

**EUROPE'S JOURNEY TO MODERNITY: DEVELOPING THE
HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY IN BRUSSELS**

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Europe's Journey to Modernity: Developing the House of European History in Brussels

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This thesis investigates the historiographical and museological aspects of the House of European History (HEH). This new museum was developed by the European Parliament in Brussels between 2007 and 2017, being conceived as an additional contribution to the European Union's identity, integration and communication agendas.

It is partially ethnographic in nature and focuses on the development process of the HEH during its conceptualization and production phase, from March 2011 to May 2017. During this period the author was an integral part of the Academic Project Team, which was charged with creating the HEH.

In seeking to address the central question – What is the House of European History as a museological act? – the thesis examines the nexus between history, memory and political power, from which a distinctive, new type of historical museum emerged in Germany that emphasised the importance of people's living memory. Drawing upon the German House of History concept and the methodology offered by conceptual history, this study highlights how a contemporary museum can be developed as a concrete and symbolic manifestation of political power. The production of this new historical museum in the political capital of Europe was born through political ambition, rooted in European history politics, influenced by the vagaries of Parliamentary bureaucracy and dependent for its form and content upon a micro-network of non-governmental actors drawn from European museum scene.

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Introduction

On 13th February 2007, Hans-Gert Pöttering, the newly elected President of the European Parliament, in presence of Angela Merkel (Chancellor of Germany since 2005 and then President of the Council of Europe) and José Manuel Barroso (President of the European Commission), in his inaugural address proposed to establish a House of European History.¹ By announcing the creation of a new historical museum, Pöttering had adopted in detail the strategy of his party mentor, Helmut Kohl. Speaking to the German Bundestag in Bonn for the first time as a Chancellor on 13th October 1982, Kohl had revealed his plans for establishing what eventually became the German House of History (*Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) – a prototype of the House of European History in Brussels.

For Kohl, the problem he aimed to solve with his announcement back in the Cold War days was that the Federal Republic of Germany, which had been established after the Second World War, did not have a national historical museum. The new ‘collection of German history since 1945’ in the capital city Bonn therefore was to be dedicated to the ‘history of our state and the divided nation’². As incoming President of a supranational European Parliament of 27 member states, the issue for Pöttering was similar, but more complicated and controversial, as European history had almost exclusively been represented ‘in national terms by the national museums’³. His controversial proposition was to construct a transnational representation of European history instead. In adding that such a House of European History, which would be located in the headquarters of European institutions, had to be networked with similar institutions in European Union member states, the connection to the German House of History was institutionalized from the very start. It is a connection so profound that any museological attempt to analyse the establishment of the House of European History

¹ Committee of Experts, House of European History (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 8 October 2017.

² German Bundestag (1982) ‘3. Oktober 1982 Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Kohl in der 121. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages’. Available online at: http://www.helmut-kohl.de/index.php?menu_sel=17&menu_sel2=&menu_sel3=&menu_sel4=&msg=1934 Last accessed: 27 February 2018.

³ European Parliament (2007) ‘Hans-Gert Pöttering’s inauguration speech as President of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 13 February 2007’. *EURACTV*. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gp2G47a-sik> Last accessed: 27 February 2018.

requires us to engage with the German post-war historiographical tradition, from which this new type of historical museum – a House of History – originated.

The vantage point of this historiography is that the coming-to-terms with the traumatic recent past assumes a moral dimension. Or as the Content Coordinator of the House of European History, Andrea Mork, put it: ‘How did extreme rationality turn into extreme irrationality in the Twentieth century?’⁴. This effectively captures the essence of what was expected to be at the core of the narrative of the new museum launched by German Christian democrat Pöttering, namely, the relentless and unabated preoccupation with a question that was central to a German historiographical school of thought, which first probed Germany’s role as a disrupter of Europe’s balance of power, and secondly positioned Germany as a role model for unification that has profoundly influenced the transnational European memory debate in recent decades. Jan-Werner Müller in analysing the German historians’ preoccupation of working through the difficult past using its distinctive method of a history of ideas or conceptual history – as indicated by the question of Content Coordinator quoted above – has observed that:

the conceptual history was both a coming-to-terms with the past and coming-to-terms with the present – but of modernity more broadly, with its supposedly fateful process of “ideologization”, rather than just the immediate Nazi past.⁵

This critical view on Europe’s modernity has its roots in the legacy of the leading German historian of ideas, Reinhart Koselleck. Following Koselleck’s methodology of critically reviewing modernity as an age of ‘ideologization’, when change in political language resulted in social change, the House of European History in its main exhibition has sought to explain the utopian ideas of the twentieth century by looking at their origins in the eighteenth century,

...which can be seen as the antechamber to our present epoch, one who’s tensions have been increasingly exacerbated since the French Revolution, as the

⁴ In an interview (conducted by the HEH Press Officer, William Parker-Jenkins, in 2015) with Andrea Mork, Content Coordinator of the Academic Project Team of the House of European History, discusses the literature and the concept which underpinned the narrative of the new museum. *Curating in a Pan-European Framework*. Available online at: <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/focus/curating-pan-european-framework>. Last accessed: 17 May 2018.

⁵ Müller, J-W. (2014) ‘On Conceptual History’, in McMahon, D.M. and Moyn, S. (eds) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 78.

revolutionary process spread extensively around the globe and intensively to all mankind.⁶

The exploration of the conundrum of a tormented 'Europe's journey to modernity'⁷ from the French Revolution to the present day is at the very heart of everything that the House of European History stands for. For Wolfram Kaiser it 'marks the high point in the European Parliament's history politics'⁸.

Interestingly, and notwithstanding the fact that the House of European History has been developed as an integral part of the European Parliament's communications work, if the hypothesis of the historiographical basis of the House of European History as outlined above holds up, it stands in exact opposition to the European establishment's identity propaganda. As I will show in this study, and as per Koselleck's instructions for applying conceptual history to make sense of a long historical process, such as the transition from *Alteuropa* (old Europe) to a modern one, which the House of European History indeed does, it effectively performs the function of a critical 'semantic check' of the current use of political language and imagery it commands. As such, it is at once a result of and a forum for critical engagement with the present-day EU history politics.

Aim and objectives

I embarked upon this research when I was appointed as an assistant to the Academic Project Team (APT) of the House of European History (HEH) in March 2011. My aim then was to study the development of this museum in Brussels from the perspective of what Kaiser, Kränkenhagen and Poehls later, and rather pointedly, described in their ground-breaking *Exhibiting Europe in Museums* as 'Europeanisation as cultural practice'⁹. I set out to document in detail the development process of the HEH, so as to reveal the dynamic entanglement of Europeanisation and musealisation processes, which I would experience at first hand, from an insider's perspective. My research thus

⁶ Koselleck, R. (1988) *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p. 6.

⁷ This phrase was coined by the Content Coordinator of the House of European History, Andrea Mork, as it appears in the interview above (see footnote no. 4). It brings the central theme of the HEH's narrative to the point and has been taken as a summative title for this study, accordingly.

⁸ Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 1.

⁹ Kaiser, W., Kränkenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2014) *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.

attends to the question asked by Kaiser et al.: ‘what happens when processes of musealisation run up against processes of Europeanisation?’¹⁰.

Musealisation, as defined by ICOM, is ‘the operation of trying to extract, physically or conceptually, something from its natural or cultural environment and giving it a museal status, transforming it into a musealium or “museum object”, that is to say, bringing it into the museal field’¹¹. Europeanisation is understood by Kaiser et al. as a ‘process of *making something European*’, thus a social phenomenon which ‘results from mutual processes of exchange and negotiation’, as opposed to an older version of ‘schematic conceptualization of Europe found in the political sciences’¹².

My aim can be summarised as:

- To understand the historiographic and museologic programme of the HEH. It seeks to answer the central question: *What is the House of European History as a museological act?*

This aim has been broken down into the following objectives:

- To understand the history of European integration, with particular focus given to its intervention in the cultural sphere from the post-war period to the time of the decision to build a museum of Europe a decade ago.
- Having covered the historical ground, the next objective is to explain how the HEH was embedded as a new project within the institutional structure of the European Parliament, looking particularly at the work of the activists and the tight-knit network that lay behind the idea of the HEH.
- My third objective explores how the content of the HEH evolved from wide research fields to precise exhibition themes connected to a Master Plan for design and production.
- Against this background, the fourth objective looks at the role of broader EU communication policies, which, after the Constitutional crisis of 2004/2005, placed a greater emphasis upon better communication with citizens and effectively marked the start of a new era of EU communications. Tracing the influence of EU history politics, which have

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ International Council of Museums (2010) *Key Concepts of Museology*. Available online at: http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Key_Concepts_of_Museology/Museologie_Anglais_BD.pdf. Last accessed: 16 February 2018.

¹² Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2014) *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, p. 3.

been integrated over the last decade into EU communication work, this objective leads me to examine how these politics, with their various actors and networks, influence such European Parliament communication projects as the Parlamentarium (the European Parliament's visitor-centre in Brussels) and the HEH.

- The fifth objective looks at the exhibition strategies applied at the HEH, drawing upon the concept of the 'museology of Europe as a language of art' (Knell), which is used as a lens through which the different ways of displaying 'Europe' in a museum can be addressed.
- A final objective examines the key to understanding the HEH as a museological act – the history of ideas or conceptual history and therewith associated methodology of historiography.

Literature review

The literature used to attend to the overall aim of showing 'what happens when processes of musealisation run up against processes of Europeanisation' is determined by the interdisciplinary nature of this research. It draws upon a multidisciplinary range of sources concerned with Europe and the museum. To these two defining elements I attach a third, the notion of collective (European) memory, which completes the framework of sources and effectively bridges the discussion on Europe with the discussion on museums. In the last two decades collective memory has become a central concept on which hinges both the academic research concerned with the Europeanisation of museum sector and the official EU history politics. This study thus contributes to the growing body of literature concerned with the issue of 'European memory framework'¹³ that is claimed to be in making. The innovative and distinctive contribution of this thesis is a significant practical case study of the conceptualization and production of the House of European History – a materialisation of sorts of the idea of a collective European memory. As such it will supplement the official account of the HEH conceptualization and production presented in the volume of essays *Creating the*

¹³ For a comprehensive overview of the eventual development of a European memory framework see Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge.

*House of European History*¹⁴, and provide an in-depth perspective onto the historical-philosophical dimension of the new museum. To enable a comprehensive view on the role of collective memory as a pivotal concept in realizing the new transnational museum on Europe's history, it brings together these various strands of literature from political science, museum studies, and memory studies, accordingly.

Collective memory is understood by Olick as 'public discourses about the past as a whole or ... narratives and images of the past that speak in the name of collectivities'¹⁵. Over the last two decades, in both the Anglo-American school of collective memory (Jeffrey K. Olick, Daniel Levy) and the German school of cultural memory (Jan and Aleida Assmanns, Astrid Erll) advocates have argued that 'the relationship between culture and memory has emerged ... [as] key issue[s] of interdisciplinary research'¹⁶, especially in humanities and social sciences. In chapter 4, I review the literature and discuss in detail the genesis and impact of the German post war school of contemporary history (*Zeitgeschichte*) along with its leading protagonists, specific terminology, methodology, and epistemology as it contributes to the development of EU history politics and the accompanying European memory debate. Here the ideas of the German school (Assmann, Leggewie, Troebst, Bauerkämper, Eder), but also the American school (Winter, Müller, Olick), are drawn upon in an assessment of collective memory as a vehicle prone to various political uses. Of particular note is Claus Leggewie's *Seven circles of European memory*¹⁷, which provides a roadmap of current European memory debate in EU history politics since 2000 and almost anticipates the emerging HEH as an embodiment of this debate.

The Belgian modern historian, Pieter Lagrou provides one of the few exceptions to this orthodox, EU-propagated, collective memory approach to academic history writing. His concerns are pointedly expressed in an article 'Europe as a place for common memories? Some thoughts on victimhood, identity and emancipation from the past'¹⁸. He criticizes the dominant presentism historicity regime, arguing that the

¹⁴ Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) (2018) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁵ Olick, J. K. (1999) 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures'. *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 345.

¹⁶ Erll, A., Nünning, A. and Young, B. S. (eds) (2008) *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, p. 1.

¹⁷ Leggewie, C. (2010) 'Seven circles of European memory'. *Eurozine*. Available online at: <https://www.eurozine.com/seven-circles-of-european-memory/>. Last accessed: 13 March 2018.

¹⁸ Lagrou, P. (2010) 'Europe as a place for common memories? Some thoughts on victimhood, identity and emancipation from the past', in Blaive, M., Gerbel, Chr. and Lindenberger, Th. (eds) (2010) *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust*. European History and Public Spheres, Vol. 2. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, pp. 281-288.

victimhood-centred European memory is exclusively retrospective and increasingly ritualised, and for these reasons it has become central to understanding the tensions in current day European memory debate among the memory advocacy groups. I discuss this in Chapter 2. Further critical assessments of the recent developments in European memory discourse¹⁹ are referenced for better understanding how, over the last two decades, it has contributed to development of a distinctive EU policy field now called 'European remembrance policy'²⁰. This work engages in a critical analysis of the official EU stance, as represented by the public communication of top politicians and official documents of the European Parliament and European Commission. Both the documents and the criticism are referenced and analysed in this study.

Various authorities on European cultural policy studies²¹ and political philosophers²² have been used to contextualise the role and place of HEH within the historical development of European cultural and identity politics. Particular reference is made to Theiler's *Political Symbolism and European Integration*, which has been closely followed in Chapter 1, to show the sequence of phases on how the European establishment has instrumentalized culture for political ends since the 1970s. Theiler's account is global; my particular interest is in tracing specifically the instrumentalization of a museum. The top-down perspectives that have been widely used to analyse official EU documents are complemented by my bottom-up approach. Little research has been done in this field using this approach. Perhaps the most valuable has been Massimo Negri's account²³ of the oldest of the European non-governmental institutions – the European Museum Forum – which drew upon the official documents of the Council of

¹⁹ Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge; Littoz-Monnet, A. (2011) 'The EU Politics of Remembrance'. Working Papers in International History, No. 9 / October 2011, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Genève; Calligaro, O. (2013) *Negotiating Europe. EU Promotion of Europeanness since 1950s*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Calligaro, O. (2015) 'Legitimation through Remembrance? The Changing Regimes of Historicity of European Integration'. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 23, Number 3, pp. 330-343; Guisan, C. (2012) *A Political Theory of Identity in European Integration: Memory and Policies*. Abingdon: Routledge; Bottici, Ch. and Challand, B. (2013) *Imagining Europe. Myth, Memory and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

²⁰ Prutsch, M. (2015) 'European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives'. Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, European Parliament, p. 36. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540364/IPOL_STU%282015%29540364_EN.pdf. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

²¹ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press; Shore, C. (2000) *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London and New York: Routledge; Littoz-Monnet, A. (2007) *The European Union and Culture: Between Economic Regulation and European Cultural Policy*. Manchester: MUP; Kaiser, W., Leucht, B., Rasmussen, M. (eds) (2009) *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Policy 1950-72*. New York and London: Routledge.

²² Van Middelaar, L. (2013) *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent became a Union*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Marquand, D. (2011) *The End of the West: The Once and Future Europe*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; Ferguson, N. (2011) *Civilization: The West and the Rest*. London: Penguin Books.

²³ Negri, M. (2008) 'City Museums. Forms and Content. A European Debate', in Campanini, G. and Negri, M. (eds) *The Future of City Museums in Europe: experiences and perspectives*. Bologna University Press: Bologna, pp. 215-222.

Europe to demonstrate its involvement in the process of museum innovation in Europe and not least in paving the way for a museum of Europe.

Another formative concept in the process of setting up the HEH which made me investigate relevant sources and position my writing within an established academic discourse, was the notion of a European public space and sphere. This is examined from a museum studies perspective, with reference to Habermas' seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*²⁴. The critical response to Habermas' concept includes Jennifer Barrett's *Museums and the Public Sphere*²⁵ which serves as a basis for examining the manifestations of European public space/sphere both in its physical and intangible forms. In considering the physical transformation of the European Quarter in Brussels over the last decade as part of a movement towards more open European public space and a stronger public sphere, the recent writings of Professor Eric Corijn²⁶ from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, as well as Carola Hein's now classical inquiry into Brussels as the capital of Europe *The Capital of Europe: Architecture and Urban Planning for the European Union*²⁷, are of great importance for this study.

Other sources guiding my development of methodology include several pieces of pioneering research in the field of Europeanising museums and musealising Europe, including the work of Wolfram Kaiser and the Norwegian Research Council's sponsored project *Exhibiting Europe in Museums. Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations* led by Kaiser, Krankenhagen and Poehls.²⁸ Among the important museological sources referenced are various monographs concerned with production of museums from epistemological and political perspectives²⁹, articles shedding light on the state of play of today's museum theory³⁰, and the origins of the

²⁴ Original in German: Habermas, J. (1962) *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

²⁵ Barrett, J. (2012) *Museums and the Public Sphere*. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing.

²⁶ Corijn, E. and van de Ven, J. (eds) (2013) *The Brussels Reader: a Small World City to Become the Capital of Europe*. Brussels: Brussels University Press.

²⁷ Hein, C. (2004) *The Capital of Europe: Architecture and Urban Planning for the European Union*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

²⁸ Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2014) *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.

²⁹ Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992) *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge; Pearce, S. (1995) *On Collecting: An Investigation Into Collecting in the European Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge; Bennett, T. (1995) *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge; MacGregor, A. (2007) *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven and London: Yale University press; Knell, S. (ed.) (2014) *Museums and the Future of Collecting. Second Edition*. London: Routledge; Knell, S. (2016) *National Galleries: The Art of Making Nations*. London: Routledge.

³⁰ Van Mensch, P. and Meijer-van Mensch, L. (2010) 'Collecting as intangible heritage'. *Collectingnet Newsletter*, 2010 (9), pp. 2-4.

concept of a House of History³¹. Further important museum studies literature which helped to contextualise the House of European History within the broader European museum scene include *European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen* (EuNaMus 2010-2013), a research project sponsored under the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission. Its publication *Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online*³² promulgates the idea of a museology of Europe in the language of art; a concept drawn upon in this study for describing the various ways Europe is represented in museums. In a similar vein, a number of exhibition catalogues and exhibition blueprints, as well as related online media, were used. These included material from the Danish National Museum, the Dutch Museum of National History (2008-2012), the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin, and the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseille, all of which have Europe and the European museum tradition at their philosophical heart.

When examining the narrative of the House of European History, the works of various contemporary historians proved invaluable. Concerning the 20th century, these included work by Tony Judt, notably *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, and Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, Jürgen Osterhammel's enquiry into the 19th century, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, Mark Greengrass' *Christendom Destroyed. Europe 1517-1648* and Brendan Simms' *Europe. The Struggle for Supremacy 1453 to the Present*.

Finally, to get to the very core of the HEH concept and demonstrate how this is inextricably rooted in the German school of contemporary history (*Zeitgeschichte*) and conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), the works of Reinhart Koselleck, specifically his *Basic concepts in History. A Dictionary on Historical Principles of Political and Social Language in Germany*,³³ and its interpretation in writings of such scholars and commentators as Keith Tribe, Jean-Werner Müller, and G. Seibt, proved essential. This

³¹ Hieke, H. (2013) 'The Rhineland Museum of 1925. The Short Life of a Grand Plan'. *Museological Review. Museum Utopias Conference Edition*, no. 17. Leicester: University of Leicester, pp. 1-17.

³² Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) 'Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.' EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press.

³³ The eight-volume strong lexicon *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* was published from 1972 to 1997 by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze und Reinhart Koselleck in West Germany.

study consequently contributes to the debate about the place and prospects of conceptual history in modern historiography from the point of view of applied museum practice.

To sum up, in parallel to documenting the practical side of setting up the House of European History, which implies analysing archival documents and information generated in the process of project development such as minutes of the meetings, content and design plans, and public communications, this study examines the concepts of collective memory and public space and sphere along with the corresponding school of historiography which informed the thinking about the project on a theoretical level. Accordingly, my enquiry contributes to the still scarce – as has been noted by Princeton historian Jean-Werner Müller³⁴ in early 2000s and a good ten years later confirmed to be the case by European scholars Stefan Troebst³⁵ and Aline Sierp³⁶ – strand of literature concerned with the nexus between history, memory, and political power. It is from this nexus that a new type of historical museum – the House of History – emerged. This study is an attempt to contribute to better understanding of political and symbolic power using a concrete example of the production of a new historical museum in Brussels.

Research methodology

The approach taken within the thesis generally is one based on contemporary history studies (see Kaiser et al.³⁷, discussed below) which focus on primary sources: official documents, declarations and reports issued by various European governing bodies, interest groups, research projects, media, as well as the working papers of the HEH. Next to the primary sources, I consult writing of contemporary political scientists and social anthropologists focusing on European cultural policy and politics. These, too, act as a kind of primary record. Official documents and declarations are viewed in the light of their references to the development of European cultural policies and history politics, and, more specifically, references to the museum as a potential instrument used for

³⁴ Müller, J-W. (ed.) (2002) *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-35.

³⁵ Troebst, S. (2013) 'Die Europäische Union als "Gedächtnis und Gewissen Europas"? Zur EU-Geschichtspolitik seit der Osterweiterung', in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) (2013) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, p. 98.

³⁶ Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, p. 10.

³⁷ Kaiser, W., Leucht, B., Rasmussen, M. (eds) (2009) *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Policy 1950-72*. New York and London: Routledge.

achieving EU cultural policy goals and how this idea influenced the decision to build the HEH. While a distinct cultural policy at the European level was integral to the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union)³⁸, earlier initiatives looked to intervention in the cultural sphere as well, including the museum sector, and these provide the underlying context of the later development of such interventionist policies and politics.

The analysis of such primary source documents has been supplemented by archival studies and the study of the secondary source literature, and backed-up with long-term, ethnographically-based observation and fieldwork. As a researcher within the HEH project, I was uniquely positioned to adopt a socially immersive method similar to that used by anthropologists in ethnographic research. The result is a qualitative case study based on personal engagement with the researched subject. Ethnography, according to Mitchell, ‘has effectively become a catch-all term to describe any form of long-term qualitative research based on triangulation of methods’³⁹. The ‘qualitative’ or ‘case study’ method has therefore left the narrow confines of anthropology and ‘has now expanded out to be part of the overall methodological “toolkit” used by ‘the entire range of interdisciplinary “studies” in the social sciences’⁴⁰. Referring to Hammersley who advocated powerfully in the 1990s for application of qualitative research methods in ethnography because ‘... the nature of the social world must be *discovered* ... this can only be achieved by first-hand observation and participation in ‘natural’ settings’⁴¹, Mitchell notes that ‘social scientists turned to this rather open-ended methodology as part of a critique of the more scientific quantitative methods of survey and experimentation’⁴². This approach has been adopted in this study, when the detailed insider’s account of the development of the HEH is placed against the broader political and historical-philosophical context of Europeanisation through culture. A high-resolution study of the process of the development of the HEH enables the ideas and concepts that informed the administrative and curatorial input to be revealed. This approach shows that many of

³⁸ European Communities (1992) *Treaty on European Union*. Available online at: <http://www.eurotreaties.com/maastrichtec.pdf>. Last accessed: 25 September 2017.

³⁹ Mitchell, J. P. (2007) ‘Ethnography’, in Outhwaite, W. and Turner, S.P. *The SAGE Handbook of Social Science Methodology*. Los Angeles California, London: SAGE, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hammersley, M. (1992) *What’s wrong with Ethnography? Methodological Explorations*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 11-12.

⁴² Mitchell, J. P. (2007) ‘Ethnography’, in Outhwaite, W. and Turner, S.P. *The SAGE Handbook of Social Science Methodology*. Los Angeles California, London: SAGE, p. 56.

these decisions were ‘open to chance’, which permitted the project, as generally expected in ethnographic fieldwork, to ‘generate new research orientations’⁴³ as it evolved. From here stems the specific structure of the thesis, which grew organically along the way of doing this ethnographic research guided by a clear aim and objectives which have remained in place throughout the project.

The numerous Wolfram Kaiser’s studies⁴⁴ in Europeanisation generally and those looking at HEH in particular, proved critical in understanding how the HEH came about through the efforts of a tight-knit network of like-minded actors and where does it sit within the multilevel structure of European governance. Kaiser’s innovative application of Actor-Network theory (ANT), which not only looks at but by means of such qualitative methods as interviews proactively engages with multilevel networks of social actors involved in Europeanisation through the cultural process, was a refreshing counterpoint to my more passive ethnographic research method of first-hand observation.

As the recent study *Unpacking the Collection. Networks of Material and Social Agency in Museum* has shown, ANT can be successfully applied in museum studies, when museums are seen ‘not merely as *material* assemblages but also as *social* collections ... the people who staff and run them, the objects and the various individuals and processes which led to them being there, those who visit them and those who encounter the objects within them in various media are all part of complex networks of agency’⁴⁵. Although I didn’t myself follow the ANT formally, this broader view and the Kaiser’s approach to specifically examine the micro-network and the agency of social actors behind the idea and realization of HEH, has shaped my thinking about the HEH as a product of one such network. The ANT as a material-semiotic method that ‘simultaneously maps the relationships between “things” and “concepts”, using the network as a metaphor for understanding the ways in which these things are

⁴³ Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Kaiser, W., Gehler, M. and Leucht, B. (eds) (2009) *Networks in European Multi-Level Governance From 1945 to the Present: Networks in Informal European Governance*. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag; Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen, S. (2010) ‘Europa Ausstellen. Zur Konstruktion Europäischer Integration und Identität im Geplanten Musée de l’Europe in Brüssel’, in Bader, T., Scharlemann, I., Zietzen, S. (2010) *Europa – Europäisierung – Europäistik: Neue wissenschaftliche Ansätze, Methoden und Inhalte*. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag; Kaiser, W., Leucht, B., Rasmussen, M. (eds) (2009) *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Policy 1950-72*. New York and London: Routledge; Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2014) *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn; Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, pp. 1-17.

⁴⁵ Byrne, S., Clarke, A., Harrison, R. and Torrence, R. (eds) (2011) *Unpacking the Collection. Networks of Material and Social Agency in Museum*. New York: Springer, p. 4.

interconnected'⁴⁶, technically could have been extended in a research like this to interrogate how museum objects become the agents in showing, for instance, 'Europe' in a specific curated sense as the central subject of the new museum. However, given that the first 'permanent' exhibition of HEH is expected to last until 2023 and was assembled through both loans and purchases, it could be said to have a degree of flux, of medium-term 'impermanency', and, as a consequence, the task of defining 'Europe' through the objects on display would be a rather difficult exercise. As demonstrated in the closing chapter, the HEH is unlike the traditional historical museum in that it sets out to prioritise the conceptual basis of its foundation over the objects it displays, resulting in an exhibition that focuses predominantly on concepts advocated by the leading actors rather than scenography (not always original objects) that represent these concepts. Accordingly, the philosophy of history, which informed the making of HEH, with this divergence from traditional museological and museographical practice, is thus interrogated using the findings of Kaiser who has followed closely the micro-network of actors associated with the HEH, coupled with the process tracing method from direct, deep and long-term involvement with the project.

Kaiser admits that contemporary historians frequently face 'special methodological difficulties'⁴⁷ in dealing with recent historic events. He indicates that this is due a paucity of relevant data when it comes to reconstructing the role of networks in the associated political processes. For example, the access to information concerning internal workings of the HEH starting from its conceptualization in 2011, to the actual production and delivery in 2017, has been very limited for researchers from outside the organisation. This weakness is diminished, if not fully addressed, within this study through myself having worked with the Academic Project Team (APT) that was charged with realising the concept, and through my direct involvement with the project, first as assistant and then as assistant curator. These roles allowed direct access to the study archives of the European Parliament that notably include the working papers of the HEH covering the period from its inception and the recruitment of the APT in early 2011, to the opening of the HEH in May 2017. As a member of the APT, I have been able to compare the findings of peer researchers (see, for example, Krankenhagen⁴⁸,

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁷ Kaiser, W., Leucht, B., Rasmussen, M. (eds) (2009) *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Policy 1950-72*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 21.

⁴⁸ Krankenhagen, S. (2013) 'Collecting Europe: on the museal construction of European objects', in Kjerstin, A. (ed.) *Assigning Cultural Values*. Berlin: Peter Lang.

Hilmar⁴⁹, Kaiser⁵⁰). Being external to the project they have had to rely for the most part on interviews, minutes of the official meetings, media monitoring, and the study of associated literature, in contrast with my own direct observations as an ‘insider’.

The operation of the structural elements of HEH project (the founding Committee of Experts and later Academic Committee, the Board of Trustees, the Building Committee, Contact Group, and other consultative bodies from the European Parliament) were observed at first-hand, from which the relative inputs of each can be assessed and the details of the complicated process of setting up the HEH ascertained. In tracing the process⁵¹ qualitative analysis is used as a tool. Collier sums up the tracing of the process as an ‘analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence – often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena’⁵². In taking a chronological approach to this case study over the period March 2011 to May 2017, the process tracing approach aided the analysis of the separate pieces of evidence in the HEH project development, enabling a complete picture to be presented at the end of the study.

Given my deep involvement as a core member of the Academic Project Team, such qualitative research methods as interviews, that are usually relied upon by external researchers who work with process tracing method, were not deemed necessary for this study. Instead, being wholly immersed in the project allowed me to act as both a member of the APT and as a researcher with my own research agenda. There was no conflict of interest in wearing both hats, from the outset this was transparent; my job application for the position of assistant curator included a declaration of intent to conduct this kind of research. Upon being granted a place in the doctoral studies programme, which occurred after a half a year in office in October 2011, this was immediately communicated to the APT leader. No objection was raised to my intention to undertake this kind of research. The need to undertake such research was not an institutionalized part of my job as an employee of the European Parliament. The associated research towards this doctorate was thus a private matter lasting throughout the lifetime of the project and my assignment within it. It must be admitted that this

⁴⁹ Hilmar, T. (2016) ‘Narrating Unity at the European Union’s new History Museum: A Cultural-Process Approach to the Study of Collective Memory’. *European Journal of Sociology*, August 2016, 57 (2), pp. 297-329.

⁵⁰ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, pp. 1-17.

⁵¹ For the process tracing method see, for example, Collier, P. (2011) ‘Understanding process tracing’. *Political Science and Politics* 44, No. 4, pp. 823-830.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 824.

dual status was constraining to my eventual wish to participate in conferences or publish papers as a researcher because it could have had an adversary effect on the project development, which had practically no public communication until the opening campaign in 2017. In line with my contract as a temporary agent and the general requirement of confidentiality about the internal workings of the project, including the many content and design draft papers in circulation, at no point during my employment did I compromise the employer or the APT in disclosing any sensitive information to a third party. Any ethical considerations were further allayed through my resignation from my position with the European Parliament after completion of the assignment and after the opening of HEH in 2017. In so doing the necessary ‘distance’ has been established between researcher and the subject of the study to ensure impartiality. Thus, on my part I have done all I can to look dispassionately at the research subject and my extensive exploration of the literature on historiography, but also critical discourse has provided an external frame of thinking into helping to achieve this. Admittedly, the methodologies frequently involve some form of compromise to enable the kind of research necessary. My research draws its strength from a high resolution and subtle ethnographic understanding of practices, decisions, and relationships within the process of developing the HEH that could not be achieved in any other way. Paradoxically, the low-key profile that I kept while at the APT has been an advantage in setting a dispassionate and distanced tone which characterizes this study.

Structure of thesis

While partially ethnographic in nature, this study focuses on the development of the HEH over its conceptualization and production phases, from March 2011 to May 2017. It sets the scene by looking at the development of European cultural policies, from early beginnings in the post war era, through the emerging identity politics of the 1970s and 1980s, to the fully-fledged EU history politics of the 2000s. While this forms the background to the establishment of the HEH, its development relied on the blueprint of that new type of historical museum of the German pedigree – a House of History.

The second chapter examines the crucial phase of the development of the narrative of the proposed exhibitions, through which the methodology and the historical-philosophical thought processes underpinning of the HEH came to the fore for the first time. It also looks at the roles of advisory bodies to the HEH, examining

their impact on content development, the structure of future exhibition and repercussions on the physical layout of the exhibition gallery.

Chapter 3 focuses on the communications work of the European Parliament (and by extension to the European Commission and the Council of Europe, too) and traces the transition of the HEH project from being under the direct supervision of the Bureau of the European Parliament to the Directorate General for Communications, a move which occurred in September 2012. Of particular concern at that point is the exploration of the concept of the European public sphere, as a new figure of speech in EU jargon, which exemplifies the aspirations of the new EU communication dogma. This doctrinal approach is reflected in various official planning documents and communication initiatives of the EU governing bodies after the failure of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe of 2004/2005.

The role and profile of the principal actors and networks in European history politics is then examined, focusing on how they influenced content development of the HEH. This is followed by an account of the recent actions taken by various EU governing bodies concerned with the politics of representation, and how their aspirations have been boosted and made manifest through the Master Plan for the European Quarter in Brussels over the last decade. The chapter closes with an examination of the theoretical basis of the various concepts of European public, which serves as a bridge to an in-depth analysis of European memory cultures and history politics that follow in Chapter 4.

The fourth chapter gives an insight into the genesis of contemporary history as a discipline in its own right within the post war German Federal Republic. In so doing we gain an understanding of the moral and political climate that gave rise to a distinctively new type of historical museum – the House of History – in continental Europe. This is the paradigm from which the HEH originates and continues to operate in. The very idea of contemporary history or *Zeitgeschichte* begs fundamental questions about politics of history and its side effects, an issue that is pointedly described by Leggewie and Lang as a battlefield of European memory.⁵³ The European memory debate, as it was presented by HEH curators and managers at various conferences in 2014 and 2015, is then scrutinised as they exemplified the themes and topics that went to the fore within the European memory debate around the time of the HEH production.

⁵³ Leggewie, C. and Lang, A. (2011) *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung: ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt*. München: C.H.Beck.

This serves as a theoretical and practical basis for Chapter 5 where the exhibitions at the HEH are considered as a primary example of the ongoing European memory debate, and as such attest to the European Parliament's active involvement in the burgeoning field of European history politics. The notion of a 'museology of Europe' (Knell) serves here as a starting point in questioning what kind of museology might or should prevail; that of the European regions that subscribe to the older 'unity in diversity' model, or the 'active remembrance' model being promoted by the Commission's 'Europe for Citizens' programme (2007-2013; 2014-2020). The question on where the HEH stands amid the associated debate is therefore fundamental. Examples of contemporary history museum projects that bear the strong imprint of the German prototype in various European countries are highlighted and critically assessed regarding the potential for similar kinds of institutions to be developed elsewhere in Europe and their capacity to survive in an ever-changing political climate.

Chapter 6 closes with the answer to the central question posed in the introduction of this thesis, *What is the House of European History as a museological act?* Having dealt with the museological implications of the conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) with its preference for concepts, the degree to which the HEH is a product of conceptual history is determined, especially in light of its central theme of Europe's conflict and crisis-ridden journey to modernity.

Chapter 1

Towards a House of European History

The Second World War destroyed Europe's centrality once and for all. In the immediate aftermath of the war, most of continental Europe was devastated, and much of it was traumatized. The death tolls defy imagination – nearly six million Jews, more than seven million Germans, more than two million non-Jewish Poles, more than a million Yugoslavs, nearly a million Rumanians, and more than twenty million Soviet citizens (not all of them Europeans). Warsaw was systematically torched and dynamited, block by block. Industrial Germany was flattened. Eight and a half square miles of Hamburg were incinerated in firestorm, caused by Allied bombing. When Germany surrendered unconditionally in May 1945, much of Berlin was a heap of rubble.⁵⁴

Before tracing the sequence of events, introducing the main protagonists and activists, and showing the influence of political, cultural and academic thought upon European Union activism and history politics, all of which had a bearing on the establishment of the House of European History, it is necessary to first revisit the early days of European unification in the immediate post war era for a reminder of how it all began. Even then culture was considered an auxiliary tool for fostering 'an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'⁵⁵. According to the account of the Council of Europe (the 1949 founded international non-governmental organisation committed to upholding democracy, human rights, rule of law and promoting culture in Europe), 'cultural policy at the European level can be traced back to 1954, when the Council of Europe adopted the *European Cultural Convention*'⁵⁶. That is to say, prior the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community in 1957, those involved with the European movement discussed questions of cultural integration. Following Theiler's account⁵⁷, for example, cultural cooperation was on the agenda of the Haag Congress of

⁵⁴ Marquand, D. (2011) *The End of the West: The Once and Future Europe*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, p. 8.

⁵⁵ One of the specific goals of the *Treaty of Rome* (1957) establishing European Economic Community (EEC) was to lay the foundations of an 'ever closer union' among the peoples of Europe. See the summary of the EEC Treaty online at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0023&from=EN>. Last accessed: 18 May 2018.

⁵⁶ Centre for Fine Arts BOZAR (2015) *60 years of cultural cooperation in Europe*. Available online at: <http://www.bozar.be/en/activities/81231-60-years-of-cultural-cooperation-in-europe>. Last accessed: 14 August 2017.

⁵⁷ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press.

May 1948, at which the structure of the envisaged Council of Europe and the framework for cultural relations were developed. Following the Lausanne European Conference on Culture, held in December 1949, the European Centre for Culture in Geneva and the College of Europe in Bruges were established in 1950. The *European Cultural Convention* (Paris, December 1954) is said to have been ‘born from the ashes of World War Two’⁵⁸ and was an aspiration to facilitate cooperation among members of the Council of Europe (that currently stands at 47) across a wide range of issues, from protection of human rights to cultural heritage, from the promotion of the study of languages to the safeguarding of the common cultural heritage of Europe. Thus, in its tone and objectives, this *Convention* set the agenda for the European cultural sector in the decade that followed the end of the war. From today’s perspective, as ‘EU institutions have increasingly engaged in transnational politics of history to enhance European identity and foster EU legitimacy’⁵⁹, this early example of European cultural policy appears surprisingly unpretentious in terms of identity rhetoric. It is pragmatic and without the pathos of later policy documents which direct culture towards the ideals of a transnational European identity. The 1954 *Cultural Convention* placed a responsibility upon the contracting parties to implement appropriate measures to develop their national contributions to the common cultural heritage of Europe, to encourage citizens to study the languages, history and *civilization of the other Contracting Parties* (emphasis added), and to grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its territory. The anticipated practical outcomes of this pioneering convention were captured in Article 4, which says that each contracting party shall facilitate the movement and exchange of persons as well as of objects of cultural value, so that the overall aims of convention may be implemented.⁶⁰ In short, the 1954 *Cultural Convention* committed the signatories to the overall concept of the ‘four freedoms’ (free movement of goods, capital, services, and labour) across the cultural domain, freedoms which were expanded upon in the Treaty of Rome, adopted a few years later.

As well as the *Cultural Convention*, and the establishment of a framework for cultural relations at the newly created Council of Europe (which immediately began

⁵⁸ Centre for Fine Arts BOZAR (2015) *60 years of cultural cooperation in Europe*. Available online at: <http://www.bozar.be/en/activities/81231-60-years-of-cultural-cooperation-in-europe>. Last accessed: 14 August 2017.

⁵⁹ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Council of Europe (1954) *European Cultural Convention*. Available online at: <https://rm.coe.int/168006457e>. Last accessed: 25 September 2017.

organizing annual art exhibitions⁶¹), 1954 saw the beginning of number of European cultural institutions, the first of which was European Cultural Foundation launched that year. This was the brainchild of the Swiss philosopher Denis de Rougemont and one of the founding figures of the European Communities (comprising European Coal and Steel Community (ECST), European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and the European Economic Community (EEC)), the French Prime Minister Robert Schuman. In 1960, under presidency of HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the European Cultural Foundation moved to Amsterdam where it stays until now.⁶²

In the same grassroots mode, a decade later Europa Nostra was founded in 1963, that aimed to look after and promote European heritage sites.⁶³ The European Museum of the Year Award (later renamed European Museum Forum) followed in 1977, an initiative of the British journalist and museum enthusiast Kenneth Hudson.⁶⁴ All of these non-governmental organisations operated either in the heritage and museum sector or in the wider cultural field, and were launched with the blessing of the Council of Europe, and all were seen as advancing developing European values concerning cultural co-operation while maintaining administrative and financial autonomy. In other words, the favoured approach in the early days of European unification was not for top-down cultural engineering but to leave more space for non-governmental activism.

A very different and much more instrumental approach has prevailed since the *Declaration on European Identity*⁶⁵ of 1973, the establishment of the European Commission consequent to the Merger Treaty (1967), uniting the ECST, Euratom, and the EEC, and the election of the first European Parliament in 1979. That period of time marked the emergence of European identity politics, characterized by the rhetoric of a common European cultural and political identity, interests and obligations in safeguarding peace and shaping a common future, accompanied by special actions in the European cultural sector. In support of this approach, and in consultation with the

⁶¹ Council of Europe. *Culture at the Council of Europe*. Accessible online at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/events/exhibitions_en.asp. Last accessed: 14 August 2017.

⁶² See the founding history of European Cultural Foundation. Available online at: <http://www.culturalfoundation.eu/about-us/>. Last accessed: 18 May 2018.

⁶³ See the founding history of Europa Nostra. Available online at: <http://www.europanostra.org/organisation/>. Last accessed: 18 May 2018.

⁶⁴ See the founding history of European Museum of the Year Award – later European Museum Forum. Available online at: <https://europeanforum.museum/emf/history-organisation/>. Last accessed: 18 May 2018.

⁶⁵ European Communities (1973) *Declaration on European Identity*. Available online at: https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32/publishable_en.pdf. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

Director of newly founded European Museum of the Year Award, Kenneth Hudson, the European Commission came up with the proposition of using national museums to foster the European project by opening ‘European rooms’ in each of them.⁶⁶ However, only one such European room opened in 1980, in Norwich Castle Museum under the direct supervision of Hudson.⁶⁷ When in late 1970s European officials began to focus on the museum as a potential mediator, capable of reaching out to broad audiences, they did it in a manner of top-down cultural engineering.⁶⁸ But the interfering with the autonomy of national museums proved to be a tactical mistake which the European establishment only recognised decades later. It was in the political climate of the post-constitutional crisis of 2004/2005, caused by the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in popular referendum in France and Netherlands, that the EU governing bodies realized anew the need for better communication with citizens and, among other things with this end in mind, picked up the idea of a museum of Europe. It is notable that plans were laid down for the European Parliament’s Visitor Centre Parlamentarium by the Parliament’s Secretary General, Julian Priestly, in July 2005; and those for the HEH by the newly appointed President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, in January 2007. This was however preceded by a symbolic event, which in the words of Habermas and Derrida ‘may well, in a hindsight, go down in history as a sign of the birth of a European public sphere’⁶⁹ – the very purpose of EU communication dogma. On the 15th February 2003, simultaneously in London, Rome, Madrid, Barcelona, Berlin and Paris, people took to the streets in protest at the US administration’s unilateral declaration of invasion of Iraq. Picking up on the mood of this widespread social upheaval, a group of distinguished European thinkers, including the Italian philosopher and novelist, Umberto Eco, Swiss author and president of the German Academy of Arts, Adolf Muschg, Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater, and Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, were brought together by Habermas and Derrida. They took the opportunity to demand the redefining of a united Europe’s foreign policy and strengthening the post-national European conscience in their vision for the liberal-

⁶⁶ Council of Europe (2002) ‘The spirit of Europe in museums’. Documents Working papers. 2002 Ordinary Session (Fourth part) 23-27 September 2002. Volume VII Documents 9468 & 9501-9537. Report Doc. 9503 – 15 July 2002. (Rapporteur: Gerrit Valk, Netherlands, Socialist Group). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, p. 12. Available online at: <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=9806&lang=EN>. Last accessed: 31 May 2018.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Compare Shore, C. (2000) *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁶⁹ Habermas, J. and Derrida, J. (2003) ‘February 15, or, What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Core of Europe’. *Constellations*, Volume 10, Number 3, 2003, p. 291.

cosmopolitan future of Europe. It is against the background of these larger events (and not least coinciding with the German Presidency at the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2007 which charges the presiding member state with a mandate for setting the European agenda) that the newly appointed President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, took advantage of political situation to resurrect the decades' old idea of a museum of Europe by way of suggesting it as one of the answers to the growing demand for a new vision for Europe.

In response to Pöttering's proposal the European Parliament instituted a committee of experts to investigate the concept further. At first glance the idea of such a museum could be seen to be at odds with the outlook of the pioneer of the European museum public quality and networking movement, Kenneth Hudson, who in 1997 expressed concern that 'a single museum to include and represent European civilization ... would need to be shaped by genius, not by a committee'⁷⁰. Paradoxically, the independence advocated by this champion of European Museum Forum, who was so characteristic of the non-governmental actors of the early days of European cultural activism, was effectively preserved in the development of the long-awaited museum of Europe that was finally delivered in the form of the House of European History. By consulting with a close-knit network of respected individuals, who subscribed to the concept of a federal Europe and who represented a school of German post-war philosophy of history, and then by appointing a group of external curators to realize the proposed concept, the museum of Europe – the House of European History – was established with a notable degree of autonomy, and, for good or worse, through a process almost devoid of public debate. These aspects, but particularly the virtual absence of an open dialogue around the development of such a proposal, are very unusual in European affairs in general and within the Brussels European Quarter milieu in particular. In the chapters that follow, I will show how a small group of museum and administrative professionals, backed institutionally and financially by the might of the European Parliament, worked quietly behind the scenes for six and a half years to bring the House of European History about, and how, perhaps contrary to expectations of Brussels observers, their efforts resulted in a final product which carries their individual imprint and attests to the professional standards of museum industry. As such it stands

⁷⁰ Kenneth Hudson, cited in Van Gaal, T. and Itzel, C. (2012) 'The House of European History Project in Brussels', in Borodziej, W. and Puttkamer, J. (eds) (2012) *Europa und sein Osten. Geschichtskulturelle Herausforderungen*. Munich: Oldenbourg, p. 77

testament to Kaiser's argument about the 'limits of cultural engineering'⁷¹, which addresses the EU governing bodies' limitations in orchestrating the making of museum of Europe in Brussels and its potential interference in the museum's history politics narrative. Thus, it may be said that the House of European History is standing proof of Kenneth Hudson's wish for a museum of Europe that would be shaped by individual genius drawing upon a specific school of thought, rather than by the amorphous collective effort of a committee. Structured around a chronological account, this study will examine the thought process behind the making of the House of European History and its practical realization.

The remainder of this chapter is divided in three parts. The first part considers in more detail the early period of the European integration project along the changing approaches to its research, when, due to decreasing popular support and following a stagnation phase in the early 1970s, culture was included as a supportive mechanism of integration for the first time. At this point the European governing bodies, following up on earlier Council of Europe activity, provide support to Europe's non-governmental heritage organisations. At that time the idea of shaping a common European heritage, using national museums and other bodies, comes to the fore. Subsequently, in the 1980s, when the symbols (flag, anthem, and the Europe Day) of European Communities were introduced, culture was again used to strengthen the European integration process. The second element sets out the EU cultural policy initiatives and approaches, post the Maastricht Treaty, that increasingly use the heritage and museum sectors to address the perceived deficiency in the EU's legitimacy caused by waning popular support. The final section focuses on the most visible initiatives geared towards musealising the history of Europe and memory as a step towards European integration, as exemplified by the now defunct Musée de l'Europe project, and two European Parliament initiatives: Parlamentarium (opened in 2011) and the HEH (opened in May 2017).

⁷¹ Se Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 1.

Approaches to European identity studies

The first attempt to use culture in general, and museums in particular, to shore up and legitimise the European unification project, took place in late 1960s, in response to deepening political and economic stagnation. Following Robin Allers' account⁷², throughout the 1960s, the French President, General Charles de Gaulle, had refused to enter into negotiations with the United Kingdom and in so doing blocked both the completion and the expansion of the European Community. De Gaulle's resignation in April 1969 opened up the prospect that the enlargement issue might be addressed. Thus, the first enlargement of the European Economic Community to include Great Britain, Ireland, and Denmark finally took place in 1973, but it coincided with the Arab–Israeli War, and the global energy crisis. According to some commentators⁷³, this global political and economic crisis gave an impetus to the development of cultural initiatives and European identity studies followed suit. By the early 1970s many policy-makers within the European Community believed that public antipathy and the growing scepticism among the general public, which was finding it increasingly difficult to identify with the Community, was becoming problematic. As noted by Allers, the decision taken by the people of Norway, just a month before the Paris Summit of 19–20 October 1972, to turn down European Community membership was something of a wake-up call in this respect.⁷⁴

The promotion of European culture, European values and European identity, it was thought, could offer a solution. Theiler states that the various identity declarations discussed in detail below, notably the *Declaration on European Identity* (Copenhagen, 14 December 1973) at that time were one manifestation of this belief.⁷⁵ A closer look at the evolution of European identity studies and its methods in recent decades reveal changing approaches in comprehending the process.

⁷² Allers, R. (2016) 'The challenges of European integration (1967–1974)'. CVCE.EU by UNI.LU. Available online at: https://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_challenges_of_european_integration_1967_1974-en-dbc91426-5582-4a17-916f-c2d05b40aadc.html. Last accessed: 18 May 2018.

⁷³ See, for example, Shore, C. (2000) *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London and New York: Routledge; Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press; Litzo-Monnet, A. (2007) *The European Union and Culture: Between Economic Regulation and European Cultural Policy*. Manchester: MUP.

⁷⁴ Allers, R. (2016) 'The challenges of European integration (1967–1974)'. CVCE.EU by UNI.LU. Available online at: https://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_challenges_of_european_integration_1967_1974-en-dbc91426-5582-4a17-916f-c2d05b40aadc.html. Last accessed: 18 May 2018.

⁷⁵ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 56.

Drawing upon constructivist theory to describe the process of nation-building, it is not surprising that culture started to be utilized in the symbolic legitimization of European integration. In particular, that strand of theoretical debate that responds to critical social theory of Jürgen Habermas, ‘which explores the role of language in mediating and constructing social reality’⁷⁶, has been instrumental in attributing the European integration process with the same characteristics as the nation-building process of the 19th century. Indeed, starting from *Declaration on European Identity*, the European project officially and explicitly by means of language sought to use the same symbolic cultural architecture for constructing an identity of Europe as the nation-states had done to establish their identities. Accordingly, this was conventionally the post-positivist approach of the likes of Habermas’ theory of communicative action which treats language as a superstructure that explain the social reality that have been applied by researchers to explain how European integration was shaped and how it operates. Such viewpoints of normative theorizing, which adopt the top-down approach of the state in the national identity making process, are very convenient when used to explain present day European identity as engineered by EU technocrats and politicians because it invariably points to Brussels and its official communication.

Until recently normative theorizing has been generally considered the best approach to understanding the mechanisms and politics of the process. However, over the last decade critical voices from the field of European studies⁷⁷ have pointed to the deficiencies of the post-positivist approach, stating that it is insufficient to explain the complete spectrum of identity-building processes adopted within the EU, and that a positivist empirical approach should supplement it. Or, as Checkel points it out, ‘Yet, the best normative theory updates its arguments in light of new empirical findings – findings typically anchored in a positivist epistemological frame’⁷⁸. The positivist view makes a case for comprehending Europeanisation process as much more complex, being dependent upon the various vertical and horizontal networking systems and

⁷⁶ Checkel, J. T. (2006) ‘Constructivist Approaches to European Integration’. *ARENA and Department of Political Science University of Oslo*, p. 5. Available online at: http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2006/wp06_06.pdf. Last assessed: 19 February 2018.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Csáky, M. and Feichtinger, J. (eds) (2007) *Europa – geeint durch Werte? Die europäische Wertedebatte auf dem Prüfstand der Geschichte*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag; Kaiser, W., Leucht, B., Rasmussen, M. (eds) (2009) *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Policy 1950-72*. New York and London: Routledge.

⁷⁸ Checkel, J. T. (2006) ‘Constructivist Approaches to European Integration’. *ARENA and Department of Political Science University of Oslo*, pp. 20-21. Available online at: http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2006/wp06_06.pdf. Last assessed: 19 February 2018.

diverse actors – state and nongovernmental – that are involved in sustaining the EU multilevel governance. In turn, the multilevel governance, comprising supranational, national, regional and local government, not to forget non-governmental bodies lobbying at all levels, inevitably involves the multiple identities of Europeans, and this complexity has to be given due recognition when it comes to addressing questions concerning the construction of a common European identity.

Checkel and Katzenstein highlight the change towards adopting more positivist epistemologies when saying that the world of scholarship has moved from the discussion of European integration theory in the 1950s and 1960s to analysing the multilevel governance and the concept of Europeanisation, which has emerged since the early 1990s.⁷⁹ In other words, the approach to studying Europe has shifted focus from normative theorizing to a more positivist epistemology, which collects its data from high-resolution case studies with a set of constructivist methods including Actor-Network theory, process tracing, interviewing, media monitoring, and a long-term direct observation in a fieldwork as this study demonstrates.

European identity studies have changed in the recent decades too, by admitting to complexity and arguing that Europeanisation has no precedence in modern history and goes far beyond the nation-state building mechanisms of the 19th century. As Theiler puts it,

European identities are shaped by factors that are too inchoate to replicate processes of nation-state identity formation. Instead of one strong European identity, we encounter a multiplicity of European identities.⁸⁰

Few political scientists or sociologists have specifically taken up European cultural policy studies, which aim at constructing shared European identity. Those who have done so⁸¹, have generally approached questions of identity along the elitist, top-down lines that typified the policy-making milieu of Brussels, while leaving aside the complexity of bottom-up processes for creating European identities.⁸² Chris Shore has

⁷⁹ Checkel, J. T. and Katzenstein, P. J. (eds) (2009) *European Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁰ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 25.

⁸¹ See authors such as sociologist Chris Shore, and political scientists like Tobias Theiler and Annabelle Littoz-Monnet.

⁸² Compare Kaiser, W. (2011) 'From Great Men to Ordinary Citizens? The Biographical Approach to Narrating European Integration in Museums', *Culture Unbound*, Volume 3, pp. 385-400. Available online at: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/v3/a25/cu11v3a25.pdf>. Last accessed: 21 May 2018.

sharply criticized the attempts of EU governing bodies to underpin its legitimacy by using culture, categorising their approach to ‘Europe-building’ as characteristically top-down, managerial and instrumental.⁸³ He has also denounced the elitist assumption that European identity ‘can be engineered from above so as to transform the European Community into a “community” of Europeans’⁸⁴. Unsurprisingly, Brussels-centred research has dominated the scene for decades. Only within the last ten years has bottom-up research been commissioned and carried out in European identity studies sponsored by the Commission itself. This marks a significant shift in the Commission’s perception on identity building. The *Euroidentities*⁸⁵ project, which was using qualitative methods (interviewing) to gain insights into the evolution and meanings of a European identity or identities from the ‘bottom up’ perspective of individual members of European societies, is one example of this new thought process in action. Similarly, and until recently, little attention was paid to studying the museum’s role in affirming and shaping national identities in the European context. A sequence of Commission-sponsored museum-related projects within the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes for Research attest also to this change in approach, notably the EuNaMus (European national museums: Identity politics, the uses of the past and the European citizen) project. The overall state of play in European identity studies was pictured in the European Commission policy review document (2012) *The Development of European Identity/Identities: Unfinished Business* which states that it ‘covers more than 20, quite diverse research projects conducted under the late 6th and 7th Framework Programmes, which have a bearing on processes of identity formation and identification with(in) Europe and the EU.’⁸⁶

Apart from the European Commission sponsored research, a notable investigation of the role of museums in the process of Europeanising and transnationalising identities was the collaborative research project *Exhibiting Europe in Museums*⁸⁷, led by Wolfram Kaiser, Stefan Krankenhagen, Kerstin Poehls, and Leonore

⁸³ Shore, C. (2000) *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

⁸⁵ *Euroidentities: The evolution of European Identity: Using biographical methods to study the development of European identity* was a Framework 7 ‘Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities’ Collaborative Project funded by European Commission between March 2008 and February 2011. Available online at: <http://www.euroidentities.org>. Last accessed: 25 September 2017.

⁸⁶ European Commission (2012: Foreword) *The Development of European Identity/Identities: Unfinished Business*. Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/development-of-european-identity-identities_en.pdf. Last accessed: 30 May 2018.

⁸⁷ *Exhibiting Europe in Museums* was a research project (German edition 2011, English edition 2014) financed by the Research Council of Norway, hosted by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in collaboration with the

Scholze-Irrlitz. The project, which did not rely on EU funding and was sponsored instead by the Research Council of Norway, identified the various actors and networks in the European museum scene and highlighted their contribution to the European identity building process through their museum work. Drawing on ANT (with its awareness of the complexity and non-hierarchical nature of social structures, while recognising the multi-level character of European governance), this study was the first to look at the financial, administrative and managerial requirement for embedding transnationalism into joint museum projects, and to examine the role of various networks across the museum sector in supporting the European integration project. The study was also the first to address the questions of correlation between collecting policies in European museums and the musealisation of Europe in the national museums of Europe. In this context it looked also at the impact of the now defunct Musée de l'Europe and the emerging HEH (which is only partially covered because after several postponements it finally opened only in May 2017) for the first time.

The Exhibiting Europe in Museums report highlighted that in establishing grand scale international museum projects, the micro-networks between politics, research, and culture, as well as professional networks were of great importance. The latter, comprising socially-oriented institutions that lobby the EU on cultural policy and deliver EU cultural policy initiatives on the ground, were regarded by European politicians as essential in the manifestation of identity politics and the implement of cultural policies. The value of the European museum network and the crucial role it played in the development of the HEH will be highlighted time and again in the ethnographic part of this study. Official documents and press release communications testify to the vital importance of these professional and private networks – a point which will be examined in more detail in the last part of this chapter.

At one stage the importance of the EU policies was based in the preconception that their success on a supranational level could be replicated at a national level amongst EU member states (the so-called spill-over effect), with a similar citizen-benefit, and that such an approach would result in a general acceptance of the broader policy. This proved not to be the case, thus pushing the EU governing bodies to turn to more subtle techniques. This explains why it is insufficient in European identity studies to look exclusively at language alone as found in the official documents of the EU

governing bodies. In order to get the full picture of what is a fragmented policy field one must engage with the various actors at multiple levels of governance on the ground. Accordingly, the remaining part of this chapter explores both the formal genesis of the EU's cultural, identity and history politics and policies, and the attitudes and work of the actors and networks behind these initiatives. Thus, the development of the HEH is viewed from the perspective of the particular micro-network that drove its inception and its eventual positioning in the institutional structure of the European Parliament, but also tracing the school of historiography and the philosophy of history which informed the emerging of this particular type of contemporary history museum in Europe.

European Community's mandate in cultural sector

In reviewing the documents that established how the European Community would operate in the cultural sector, it is clear that the Treaty of Rome (1957) establishing European Economic Community (EEC) did not give the Community any powers in cultural policy.⁸⁸ Although Article 235 of the EEC Treaty authorized the Council of Ministers to act unanimously to initiate 'action by Community' in areas not explicitly mentioned in the treaty, Theiler questions whether it was ever used by the Community to advance any cultural policy issues, and that it 'has been disputed if ever having any real impact on cultural area'⁸⁹. Early regulatory documents coming from the EEC only contain references to culture peripherally, and at most the post-war era can only be regarded as a proto-phase of European cultural policy. A reassessment of culture by the Commission took place only in the late 1960s, when a lack of public support for the European Community seemed to emerge as a problem for which a remedy needed to be found. The first public pronouncements, which addressed the necessity of coming up with more unifying factors for the European project, apart from purely economic gains, arose at this time. Theiler points out that 'if the Community was to thrive in the long term and possibly move into new areas such as foreign and monetary policy or direct elections to the European Parliament, it would need to do more than demonstrate its economic unity'⁹⁰. There followed a period when the Community strove to secure public support for the European agenda by developing policy which would help to

⁸⁸ European Communities (1957) *The Treaty of Rome*. Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/romania/sites/romania/files/tratatul_de_la_roma.pdf. Last accessed: 11 June 2018.

⁸⁹ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 54.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

strengthen notions of European values, consciousness and identity. One of the first pronouncements that alluded to the idea of a European cultural dimension came in 1968 when in a statement on the 'Achievement of the Customs Union' the Commission stated:

But Europe is not only of customs tariff. (...) it must also be the Europe of the peoples, of the workers, of youth, of man himself. All – or nearly all – still remains to be done.⁹¹

The next important mentioning of culture came in Paris Summit of 1972, when it was declared that:

Economic expansion is not an end in itself (...). It should result in an improvement in the quality of life as well as in standards of living. As befits the genius of Europe, particular attention will be given to intangible values and to protecting the environment, so that progress may really be put at the service of mankind.⁹²

However, the *Declaration of European Identity*, issued at the Copenhagen Summit in 1973, signified the advent of a new kind of rhetoric concerning culture altogether:

The European identity will evolve as a function of the dynamic of the construction of a united Europe. In their external relations, the Nine propose progressively to undertake the definition of their identity in relation to other countries or groups of countries.⁹³

The *Declaration* was precisely that, a declaration of intent. It did not advocate substantial action, but it played a significant role in preparing public opinion for what

⁹¹ Commission 1972 (1968), cited in Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 69.

⁹² European Communities (1972) 'Statement from the Paris Summit'. *Bulletin of the European Communities*. October 1972, No 10. Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Communities, pp. 14-26. Available online at: https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/b1dd3d57-5f31-4796-85c3-cfd2210d6901/publishable_en.pdf. Last accessed: 27 February 2018.

⁹³ European Commission (1973) 'Declaration on European Identity'. *Bulletin of the European Communities*. December 1973, No 12. Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Communities, pp. 118-122.

was about to come in the mid-1980s when, for the first time, the symbols of European Communities – the flag, anthem, and Europe Day – were introduced. It was then that official communication coming from the European institutions became most assertive about European identity, suggesting that this was something that already existed, and which simply needed reinforcement and strengthening, rather than something which was being created from scratch, or even reinvented. Overcoming what was termed ‘Eurosclerosis’ and making Europeans more aware of a shared European history, European values and European identity became the new task of emerging cultural policy. The year after the *Declaration* saw the institution of the Eurobarometer which conducts regular surveys among European population about variety of topics. This was a response to national concerns regarding ‘the lack of soul in the European Commission and its technocratic world (...), which had to provide scientifically proved information from opinion polls’⁹⁴. Yet, there was the intention within the Commission to build on the Copenhagen *Declaration*, to draw on previous experience and to build a broad consensus towards legitimizing European integration through cultural policy. Theiler says that this process took a long time to build up a critical momentum. Only by the late 1980s did the Commission’s involvement in this area first become manifest.

In the 1970s, the Commission initiated several reports on the state of the arts across member States, which implied a concern with culture. The first comprehensive cultural policy initiative formed part of the *Report on European Union*, submitted by the Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans to his European Council colleagues in 1976. Among various other policies conceived as steps towards a ‘political union’ in this blueprint, is a section entitled ‘A Citizen’s Europe’ that contained suggestions for addressing the Community’s lack of popular appeal and overcoming ‘Eurosclerosis’. Geared towards consolidating and aligning the policies of the nine countries of the Community, ‘Aware of the need to bring Europe closer to the man in the street, Tindemans recommended the introduction of a European education policy’⁹⁵, thus setting the precedent for appropriation of cultural sphere by the European Community for the first time.

⁹⁴ Commission 1972 (1968), cited in Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 56.

⁹⁵ Deschamps, É. (2016) ‘The Tindemans Report’. *CVCE.EU by UNILU*. Available online at: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_tindemans_report-en-03f0d181-4838-4a86-a1b5-f143bb34cbd0.html. Last accessed: 21 May 2018.

The former curator of the HEH, Étienne Deschamps, observes that despite its deliberately moderate and pragmatic tone, the Tindemans Report failed to arouse much enthusiasm in the Member States' governments and that no immediate action was taken after it was presented on 30 September 1976 in The Hague Summit.⁹⁶

According to Theiler, it nevertheless did prompt the Commission to submit a range of follow-up proposals to the member states within *Community action in cultural sector* in 1977.⁹⁷ It included such proposals as stimulating better freedoms for 'cultural goods and services' and 'cultural workers' and other economic benefits, but, perhaps more importantly, it recommended for the first time a range of symbolic measures that went further than those suggested by Tindemans. These included a call for 'European rooms' in national museums, to highlight works 'which form part of the Community's heritage'. This suggestion came to nothing, however, Theiler states that despite the European Parliament's supporting resolution in 1979, the Council of Ministers refused even to debate it: England and Denmark refused to participate at all, Germany refused to entertain it for fear of losing their regional prerogatives, yet France was open to the lines of cultural collaboration it had supported with Germany since WWII.⁹⁸

So, it might seem that, as put by Theiler, the first European governing body's top-down attempt to instrumentalize national museums towards gaining broader public support for European integration led to naught. But this suggestion nevertheless was to have important implications for the development of the idea of a museum of Europe in the future. Against the background of the Commission's failed 'top-down initiative of European showrooms' came a number of 'bottom-up' initiatives orchestrated from within the museum sector, including the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) (later European Museum Forum (EMF)), established under auspices of the Council of Europe upon the suggestion of Kenneth Hudson. Hudson was a prolific British journalist, known for being the inventor of industrial archaeology and, among other things, was one of the pioneers of the European museum networking movement. According to Taja Vovk van Gaal, the leader of the HEH Academic Project Team and a collaborator of Kenneth Hudson in the EMF, at the end of the 1970's, after the establishment of EMYA, 'Hudson worked with the Commission and together they came

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Commission 1972 (1968), cited in Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, pp. 57-58.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

up with the concept of “European showrooms”⁹⁹. But with the retirement of the responsible official at the Commission, and without his input and the lack of a mechanism to convince those in the European museum scene of the merits of the scheme, it had no follow up. Only one such European room was created, in Norfolk in 1980 under Hudson’s direct supervision.

This account by Vovk van Gaal is confirmed by Gerrit Valk, rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Council of Europe. In a report entitled *The spirit of Europe in museums* from 15 July 2002 compiled under the auspices of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which was produced to mark the 25th anniversary of the EMYA scheme, Valk gives credit to Hudson as a consultant of the Commission’s scheme of ‘European rooms’ in national museums.¹⁰⁰ This suggests that the idea of a museum of Europe, or least European rooms in national museums, was not only a technocratic ‘top down’ proposal coming out of the European governing bodies; there was an attempt from within the museum sector itself to influence this top down approach. I discuss the role of the Council of Europe and therewith associated network of actors in promoting the idea of a Museum of Europe in more detail in Chapter 4.

As Theiler points out, the failure of these early cultural initiatives carried several lessons. First, it highlighted the crippling effect of the Commission’s lack of a legal mandate in the field of culture. Thus, no member state was obliged to implement any measure solely on the basis of ‘communications’ or ‘draft resolutions’. It is not surprising, therefore, to see the first phase of Commission’s intervention in cultural policy being regarded as ‘a tactical mistake’ and the proposals towards building or reinforcing European identity, common culture and values through the establishment of ‘European showrooms’ in museums being likened to the mechanisms of 19th century national-building.¹⁰¹

Yet, even from today’s more fully-fledged EU cultural and history-politics perspective, underpinned by the legal mandate in culture which the EU technically acquired via the Maastricht Treaty (1992), there remains still a question of ‘legitimacy’

⁹⁹ E-mail from Taja Vovk van Gaal [office of HEH] to author, 26 September 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Council of Europe (2002) ‘The spirit of Europe in museums’. Documents Working papers. 2002 Ordinary Session (Fourth part) 23-27 September 2002. Volume VII Documents 9468 & 9501-9537. Report Doc. 9503 – 15 July 2002. (Rapporteur: Gerrit Valk, Netherlands, Socialist Group). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, p. 12. Available online at: <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=9806&lang=EN>. Last accessed: 31 May 2018.

¹⁰¹ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 59.

when it comes to intervention in the realm of culture. Public confidence and acceptance of any interventions requires the involvement of independent actors from within museum sector; a sector and associated therewith protagonists that is regarded by the public as operating under the impartial code of professional ethics and the standards of academic integrity. While the European establishment realized this imperative decades later, in the early phase of instrumentalizing culture, represented by 1977 Tindermans Report and its follow-up proposals, its necessity was not accepted, possibly contributing to the failure of early cultural policy to achieve its objectives. In short, in the early phase of cultural policy development the EU had failed to realize that the power of museums lay in their separation from partisan politics and instrumentalization – that they, ideally, are autonomous cultural institutions.

A momentum in the cultural integration agenda had built up by the mid-1980s, as demonstrated by the introduction of such Community symbols as the Flag, the Anthem and Europe Day in 1986. These were rooted in the Fontaineblau Summit of 1984, where a decision was taken to appoint a committee (chaired by Italian Member of Parliament (MEP) Pietro Adonnino) to examine how the Commission could ‘strengthen and promote its identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world’¹⁰². The committee’s subsequent report *A People s Europe* suggested the launching of ‘European post stamps and lottery’ to ‘make Europe alive for Europeans’ and thereby ‘help promote European idea’. It also recommended the introduction of ‘border signs with common design’ and a European flag and Beethoven’s Ode of Joy as the anthem of the Community. Theiler says that if in 1970s culture was portrayed by the Commission as a way to catapult the Community out of stagnation, in the 1980s it was depicted as ‘indispensable to sustain the Community’s rising fortunes at that time’¹⁰³. The prevailing mood was manifested the European Community symbols, but this was but a step towards a more elaborate cultural policy, which came with a major change in the geo-political situation in Europe that occurred in the 1990s.

¹⁰² Bulletin of the European Communities (1985) *A People s Europe. Reports from the ad hoc Committee* (Pietro Adonnino Chairman), Supplement 7/85, p. 5. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Available at: http://aei.pitt.edu/992/1/andonnino_report_peoples_europe.pdf. Last accessed: 20 November 2018.

¹⁰³ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 64.

Culture ‘officially’ enters the EU: the Maastricht Treaty

With the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which itself constituted the European Union, culture was at last formally recognised. The ‘Cultural article’ (128) gave the Community a cultural mandate for the first time, albeit a limited one:

The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.

Further the Article specifies that:

Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas: improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples; conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance; non-commercial cultural exchanges; artistic and literary creation, including in the audio-visual sector.¹⁰⁴

After the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, the Commission turned to the networks of cultural organisations, considering their potential as agents of European integration, and put in place measures to support them financially (usually covering part of administrative costs) and asking them to subscribe to the concept of European integration in return. Unlike the professional networks that emerged during the first phase of European integration (such as the EMF, who would under the auspices of the Council of Europe run the prestigious EMYA scheme), newcomers, such as the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)¹⁰⁵, established in 1992, were already creatures of the new political climate – made because of the EU and the opportunities and necessities it presented in the field of museum advocacy.

The choice to work with cultural networks, rather than to operate ‘top down’, obviously marked a change in strategic direction in post Maastricht Treaty Europe, as

¹⁰⁴ European Communities (1992) *Treaty on European Union*. Available online at: <http://www.eurotreaties.com/maastrichtec.pdf>. Last accessed: 25 September 2017.

¹⁰⁵ See *A brief history of the Network of European Museum Organisations*. Available online at: <http://www.nemo.org/about-us/history.html>. Last accessed: 10 April 2018.

the Commission attempted to do justice to the cultural policy articulated in Article 128. But there are doubts concerning this emphasis on networking and whether or not it has brought the anticipated result. Indeed, even if about 80 per cent of the whole cultural budget had been spent on networks, Theiler states that they remained largely vague in expressing any cultural policy goals.¹⁰⁶ In turn, since Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Commission itself has been very cautious in initiating or establishing any permanent identity building institutions. Notably, the recommendation for a European library and museum in a 'European house', advocated by the De Clercq Report (1993), which clearly attests to the idea of a museum of Europe again being in the air around the time of entering of Maastricht Treaty into force, was left unnoticed:

A 'European house' comprising a library, a museum and various operational services should facilitate the work of journalists and of all those who wish to have direct access to the institutions.¹⁰⁷

As far as can be ascertained, this was the first occasion in official EU documents that the words 'house' and 'Europe' were mentioned together in a purposeful way as a suggestion for a new cultural institution. Regardless of the efforts of many advocates, it took more than a decade for the idea to gain momentum and more than two decades to envisage 'European house' as the House of European History. The most obvious reason for this was that any attempts at an EU level to institute top-down cultural policies were confronted and criticised by nation-states, who had a distaste for what they considered propaganda and were suspicious of perceived attempts to construct and impose a normative model of European identity. The post Maastricht Treaty era was increasingly marked by an unease about the neo-functionalist theory of 'permissive consensus', witnessing a growing trend of 'constraining dissensus'¹⁰⁸ instead, not least in the cultural sphere. This accordingly resulted in developing more inclusive techniques of Europeanisation in communications area by the European establishment.

This general observation describes precisely the path that the Commission and subsequently the European Parliament opted to go down after a number of large-scale

¹⁰⁶ Theiler, T. (2005) *Political Symbolism and European Integration*. New York: Manchester University Press, p. 73-75.

¹⁰⁷ European Parliament (March 1993) *Reflection on information and communication policy of the European Community*. Report by the Group of Experts chaired by Mr. Willy De Clercq, MEP, p. 27. Available online at: <http://aei.pitt.edu/29870/>. Last accessed: 25 September 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Hooghe and Marks 2009, cited in Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 1.

‘top-down’ European cultural initiatives of the 1990s (Europa TV and the common European History Book, for example) had failed. Subsequently the EU has sought new solutions in reaching out to its citizens, recognising that the old ones were not fit for purpose. Digitization is one example of this new approach; one that has been widely used in the field of cultural heritage. The popular European digital platform, Europeana¹⁰⁹, an idea of the French President (1995-2007) Jacques Chirac dating from 2005, is perhaps the most prominent example. Some of these digitization initiatives are reworking of older unsuccessful ones, such as the international, web-based portal Historiana¹¹⁰, initiated by Euroclio, the European Association of History Educators and the Netherlands Institute for Heritage that targets young people especially. This programme aims at creating ‘a thematic website that enables young generations to learn about their past ... offers access to a plurality of historical sources and well-developed teaching and learning ideas to educators, students and other users.’¹¹¹ As such, Historiana appears to be the first real alternative solution to the failed idea of a European History Textbook but in a more pluralistic shape, representing an innovative approach to the ‘shared past’.

Alongside its growing interest and support for professional networks and its investment in digitization, with the mandate given by Maastricht Treaty to bring common cultural heritage to the fore, the Commission grew increasingly interested in the role of museums as mediators of European identity. According to Kaiser, following the failure of the European showrooms in national museums programme, it showed strong interest in supporting a temporary exhibition entitled *C’est notre Histoire* presented at the Musée de l’Europe in Brussels in 2007.¹¹² After the 6th (2002-2006) and 7th (2007-2013) terms of the Research and Development Framework closed, the Commission continued funding museum-centred research projects under the current ‘Europe for Citizens’ (2014-2020) programme, specially under its ‘European remembrance’ strand.

Until recently, the European Parliament, in contrast to the Commission and the Council, has not been considered a major player in the European cultural policy field

¹⁰⁹ European Commission co-funded European digital library *Europeana*. Available online at: <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en>. Last accessed: 10 April 2018.

¹¹⁰ The Euroclio programme *Historiana*. Available online at: <https://www.beta.historiana.eu/#/>. Last accessed: 10 April 2018.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2014) *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.

due to its lack of executive functions. In contrast to the national governments, the Commission does not legislate itself but only puts forward policy for the European Parliament to negotiate. Given its role as legislator and not as executive, Parliament has not been as technocratic as the Commission in how it has approached culture for the legitimisation of European integration project. The Parliament's action in this regard is perhaps hampered by its lack of capacity, when compared with the Commission; it employs around 6,000 people, whereas Commission has some 30,000, plus a variable number of auxiliary agents. Notwithstanding its original, some might say marginal role in the cultural policy debate, the Parliament's involvement can be traced back even to the pre-Maastricht Treaty era of early 1980s. Apart from the earlier discussed Addonino reports of 1984, the Parliament had previously used its own budget in support of small-scale cultural projects. One, such example, was brought forward in 1982 under the presidency of the liberal, Simone Veil, the first President of the publicly elected European Parliament. It concerned the acquisition of and on-going support for the house of Jean Monnet in Houjarray in France, which opened to the public in 1987.

Parliament's role and involvement with culture has grown significantly since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, so too has its willingness to use its institutional resources for cultural targets. Two large-scale projects of the 2000's, supported by the Parliament, are the Visitor centre Parlamentarium and the HEH, both of which were designed to contribute to musealisation of the EU but in very different ways. The idea of a museum of Europe which eventually came to fruition in the HEH concept, though, had a long gestation period prior it being publicly announced in 2007. This will be explored in detail below.

The innovative potential of the concept of a museum of Europe as a real physical space must be seen against the failure of previous large-scale communications and educational projects. Indeed, with a European television and radio initiative from the 1990s remaining obsolete, with no common agreement on the introduction of a European dimension in schools via a common European history textbook (although we observe a renaissance of that same idea in a digital and more pluralistic format of the *Historiana*), and in light of the limited nature and applicability of the Commission sponsored academic research, what other form of a 'mass media' would be able to live up to the expectations concerning construction and representation of a shared European identity?

A new type of historical museum – a House of History

A museum, or rather a new type of hybrid institution combining the role of traditional museum (with its functions of collecting, research and communications) with that of information and documentation centre, and with the delivery of a broad range of outreach activities, was conceived under the slightly obscure title of a House of History. However, this description belies its underlying function. To appreciate how and why the EU governing bodies regarded the House of History as an agent of European cultural legitimization, we must examine the recent history of museum development in Germany, along with its dominant post war school of historiography, which gave birth of this new type of a historical museum. According to official account, the House of History of the German Federal State¹¹³ avoids using the word ‘museum’ in its title because its founder – the Federal State of Germany – did not have a mandate to directly fund museums or other cultural institutions when it was set up in the 1980s. Unofficially it is said that the German House of History deliberately dropped any reference to ‘museum’ in its title because of its traditionalist connotations. These were perceived to be at odds with the new and inclusive approach to the consideration of recent and contemporary history. Besides, the little-known German tradition of calling their local history museums *Haus der Heimat* (House of Fatherland), a practice stemming from the interwar years which I discuss in more detail in the closing paragraph of Chapter 3, has to be taken into account in the chronology of the House of History concept. Once up and running, in practice the German House of History grew into a typical historical museum, which performs the classical functions of collecting, research and communication. What is unique about it, however, is the thinking behind its establishment, which has proved attractive to others. Since the opening of the German House of History in 1994, a number of other European countries have aspired to establish a similar museum of national importance, including the Netherlands, France, partially Hungary, and lately, Austria. So, what is the formula of this new type of a historical museum?

The concept of the House of History emerged shortly after the German Christian Democrat, Helmut Kohl, took up the office of Chancellor of the German Federal

¹¹³ See the website of the *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Available online at: <http://www.hdg.de/bonn/>. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

Republic in 1982. It was not a case of simply changing the title or rebranding an existing national scale history museum with its predictably vast collections, but of developing a new historical museum from a blank page, from scratch. At the time when the Kohl's new 'collection of German history since 1945'¹¹⁴ was announced, neither collections, nor premises, nor staff, nor institutional setting were in place in the capital city of Bonn. Its underlying premise drew upon the German post war school of thought, commonly known as contemporary history or *Zeitgeschichte*, and it was conceived as a modern documentation, information, and exhibition centre. Normally such initiatives begin with a public debate among various actors of government, academia and the non-governmental sector as it was the case in West Germany exemplified by the *Historikerstreit* – the dispute of historians about the role of Nazis in the Holocaust.

The second important aspect of a House of History is that its scope of historical interest is primarily the period of people's living memory, and its collecting policy follows suit. Unlike a typical historical museum, a House of History is strongly orientated towards the interpretation of contemporary history and as a rule functions in a regime of presentism historicity; its methodology follows the lines of a public or applied history. It is precisely this focus on contemporary history that renders this new type of historical museum, with its German pedigree, so important to official rhetoric that is associated with it.

A third distinguishing characteristic of this new type of museum is that, from the outset, it is branded and positioned as a 'Public Square' – a forum for public deliberation. This is exemplified by and indeed embedded within the title of one of the branches of the German House of History – Forum of Contemporary History in Leipzig (*Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig*).

As will be shown below, the German House of History, with its collecting interests in recent and contemporary history, its role as a documentation and information centre, and its function as a forum for public debate, was the model of the eponymous European contemporary history museum and the prototype for all the later variations that emerged in various European countries, including the House of European

¹¹⁴ German Bundestag (1982) 3. Oktober 1982, *Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Kohl in der 121. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages*. Available online at: http://www.helmut-kohl.de/index.php?menu_sel=17&menu_sel2=&menu_sel3=&menu_sel4=&msg=1934. Last accessed: 27 February 2018.

History in Brussels – the political capital of Europe.

The German House of History was opened in a purpose-made building in Bonn only in 1994, after the reunification of the formerly divided German nation. Since then its permanent exhibition has been redesigned three times, with a fourth iteration due for completion in late 2017. This constant evolution and purposeful updating is directly in keeping with its mandate, within which it is expected to reflect upon the recent and contemporary history of Germany from the perspective of a public historian. Throughout Europe it is easy to spot a handful of other projects at national and European level, which emulate the Bonn model. For instance, the House of History of the Baden Württemberg¹¹⁵, one of German Federal states opened already in 1987 pre-empting the original Kohl project. The French House of History (*Maison de l'histoire de France*) was about to open in Paris in 2015 on the initiative of conservative Nicolas Sarkozy only to be cancelled¹¹⁶ by his socialist rival and successor, François Hollande. The same fate befell the Dutch National History Museum, which, drawing upon experience and methodology of the German prototype, was announced in 2008 only to be cancelled three years later following a political change of power.¹¹⁷ The establishment of the Austrian House of History (*Haus der Geschichte Österreich*) was announced in 2006, while still to come to fruition it is the single national-scale House of History project outside Germany that has a good chance of being completed.¹¹⁸ Some of the characteristic elements of this new type of historical museum have been applied at other institutions concerned with historical enquiry, such as the House of Terror in Budapest, which was completed in 2002.¹¹⁹ I look more closely at some of listed here examples so as to show their differences in Chapter 5.

All in all, even a superficial look at the continental Europe's museum scene proves the influence of the German invention of a contemporary history museum, the House of History, as a medium for addressing recent and contemporary history issues

¹¹⁵ See the website of the *Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg*. Available online at: <https://www.hdgbw.de/>. Last accessed: 23 March 2018.

¹¹⁶ 'Le projet de Maison de l'histoire de France, initié par Nicolas Sarkozy, définitivement abandonné', *Huffpost*. Available online: https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2012/12/26/dissolution-de-la-maison-histoire-de-france-nicolas-sarkozy_n_2364100.html. Last accessed: 16 April 2018.

¹¹⁷ Byvanck, V. and Schilp, E. (eds) (2012) *Blueprint. Plans, sketches and story of the Dutch Museum of National History (2008-2012)*. Amsterdam: SUN.

¹¹⁸ See the website of the *Haus der Geschichte der Republik Österreich*. Available online at: <http://www.hdgoe.at/>. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

¹¹⁹ See the website of the *House of Terror Museum*. Available online at: <http://www.terrorhaza.hu/hu>. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

through a museographic technique of ‘illustrated stories’¹²⁰ against which the heavily-loaded and traditionalist notion of a history museum seems inadequate. Arguably, following in the steps of his political mentor, Helmut Kohl, it is not surprising that Hans-Gert Pöttering, shortly after assuming the Presidency of the European Parliament in February 2007 unequivocally stated his desire to establish a House of European History:

I should like to create a locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow. I would like to suggest the founding of a “House of European History”. It should [be] a place where a memory of European history and the work of European unification is jointly cultivated, and which at the same time is available as a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union.¹²¹

The emphasis in this announcement is clear, the purpose of the HEH was to preserve the memory of European history and for it to be a tool in the drive towards European unification. The memory of European history is seen here as a vehicle for yet unaccomplished integration project in line with Graham Leicester’s observation:

instead of an inherited myth about a nation forged in past battles, the Community is based on a ‘myth of the future’; it is only in contemplating the eventual goal of federation, or ‘ever closer union’ as it become in the treaty of Rome, that the peoples of Europe might discern a vision of their participation in a wider policy.¹²²

¹²⁰ Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) ‘Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.’ EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 13.

¹²¹ Committee of Experts, House of European History (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*, p. 5. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 8 October 2017.

¹²² Leicester, G. (1996: 8), cited in Shore, C. (2000) *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 206.

Strongly influenced by the idea of European federalism as it is explicitly demonstrated in his autobiography¹²³, Pöttering was the only continuously serving MEP from the Parliament's first free elections in 1979 until his retirement in 2014. He subsequently took on the role of the President of Konrad Adenauer Foundation. When announcing the House of History in his inaugural Presidential speech, he was revealing an idea that was already well-shaped in his mind. Following his announcement, and having learned from previous mistakes, the only technically viable way of pursuing its establishment was for it to be an integral part of the Parliamentary structure. Subsequently an external group of experts from the international and European museums sector was recruited to bring the concept to materialisation. Thus, for the first time in its history, the EU became directly engaged in museum-making. With notable foresight, the governing body, comprising independent professionals, was recruited, and it (together with contracted agents) drove the idea forward.

It was widely recognised by the time of President Pöttering's announcement that when the EU governing bodies wished to implement an initiative, it needed to outsource the job to independent professionals in the field; first as a means of justifying the project, then to ascertain its technical viability. Once these were accomplished the project could then be permanently instituted as integral part of the European Parliament's communication work. This is what happened with the HEH from 2011 to 2017. Across the various European governing institutions, the recognition of the value of culture occurred at different times and in different manners, but nowhere did it occur so intensively and at such a speed than over the last decade within the European Parliament. The transformation of its physical public space in Brussels is evidence for this, which symbolically transformed the cultural landscape of the political capital of Europe and the European Quarter within it.

A concrete movement towards a museum of Europe started in the early 2000s when the European Parliament embarked on, as it was supposed at that time, a long-term partnership with the Musée de l'Europe, a non-profit association, established in 1997 and consisting mainly of Belgian elites such as public figures, academics and cultural entrepreneurs. According to Charléty, by 2002 it had managed to gain the necessary degree of Belgian official and public support to start negotiations with the intent of housing the museum in a building (D4) on Plas de Luxembourg, thus

¹²³ Pöttering, H-G. (2014) *Wir sind zu unserem Glück vereint: Mein europäischer Weg*. Cologne: Böhlau.

integrating it within the new Parliament campus that was then under construction.¹²⁴ Further support for the idea came at a meeting between the Parliament, the Council of Europe and the Commission in 2002. Subsequently the Belgian Government allocated 1 million euros in February 2003 for the architectural project with a surface area of 5190 m², which had the agreement of the Parliament. These plans, however, ground to a halt when, in July 2005, the Parliament backtracked in favour of developing instead a visitor centre modelled on that within the Capitol in Washington DC. The Musée-Project, consequently, had to abandon its plans and proceeded to look for another home. Seemingly another reason why the Musée-Project had to be abandoned by the Parliament was the legal requirement to tender for the delivery of such public projects. The Parliament could not legally offer these premises to an external organisation without an open tender competition, and that supposedly some of Musée-Project members were involved in business sectors to which the EU legislator did not want to be, or could not be, associated. Klaus Welle, Secretary-General of the European Parliament, describes the situation as follows:

In February 2007, when President Hans-Gert Pöttering took the initiative to make the creation of a House of European History a core piece of his inaugural address, the outlook was rather bleak. Rejected once already by the Bureau because of a lack of financial support from Belgian and European institutions, and replaced by the Parlamentarium, it needed more than simple approval. It was an act of resurrection.¹²⁵

Indeed, the Musée-Project of Antoinette Spaak having fallen, the Parliament's visitor centre, Parlamentarium, opened in these premises in late 2011. It contained both historical and political sections, with an emphasis of showing the functionality of Parliament's decision-making process, while leaving aside any broader historical interpretation, except for a visualised timeline of major events of Europe's post war unification process. Thus, the idea of a proper museum lay dormant and the way was open for the announcement by Pöttering, in his inaugural speech in February 2007, of

¹²⁴ Charléty, V. (2004) 'L'invention du Musée de l'Europe. Contribution à l'analyse des politiques symboliques européennes'. *Regards Sociologiques*, Nr. 27-28, pp. 149-166.

¹²⁵ Welle, K. (2018) 'The Making of the House of European History: How was it possible?', in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 12.

his intention to resurrect it through establishing the HEH: ‘Accordingly, the inspiration to be followed was switched from the Belgian project ... to the House of History of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn’¹²⁶.

The initiative was unanimously welcomed by the Parliament’s Bureau and resulted in appointment of a Committee of Experts under leadership of Prof. Hans-Walter Hütter, Director of the German House of History. Under his supervision the *Conceptual Basis for the House of European History* was drafted by the Committee of Experts and presented to the Bureau in September 2008. According to this programmatic paper, one of the key objectives of the HEH was:

... to enable Europeans of all generations to learn more about their own history and, by so doing, to contribute to a better understanding of the development of Europe, now and in the future. The House of European History should be a place in which the European idea comes alive.¹²⁷

Ultimately, it had to aim at prompting ‘greater citizen involvement in political decision-taking processes in a united Europe’¹²⁸. Initially, then, working from a blank page, the experts conceived the HEH as a modern exhibition, documentation and information centre, reflecting the latest museological thinking, and with a distinct and strong emphasis on the applied history agenda. According to the report, the centrepiece of the HEH was to be a permanent exhibition focusing on European history from the First World War to the present day, with a special focus on the period after the end of the Second World War, all of which was to be complemented by smaller-scale surveys of the roots of the continent through the classical, medieval and modern periods. It was not to be an agglomeration of the individual histories of Europe’s states and regions, but was to focus instead on European phenomena, and building its own collection of exhibits. In so doing, its approach mirrored the formula of the prototype for contemporary history museums – the German House of History in Bonn, which had also started with a bare idea.

The adoption of the *Conceptual Basis* report was followed by the setting up of an Academic Committee and Board of Trustees in 2009. These were charged with

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

continuing the work of addressing the preparatory issues of establishing the HEH project. When the Academic Project Team (APT) was recruited in early 2011, the proposed opening date of HEH was June 2014, notably a date which was prior to the upcoming European Parliament elections. This timeframe was seen as an ambitious but realistic goal, bearing in mind that the architectural contract for renovation and extension of the museum's building had already been put together and signed with the winning architect consortium in 2011.¹²⁹ After several failed attempts to appoint the APT leader, the advisory bodies and the Parliament's Bureau finally secured the services of Taja Vovk Van Gaal, a former director of Ljubljana City Museum (1997/2006), latterly an employee of the European Cultural Foundation (2006/2009), and a long-standing judge and collaborator of the European Museum Forum. The APT leader's connection to EMF proved to be a decisive factor in her appointment, especially given its active involvement in the Europeanising of the museum sector since the late 1970s, and its commitment to public quality within European museums.

The new museum was planned to be located in the Eastman Building, which is part of the European Quarter in Brussels in immediate proximity to the Parliament. The art-deco edifice had to be totally renovated and remodelled to accommodate the museum's functions, including an exhibition space of approximately 4000m². Although a Parliamentary project, it had to rely on the collaboration of the city of Brussels, especially as the museum building was located in the listed Parc Léopold in central Brussels. Representatives of the city council were invited to join the working committee charged with the building's renovation, essentially to ensure smooth cooperation in placing this new cultural venue in the urban and cultural landscape of the city. At the beginning of the process it was proclaimed that the renovated Eastman Building would become one of the attractions of Parc Léopold, which features other architectural and cultural highlights such as the listed Belgian Royal Natural Sciences Museum, number of former university buildings, and the Émile Jacqmain Lyceum and the Solvey Library. Upon the opening of HEH in Spring 2017, and with an eye on future expansion, negotiations between the Parliament and Belgian government were started with a view that the Parliament would lease the historic Antoine Wierz Museum, next to the Natural

¹²⁹ Consortium of architects was composed of *Atelier d'architecture Chaix & Morel & associés* from France, *JSWD Architekten* from Germany, and *TPF* from Belgium. More in *Building a House of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 10 April 2018.

Sciences Museum, which at that time was operated (without much public interest) by the Royal Museums for Fine Arts of Belgium. These negotiations also included the adjacent gardens with a view to using the additional public space for the Parliament's communications work.

With the completion of two large-scale projects (the Parlamentarium and HEH), the construction of the *Solidarność* esplanade and the Simone Veil agora which connects its buildings into a 'citizen's mall' and the further expansion plans in the Parc Léopold, the Parliament positioned itself for the first time as a very visible player, alongside the Commission, in the politics of representation through its physical presence and communications work. While the Commission, as an executive governing body, has built a reputation based on the financial support of European networks, research, of digitization programmes and suchlike, the public perception of the Parliament, as a legislator, rests mostly on its declarations, including those concerning history politics. Thus, its involvement in shaping the physical space in and around its headquarters in Brussels was perceived as a good way to add to its representational standing. The success of these projects was notably dependent of the control and mastery of the political milieu of Brussels, necessary to guarantee the continuity of these large-scale projects at the various governance levels. For instance, since its launch in 2007, several important changes in leading positions of Academic Committee of HEH have occurred. These have mirrored the political situation in the Parliament. With the change of presidency, from German Pöttering to Polish Buzek, came a change of personnel at the head of Academic Committee, with the German Hütter being replaced by the Pole Borodziej. It is at this level that the issue of micro networks become a key factor in understanding the functionality of a project like the HEH. To be fit for purpose, these networks had to be well-positioned and supplied, have an intimate knowledge of the internal political process, and have access to the necessary finances and legal competences. In having these characteristics, following Kaiser the HEH is an excellent example how one particular micro-network linking culture, science and politics can ensure the successful functioning of the project.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, pp. 3-4.

The micro-network behind the idea of HEH

On the surface it appears that the HEH was the brainchild of one well-informed politician, who presented the concept in the right place and at the right time for it to be taken up. However, in reality, it was a more complex affair as has been observed by Wolfram Kaiser, who has closely following the process of HEH project development since its inception in 2007. According to Kaiser¹³¹, the German MEP Hans-Gert Pöttering worked closely with Ludger Kühnhardt, one of directors of the Center for European Integration Studies at Friedrich-Wilhelms-University in Bonn, and with Walter Hütter, Director of German House of History to develop the concept of the HEH. All three Catholics from neighbouring West German regions, and members of German Christian Democratic Party, shared the ideal of a federalist Europe underpinned by Christian values that had long been held by Konrad Adenauer and later by Helmut Kohl. From beginning it was their intention that this museum project would be used to strengthen cultural integration across Europe and thereby substantiate the legitimacy of the EU. So, to secure broader support in the Parliament for his idea, Pöttering worked closely with a Danish member, Harald Rømer, a General Secretary of Parliament between 2007 and 2009, (who, also, after his retirement coordinated the internal project Contact group of the HEH project), and also with his successor in Klaus Welle, (who had been a Chief within President Pöttering's cabinet). In building political acceptance for the project, Pöttering sought to develop a supportive coalition within the Parliament. To this end he invited the Spanish socialist, and the Parliament's vice-president for multilingualism, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, to be a representative and communicator of the project. Martínez Martínez himself recalls that after the Pöttering's announcement 'I immediately contacted the leadership of the Socialist Parliamentary Group where I belonged and conferred to them my wish to be involved in the House of European History as much as possible'¹³². Between 1992 to 1996 he was a president of Parliamentary Assembly of European Council and in this capacity had been instrumental in awarding the German House of History the Council of Europe Museum Prize in 1995, as part of the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) scheme

¹³¹ See, for example, Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2014) *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn; Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, pp. 1-17.

¹³² Martínez Martínez, M. A. (2018) 'It Was a Good Team and We Did Overcome', in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 58.

operated by the European Museum Forum (EMF). Thus was the political basis for HEH project prepared, concludes Kaiser.¹³³

From this sequence of events and bearing in mind the background of the people concerned, it is evident that the German House of History formed the blueprint of the future HEH from an early stage, but again the actuality is more complex. Next to the direct German influence of the principle protagonists, the EMF with its prestigious EMYA scheme had a not insignificant bearing on the development of the HEH. It played a decisive role in highlighting the German contemporary history museum as a role-model to follow. In conjunction with the Council of Europe, the EMF actively made the Brussels political milieu aware of this new type of historical museum and its potential to reach out to broad audiences. In so doing it played an indispensable part of the process. The role of the Council of Europe in promoting the German model of contemporary history museum – the House of History – is examined further in Chapter 4.

In summary then, it took more than a decade for the national elites, keen on strengthening European identities and supporting projects which enhance its symbolical power, and using various micro-networks, to put their stamp on the EU cultural policy, but more specifically on those aspects connected with history politics and museum-making. Against a background of an extremely fragmented EU cultural policy scene, influential and well-connected individuals coming from a background that might be described as ‘core Europe’ (Habermas) had the necessary connections to build networks, forge collaboration and even initiate new funding programmes and projects like the HEH, which completely relied on capability of the described by Kaiser micro-network in embedding it into the institutional framework of the Parliament and keeping it afloat in a constantly changing political climate.

The abilities and influence of this micro-network was once again tested when the conservative Pöttering, followed by Buzek, were succeeded by the socialist Martin Schulz. Schulz was elected President of the Parliament in 2012 and stayed in office until 2017, his tenure coincided with the most crucial years in the HEH project, when it was vitally important that the large coalition and the Committee on Budgets agreed its sustained support. Eventually the HEH opened under the conservative president Antonio Tajani in 2017. Its materialisation was thus dependent upon the success of the

¹³³ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, pp. 3-5.

previously mentioned micro-networks to navigate the political system and secure the support of politicians coming from various political viewpoints, with the EMF playing a vital role and with Taja Vovk van Gaal taking up the leadership of the HEH project at the Parliament.

The structure, content development, and functionality of the HEH project with a special focus on its leading actors and their imprint on overall concept of the new museum within its crucial concept development phase in 2011 and 2012 is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

From brainstorm to exhibition concept: developing content for the HEH

Having set the scene concerning the EU's activity in the cultural sphere, with its special focus on and repeated attempts at instrumentalizing museums in the politics of representation since 1970s, this chapter details how the content of the HEH permanent exhibition was developed and how the HEH became institutionalized within the structure of the European Parliament.

Ten years lapsed between the initial proposal and the opening of the HEH. I served for six and a half years as a member of the HEH's Academic Project Team (APT). This close involvement with the project has allowed an ethnographic approach to be taken when considering its evolution in detail. As an APT member, I participated in all content development meetings and workshops in the conceptualization and later realization phase of the HEH. My job as an assistant initially was specifically administering those meetings and producing minutes. Apart from regular APT meetings, participation at the Academic Committee meetings, usually taking place three times a year, where the results of the APT work were presented and assessed, allowed me to gain a first-hand insight into the overall project development process. Although the quarterly Board of Trustees meetings were reserved for the Management Team of the project only, its proceedings would be reported to the trustees and focused on the progress and to seek to secure necessary political and administrative support. Uninhibited access to these minutes and audio recordings of those meetings has allowed me completing the picture. Minutes from the meetings of all three involved actors – the APT and the two advisory bodies – Academic Committee and the Board of Trustees – are the primary sources of this chapter.

As is common with projects of this scale, the APT was recruited gradually and not all at once. The number of employees grew alongside the needs of the project. This factor had a palpable impact on the attitudes and morale of the employees, especially on those arriving at a later stage to fill vacant administrative posts, and who consequently did not have a full knowledge of the genesis of the HEH project. The core members of APT, however, were recruited over a short period of time, from early to mid-2011, in the first phase of project development. Thus, technically, the core team of around ten

people all had a full and rounded perspective on the project. I was recruited in the early phase of development, in March 2011, which gave me complete access to and participation in the laying the foundations of the future exhibition and the overall organisational structure of the HEH. At that point the profile and role of the new Unit within the European Parliamentary structure was not the main issue of concern, instead it was the content of the permanent exhibition into which all the curatorial and administrative energy was invested.

With hindsight it may be said that the very unusual situation where an international team of museum professionals has been brought together under the aegis of EU legislating body to realize ambitious project within its administratively complex political environment, necessarily had a bearing on the work culture of the newly recruited team. In a short time the curators had to establish their respective positions in the team. It is fair to say in this regard that one of the curators adopted a more forthright and singular attitude in pushing through the methodology for content development. Andrea Mork was one of the newly recruited curators, who is reported by Kaiser as having ‘joined the team from the House of History in Bonn as a “Concept Manager”’¹³⁴ thus attributing to her the role of being the leading intellectual force in the APT *avant la lettre*. Soon she proved her credentials as the *de facto* Content Coordinator.

The proposed underpinning philosophy for the HEH was generally based on the paradigm of German post-war school of contemporary history or *Zeitgeschichte*, and more particularly the application of the methodology of conceptual history or *Begriffsgeschichte*. The associated historical-philosophical vision of ‘Europe’s journey to modernity’¹³⁵, as later pointedly formulated by Mork, fundamentally informed the development of the narrative of the HEH permanent exhibition, yet it was not discussed by the APT in the early concept development phase in 2011. On several occasions during the initial phase of the content development, it was suggested that the newly arrived APT curators should be asked to tell other team members about their previous work in museum, political or academic work. This proposal was not taken up. Nor was the founding philosophy or any previous attempts to apply it expounded in detail,

¹³⁴ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 9.

¹³⁵ In an interview (conducted by the HEH Press Officer, William Parker-Jenkins, in 2015) with Andrea Mork, the Content Coordinator of the Academic Project Team of the House of European History discusses the literature and the concept which underpinned the narrative of the new museum. *Curating in a Pan-European Framework*. Available online at: <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/focus/curating-pan-european-framework>. Last accessed: 17 May 2018.

resulting in the false impression that the future exhibition was open to various possible scenarios, which were somewhat uncritically pursued in the early brainstorming sessions.¹³⁶ There were, of course, plenty of opportunities to learn about each other's previous work experience informally and through an early teambuilding session in 2011, but the prevailing attitude both internally and within external communications on the project was one of 'let the team work quietly'¹³⁷, as put by one of the core members of Academic Committee, Oliver Rathkolb. Without having named the exact source of philosophy of history which informed the concept, the blueprint of the HEH was already predefined in compliance with the prevailing strategy of *de facto* Content Coordinator. The adopted approach of not discussing a founding philosophy openly with curators meant that the historiography and epistemology of the particular German school of thought which underpinned the HEH concept was an elephant in the room. Metaphorically this state of affairs stands to show how dominant the Germanic influence of *Zeitgeschichte* was, in view to its presentism regime of historicity, and *Begriffsgeschichte* as a defining factor in conceptualizing the HEH. This accordingly resulted in the adoption of a museological concept in which concepts, rather than objects, were the primary concern. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6.

Such an approach was embedded in the outlook of Mork, who had conceptualized a similar project, the Bauhaus Europa in Aachen in early 2000s. That project did not proceed due to an adverse result in a public referendum. It is very likely that the strategy of not exposing the concept to scrutiny within the APT had to be explained by this earlier negative experience. This former, flawed attempt to apply conceptual history, in making a Museum of Europe by the *de facto* Content Coordinator, was not mentioned nor discussed in the APT meetings. At a conference in Basel in January 2007, Mork nevertheless spoke about the Bauhaus Europa at some length, in which she detailed the concept of the permanent exhibition of the Aachen project. This presentation revealed all the major facets of the future concept of the HEH: a clear chrono-thematic approach with history of ideas or concepts (rather than objects) as the guiding principle in writing a script for the exhibition narrative, down to

¹³⁶ Academic Project Team, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting 'Top 10 topics for the House of European History' of 2 and 3 March 2011. Not published internal paper.

¹³⁷ Interview with Oliver Rathkolb, cited in Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 10.

exact wording of introductory sentence: ‘What is Europe?’¹³⁸, which was repeated in the permanent exhibition of the HEH. Kaiser’s statement about the ‘Content Manager’ joining HEH from Bonn therefore is fully justified in view to apparent expectation of Hütter, Director of German House of History and one of the leading protagonists of the project, that over time Mork would indeed secure the role of Content Coordinator at the HEH, which she did. Aided by previous experience, she was subsequently able to table the preferred approach of conceptual history when no strong alternative methodology for the HEH was brought forward.

It was perhaps less the obvious determining influence of the leading actors of the Bonn-centred micro-network behind the HEH project, and more the lack of acknowledgement to the APT team that the German museological and historiographical philosophy was the predetermined model for the HEH, that contributed to a sense that there was not enough transparency within the project. The unease thus created never left the project. A later study trip in 2013 by the Management Team and the newly recruited Exhibition Manager, Michèle Antoine, to the German House of History was confirmation of this presumption, especially as the visit was never analysed or critically assessed within APT. Perhaps if the fundamental basis of the philosophy of history and influence of the German model would have been admitted and drawn out explicitly and openly, at least internally amongst the project team, this would have provided greater transparency and communication, and strengthened the capacity to undertake critical self-reflection.

For example, the minutes from 24 March 2011 APT meeting about the recently conducted SWOT¹³⁹ exercise and the objectives of HEH feature such unequivocal phrase – ‘the HEH is considered a German idea’, a point which was made in terms of it being a potential threat to the project. In the discussion that followed, curator Elke Plujmen ‘pointed out that the House der Geschichte [German House of History] was stressed several times [by the Academic Committee] as a model to the HEH and this is the base of the “identification process”’. Instead, the *de facto* Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork, ‘underlined that it has to be made clear that the HEH has an independent

¹³⁸ Mork, A. (2008) *Bauhaus Europa in Aachen. Das Konzept für die Dauerausstellung*, in Kreis, G. (ed.) ‘Europa als Museumsobjekt’. *Basler Schriften zur europäischen Integration*, Nr. 85. Basel: EuropaInstitut der Universität Basel, pp. 23-24.

¹³⁹ SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is a popular method of organisational analysis.

vision and mission, and it is different from the *Haus der Geschichte*'¹⁴⁰. These early discussions signal that Mork, although coming from Bonn and being aware of the epistemological and methodological implications for developing the HEH in accord to her previous experience, nevertheless deliberately tried to establish a distance from the German prototype, as if disavowing its antecedence. This can be said mostly in regard to the first – conceptual development project phase in 2011 and 2012, when the core APT members were recruited, and the structure of the narrative was being elaborated upon. Those who joined the APT later, had less of a chance to be introduced to the genealogy of contemporary history museum of German pedigree and thus were more distanced from the core idea of the project as such. Over time, once the project entered the production phase, questions concerning its philosophical roots naturally became less and less important, while the accumulating administrative tasks and the 'getting things done' objectives gradually turned the whole process into a mechanic exercise in a run up to the opening – all the more so as the opening had several postponements. The process proved hard and long, and the composition of Management Team changed dramatically during its course. From the original cast of actors, apart from the few European Parliament officials who were there prior to the recruitment of independent museum professionals, only the APT leader, Taja Vovk van Gaal, and the *de facto* Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork, remained in their respective positions right through to the opening of the HEH in May 2017. The other players – Architect-museologist, Content-museologist, Coordinator of Communications, Coordinator of Collections, Coordinator of Education, and even the Exhibition Production Manager – all left the project for reasons as diverse as getting other jobs both inside or outside the EU governance structures, or simply not prolonging the contract when yet another postponement of the opening was announced in the lengthily six and a half years of the HEH production.

The lack of transparency concerning the methodological and historiographical principles upon which the HEH was established, makes the need for a critical assessment of the content development phase all the more crucial in understanding the foundations of the HEH as a new organisation. But before considering the decisive role of contemporary and conceptual history and its impact on the narrative of HEH, as will be detailed in the final chapter of this study, it is necessary to examine the technical

¹⁴⁰ Academic Project Team, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting 'SWOT Analysis meeting' of 24 March 2011. Not published internal paper.

process development and those involved in conceptualizing the HEH exhibition narrative during the first two years of the project.

Content development

The content of HEH's permanent exhibition draws on the *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*¹⁴¹ report from 2008. This paper was referenced by the APT throughout the process of creating the permanent exhibition during 2011 and 2012. This process started with brainstorming sessions which drew out the main topics, and following research on these, five exhibition themes emerged. The process then focused down onto the eventual structure of the exhibition. The set of five themes with its provisional story line was taken as a 'backbone' for developing a concept design of the permanent exhibition, work on which was completed in September 2012.

At the very beginning of this journey, in January 2011, four short reports were written by the members of APT on the following topics: 'Locating Europe – the borders', 'Theories and historical views on Europe', 'Europe in legislation', and 'Europe in museums'. Drawing upon the *Conceptual Basis*, in a series of brainstorming sessions in the period from February to March 2011, the APT developed its ideas on the content of the permanent exhibition, and prepared an extensive list of possible topics, subtopics and micro topics in the process. Weeks later, in March-April 2011, the list of topics and subtopics was condensed into ten main topics, which were selected following criteria put forward by *de facto* Content Coordinator.¹⁴² Each of selected topics or concepts had to have the following characteristics: 1) to have originated in Europe; 2) to have reached out across Europe, and, 3) to be of contemporary importance. This is where for the first time the hierarchy of meaning of the 'basic historic concepts' (in German – *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*) were seen to come into play in the HEH content development. In the closing chapter of this study the role of *Begriffsgeschichte* or the German version of conceptual history commonly associated with the name of Reinhart Koselleck as a key to understanding the HEH narrative at a historical-philosophical level, will be examined. Here, it suffices to say, that it was the later

¹⁴¹ European Parliament (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

¹⁴² Academic Project Team, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting 'Top 10 topics for the House of European History' of 2 and 3 March 2011. Not published internal paper.

Content Coordinator, that time an ordinary curator, who brought in Koselleck's principle of the 'hierarchy of meaning of basic historic concepts' with its three criteria for selecting the eventual themes for HEH permanent exhibition, and in doing so effectively cleared the way through a jungle of propositions for the structure of future exhibition.

The method adopted for this exercise comprised groups of two teams each preparing proposals for future discussion at regular APT meetings. After presentation and discussion of the proposals, the written feedbacks and comments by the members of the team was integrated into the proposals on the main topics. As a result, six presentations were created at the end of this exercise, each with a list of main topics and subtopics. The same small groups then had to transform the main topics into fields of research following the three general criteria: each of these fields had to be connected (historically or metaphorically) to the fundamental aim of the House of European History, namely, European integration. All fields, including the main issue, were briefly researched and then presented in a form of short essays with proposals for additional thematic orientation points.

Considering the theoretical framework in this early but crucial phase of content work, it was agreed to follow two fundamental principles in conceptualizing European history, but with each having as particular emphasis on recent European integration phase. The first concerned the geographical realms of research, and the other its interpretation. As a consequence, while the main focus of the HEH had been defined in *Conceptual Basis* as the 'Europe at large' with reference to the story of its integration during the 20th century, it was felt that geographically this should not be confined to the countries belonging to European Union only, but should be broadened to encompass Europe as a continent in its broadest possible sense: East and West, North and South. This idea was summed up within internal communication as 'The whole of Europe is our playground'. Or, more formally, in a paper meant for public use, it was put like this:

The House of European History is committed to understanding Europe in the broadest sense – east and west, north and south – and will not, therefore, only cover the countries within the European Union. For the sake of clarity, the

House will employ the wider definition of Europe used by the Council of Europe.¹⁴³

The APT considered the theoretical basis upon which it would operate. It was proposed early on by *de facto* Content Coordinator to make use of the concept of collective memory.¹⁴⁴ This concept dates back to 1920s, when the Franco-German sociologist Maurice Halbwachs developed his thinking on the social character of memory, drawing upon the work of sociologist Emil Durkheim and philosopher Emil Bergson. The idea of collective memory, as understood and developed further by APT, implied a pluralism of perspectives and encompassed a broad spectrum of historic events that are commonly perceived to be of importance for a European society. At that same time, it was stressed that collective memory is understood as a construct, in Hobsbawm's sense; a deliberately made framework to accommodate an endless variety of, sometimes even contradictory, individual memory accounts.¹⁴⁵ Being confronted with a choice to deploy the concept of identity or collective memory instead, APT chose to stick, as it was initially assumed, to the less politically charged concept of a collective memory. The antagonism towards the term 'collective identity' was stoked by referencing Theodor Adorno's *Negative dialectics*¹⁴⁶, which denounces the top-down character of the identity building process as being imposed and manipulative, of being ideological and running counter to the democratic process. In the particular case of the HEH, the notion of collective memory was not meant to refer to any particular ready-made construct, but to an emerging and eventual European collective memory as such, which can be represented in the exhibition. Questions on whether or not anything like collective European memory might actually exist, and whether or not it is necessary, might have been infrequently discussed in academic circles, but at the time of conceptualizing the exhibition they did not concern the APT, which was preoccupied with a practical task of making a compelling exhibition using this notion as a working principle. The curators were aware of their role as constructors of a representation of an open-ended, ever-becoming, version of European collective memory, rather than being

¹⁴³ Academic Project Team, House of European History, 'Information on the House of European History', July 2012, p. 10. Not published internal paper.

¹⁴⁴ Andrea Mork, Academic Project Team, House of European History, 'Some explanation on "Collective Memory" for the APT'. 17 March 2011. Not published internal paper.

¹⁴⁵ Snyder, Th. (2002) 'Memory of Sovereignty and Sovereignty over Memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939-1999', in Müller, J-W. (ed.) *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39-41.

¹⁴⁶ Adorno, Th. W. (1966) *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt am Mein: Suhrkamp Verlag.

promoters of a prioritised and predefined image of European identity. The APT interpreted collective memory very broadly, as something that has been formed by the historic events and social context which Europeans had collectively experienced, and as being crystallised in those important historical moments that both bind and divide the European people. Later in the exhibition development the notion of collective memory played a crucial role and served as one of decisive principles in selecting the historical topics to look at and was indicative in showing the place of HEH within larger EU history politics field. The fact though, that the nuances of terminology in applying the concept of memory (its active and passive modes as signalled by the difference in notions of ‘active remembrance’ and simply ‘collective memory’) with its far-reaching implications for the projected image of Europe in the new museum were not discussed by the APT, requires a more detailed analysis. I look at the terminological nuances which are crucial to understanding the HEH’s theoretical basis further in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Informed by this thinking, the regular meeting of the APT during April and May 2011, focused on revising the fields of research. These were divided between the members of the team, who continued to work individually and in small groups. Every field had a responsible person and two counter partners and the associated papers were finished around the end of May 2011 and drawn together in a document entitled *Fields of Research: the bases for the Permanent Exhibition themes*.¹⁴⁷ At that stage the fields of research were identified as follows:

1. European Integration as the overall ‘central issue’;
2. *Europa*: Myth, History and Visions;
3. Diversity in Europe;
4. Omnipresence of Christianity;
5. The Invention of the Individual;
6. Enlightenment and Democracy;
7. Capitalism and Imperialism;
8. National State and Nationalism;
9. Marxism and Socialism;
10. National Socialism;

¹⁴⁷ Academic Project Team, House of European History, *Fields of Research: the bases for the Permanent Exhibition themes*, June 2011, PE 466.069/BUR/GT.

11. World War I and II;
12. A special relationship: Europe and the USA;
13. Epilogue: Europe between national and global.

With a view to completing the first phase of work on the design Master Plan by September 2011, the APT held several creative workshops, in order to come up with a more coherent and concise structure for the exhibition narrative. In June 2011 the outline research fields and orientation points for the permanent exhibition were combined into clusters, using ‘bubble diagrams’ – a method used to focus down from the broad historical content listed above to combinations of topics with strong connections that were then arranged into ‘bubbles’ or thematic clusters. The whole curatorial team participated in creating these thematic clusters. To transform the fairly abstract fields of research into a concept of a visitor friendly exhibition and to clarify the main ‘take home messages’, a special worksheet template was created. This was fleshed out using thematic clusters identified in the workshops. Thus, by June 2011, five small groups (every team member being part of two or three groups) were working on covering the five thematic clusters (themes) to test if they were a workable ‘backbone’ for the exhibition narrative and against which the take home messages could be formulated.

After series of APT group discussions, the preliminary exhibition narrative content was finalised across the five major themes. Following this purely theoretical, desk-based exercise, work then began on putting together of the exhibition content (eventual objects and visuals), again using worksheets, to establish how the five themes were to be placed in the real exhibition space – the five exhibition floors of the future museum building. Finally, the themes were provisionally entitled: Introduction, Defeating War, Europe of the EU, Daily Life, and the Epilogue, and new working groups were formed during the 2011 summer period to revise the worksheets according the given levels of the building.

As a result, the next phase of revising and focusing down the exhibition narrative could start. In October 2011 the London-based interpretative designer and scenographer Arnaud Déchelle joined APT for a period of about 12 months. His task was to help curators visualizing five exhibition themes in a real exhibition space. After several workshops at which various options for the spatial arrangement for respective topics were worked out and different visitor flow routes examined, the work on

exhibition concept design could start. However, before that phase of work could begin in early 2012, the APT secured the agreement of the Academic Committee through the presentation of a summary paper on the exhibition content. Entitled the *Information Document on the State of Play of the Permanent Exhibition Narrative*¹⁴⁸, it set out the five themes, their associated topics and their chronological span as follows:

<p>Theme 1: Shaping Europe (Timeline: From 1000 BC onwards):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory and Identity • The myth of Europa • Mapping Europe • A common European heritage
<p>Theme 2A: Europe ascendant (Timeline: 1848 – 1914):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advance of progress • Nations and empires • Capitalism, liberalism, socialism
<p>Theme 2B: Europe eclipsed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First World War 1914 – 1918 • Europe between democracy and totalitarianism 1919 – 1939 • Second World War 1939 – 1945 • Shoah 1933 – Present day • Never Again: Between fear and hope 1945 – Present day
<p>Theme 3: A house divided (Timeline: 1945 – 1968):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-war reconstruction • A fragile stability • Towards a better life?
<p>Theme 4: Breaking boundaries (Timeline: 1968 – 2007):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes and challenges in European societies • Furthering democracy • Growing together?
<p>Theme 5: Looking ahead (Timeline: 2007 onwards):</p>

¹⁴⁸ The internal not published document *Information Document on the State of Play of the Permanent Exhibition Narrative* from 16 January 2012 was presented at the Board of Trustees of the House of European History Meeting of 24 January 2012.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe in a globalised world • Shaping future history
Plus an additional topic (Timeline, 1950's – Present Day): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brussels – Capital of Europe

Comparing these five plus one exhibition themes with the earlier version of research fields, and with the even earlier *Conceptual Basis*, reveals a gradual shifting of accents from a *longue durée* perspective on European history to one with an emphasis on modern Europe, with a special focus on its political and economic history during the 19th and 20th centuries. The associated dilemma could be summed up as, when exactly should the narrative start in a technical sense – in early or late modern times? Or in relation to the objects available, the question could have been phrased, would the exhibition start with Luther's translated Bible in vernacular languages, and Gutenberg's printing press, as a symbol of the individualism characteristic to the modern times (a point drawn out in the *Fields of Research* paper from June 2011¹⁴⁹), or rather Marx's *Communist manifesto*, indeed, the British-patented steam hammer both of which metaphorically propelled the European economy into a new era of mass production and social tensions? As I will discuss in Chapter 5 and 6, because of centrality of the late modernity in the Koselleck's conceptual history, which served as methodological basis for the HEH, the latter was the case.

Equally important in this regard were the shifts that occurred in the selected themes, for example such themes as 'Diversity in Europe', 'Omnipresence of Christianity' and 'A special relationship: Europe and the USA', were not included as separate themes in the final version of exhibition structure. The process of condensing the fields of research into this early phase of content development and making sure these were in one way or another later integrated into the overall concept of the HEH, was principally the responsibility of the associated curator. For example, although 'Diversity in Europe' was not selected as a discrete theme within the permanent exhibition, thematically it formed the basis of what later became the first temporary exhibition of the HEH: *Interactions. Centuries of Combat, Commerce and Creation*. This rearrangement of using temporary exhibitions to alleviate the pressure to include particular themes in the main exhibition came about through the initiative and

¹⁴⁹ Academic Project Team, House of European History, *Fields of Research: the bases for the Permanent Exhibition themes*, June 2011, PE 466.069/BUR/GT, pp. 22-23.

resourcefulness of the responsible curator. The same can be said about the theme ‘Omnipresence of Christianity’ but in opposite way. Although strongly represented in the *Conceptual Basis*, thus formally standing a good chance to be featured in the permanent exhibition, the theme of the Middle Ages and the legacy of Christianity did not find its way into the permanent exhibition, but was acknowledged through the inclusion of single objects, and reference in the accompanying text and graphics among a number of other topics in the introductory part of the permanent exhibition, entitled ‘Common European heritage’. Likewise, the theme ‘A special relationship: Europe and the USA’, developed by the same curator, was not elaborated upon as a separate theme but referenced in the permanent exhibition, at various points only in a chronologically structured narrative. Thus, the content development phase in 2011 can be seen both as a time of intense collaborative teamwork but also of a fierce competition among curators from which the winner walked away with the title of Content Coordinator. In turn, other resourceful curators were able to secure their preferred themes and continue working on them throughout the lifespan of the project.

This is said bearing in mind that the curators on the project were chosen for their expertise in particular period of history. However, their proposals on themes for inclusion in the exhibition were assessed critically against the selection criteria of the ‘hierarchy of meaning of the basic historic concepts’, which focused on Europe’s transition to modernity. As a result, after the selection, specialists found themselves working on the broader themes of 19th and 20th century history, starting with national revolutions and ideologies, followed by both world wars, and various phases of post-war European political and economic history, and social integration. In addition, they had to concern themselves with such important recent historic events as the war in former Yugoslavia, EU currency reform, EU enlargements, and the various economic and migration crises. The impact of this shift was exemplified by the situation where an expert medievalist, who had been recruited as such because of the needs presented in *Conceptual Basis*, eventually found that their expertise was no longer needed as the narrative starting point moved to the late 18th century. At the end of the day, then, it was not the curators’ areas of expertise that set the HEH narrative, but rather it was driven by the strong, preconditioned character of the HEH concept, which was destined to arrive at condensed vision of the ‘Europe’s journey to modernity’ (Mork), a point examined in more detail in closing chapter.

Thus in 2012, mindful of its preconditioned character, the curators developed the structure of exhibition, giving clear shape to the listed themes of the final version of the research fields, to the ‘take home message’, and summarised the story line and list of subtopics. While the number of themes did not change over 2012, the respective titles of themes, topics and subtopics altered substantially as the work evolved in cooperation with interpretative designer and the advisory bodies. In a process of close cooperation involving fortnightly meetings, constant e-mail exchange and numerous Skype conferences, the APT and the interpretative designer came up with a *Concept Design* paper by September 2012, and by October 2012 the summative *Permanent Exhibition Design Master Plan*¹⁵⁰ of the five major exhibition themes to be placed in the future exhibition space in Eastman building was ready. At no point in this process were the Parliament opinion makers consulted, neither was there consultation across the academic or public spheres; the preference of the Parliament’s Bureau was for a quiet process. Potential sticking points in the process, as mentioned above, were eased by the robustness of the agenda and the persuasive ability of the curators, notably that of the *de facto* Content Coordinator, that determined the exhibition themes, aided by the possibility of some of these being later transformed into temporary exhibition, or by being partially incorporated in the overall narrative of the permanent exhibition.

The role of advisory bodies

Having sketched out the creative and conceptual processes in devising the structure and narrative line of the future exhibition, it is necessary to look at the main players behind the scenes, who had a decisive role in steering the project, both within and outside the Parliament’s institutional framework. Particularly so because the Parliament’s advisory bodies had a decisive role in the process of building the *Concept Design* of the permanent exhibition. The process of developing the exhibition content took place under supervision of a number of the Parliament’s advisory bodies – Academic Committee and the Board of Trustees.

The Academic Committee basically grew from the Committee of Experts who were charged with the task of composing the *Conceptual Basis for a House of*

¹⁵⁰ House of European History (2012) *Permanent Exhibition Design Master Plan*. Not published internal document.

European History in 2007.¹⁵¹ Members of this initial group of experts under leadership of the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, and the Secretary-General of the European Parliament, Harald Rømer, were: Giorgio Cracco, António Reis, Mária Schmidt, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Hans Walter Hütter, Marie-Hélène Joly, Matti Klinge, Michel Dumoulin, and Ronald de Leeuw.

Chaired by the Polish modern historian Włodzimierz Borodziej and made up of a now extended group of historians and professionals from internationally renowned museums, the function of Academic Committee was set ‘to play a follow-up and advisory role on historical and museological transcription issues’¹⁵². Its members during the time of HEH production from 2011 to 2017 were: Norman Davies, Hans-Walter Hütter, Matti Klinge, Anita Meinarte, Hélène Miard-Delacroix, Mary Michailidou, Oliver Rathkolb, Antonio Reis, Maria Schmidt, Jean-Pierre Verdier, and Henk Wesseling.

In turn, chaired by the former President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, the Board of Trustees ‘is a body made up of high-level politicians and well-known public figures, bringing together several European institutions and the Brussels authorities’¹⁵³. The Board is advised by Harald Rømer, formerly Secretary-General of the Parliament. The members of the Board are: Włodzimierz Borodziej, Étienne Davignon, Hans-Walter Hütter, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Gérard Onesta, Doris Gisela Pack, Chrysoula Paliadeli, Charles Picqué, Alain Lamassoure, Wojciech Roszkowski, Peter Sutherland, Androulla Vassiliou, Diana Wallis and Francis Wurtz.

During the project lifetime, the APT work was structured so that each phase of research and its outcomes had to be presented to the both advisory bodies for approval. The Academic Committee met at regular intervals usually three times a year, and the Board met five times a year, thus the recommendations of these supervising bodies on the structure of exhibition content and its spatial arrangement could be taken on board quickly and precisely.

¹⁵¹ European Parliament (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*, p. 4. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

¹⁵² European Parliament (2013) *Building a House of European History*, p. 46. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Meetings and outcomes

The Academic Committee meetings that influenced the development of the exhibition content started in 2011. However, some of the parameters of the process had already been set when, at an Academic Committee meeting of 8 December 2010 the newly appointed APT leader, Taja Vovk Van Gaal, had been given instructions on how to go about drafting the first papers for discussion on the first joint Academic Committee and APT meeting scheduled in March 2011. These included, stressing the difficulties concerning the presentation of topics that do not automatically touch people emotionally, and highlighting the danger of adopting a closed design approach that could not facilitate future changes. An approach which kept the narrative open-ended was preferred.¹⁵⁴ With this general guidance the APT embarked on a journey, which led in several phases to the *Concept Design* by September 2012. Central to completing this was the cooperation between the APT and the advisory bodies.

On 21st March 2011 the Academic Committee met the newly recruited Academic Project Team for the first time to discuss the reflection papers prepared by the APT that focused on the two major methodological principles mentioned earlier.¹⁵⁵ There was a consensus regarding the geographic scope of the exhibition; that it was not to be confined to the EU member states only. As noted above, this principle had been established by APT and incorporated in the exhibition concept from the very beginning. The second methodological principle concerning the interpretative approach, namely the concept of collective memory, provoked a notable degree of debate and a lively exchange of opinions. In discussion the Committee members stressed the importance of adopting multifarious viewpoints, which they thought might possibly be diluted or get lost if too much stress was placed on the notion of an overarching collective memory. In response to this, the APT underlined that a multi-perspective approach was an integral part of the theoretical basis – the *Conceptual Basis* drafted by the core members of Committee – and gave an assurance that various and different viewpoints would be respected when drafting the exhibition concept. The discussion also shows, however, that the notion of ‘shared memory’ was not wholly abandoned, with some of Committee members favouring it and others suggesting that it might be considered again in the

¹⁵⁴ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 8 December 2010, PE457.987/BUR/GT.

¹⁵⁵ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 21 March 2011, PE461.433/BUR/GT.

future. From the very first meeting, then, the APT and Academic Committee were at odds over the issue of a common terminology and the understanding of basic concepts of the exhibition. This was to become a major challenge. It was not the case that the acclaimed historians on the Committee board were unfamiliar with concepts used by APT, such as the idea of the collective memory (which has been reintroduced particularly in German and the international historical debate by Aleida and Jean Assmann in 1990s), but rather the pressures of time meant that the Committee were required to focus on such practical matters as the layout and delivery of the exhibition, rather than spending time pondering academic principles.

At the Committee meeting on 22nd June 2011, the APT leader, Taja Vovk Van Gaal, reported on the progress made concerning development of exhibition content. She explained the process of distilling down the topics seen as important to European history and the history of European integration. She also stated how, out of 300 proposals that came out of initial brainstorming sessions (at which the ‘hierarchy of meaning of basic historic concepts’ criteria – even if not termed in accordance to Koselleck’s original terminology) the selection of ‘Fields of Research’ had been made, these had been agreed as the ‘backbone’ of the future exhibition.¹⁵⁶

The point had been reached when the practical choices about exhibition objects and spatial arrangement had to be taken, and the time was ripe to start tackling associated museographic questions. In discussion with the Committee members regarding the permanent exhibition, the APT leader stressed these aspects and the need to find the best possible way of visualising the content of fields of research, and the need to decide such aspects as visitor flow. Given that at that time there was still some uncertainty about support (both internal and external) the APT needed to push ahead with developing the visualisation of exhibition content and developing the thinking behind its spatial arrangement, as well as the associated museological arguments in order to pave the way for external interpretative designer to be taken aboard in late 2011.

The necessity for establishing a clear relationship between the chronological and the thematic elements was advocated by the Content Coordinator and accepted by the APT. But there was no such clarity amongst the Committee members, who insisted on having clear distinction between these two aspects, and who recommended that either a

¹⁵⁶ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 22 June 2011, PE4.4/BUR/GT.

thematic or a chronological approach be taken for the further work. Despite the fact that in contemporary museological practice endorses that there is no contradiction between a combined chrono-thematical approach when it comes to drafting an exhibition narrative, the Committee insisted that the APT stick to an unambiguously chronological approach. This is indicative of other similar situations in the joint Committee and APT meetings where there were tensions between the renowned academics and the museum practitioners on the Committee, and where the obvious lack of a senior level museologist among the APT who could negotiate its position with effect. This led to heated discussion on the exhibition content, notably at the first content evaluation meeting around the most recent research from Eastern Europe on European integration; the need to take into account the view of other countries (other than the USA) when speaking about other parts of the world; the challenge of demonstrating diversity, and showing its dynamics, while avoiding the impression of fragmentation; the necessity to introducing elements about knowledge, schools, books, and languages in the European history narrative; and the need to discuss the Euro and Federalism; and the challenge of representing the value of the individual and the nation state within European structures.¹⁵⁷

After discussion many of these ideas were incorporated into exhibition narrative. But by far most far-reaching recommendation of the advisory bodies, notably the Board as the highest steering authority of the project, was the suggestion to radically change the layout of the museum and the way the visitor moved through the exhibitions, which until then it was assumed that visitors would enter the exhibition on the top floor of the Eastman building and work down towards the ground floor. At the Committee's meeting of 22nd June, the coordinator of HEH project, the former Secretary General of European Parliament, Harald Rømer reported on possible architectural modifications then being negotiated amongst the APT, Committee, Board and the Directorate General for Logistics (a unit supervising construction works within the Parliament).¹⁵⁸ He stated that, as a result of the work of the APT the content had been agreed upon, but few issues remained unresolved, one of which was the possible change in the direction of a visit. The change of visitor direction was discussed on that same day at the Board meeting, following a detailed discussion in a Building

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Committee (a subunit of Committee dealing specifically with the Eastman building). Further to a recommendation of the Building Committee, the Board expressed its preference for a changed direction. The choice of having the end of the visit on the top of the building was given both a theoretical and practical explanation. Apart from the underpinning symbolism of going from bottom to the top following the trails of European history, there was a logistical consideration, also with symbolic considerations. End the tour on the top floor meant that visitors would conclude their visit looking out of large windows on the top floor which offered a view across the European Quarter in Brussels. This change of visitor flow was by far the most important amendment to the architectural project of the building, necessitating the inclusion of additional elevators and profoundly influencing the exhibition content and narrative structure. Following this crucial decision and having worked intensively to adjust the exhibition narrative accordingly, the APT presented the Committee members with the first draft of the permanent exhibition narrative on the 12th October 2011. The intention was that this would form the foundation of the future work with interpretative designer during 2012. The five themes of the draft narrative at that time were titled now as follows: ‘Shaping Europe through History’, ‘Wars and Survival’, ‘Building United Europe’, ‘Striving for a Better Life’, and ‘Looking Ahead’.¹⁵⁹

At this point the Committee expressed a major concern that the concept narrative was focussed too much on the 20th century and presented a traditionalist Western-centred view. This remark would come back at every consecutive Committee meeting, right up until the presentation of finished *Concept Design* in September 2012. Over that period the concept design continued to seek a balanced approach in dealing with totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, showing both East-European and West-European views on the subject. The both Eastern and Western totalitarian regimes – Nazism and Communism – were to be juxtaposed with a third element in a triangle – democracy – that was shown as rapidly losing ground in the interwar period.

As work on the exhibition content progressed, several members of the Committee argued that some topics should be given stronger emphasis. Such themes included: Europe’s roots in antiquity and the middle ages; the conflict between state and church; democracy; the Magna Carta and Greece; colonisation and de-colonisation; nationalism; the interwar geopolitical and strategic debates; compulsory military

¹⁵⁹ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 12 October 2011. PE479.740/BUR/GT.

service; the Cold War; totalitarianisms in the so-called 'Free Europe'; democracy versus totalitarianism (particularly around the Hungarian and Baltic dictatorships); totalitarianism in earlier and later years; Stalinism (but without succumbing to debates about analogies between Stalinism and Shoah); neighbours and partners; Russia, neighbours in the Mediterranean; the Atlantic countries other than the United States; Africa; a concept of neighbours which would be globally conceived; the role of the United States; the role of China, Russia and Turkey in World War II; the economy; art and culture; cultural heritage; common identity, various 'isms' e.g. Humanism etc.; and, the shrunken European territory, the crisis of European conscience.¹⁶⁰

This list of recommendations and suggestions as expressed by the Committee members was diverse both in terms of its scope and scale and suggests that at the end of 2011 the exhibition narrative was still considered to be loose and open. Even though the time for setting the themes of narrative was fast approaching and the need to ratify a *Concept Design* at the beginning of 2012, the discussions on the content continued. However, keeping in mind what was said earlier about the clarity with which the roadmap of narrative based on the 'hierarchy of meaning of basic historic concepts' (Koselleck) was presented by the *de facto* Content Coordinator, these discussions were largely a formality and did not lead to any major changes in the narrative structure.

Illustrative of this role-play was the situation where the views of the Hungarian member, Maria Schmidt, regarding the 'darker trails of history'. While discussing the theme of 'Wars and Survival', the Director of the House of Terror in Budapest objected to the idea of having, as she put it, 'yet another separate Shoah room' in a brand-new historical museum. An exhibition with Shoah and the World Wars at its centre she judged as being outmoded, preferring the exhibition should show the cultural achievements of the pre- and inter-war periods, as characterised by ideas of liberty, pan-Europeanism and culture, and less about the tragic events of European history. Ms Schmidt not only proclaimed such preferences at the Committee meetings, but also on other occasions outside the HEH environment. At a symposium organised by German Foundation Ettersberg in late 2010, sometimes referred to as the first public scholarly debate on the HEH concept, she took the liberty of pledging that more cultural history

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

would be contained in the future museum.¹⁶¹ Her position, or more accurately the position of the House of Terror, did not go unnoticed by the British historian Tony Judt in his best-selling book *Post War*. When discussing the history and culture of memory in Europe he remarked that the recognition of the Holocaust has become a sort of ‘entry ticket to Europe’ for countries seeking accession to the Union. He notes that there is very little about the Holocaust in the House of Terror in Budapest when compared with the representation of the suffering caused by Communism.¹⁶² This episode, together with the associated observations, served as a reminder to the historians sitting on the Academic Committee that there were different historical and political perspectives prevalent on either side of what was termed the Iron Curtain, often driven by personal research interests and an individual’s political outlook. This was most vividly apparent amongst the Committee members coming from the former Soviet bloc countries, where the issue of Communist regime crimes is more recent and therefore more widely recognised than those of National Socialism. This stress within the agenda of East-European history politics, often perceived to be at the expense of other European collective memories or in competition with them, caused notable tensions. While the subject of the ‘memory battle’ is elaborated upon in Chapters 3 and 4, it is sufficing to say at this juncture that Ms Schmidt never succeeded in bringing ‘more culture’ into the HEH narrative. Indeed, the opposite occurred. The HEH permanent exhibition, having gone through numerous phases of internal consultation, ended, as rightly noted by Kaiser, ‘... by de-emphasizing cultural and religious aspects [of Europe’s history] the HEH refrains from engaging in a potentially highly divisive discussion of what might have made Europe specific or even, in more normative terms, special’¹⁶³.

Following such lively debates on the exhibition concept narrative, it was decided that a meeting between the Committee and the APT be organised to examine associated matters in more detail. The proposal came from Committee members (mostly driven by the German member Hütter, who was also the chair of the Committee of Experts in charge of the *Conceptual Basis*) and it was agreed that a workshop would last one and a half days and focus on a few selected topics within permanent exhibition

¹⁶¹ See Schmidt, M. (2011) ‘Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Gedächtnis? Eine ungarische Sicht auf das geplante Haus der Europäischen Geschichte’, in Knigge, V., Veen, H-J., Mähler, U. and Schlichting, F-J. (eds) *Arbeit am europäischen Gedächtnis: Diktaturerfahrung und Demokratieentwicklung*. Europäische Diktaturen und ihre Überwindung, Schriften der Stiftung Ettersberg Vol. 17 (2011). Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, pp. 165-168.

¹⁶² Judt, T. (2010) *Post War*. London: Vintage, p. 827.

¹⁶³ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 11.

narrative. The workshop took place at the end of February 2012, in which three exhibition topics were discussed in detail: ‘A common European Heritage’ from Theme 1 (‘Shaping Europe’), ‘The advance of progress’ from Theme 2a (‘Europe ascendant’) and finally ‘A fragile stability’ from Theme 3 (‘A house divided’). In addition to the detailed discussion on these topics, this meeting saw the first presentation of the working approach of the concept design by the scenographer, Arnaud Déchelle.

While there were a few suggestions regarding the reconfiguration of the three topics, the principal outcome of the meeting was the overall acceptance of APT and scenographer’s work to that point. What also emerged, however, was a lack of agreement amongst members on the text of the first communication material for the publication *Building a House of European History*¹⁶⁴, which was to sum up in general terms the aims and objectives of the project and that was scheduled for publication in the Spring of 2012. After several amendments and restructuring, it was returned a number of times back to APT and consequently this text did not reach the advisory bodies until the end of 2012. It was finally published in 2013 and was restricted to only outlining the future exhibition that would appear at the opening of the HEH in May 2017.

Collecting policy and further content development

Following the workshop, the APT leader reported to the Committee meeting of 29th May 2012 that the *Concept Design* would be finished in September 2012.¹⁶⁵ She also informed the Committee that the APT has started planning a pilot-project on ‘evidencing’, or sourcing, objects for the future exhibition and that it was in the process of contacting various museums and other heritage institutions across Europe. Letters were sent out by way of introducing the project to the potential partners and requesting long-term loans from these institutions. In this early phase of HEH structural development it was still assumed that that ‘borrowing objects for the exhibition will not be a problem’¹⁶⁶ and that a centralized system of official requests would facilitate this. The Collection Management Policy pointedly described the associated ambitious target:

¹⁶⁴ European Parliament (2013) *Building a House of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

¹⁶⁵ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 29 May 2012. PE494.268/BUR/GT.

¹⁶⁶ Academic Project Team, House of European History, *Fields of Research: the basis for the Permanent Exhibition themes*, June 2011, PE466.069/BUR/GT.

‘The new collection should become the “nucleus” for a permanent reservoir of collective European memory.’¹⁶⁷ In the end the loans grew to around 1,500 objects from some 300 partner institutions, and in addition the rights for a huge volume of graphics and footage had to be cleared. These tasks fell to the small APT team, and the scale of the task proved to be one of the major obstacles for opening the museum within given time and budget. In the end the Parliament had to supply the APT with additional staff to avoid the possibility of team members leaving because of being overworked. To compound matters the centralized system of issuing official letters with the invitation to contribute to HEH exhibition development failed completely, and in the end the loans and rights process required individual curators locating and negotiating the loans individually on a case-by-case basis.

At the same Committee meeting in May 2012 there was further discussion on the exhibition themes, continuing on from the February deliberations. Regarding Theme 2b, ‘Europe Eclipsed’, the Committee recommended, among other things, that the exhibition should avoid using well-known or simplistic ways to represent World War Two. It was not to restrict the narrative to political and military history, but it should put people to the fore and add an element concerning the associated economic and cultural history, by way of reflecting the mind-sets of the time and revealing aspects of daily life. It was not to use objects drawn from the political history; it was to stress modernity, and reveal the various experiences and viewpoints of the interwar period, not leaving out pacifism etc. The Committee also lauded the comparison of the two dictatorial regimes of the 20th century, as proposed by the APT, as a very good and modern approach.¹⁶⁸

In the discussion on Theme 4 ‘Breaking Boundaries’, the Committee expressed their concerns about representation of Eastern Europe in this theme, notably about adequately showing the notable transformation of societies and the incapacity of Eastern European countries to cope with the new economic challenges. They recommended, for example, the use of the term ‘Iron Curtain’ instead of ‘Berlin Wall’. Further recommendations included: the representation of the importance of the United States to Europe, specifically relating to German Reunification; the representation of

¹⁶⁷ Academic Project Team, House of European History, *Collection Management Policy of the House of European History*. 24 April 2013. Not published internal paper. This collection management policy is said to be based on the draft Collection Plan for the HEH of September 2009, based on the collection concept of the German House of History in Bonn.

¹⁶⁸ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 29 May 2012. PE494.268/BUR/GT.

the emergence of the Asian Tiger economies, and; the link between energy dependency and the progress of the European Communities. The Committee also requested that 1968 be replaced by 1973 (the year of the Helsinki agreement and of the oil crisis) as the watershed event in the exhibition narrative, in order to draw a line between post-war economic growth and the following standstill. It asked for the balance between East and West to be kept in the narrative, and that more details on the development of the European institutions should be included.¹⁶⁹

In the following Committee meeting of 24th September 2012, the issue of division between the topics of 'House Divided' and 'Breaking Boundaries' was touched upon once again. At a previous meeting of the Academic Committee, its members had objected to using 1968 as the dividing line, arguing that on a global scale the Prague Revolution and the Student Revolts across Western Europe meant little in the context of geopolitical situation in Europe, and that on that criteria 1973 should be the starting point of the narrative. However, this choice was criticised by Professor Norman Davies. While he had not attended the previous Committee meeting and subsequently had missed out six months of discussion on the concept design development, he stepped into debate and argued that, instead of 1973, the year 1989 should be considered as the major turning point in European post war history, and that the division of topics and its scenographic representation should follow this watershed date accordingly. But given that the general floor layout of the future exhibition had already been agreed and worked out to considerable extent, his opinion was taken on board only partially. It was argued that the division of topics according to historical eras had to take account of the floor space available and that it was not possible to cover the whole of the period from 1945 to 1989 on a single floor. To do so, it was argued, would result in a much too compacted exhibition. With such logistic considerations to the fore, the division between topics along 1973 cut-off date was considered as an acceptable compromise, though it was also agreed that 1989 would be made much more prominent as it was before in the exhibition design and narrative.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 24 September 2012. PE502.412/BUR/GT.

Concept Design and the first symbolic object

When the exhibition concept, as presented in the *Concept Design* paper in late 2012, is compared with what was originally envisaged within the *Conceptual Basis* reveals, one can see how far the APT departed from the original 2008 proposal of the Committee of Experts. As noted by Kaiser, the narrative as developed by APT now focused on the 20th century and only touches on the 19th century by way of explanatory context.¹⁷¹ The 2012 conception lacks the consistent *longue durée* perspective advocated by the Committee of Experts but strengthens the Eastern European perspective. The core subject of the original proposal – European integration – was, by 2012, was to be treated through a narrative on the history of major events such as treaty negotiations and EU enlargements, thus considerably deviating from the EU integration-centred *Conceptual Basis*. Such changes were perhaps inevitable given the view that,

In fact, the Conceptual Basis is nothing more than a sort of guidelines, which should be transformed in forthcoming years – over tens of thousands of working hours – into an exhibition concept.¹⁷²

This quote from Włodzimierz Borodziej, chair of the Academic Committee of the HEH, who participated in drafting the *Conceptual Basis* back in 2008, makes a significant point regarding how this document was viewed. While there was very little public communication on the HEH project at that point, there was a growing interest in the Brussels-based, pan-European museum project, and amongst the interested parties there was the misperception that the *Conceptual Basis* was actually a blueprint of the future museum when in reality it only outlines the overall concept.

Borodziej made this point clearly in his report *House of European History as a concept of memory with courage to remain open-ended*¹⁷³. He acknowledged as justified the remarks from different parties who found his paper insufficient in revealing how particular historical issues were being dealt with in the developmental process, but he argued that (with the exception of the essential component around European integration) it was never intended to be an exhaustive or definitive listing of the historic

¹⁷¹ Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 10.

¹⁷² Borodziej, W. (2011) 'Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte – ein Erinnerungskonzept mit der Mut zur Lücke', in Knigge, V., Veen, H-J., Mähler, U. and Schlichting, F-J. (eds) *Arbeit am europäischen Gedächtnis: Diktaturerfahrung und Demokratieentwicklung*. Europäische Diktaturen und ihre Überwindung, Schriften der Stiftung Ettersberg Vol. 17 (2011). Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, p. 141.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

topics that would necessarily be covered in the final exhibition, rather the *Conceptual Basis* stood as a series of loose guidelines to aid thinking on the exhibition concept. This being the case, there is merit nevertheless in comparing the *Conceptual Basis* with the *Concept Design* paper of 2012, which marked a crucial moment of the project's development.

The most evident and major difference between the *Conceptual Basis* and the *Concept Design* is the difference on the proposed timeframes of the exhibition. The former suggested it cover the vast spectrum from the years of the Middle Ages to the modern era, a point not addressed at all in the design document. While *Conceptual Basis* lists a dozen of points related to early forms of European unity under the Holy Roman Empire and Charlemagne, *Concept Design* leaves these large chunks of European pre-modern history out of the narrative. Only the topic 'Memory and Identity', in the introductory part of the actual exhibition entitled 'Shaping Europe', touches upon some of the historic concepts fundamental to European civilization and the commonalities across its cultural roots – in philosophy, rule of law, Christianity, science, but also including state terror, the slave trade and other darker chapters of Europe's collective or shared memory.

Another fundamental difference already alluded to was that instead of a consistent *longue durée* perspective which would allow an exploration of those cultural expressions essential to shaping Europe as it now stands, the *Concept Design* for the HEH permanent exhibition clearly shifted the focus in favour of post French Revolution modernity with particular emphasis on the forces of industrialisation and nationalism that built the powder keg which led Europe to the edge of the abyss of destruction in the first half of 20th century. With a further emphasis on the reconstruction, and on the economic and political integration of Europe in the post war era, in the HEH exhibition the stress shifted to an attempt to outlaw war and set the legal structure for reconciliation, not forgetting the conflicted histories that led to the modern situation.

To sum up, between October 2011 to September 2012 the APT worked on the draft scenario for the permanent exhibition in a close cooperation with London-based interpretative designer Arnaud Déchelle. Although originally called the *Concept for the Permanent Exhibition*, on submitting a draft of certain of its aspects for discussion by the supervising authorities, it was subsequently retitled the *Feasibility Study for the Permanent Exhibition*. This was done on purpose considering that the advisory bodies

would strongly object things being presented as *fait a complete*, as had happened at Academic Committee meeting in May 2012. Thus the ‘preliminary visualisation’ of future exhibition was not presented as something completely engineered, thus deliberately allowing room for the creative response of future contract designers. The contract designers started working with the APT in March 2013 with an aim of developing the *Final Design* and bringing it to the point that could stand as a technical manual for the installation of the future museum exhibition. Put another way, the *Concept Design* was polished into the accomplished curatorial and interpretative design proposal accompanied by the *Permanent Exhibition Design Master Plan*. As a joint effort, it was 12 months in making, and provided the spatial and thematic structure for the envisioned exhibition while simultaneously revealing some of the philosophy of history that informed its contents.

Having completed and agreed the process, it had to be approved by Parliament’s hierarchy. This was a reasonably straightforward procedure. The HEH was by that time an integral part of the Directorate General for Communications (DG COMM). It had to report to the supreme decision-making body of the Parliament, the Bureau, which had overall control of the budget and institutional strategy. Getting the project onto the agenda of a Bureau meeting was therefore both a rare and an important occasion, as it provided the opportunity to report on the achievements, gain support and promote the initiative. Such a chance was given to HEH project, upon the completion of the concept design in October 2012. The Bureau meeting of 11th October was therefore viewed as one of the very special moments in project development since its inception in 2008. In the intervening period the Parliament presidency had shifted from the initiator of the project, the conservative H-G. Pöttering of the European Peoples Party, to his party member Jerzy Buzek (July 2009) and subsequently to the Socialist Party leader Martin Schulz (January 2012).

At the October 2012 meeting of the Bureau the APT managers presented the *Concept Design* for the permanent exhibition and informed members about the plans to start the building works in 2013. The Bureau members were notably supportive and the APT received an assurance of the Bureau’s support in promoting the project further in the Parliament’s institutional structure and among the broader coalition of Members of the Parliament. At the meeting it was suggested that, given the EU had been awarded the Noble Peace prize that year, the associated medal and citations could be displayed at

the HEH. This suggestion was welcomed and later agreed upon by the Parliament, the Commission and the European Council. These being the highest authorities within the EU, securing the medal and certificate as the first object in the collection of the HEH was particularly symbolic. Indeed, the first symbolic object reinforced the previously accepted museological approach on objects within the HEH. Objects could now start arriving once the exhibition design for a narrative driven by an underlying ideology, at the expense of the primacy of the museum object, was completed. The consequences of this are explored further in Chapter 6, in relation to the conceptual character of a contemporary history museum.

Already, at the Noble Peace Prize award ceremony, held on 10th December 2012 in Oslo, news releases from various media channels were reporting that the medal would be taken to Brussels, where it would become a ‘centrepiece of a controversial “House of European History”’¹⁷⁴. However though misleadingly reports (e.g. by *The Telegraph*) stated that the museum was to open in 2014. Even the Commission’s official communication did not correct this inaccuracy and provided no more detailed information on the future hosting institution of the Nobel Peace Prize, saying only that the Medal will be on show in Brussels at the HEH, once it had been completed. This occasion marked the start of acquisition of a collection for the HEH.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to EU and the commitment to display the medal was seen by APT members as an opportunity to open a broader discussion on the possible consequences of the decision. On the one hand it was thought that its symbolic power and the immense popularity of the award would inevitably raise interest among broad international audiences about the new museum project in Brussels and, indeed, open the door for further discussions. Yet on the other hand the HEH managers were concerned that the decision would lead to increased demands for information and transparency on the project. Such concerns proved nugatory as the Bureau, DGCOMM, nor the Management Team (as far as it could) were to develop a proper communication strategy in the run up for the opening that took account of the Nobel prize award and its impact on the HEH, thus effectively excluded any significant communication with the future audiences, outside the presentation of the project plans at the occasional academic conference.

¹⁷⁴ Waterfield, B. ‘Nobel Peace Prize: ‘We will come out of crisis stronger than ever,’ says EU president’. *The Telegraph*, 9 December 2012. Available online at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/9732847/Nobel-Peace-Prize-We-will-come-out-of-crisis-stronger-than-ever-says-EU-president.html>. Last accessed: 21 November 2018.

By end of 2012, when the *Concept Design* was in place, there was only a modest section concerning the HEH on the Parliament's website, which was considered by some as unsatisfactory in view to the scope of provided information being requested by interested journalists and general public alike. For example, the important fact that the opening of the project was to be postponed to late 2015, instead of, as previously announced, before the next European Parliament elections in June 2014, was not communicated via press release. Such a change could only have been deduced from the project expenditure data, which indicated allocation for the project development phase during the period 2011-2015. Thus far in the overall project, the Parliament's website was the only publicly accessible mechanism for official communication about the financial and time planning of the HEH project, and this was to be the case until the Spring 2017 when the HEH website was finally published.

Towards the close of 2012 the building permit was issued by the Brussels Region authorities, allowing construction works to be started in early 2013 in accordance with the HEH project plan. In March 2013 the desk-based work with the contract designers began on transforming the *Concept Design* into detailed design schedule for the production of the exhibition. Having pinned down these essential aspects, the APT assumed control of the Eastman building in Parc Léopold, and as the scaffolding went up, and the museum's physical spaces took shape, the team saw this as an opportune time to communicate with the professional community and the general public. This, however, was not to be as the Bureau and the advisory bodies adopted the strategy of not exposing the project to any criticism not even inside the Brussels bubble. The communications work of the HEH and the EU governing bodies at large, accordingly, is the subject of next chapter, and in order to understand this it is necessary to return to a period before the establishment of the HEH team, when the concept of a common European public space entered the debate.

Chapter 3

In the service of communication: the HEH and the European public space

At a meeting on 24th September 2012, the Chair of the Academic Committee, Włodzimierz Borodziej, announced that the HEH unit was to be incorporated into Directorate C of the Directorate General for Communication (DG COMM) under the leadership of director Stephen Clark.¹⁷⁵ Thus after a period when the HEH was governed at arm's length by the Parliament's Bureau, it was now to be accountable to the one of its Directorates. This transition took place a year and a half after the project team of the HEH had been recruited. This move indicated the final and predictable settlement of the HEH project within the rigid functional framework of the Parliament.

The new host of the HEH, Directorate C of the DG COMM, was and is directly concerned with the relationship of the EU's political and administrative bureaucracy with EU citizens and others, and as such is at the forefront of communication in the broadest possible sense. Its mission statement says that Directorate C is there 'to increase awareness of the European Parliament's role, its decisions and its activities for citizens, opinion leaders and the large public'.¹⁷⁶ It does so by targeting specific groups. The DG COMM's approach to business is termed 'service-oriented', while its communication is referred to as being 'events-based'. Under the DG COMM's supervision are the units of the Visitors Centre Parliamentarium, Visits and Seminars, Information Campaigns, Events and Exhibitions, as well as the Information offices in 28 EU Member States (under special joint initiative called the European Public Spaces¹⁷⁷) and a Liaison Office (EPLO) in Washington, D.C. It is running the visitor services of the Parliament on all three of its sites, in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

Directorate C's job, accordingly, is to issue official public communications on behalf of the Parliament and monitor media in order to respond to eventual

¹⁷⁵ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 24 September 2012. PE502.412/BUR/GT.

¹⁷⁶ Information about the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Communication. Available online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-secretary-general/en/organisation/directorate-general-for-communication>. Accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁷⁷ European Public Spaces (EPS) are run jointly by European Commission Representations and European Parliament Information Offices as information points and meeting places for debates, forums, lectures and training on European issues, as well as cultural activities such as exhibitions and films. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/contact/local_offices_en.htm. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

misinterpretations regarding the Parliament's public standing. In other words, Department C is the closest one gets to the role of an image-maker for the Parliament, in support of attaining the global objective of 'Enhancing the political nature of the European Parliament'¹⁷⁸, as it was formulated by Juana Lahousse-Juárez, former Director General of DG COMM, on the occasion of the launch of election campaign's pre-vote phase on 11 March 2014.

Within this structure the HEH, as a newcomer, had to find its place, mindful that it was bringing an exhibition on European history to the table, together with a space for temporary shows. From the time of its incorporation within the Directorate it was perceived as being an integral to delivering the DG COMM's core purpose, namely, 'to increase the awareness on the European Parliament among citizens, stakeholders and opinion leaders through bespoke communication and information campaigns and online channels'¹⁷⁹.

Positioning the HEH within the DG COMM, specifically in Department C, not only gives an indication of how the project was viewed in terms of its prestige and importance within the Parliament's structure, but also points to the expected outcomes and the role it would play going forward. It signalled that the HEH would be an integral part of the overall communication strategy of the Parliament and as such would likely be institutionally restricted. Whereas publicly funded museums in the national states are bound by the policies of respective countries, these can vary from preserving cultural heritage to a more proactive role in promoting social justice, championing inclusion, and overall stimulating regeneration through creative economies, whereas a museum run by the Parliament was inextricably linked to the policies, ethos, and goals of this supra-national European legislative body. All of these are framed and set within the public's mind through the growing business of communications, or more precisely the business of the European public sphere and communicating the official lines of both the Parliament and Commission. As a consequence of this the strategic planning documents of the Parliament, notably the *Updating Parliaments Communication Strategy*¹⁸⁰ and *Action Plan for the implementation of Parliament's updated communication strategy*

¹⁷⁸ DG COMM internal staff meeting. European Parliament, Brussels, 11 March 2014.

¹⁷⁹ See website of the European Parliament's DG COMM. Available online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-secretary-general/en/organisation/directorate-general-for-communication>. Last accessed: 21 May 2018.

¹⁸⁰ European Parliament (2010) *Action Plan for the implementation of Parliament's updated communication strategy 2011-2014*. DGCOMM. Not published internal document.

2011-2014¹⁸¹, were binding upon the HEH as it emerged as one of the Parliament's flagship projects. From this point on the HEH was one of its communication tools in the service of fostering participative citizenship and the cultural legitimacy of the EU.

Having examined the global development of the European cultural policies since the time of establishing European Communities in the 1950s, with the aim of identifying the key actors, events and decisions, as they related to the concept of a pan-European museum in Brussels, and then in Chapter 2 focusing on the immediate environment of the content development of the HEH, the focus of this chapter necessarily turns to the communication strategies of the European governing institutions and their impact on the HEH.

Of particular importance in this regard are the communication policies of the Parliament and the Commission as well as the urban development plans for the European Quarter, drafted over the previous decade, which proved to be formative to the thinking that led to the launch of the HEH project by the former President of Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, in 2007. These factors also proved essential in securing the sustained, cross-institutional support leading up to its opening in 2017. Setting aside for the moment any attempt at conceptualizing the role of a museum in the public sphere, which itself is formulated by Habermas as 'an arena for the perception, identification and treatment of problems affecting the whole society'¹⁸², it is necessary to start by considering such practical issues as how the communication policies of the European governing bodies were reflected in the process of establishing the HEH. Here, with a nod to the linguistic approach of continental social theory (Habermas, Bourdieu, Derrida), particular attention needs to be paid to the terminology that is used by the European governing bodies and top officials when they articulate their strategic communication goals, particularly those around the public space and sphere. To understand such jargon, one needs to go back to the sources and meanings in contemporary political, social, and urban theory.

The next section looks at the HEH project development over 2013 and 2014, in light of the Parliament's communication strategy and how the HEH contributed to the communication goals of the Commission and the Council of Europe too. This entails

¹⁸¹ European Parliament (2011) *Updating Parliaments Communication Strategy*. DGCOMM. Not published internal communication.

¹⁸² Jürgen Habermas, 'Warum Braucht Europa Eine Verfassung?'. *Die Zeit*, 28 June 2001, p. 7. Available online at: http://www.zeit.de/2001/27/200127_verfassung.xml. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

mapping the scene and identifying the most visible players in the field of history politics, in order to place the HEH project in a wider context of European history politics and tracing the influence of various interest groups and their various claims on the HEH, together with their impact on the process of building a new public museum. On this practical background picture, the last section of this chapter will highlight the role for historical museum in the public sphere serving the growing agendas around European memory cultures and history politics.

European public space – a new figure of speech in EU jargon

In a booklet *Building a House of European History* published in 2013 concerning the development process of the HEH, the president of the Parliament, Martin Schulz, elaborated on how it would function as a public space. He anticipated ‘The creation of a public space, a ‘House’ [that]... will become a platform where the politician plays the role of facilitator in the democratic debate and where the historians and the curators freely carry out their function to convey their knowledge and reading of European history.’¹⁸³

In this statement Schulz uses the term ‘public space’ as a figure of speech which transcends the basic understanding of a physical space, moving much more towards Habermas’ view of a public sphere as arena of deliberation, as mentioned above. This was a further tentative step towards the terms *public space* and *public sphere* becoming synonymous with, or at least representative of, political aspirations. These terms entered vocabulary of the communication work of the European governing bodies and had notable ramifications for the HEH.

In this statement President Schulz not only sets out the HEH role as guardian and disseminator of knowledge about the ‘culture and history of European peoples’, as it is formulated in the Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹⁸⁴, but in addition refers to the HEH project as a ‘significant innovation in the way in which an advanced democratic system approaches its relationship with the

¹⁸³ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*, p. 2. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁸⁴ European Commission (2012) *Treaty on European Union*. Available online at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012E%2FTXT>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

past'¹⁸⁵. He explicitly asserts the HEH's role as a proactive communication agent that will eventually 'engage visitors in critical reflection on what the European integration process means'¹⁸⁶. Indeed, a great deal of the President's and, subsequently, the Parliament's communications at the time envisaged the role of the HEH as providing the 'space necessary for debate, knowledge and exchange of views regarding the history of Europe, its people and institutions'¹⁸⁷.

The idea of public space as a medium for problem-solving and having the capacity to orientate people's future thinking, was gathering strength. In the Preface to *Building A House of European History*, the President speaks about the HEH as an institution in the service of European Union's vision for the future, 'We are building our European project on solid common roots, but our political union is all about the future'¹⁸⁸. In saying this, Schulz is unmistakably following the footsteps of his predecessor in office, the initiator of the HEH project, Hans-Gert Pöttering, for whom it was 'a locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow, ... a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union'¹⁸⁹. Arguably, the development of HEH as a mechanism within the Parliament's communications tool has to be examined against the background of the rhetoric prevailing at the time, which shows the strong influence of the then on-going debate around the EU's democratic deficit. Hence the necessity 'to do something more about communication', as everybody was saying around the time of Constitutional failure in 2005, as was recalled by the project manager of the Parliament's Visitor Centre Parlamentarium, Alexander Kleinig.¹⁹⁰

The background to the debate about the democratization of European governance, which has proved a constant conundrum, is rooted in the general perception that there is low public support for the European idea. On the other hand, the rhetoric of one of the most high-ranking EU officials – though generally positive about the future prospects – implicitly indicates that the cause of the problem of democratic

¹⁸⁵ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*, pp. 2-3. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ European Parliament (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*, p. 5. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁹⁰ Kleinig, A. (2011) *Parlamentarium – Interactive, multimedia, multilingual*. Available online at: <http://www.ep-webeditors.eu/2011/10/parlamentarium-interactive-multimedia-multilingual/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

deficit lies within the communication work of the EU institutions themselves. A problem, which has laid dormant ever since the creation of the EU back in 1992, was painfully realized after the low turnout at the Parliamentary elections in 2004 (the average EU turnout had decreased from 61.99% in 1979 to 42.61% in 2014)¹⁹¹ and a surprise failure of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe due to negative public referendum in France and Holland in 2005. These setbacks were subsequently addressed by the communication policies drafted soon after.

It was the European Commission who responded first to the image crisis of the EU. Morganti and van Audenhove¹⁹² say that in a self-critical manner it blamed the insufficiently developed communication work failed in the battle for people's minds and hearts. President José Manuel Barroso, then new to the Commission, created a new post for Commissioner for Communication, to which Margot Wallström was appointed. She began her work with a long phase of internal and external consultations. In July 2005, she presented her first action plan, geared at the modernisation of the communication practices of the institution, and widely known as the Plan-D: for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate. After the 'period of reflection', which lasted for about a year following the Constitutional failure, the communication work was given a new start both with the launch of the Plan D in 2005. *The White Paper on European Communication Policy*, followed in early 2006, which sought to 'close the gap' between the European institutions and citizens through the pursuit of a revamped communications policy. Among other things, this consultation paper identified such problems as the lack of 'meeting places where Europeans from different Member States can get to know each other and address issues of common interest'¹⁹³. Thus, there was a spatial dimension to solving the problem.

For the first time the Commission's communication plan included the notion of a public meeting space in a physical sense. Moreover, the concept of a public sphere, both significantly and surprisingly, appears in this document too. Widely used in political science and sociology for decades, the notion of a public sphere¹⁹⁴ was charged

¹⁹¹ European Parliament (2014) *Results of the 2014 European elections*. Available online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html>. Last accessed: 24 March 2018.

¹⁹² Morganti, L. and van Audenhove, L. (2012) 'Communication and Information Strategies and Policies for the European Public Sphere: Between Rhetoric and Facts', in Morganti, L. and Bekemans, L. (eds) *The European Public Sphere: From Critical Thinking to Responsible Action*. Brussels: Peter Lang, p. 125.

¹⁹³ European Commission (2006) *White Paper on a European Communication Policy*. p. 4. Available online at: http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com2006_35_en.pdf. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

¹⁹⁴ The German *Öffentlichkeit* by comparison to *public space* doesn't necessarily have connotation of a physical space. In turn, the French *publicité* is closer to German version, accordingly closer to the original meaning invested in this

by the time it entered the EU jargon with a definite meaning, alluding to the academic writing of German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas. It is noteworthy when this type of technical vocabulary enters the communication jargon of the EU officials, it does not do so always in a positive way. As one observer has ironically commented, ‘that it has [been] wholly embraced by EU policy makers is no recommendation to the notion’¹⁹⁵. A critical view, for example, on appropriation by the European establishment of the ‘public sphere’ concept is summed up by the web-based platform *E!Sharp*, which claims to provide ‘a sharper view from inside Europe’. It describes European public sphere (EPS) as follows:

For its critics, this term sums up all that is wrong with the efforts by the EU institutions to explain what they do. Coined by the European Commission’s directorate-general for communication, it refers to the idea that the EU needs a forum where ordinary people – or citizens, as they are invariably referred to in EU jargon – can meet, either physically or virtually. If ever an example of the endemic problem of “Brussels talking to Brussels” were needed, say the critics, this is it. The Commission insists that Europeans are desperate to see the creation of the EPS ... Critics say the EU officials who dreamt up this meaningless concept really should get out more.¹⁹⁶

If the concept is indeed a meaningless ‘Brussels talking to Brussels’ euphemism, it has yet to be proved to be the case when looking at concrete examples of communication policies in action, for example the HEH, along with the general public perception of it. Following the motto of ‘enhancing debate and dialogue’, the *White Paper on European Communication Policy* explicitly speaks about the European public sphere as the ultimate goal to strive for. It is self-evident, though, that reinforcing the public sphere, to which European institutions have bound themselves to, and on which they are now held accountable, does not necessarily imply support for the European project. On the contrary, ensuring space for public discussion and deliberation has, at times, witnessed the consolidation of an anti-European sentiment. The unpredictable

word by Habermas: public space as the realm of literary rational discourse. Neither *Öffentlichkeit* nor *publicité* has that strong physical connotation which is present in the English notion of a public space, which though simultaneously has potential to convey the meaning of the realm of ideas and discourse.

¹⁹⁵ Berlaymonster Blogpost. Available online at: <http://berlaymonster.blogspot.be/2014/04/twitter-fight-club-view-from-canvas.html>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁹⁶ See the *E!Sharp* online magazine. Available online at: <https://esharp.eu/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

character of communications work seemed to be a major concern of President Barroso, under whose guidance the Commission came up with idea of revitalizing this aspect of the EU's work, for as he stated, 'It is strange – or maybe not – that political forces that have always criticized a lack of democratic accountability in Europe now reject such new measures that are designed precisely to strengthen that accountability'¹⁹⁷.

During his time as Commission President, the idea of European public space became a constant refrain in his public addresses, which drew on the axiom that 'the times of European integration by implicit consent of citizens are over'¹⁹⁸. The centrality of the concept of EPS in the future vision of the EU was, by this time, indelible. It was prominent in the President's State of the Union Address of 2009 to the European Parliament plenary session, shortly after the Parliament's powers had been enhanced through the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty. Even in more economically stringent times, the State of the Union Address given by President Barroso in September 2012 spoke explicitly about development of the communication tools managed by the European Commission which 'aim at increasing the interest, the understanding and the involvement of the EU citizens in the EU integration process and in the development of a European Public Space'.¹⁹⁹ Simultaneously he called for the development of a European public space 'where European issues are discussed and debated from a European point of view'²⁰⁰.

If a communications strategy involving the use of 'public space' was to be effective, then greater financial support in this area was required, and this was to have an impact on the HEH's annual budget and the overall project development as I will show below.

After nearly decade of its revised communication, during which time it tried out various ways of consulting audiences and with an increasingly public face, the EU governing bodies were forced to admit that the objective of enhanced European public space or sphere was becoming more paradoxical as time moved on. While it required the ruling elite to activate the concept, once established the very civic society it was

¹⁹⁷ New Europe: *Barroso spoke about the power and influence required to safeguard Europe's peace and prosperity*. Available online at: <http://www.neweurope.eu/article/considerations-present-and-future-european-union>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁹⁸ José Manuel Durão Barroso (2013) *Speech by President Barroso at the State of the Union conference: Restoring confidence*. Available online at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-397_en.htm. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

¹⁹⁹ José Manuel Durão Barroso, *State of the Union 2012 Address*. Available online at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-596_en.htm. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

empowering used it to challenge the very actions and attitudes of the Establishment. Alas, democratic governance, which champions transparency and holds dear the freedom of speech, at times finds itself in a situation where it is paralysed by the consequences of its own actions. But then the world democracies have learned how to cope with paradoxes like these and even mastered how to turn civic discontents into an advantage. For instance, the Occupy Wall Street protests in September 2011 in New York against the bailout of the failed banks by the USA government, as noticed by Žižek, were turned into an advantage for the White House who without consulting the protestors pursued the bailout plans and stylized the protests as a sign of democracy for the international society.²⁰¹

However, many citizen initiatives, NGOs and lobbyists in the cultural realm (specifically the history politics domain) are supportive of such democratising initiatives of the EU as the European public sphere concept. As outlined above, while not exactly a failure of democratic governance as such, the failure of the EU to encourage citizen engagement, through consultation and encouraging active participation in its affairs, was, according to Commission paper, because there was a lack of an ‘obvious forum within which they [citizens] can discuss these issues together’²⁰². It is perhaps not surprising then that soon after this realization that the Parliament’s Visitor Centre Parlamentarium and the HEH were proposed as groundbreaking communication initiatives. In essence they were designed to address this issue both in a physical and a metaphorical sense, and to be seen as contributing to building a European public space and sphere, each in its own way. It is against this background of the Commission’s renewed enthusiasm for communication, the newly appointed president of the Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering pledged the establishing of a House of European History in his inaugural speech in February 2007. At that time the official reasoning around communicating the European integration project had developed to the point where any initiative which satisfied the missing ‘meeting point’ or, in the words of the President himself, promised a ‘locus ... where the concept of the European idea

²⁰¹ Žižek, S. (2011) *Living In The End Times*. London and New York: Verso.

²⁰² European Commission (2006) *White Paper on a European Communication Policy*, p. 5. Available online at: http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com2006_35_en.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

can continue to grow'²⁰³, was welcomed by majority of the members of the Parliament, and later in that year proposal was unanimously accepted by the Bureau.

For a short time (until its opening on 14 October 2011) the preparatory works for the opening of Parliament's Visitor Centre ran in tandem with the HEH, but they were more low key and proved to be far less politically contentious than the HEH. The idea for a visitor's centre, as reported by Alexander Kleinig, came from, Sir Julian Priestley, the Secretary General at the time who after visiting the visitor centre on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., came up with proposal 'to do something similar'²⁰⁴. The timing was perfect, the political support and the necessary planning permits were secured, and, after having dropped the idea of Musée de l'Europe in these premises, in rather quick time the centre was opened in a wing of the Willy Brandt building.

Alongside the newly opened public spaces came the rebranding of the main public square of the Parliament's courtyard into the 'European Esplanade'. Officially called after the Polish democratisation movement of the 1980s *Solidarność*, it became the 'Citizen's Mall'²⁰⁵ and a massive investment in broadcasting and the web services at once signalled the Parliament's intention to become a major player in the EU communication business, using both the physical and virtual tools at its disposal. Up until that time, the digital platforms and mass media outlets were considered the extent of the 'public space' by which the EU engaged with its citizens. The physical public space in the European Quarter in Brussels, together with the Parliament's information offices in all the EU member states (now stylized as European Public Spaces) did not have the same degree of acceptance in people's minds on what constitutes European public space/sphere. The perception of the dominance of virtual public sphere over the physical was captured in a phrase of Stephen Clark, the former Director of the Web service of the DG COMM and later director of Directorate C under which supervision the HEH opened in 2017. Rhetorically he asked around the time of the start of HEH project, 'Will the elusive European public sphere turn out to be online?''²⁰⁶. It would

²⁰³ European Parliament (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*, p. 4. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 26 September 2017.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Alexander Kleinig (2011) *Parlamentarium – Interactive, multimedia, multilingual*. Available online at: <http://www.ep-webeditors.eu/2011/10/parlamentarium-interactive-multimedia-multilingual/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁰⁵ De Cannière, A., Roggemans, M-L. and Rouyet, Y. (2013) 'The Development of the European Quarter', in Corijn, E. and van de Ven, J. (eds) *The Brussels Reader: a Small World City to Become the Capital of Europe*. Brussels: Brussels University Press, p. 263.

²⁰⁶ Clark, S. and Priestley, J. (2012) *Europe's Parliament: People, Places, Politics*. London: John Harper Publishing, p. 414.

seem that the very physical character of European public space created by the Parliament had not yet established itself to be on the same rank as the more developed media work, and that a lot of effort and investment would be needed to engender the physical European public space programme with the same degree of momentum. Moreover, the legitimate questions of the sceptics whether ‘was it feasible to ask historians from different countries and traditions to develop and agree on a common narrative for European history?’ and ‘could the European Parliament, a quintessentially political construction, credibly undertake a project the ultimate success and reputation of which would depend on its ability to distance itself from the politics of the moment?’²⁰⁷, could be convincingly answered only *post factum*.

Retrospectively, the sceptic of the HEH himself, Stephen Clark, admits that ‘The early sceptics are confounded’²⁰⁸ and that this is in large part thanks to academic independence that the HEH was granted in choosing its own way. But what exactly was the spectrum of manoeuvre of this new public space in the larger EU communications business – ‘a museum of European history whose main priority was academic independence but that was at the same time under the aegis of an intensely political body – the European Parliament’²⁰⁹, as noted by Tessa Ryan, the later Coordinator of Communications at the HEH and the most experienced among APT members in working for the European supranational legislator?

HEH in view to European public space in its ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ forms

Thus far the global communication thinking and the associated policy development of the European governing institutions have been examined, and how they were notably influenced by the need to address issues relating to governance democratisation were triggered by the record low participation turnout at the Parliament elections in 2004, failure of Constitutional project in 2005, and the EU debt crisis of 2009. This thinking shaped the major events in the implementation process of the HEH during 2013 and 2014 and resulted in it becoming central to the Parliament’s and Commission’s communication strategies.

²⁰⁷ Clark, S. (2018) ‘The House of European History as a Hybrid Project: An Administration’s Eye View’, in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 40.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰⁹ Ryan, T. (2018) ‘A Leap of Faith: Communicating the House of European History’, in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 324.

With the approval of the *Concept Design* for the permanent exhibition by the Bureau on 22nd October 2012, construction work started on the Eastman building in early 2013. The Spanish contract designers, General de Producciones y Diseño, S.A. (GPD), later renamed Acciona, S.A., were appointed to undertake the detailed design for the exhibition. This work lasted well into Summer 2014. Other important steps towards completion of the project included the installation of the collections management system, MuseumPlus in Spring 2013, provided by the Swiss company Zetcom AG. As will be evident later, the launch of the object acquisition and loaning campaign, turned out to be one of the most challenging parts of the project.

Alongside the building works, the work continued on refining the various policies for exhibitions, learning, research, collecting, partnership, communications etc., and on resolving important budgetary issues, particularly those linked to the opening of the facility. This was now set for a date in 2015, but which was postponed again to November 2016, and finally to Spring 2017.

At the Academic Committee meeting held on 28th January 2013, the Project Coordinator, Harald Rømer, gave an overview on the budgetary forecast of the project, up to its completion. He informed members about the consequences of changing the opening date, stating that although such a change would not affect the global budget, the postponement would result in the available money having to be spread out between then and the new opening date.²¹⁰ A considerable proportion of the yearly budget – €1m in 2013 was allocated for the purpose of acquisition of objects and expenses related to logistics of the new collections. The same amount was earmarked for both 2014 and 2015.

Given the importance of collections work in the future museum, the delay in the acquisition and sourcing of objects for loan collections work in 2013 had a direct impact on the scheduled opening in late 2015. At the end of 2013 an internal communication was released that stated that due to failure of a tender for hiring a collections facilitator (an external expert in art market) who would be responsible for managing the purchase of objects on behalf of the HEH (since the Parliament was not legally allowed to acquire objects), the unspent €700,000 earmarked for this had to be returned to the budget of DG COMM. The other €300,000 within the budget was used by the HEH to support the various tasks related to building the collection, such as

²¹⁰ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 28 January 2014. PE528.944/BUR/GT.

financing the many business trips, purchasing the first few objects for the collection, and paying for the services of external contractors to undertake research and the like. The contract with the Belgian collection facilitator Bounameaux Sprl for provision of services for building up a collection of museum objects had a value of € 4.2 million, excluding VAT. It was finally signed in May 2014, after a second tendering round, and the acquisition of objects for the exhibition started soon afterwards. Building up the collection and managing the loans programme for the new museum, as part of the larger communications strategy, and with a continually shifting opening date, proved a complex business. The European Parliament, as a newcomer to the business had to learn many, sometimes painful, lessons on what it takes to operate in the international museum environment, but particularly around the time and money that is needed to build a proper museum. Learning these lessons took time and was a principle cause of the several delays in realization of the HEH.

At the meeting of 8th July 2013, Harald Rømer repeatedly informed those present that the European Commission had earmarked €800,000 in its draft budget for 2014 to cover about a thirty per-cent of the running costs of the project during the forthcoming year.²¹¹ In doing so the Commission was showing its support for a European Parliament project, and confirmation of the promise of financial help has been expressed by José Manuel Barroso since 2011.²¹² This commitment was made at the request of Pöttering in order to resolve the problem with the Socialist and Green Groups who blocked the approval of the 2012 budget for HEH project until the issue of how the running costs were to be paid after the completion of the project were cleared. ‘The commitment by the Commission to the European Parliament worked wonders’²¹³, says Pöttering, the request was withdrawn and the budget for 2012 adopted, yet the Parliament could not sort out the legalities on how to accept this support until the opening in 2017.

The Commission’s decision to cover a third of the running costs of the HEH reflected its support of the principle behind the project, and committed it to a future, long-term cooperation with the HEH. Thus, there was unanimity amongst the legislative

²¹¹ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 8 July 2013. PE516.091/BUR/GT.

²¹² It was at the meeting of Academic Committee on 12 October 2011 (PE479.740/BUR/GT) that Harald Rømer for the first time reported about a support letter from the President of the European Commission Barroso to that time President of the Parliament Buzek, in which he expressed Commission’s intention to commit a substantial contribution in support of the European Parliament to the functioning of the House of European History.

²¹³ Pöttering, H-G. (2018) ‘From Idea to Realisation’, in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 25.

and the executive EU bodies concerning the associated communication goals of the HEH. Such support can also be seen as an attempt by the Barroso Cabinet to leave a legacy concerning participative citizenship initiatives alongside ‘The New Narrative for Europe’ launched during the years of his presidency.²¹⁴ The Commission’s ‘New Narrative for Europe’ was part of a larger Debate on the future of Europe programme, carried out during the European Year of Citizens 2013.²¹⁵ It aimed at contributing to the concept of European public space through mobilizing European intellectuals and the broader public to engender an open debate. To this end this outreach project was started, for collecting views and visions on Europe’s future. It took the form of a series of ‘town-hall meetings’ across the continent, as well as asking targeted individuals to contribute in writing. After 18 months in operation some 51 Citizens’ Dialogues had held, across all Member States, and just before the European Parliamentary elections of May 2014 the Commission published a summary of this campaign. It was entitled *Citizens’ Dialogues as a Contribution to Developing a European Public Space*.²¹⁶

Contrary to the dominant technocratic–intergovernmental vision of the Europe, the cultural committee of the project stated that what defines Europe is a ‘state of mind’²¹⁷ and a moral and political responsibility shared by citizens across the continent, thus it mirrored exactly the vision of Europe as a cultural public space/sphere. In this formulation, the idea behind this initiative comes very close to the concept proposed by Umberto Eco at the Prodi-Verhofstadt think tank (2001) on the issue of the Capital of Europe. The concept, which was dubbed ‘soft’ as opposed to ‘hard’, suggested Brussels becomes a centre for discussing all the big political issues. By contrast, the architect Rem Koolhaas’s so-called ‘hard’ concept took a different approach. He proposed two particular forms of representation: ‘firstly through both verbal and visual communication, and secondly through the physical substance and the buildings of the

²¹⁴ European Commission, *A New Narrative for Europe*. Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/new-narrative_en. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²¹⁵ European Commission, *Europe for Citizens Programme*. Available online at: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²¹⁶ European Commission, *Citizens’ Dialogues as a Contribution to Developing a European Public Space: Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. Available online at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52014DC0173>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²¹⁷ European Commission, *A New Narrative for Europe: The Mind and Body of Europe*. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/policy/new-narrative/documents/declaration_en.pdf. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

European institutions’²¹⁸. Both the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ approach outlined by the Prodi-Verhofstadt think tank provide the extremes of the concept of a public space and are therefore particularly interesting when it comes to building an understanding the whole spectrum of views within the discourse of European public space and sphere.

The Citizens’ Dialogues, a typical example of a ‘soft approach’, ran throughout the 2013 European Year of Citizens. They were meant to be an appeal to people to become involved; ‘As artists, intellectuals and scientists, and first and foremost as citizens, it is our responsibility to join the debate on the future of Europe, especially now, when so much is at stake’²¹⁹, and as an innovative communication tool it was seen as preparing the ground for the European Parliamentary elections of 2014. As such it aligned with the communication strategy of both the Commission and the Parliament. Assessing the benefits of the Citizens’ Dialogues, which involved both members of EU Institutions and actors at national level, it has been said in the final report that:

... they can effectively contribute to the development of a European Public Space. A space in which Europeans speak with each other rather than about each other, in which European issues are debated from a European point of view, creating a European narrative that is based on our shared values and that takes into account national and regional specificities.²²⁰

While the Citizens’ Dialogues, which occurred as events and online, were seen as a ‘soft’ aspect by the Commission, it saw the HEH project as providing the complimentary ‘hard’ – permanent and onsite – element in the narration of Europe’s history and engaging audiences in the debate about its future. Just as the Parliament had seen, since 2011, the advantages of having a specially designed space in its premises in Brussels for involving citizens in reflecting on the issues of European importance at large, and the institutional operation of Parliament in particular, the Commission now seemed to be eager to participate in developing a centrally placed public space. It favoured the Léopold Quarter in Brussels, where the history of European Commission

²¹⁸ ²¹⁸ De Cannière, A., Roggemans, M-L. and Rouyet, Y. (2013) ‘The Development of the European Quarter’, in Corijn, E. and van de Ven, J. (eds) *The Brussels Reader: a Small World City to Become the Capital of Europe*. Brussels: Brussels University Press, p. 273.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ European Commission, *Citizens’ Dialogues as a Contribution to Developing a European Public Space: Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, p. 1. Available online at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52014DC0173>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

and its forerunners, along with the issues of public interest, could be addressed, through having a ‘hard’ presence. While the HEH, with its broad chrono-thematic approach to European integration, was not set up to reflect on the history of just one of the European institution, it could accommodate the communication interests of the Commission, just as it could do so for others, the Parliament and the Council of Europe, for example.

With the promise to allocate an annual grant in aid to the HEH, President Barroso was cementing the legacy of his cabinet beyond October 2014, when his term of office expired, while the Parliament’s HEH project could, in turn, deliver aspects of the Commission’s Plan D, which was supposed to run throughout the lifetime of the Barroso Commission, and beyond. Thus a complementarity ran across both parties.

Towards a common EU communication policy?

According to Morganti and van Audenhove, the aspired to co-ordination of communication policies across the European governing bodies, developed after 2005, remained an unfulfilled paper exercise, and in reality ‘each of the three European institutions has its own means and instruments for informing the public and carrying out its own information and communication policy’, and ‘the reality is that still today the three main European institutions have independent and heterogeneous information services and policies’²²¹. The cooperation between Parliament and Commission in establishing the HEH, therefore, can be considered a step towards closer co-operation, both ‘soft’ terms (the overall EU communications work) and the ‘hard’ (the urban development of the European Quarter in Brussels).

Against the background of the considerable public communication work pursued by the Parliament and Commission during 2013 and 2014, the internal communication work of the HEH at that time retained the principle of quiet, effective progress. This notwithstanding the fact that ever since the announcement of the support letter received by Barroso in October 2011, the Vice-President of the Parliament for Multilingualism and the Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees, Martínez Martínez, stressed both the importance of President Barroso’s letter in the budgetary negotiations and the importance of communication within the development of the project.²²² Thus

²²¹ Morganti, L. and van Audenhove, L. (2012) ‘Communication and Information Strategies and Policies for the European Public Sphere: Between Rhetoric and Facts’, in Morganti, L. and Bekemans, L. (eds) *The European Public Sphere: From Critical Thinking to Responsible Action*. Brussels: Peter Lang, p. 125.

²²² Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 12 October 2011. PE479.740/BUR/GT

since 2011 the question of communications was a recurring motif especially at the meetings of the Board of Trustees, yet there was never much by way of follow-up. While some of the trustees advocated for more visibility and greater public communication, members of the Academic Committee, notably Prof. H-W. Hütter, were decisively against such action. The proposal of enhanced visibility came from the founder of the project, H-G. Pöttering, and from the Bureau itself. The Bureau's stance was predictable, given that it was chaired by the Secretary General Klaus Welle, the former chief of the Pöttering's Christian Democrats party office in Brussels. With Hütter and Pöttering sharing that same conservative political outlook, their disagreement concerning public communication had to do more with the caution of an experienced museum practitioner versus the outward looking views of a politician. Hütter's caution was centred on a fear that, at a vulnerable point in its development phase, the HEH might be compromised by the pressures coming from a notable degree of public interest. In this regard he was mindful of what had recently happened on similar projects; both the Dutch and French Houses of History had come unstuck during the conceptualization phase. While there was this disagreement among the former Committee of Experts and the Bureau in the early development phase in 2011 and 2012, both sides – the Academic Committee and the Bureau – as observed by Kaiser, they later agreed that the German experience in building up their House of History with the 'cross-party and public debate about its objectives' could not be replicated on a European level without running a risk of jeopardizing the project.²²³

The Committee repeatedly turned down the proposal by the Bureau for holding a high-level conference on the issues of European history (provisionally entitled 'European history in the mirror'). This was a clear sign that both parties had yet to synchronise their communication strategies. While the members of the Bureau were tempted by more publicity, the Academic Committee was focused on the technical realization of the exhibition. At the meeting of 24th September 2012, when this Bureau proposal was discussed, 'members of the Academic Committee raised concerns about the moment of the Bureau request and the nature of the conference envisaged and advocated that the conference be held after the opening of the House of European History'²²⁴. Having turned down the idea of the conference, the communication work of

²²³ Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p.

²²⁴ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 24 September 2012. PE5502.412/BUR/GT.

the HEH stagnated, except for the single hard copy publication *Building a House of European History* in 2013, discussed earlier, little else was forthcoming. In the opinion of some, this publication marked a belated launch of the public communication campaign of the HEH. But in reality, this campaign did not take off until the opening in 2017.

Apart from this booklet, the HEH developed a simple website in 2013, which was incorporated into the general Parliamentary site, under the section on Visitor information. It also held two workshops with external digital access experts aimed at developing an online strategy for the HEH in the run-up to its scheduled opening in late 2015, subsequently postponed. Apart from these elements, the communication work of the HEH remained confined to the participation by APT members at occasional conferences, and presentations at the Parliament's annual Open Days held in May, and at the annual European Youth Event from 2014 onwards.²²⁵

While the Board and Academic Committee concerned themselves with the communications dilemma, in 2013 the APT curators were focused more on collecting material for the future museum, and in doing so visited around 300 museums in 37 European countries. There they met museum managers and curators to discuss long-term loans for the permanent exhibition which was conceived of having a seven-year lifespan. This resulted in more than 3000 objects being registered on the collections management system prior the production phase finally commencing in 2016. All of these objects, without a great deal of critical assessment, were considered potential items for inclusion in the exhibition, either through long-term loan, digital reproduction or replication. In the end many of the object proved not to be available on loan.

The process of researching objects for the exhibition raised many questions and gave rise to a number of problems. The centralized system of email requests to major European national museums failed completely, and the process of sourcing objects had to be done individually by the curators on a case-by-case basis. This proved to be far more laborious than first envisaged. It also emerged that the object sourcing, the negotiation of loan agreements and the purchasing campaign had a distinct geographic bias, which coincided with the countries from where the curators came or were interested in. Right up until the opening, the object sourcing campaign was the most publicly visible HEH activity. It was confined to the professional contacts and did not

²²⁵ European Parliament's *European Youth Event*. Available online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/european-youth-event/en/home/previous-editions.html>. Last accessed on: 27 September 2017.

have an explicit political dimension. This characteristic of the approach was influential, bearing in mind that at the time of the European Parliament elections of May 2014, the activity of various history politics interest groups had intensified. Their interest in the HEH grew from this point and continued until its opening, and with it came an increased level of enquiries; who will be represented in the exhibition and whose story will it be? Such inquisitiveness could be seen as being absolutely normal and even necessary in making the HEH as a democratic public space. All of the memory and history politics interest groups would have liked to have seen their views represented.

Before turning to the actors of history politics and sketching the possible points of contestation, it is necessary to give a short overview on how the final design was received by the bodies consulted by the HEH and the Bureau.

Final Exhibition Design

In keeping with the aspiration to make quiet continual progress, on 4th December 2013, the *Final Exhibition Design*²²⁶ (a document of 843 pages comprising visualizations, summary of content of each of the topic and technical specifications) was presented to the Contact Group of the Board of trustees. It was approved, there being no significant objections to either the exhibition concept nor the proposed design layout.²²⁷ With the green light being given, the APT presented the paper to the Academic Committee on the 28th January 2014. After making minor remarks about some of the design solutions and requests for a few amendments, the design was accepted by the Committee. A few reservations were expressed by Committee members, notably by Prof. O. Rathkolb and Prof. H-W. Hütter. These related to the sector concerning European integration, which they thought was conventional and old fashioned, visually too static and not in keeping with the views emerging from the latest scholarly debate on the subject.²²⁸ More specifically, this criticism was levied at the display on the ‘Founding Fathers’ of the European Community. It was felt that the focus on individual personalities was reductive and only repeated what was already available in the Parliamentarium and that the proposed display and narrative on what was considered a core topic did not reveal the complexity of the development of European integration. This observation echoed

²²⁶ Academic Project Team, House of European History, *Final Exhibition Design*. 2013. Not published internal document.

²²⁷ Board of Trustees, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 4 December 2013. PE525.114/BUR/GT.

²²⁸ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 28 January 2014. PE528.944/BUR/GT.

that of Committee members, expressed earlier in 2013, regarding the design proposals for that part of the exhibition telling the rise of nationalism in 19th century, entitled ‘National Heroes’. The stories of the so-called National Heroes – historic persons and epic figures alike – were to be displayed in a standardised way, highlighting their iconographic similarities and status in a manner very similar to the approach exploited by the nationalist movements in the 19th century Europe. The reservation held about that aspect were mirrored in the concerns on the section on European integration too, thus causing reservations. The upshot was the depersonalisation of this section of the exhibition. Unlike the Musée de l’Europe whose display and interpretation relied heavily on the personal stories of the principle protagonists, the HEH, in the words of Kaiser, opted instead for an ‘antiquated focus on negotiations and treaties as “milestones”’²²⁹.

Maria Schmidt, Director of the House of Terror in Budapest and member of the Committee, repeatedly remarked (echoing her views of 2012 on the *Concept Design*) on the lack of cultural history in the exhibition, contrasting it with the prevalence of political history. Believing that the exhibition concept had strayed too far from the original premise and from her expectations as a political reactionary of the national conservative right-wing Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz), Ms Schmidt ceased attending the Academic Committee meetings from this point on, until the opening in 2017.²³⁰ Her disagreement with the way how the central question ‘What is Europe?’ is answered in the final exhibition, is brought to the point in the volume of essays *Creating the House of European History*:

It is thus important for us to point out the process of shared memory, as our national cultures are thoroughly permeated by the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions which we inherited from past millennia. The heritage is, however, still being overshadowed to this very day by the traumas of the

²²⁹ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 14.

²³⁰ In this regard telling is observation of Gero van Randow. In an article about Fidesz leader’s and the Prime Minister’s Victor Orbán’s illiberal democracy, he is quoting Orbán’s adviser, Maria Schmidt, who has been saying that ‘On the gravestone of the German soul I would write the following: suffocated by their leftist elite and the Holocaust rituals’. *Die Zeit* 14. April 2016. On this subject see also Applebaum, A. ‘A Warning From Europe: The Worst Is Yet to Come. Polarization. Conspiracy theories. Attacks on the free press. An obsession with loyalty. Recent events in the United States follow a pattern Europeans know all too well’. *The Atlantic*, 12 September 2018. Available online at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/10/poland-polarization/568324/>. Last accessed: 21 November 2018.

twentieth century ... However, the bitter experience of the dictatorships of the last century cannot constitute the dominating theme of the exhibition ...²³¹

Notwithstanding these and few other very minor disagreements, the *Final Design* was nevertheless approved. This cleared the way for the APT to present the document to the Parliament's Bureau in February 2014 for final approval. This was forthcoming. Thus, the project was able to pass to the next phase, the detailed design. Eventually the design was set out in the instruction book which was passed to the Belgian exhibition production company Meyvaert. It was scheduled to start the installation works in an early 2015, once the main building works had been completed. But the delays on the collecting campaign and the construction works necessitated a shift to 2016.

Actors and networks in EU history politics

As the project developed and the exhibition began to take a more concrete shape, the HEH's focus shifted increasingly to the subject of history and memory politics. If the complete overhaul of the communication strategy of EU's governing bodies, to which Parliament elections campaign in May 2014 was a good example, was about empowering participative citizenship and creating European public spaces, then the following years began to see this intent becoming manifest. Already prior to the election campaign, the APT could observe an increase in the activity of various of spheres of experts with their networks, conferences, journals, and various memoranda attempting to influence the EU history politics and the HEH work in particular, all of which represent this new policy of openness.

In the field of European history politics, the issues of public concern predominantly revolve around the legacy of totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. This legacy has proved to have tremendous potential to mobilize interest groups, who use their power to influence public opinion through various means. Parliament resolutions, research funding, educational programmes and the like are the overt manifestations of this influence. It is useful here to attempt to map the most visible players in the field of European history politics, or at least those who attempted to

²³¹ Schmidt, M. (2018) 'What is Europe?', in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 83.

influence the EU's official understanding of collective memory, and those who attempted to institutionalize particular collective memories through influencing the HEH project.

If in the public space the focus is upon rational deliberation, thought fundamental to the democratic decision-making process, then a useful approach for history politics activists to influence the processes is the concept of collective memory. For its protagonists, Europe should ideally become a 'community of memory'²³² itself. The concept of collective memory in history politics is akin to the concept of deliberation in a democratic public space; frequently it plays a role of *modus operandi* in problem solving. Memory, as both a subjective and an objective notion, is increasingly considered a useful tool in history museum setting. It can accommodate different views and with reference to its subjectivity avoid head-on clashes between representatives of different views. In short, the concept of collective memory, or more powerfully 'shared memory', ideally has a pacifying potential, as it presumes that the joint memories of the parties involved, their experience and living memory, are all equally valid in revealing the meaning of the past.

This mode of subjective historiography is supplemented by the strictly fact-based and corrective academic accounts. Consequently, a museum applying the tool of collective memory cannot expect to work with dogmatic truth but will recognise the value of a democratic and pluralistic public deliberation about the meaning of historic and current events. At least this is the theory for applying the concept of a collective memory in a history museum, but the outcome rarely results in a consensus or a synthetic truth, but, more of a reconciliation of diverging memories. That is why in an early phase of project development, the curators of HEH, as observed by the Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork, at the 1st European Remembrance Symposium in Gdansk in 2012, chose to work with collective memory, instead of identity, and which, according to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, is 'the prototype of ideology'²³³.

In reviewing the environment within which the HEH was operating in at the time, one can easily identify several groups of Members of the Parliament (MEPs) and their networks stretching across national governments, that had a particular interest in

²³² For discussion on Europe as a community of memory see Assmann, A. (2007) 'Europe: A Community of Memory?'. *GHI Bulletin*, No. 40, pp. 11-25.

²³³ Mork, A. (2012) 'Presentation of the House of European History'. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Symposium of European Institutions dealing with 20th Century History, Gdansk, Poland, 14-15 September 2012. Available online at: <http://www.europeanremembrance.eu/edition2012/house-of-european-history>. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

the field of history politics and for whom the collective memory concept is pivotal. Many thus turned their attention to the HEH project and, especially amongst the more experienced MEP's, pursued their interest, and that of other interest groups, using the available administrative avenues to influence the process of exhibition development. It is common knowledge that individuals and organisations without a permanent representation in Brussels or well-functioning networks with connections to it, are less likely to be able to exert an influence.

As early as 2012, the President of the Parliament, H-G. Pöttering and the APT leader, Taja Vovk van Gaal, had to deal with representation from organisations such as Bund der Vertriebenen²³⁴ (Federation of Expellees) in Bonn, the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory²³⁵ in Tallinn, and the Latvian War Museum²³⁶ in Riga. Each having commented upon and questioned the *Conceptual Basis for the House of European History* and made recommendations on the practical execution of the project.

The Bonn-based president of the Federation of Expellees, Erika Steinbach, for instance, lobbied for a more extensive treatment in the exhibition of the plight of the millions of German speaking people expelled from the territories of former German Reich and from the regions in central, eastern and southern Europe. Such representation was not effective in altering the exhibition content, and even if it had, it is unlikely that such a nationally well-positioned organisation as the Federation of Expellees would have been fully satisfied with any response coming from the administration of HEH. Such lobbying was, in the end, ineffective, possibly because such organisations felt that Brussels was too 'distant' from them to be able to follow up on their suggestions and because the HEH did not encourage it, preferring instead to keep a low profile.

Yet, among the most visible Brussels-based memory-politics groups interested in HEH was the Reconciliation of European Histories group. Composed mainly of the politicians from the Eastern European countries, it was specifically concerned with the memory of the crimes of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. As a group of conservative politicians belonging to the European People's Party, it is supportive of the European project overall. On its website one finds this statement,

²³⁴ Letter from Ms Erika Steinbach, Bund der Vertriebenen, to president of the European Parliament, H-G. Pöttering from 19 October 2012.

²³⁵ Letter from Mr Toomas Hiio, Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, to president of the European Parliament, H-G. Pöttering from 21 November 2012.

²³⁶ Letter from Ms Aija Fleija, Director of Latvian War Museum to APT leader Taja Vovk van Gaal from 29 January 2013.

Europeans and their neighbours have different ways of managing their historical memory and have to find yet their own way to achieve reconciliation with their past. The European Union is in itself an example of reconciliation. The EU has limited powers to deal with these issues “from above”. However, it can facilitate this process as much as possible by promoting discussions and by providing opportunities for mutual exchange.²³⁷

In other words, the group saw the EU governing bodies as providing the ‘space’ where the grass-root initiatives on European memory can be debated. As a grass-roots initiative, the Reconciliation of European Histories group emerged from the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, which was established following the adoption of the resolution on *European conscience and totalitarianism*, by the European Parliament in April 2009.²³⁸ As an educational project, founded by the governments of the Central and Eastern Europe during the Polish presidency at the European Council, it cooperates closely with the aforementioned informal all-party group under the leadership of Latvian MEP, Sandra Kalniete.²³⁹

Given that these history politics groups are interested in the institutionalization of particular collective memories, it is not unusual for these to be at odds with the interests of other collective memories. Associated disputes inevitably emerge when legislation is being drafted, but they also came to the fore as they attempted to influence the museum exhibitions and publications of the HEH. In his essay on the institutionalization of the memory of forced migration, the historian Stefan Troebst observes that forced migration and ethnic cleansing do not feature in the programme concerns of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. These were, however, concerns of Erika Steinbach of the Federation of Expellees when she wrote to the HEH. Troebst was of the view that the HEH ‘concentrates exclusively on what is called “totalitarian crimes” committed by “Nazism, Stalinism, fascist and communist regimes”’²⁴⁰. He adds, though, that ‘the EU’s planned House of European History

²³⁷ Reconciliation of European Histories. Available online at: <http://eureconciliation.wordpress.com/about/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²³⁸ *European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism*. Available online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

²³⁹ Platform of European Memory and Conscience. Available online at: <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁴⁰ Troebst, S. (2012) ‘The Discourse on Forced Migration and European Culture of Remembrance’. *The Hungarian Historical Review*. Vol. 1, No. 3/4 (2012), p. 407.

which is to open in Brussels in 2014 (sic) will address this topic'²⁴¹. The expectations placed upon the HEH so far as its role in reconciliation was concerned were particularly high from the very start of the project, a point recognised by the APT leader Taja Vovk van Gaal, who said, 'the existence of memory conflicts cannot be totally ignored'²⁴². Thus, the HEH sought to maintain a position in which it would be suggesting compromise in its vision of the 20th century history and the collective memories of different advocacy groups. Adopting such a position was, in retrospect, perhaps pragmatic, for as soon as 'conservative memory politics groups', as dubbed by the opponents, emerged, so did the groups representing their political counterparts. The actions taken by European Left in this regard I discuss in final part of this paragraph.

The politically right-of-centre Reconciliation group published an announcement on 20th March 2014, stating that in response to a letter sent by MEPs Sandra Kalniete (Latvia), Doris Pack (Germany), Jacek Protasiewicz (Poland), Tunne Kelam (Estonia), Vytautas Landsbergis (Lithuania), and Monica Macovei (Romania) the Parliamentarium Museum (sic) must move to ensure that Soviet aggression is incorporated into the exhibition.²⁴³

Setting aside its mistaking the Parliament's Visitor Centre for a museum, this articulates the history politics movement in action. The article states that in their letter 22nd May 2013, the MEPs expressed their concern that the museum of the European Parliament would not adequately address the role of the Soviet Union in fomenting World War Two, nor would it deal with its perpetration of severe crimes against humanity: 'While the Parliamentarium museum addresses the grave atrocities committed by the Nazi Regime and Nazi Germany's role as aggressor in World War Two, we find it disheartening that similar acts committed by the Soviet Union and their role as ally of Nazi Germany and co-aggressor at the start of the war are not mentioned'.²⁴⁴ A subsequent internal press release issued by the Directorate General for Communication later said that after reviewing the content the section, addressing the history before the European Union would be revised. This communication goes on to say that consultation was currently taking place with museums dedicated to Soviet crimes in order to select

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Van Gaal, T. and Dupont, Chr. (2012) 'The House of European History', in Axelsson, B., Dupont, Chr. and Kesteloo, C. *Entering the Minefields: The Creation of New History Museums in Europe: Conference Proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past, and the European Citizen, Brussels 25 January 2012*. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 78.

²⁴³ Reconciliation of European Histories. Available online at: <https://eureconciliation.eu/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

the most appropriate images. It is also stated that the administration of the Parlamentarium would be in touch with the Reconciliation Group regarding the implementation of its request, thus, maintaining a sense of urgency so typical of this type of political communication.²⁴⁵

The exhibition at the Parlamentarium had been in place since the end of 2011. Thus, it could be examined and representations for changing it could be made by lobby groups based on its extant content. However, given the exhibition intended for the HEH was unformed and still at the concept stage, the lobby groups had to find different ways of influencing its content while it was still in the process of production. This often began with a modest signal of interest. For example, an enquiry, dated 17th March 2014, from the Lithuanian MEP, Radvilė Morkūnaitė, a member of the Reconciliation of the European Histories group, to the Chairman of the Academic Committee, Włodzimierz Borodziej, and APT leader, T. Vovk van Gaal, indicated the growing interest of the Reconciliation group in the work of HEH. Morkūnaitė suggested, given the date of the opening was approaching, that there should be national representation from the Baltic States and closer cooperation with the heritage institutions of Baltic States in the setting up of the HEH.²⁴⁶ In a further letter of 31st March 2014, the Lithuanian MEP offered the support of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in development of HEH. This suggests how the lobby group could cooperate with and assist the HEH through, ‘... developing common activities and projects with the Platform, which could be implemented after the official opening of the House, for example, featuring the travelling exhibition at the HEH, or organizing continuous activities, such as presentations of the reader book and training for history teachers and professionals or organizing thematic seminars for visitors’²⁴⁷. It is important to notice here that the Lithuanian MEP sees the HEH as ‘an important work of strengthening European remembrance’, thus projecting the particular viewpoint of her history politics group and attempting to influence how the future museum should function and exactly what memories it should preserve and promote.

The other side of the political divide was equally forthright. A group of the European Left – ‘transform! europe’ – soon went on the offensive. This network for

²⁴⁵ European Parliament, DG COMM. Not published internal communication, 2014.

²⁴⁶ Letter from Radvilė Morkūnaitė, member of the Reconciliation of the European Histories group, MEP, to APT leader Taja Vovk van Gaal from 17 March 2014.

²⁴⁷ Letter from Radvilė Morkūnaitė, member of the Reconciliation of the European Histories group, MEP, to APT leader Taja Vovk van Gaal from 31 March 2014.

alternative thinking and political dialogue claimed to be a network of 27 European organisations drawn from 19 countries, and active in the field of political education and critical scientific analysis. It was and remains a political foundation of the European Left Party. The network states that it combines leftist and socialist intellectuals seeking to reform the integration process of the EU through communication and recommendation,²⁴⁸ which indicates the basic weapons in the arsenal of the memory politics lobbyist groups through which they make their claims and representations.

‘transform! europe’, at a workshop organised by the AKADEMIA Network and held on 14th February 2014, brought together a group of likeminded historians. The event was supported by the MEP Marie – Christine Vergiat (Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left). It saw various young historians, together with their experienced tutors, tasked with examining the future role of the HEH within European history politics. In their official communication ‘transform! europe’ pointed out the express need to ‘fight the offensive of conservative MEPs from Germany and Eastern Europe in their efforts to ‘hegemonise’ the contents of official EU programs of European historical memory in education and culture’²⁴⁹. Notably, the honorary MEP, Francis Wurtz, confirmed the ‘offensive of conservatives’ in the project of HEH and the ‘limited influence of progressive representatives in the board, like himself, to correct the extremely unbalanced, non-scientific and partisan representation of European history’²⁵⁰.

While one could dissect Mr Wurtz’s remarks further, these two examples show how opposing history politics lobby groups attempted to influence the development phase of the HEH. In the final analysis, the attempts to politicise the HEH and positions adopted by the both groups – European conservatives and the Left alike – are generally conceived to be poorly informed and considerably exaggerated. It might be argued that the eliciting of lobby interest from both political opposites was proof enough of the balanced political representation that was driving the HEH project. Not only was there a broad Parliamentary coalition supporting the HEH, as represented by the members of Bureau, Academic Committee and the Board of Trustees, but there was also a notable diversity of backgrounds amongst the curators of the APT itself.

²⁴⁸ *transform! europe*. Available online at: <http://www.transform-network.org/home.html>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁴⁹ *transform! europe*, ‘The Red Thread of Alternative Historiography’. Available online at: <http://transform-network.net/blog/blog-2014/news/detail/Blog/the-red-thread-of-alternative-historiography.html>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

While the above illustrates the on-going battle between the different networks and groups of MEPs, each representing the diverging history politics of the European conservatives (EPP) and the Europe's Left (PES), the HEH had to contend with another lobbying strand, that of the Eurosceptic. The Eurosceptics, with the British Conservatives at the forefront, continued to ridicule the Parliament's communication work, including the HEH, dubbing it as propaganda, self-aggrandisement and a squandering of taxpayers' money. This split between Eurosceptics and Europhiles, of course, goes much deeper than disputes over a particular project. It starts with a conflicting vision on the very idea of a federal Europe, with all of its accompanying elements; its symbols, rituals, and its notions of citizenship and federalism.

It was anticipated that the points advocated by these history politics groups, all of which subscribed to the European unification project, would grow and would be stated more vocally as the HEH evolved, and that the associated arguments would spill out to the public domain as the opening approached. However, the moderate cooperation and dialogue with the mentioned interest groups, seems to have saved the HEH from such public scrutiny. Nevertheless, its decision not to engage in high-profile communications did give rise to the perception that the HEH was somewhat secretive and lacked transparency, but then this was in keeping with the general assumption about Brussels bureaucracy.

Keeping in mind the institutional reasons for maintaining a low public presence for the HEH, for reasons explained before, this stance occasionally resulted in awkward situations. For example, as late as in April 2014, two of the APT content staff, Andrea Mork and Constanze Itzel, attended the Symposium '1914 - 2014. A European Century', organised by the German State Radio Deutschlandfunk, in Cologne. Such was the profile of the HEH that the editor-in-chief of radio station, Birgit Wentzien, in the interview about the conference, said that the occasion was the first time ever that HEH concept was to be presented to the public in Germany.²⁵¹

In fact, the Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork, had given presentations on the HEH on several occasions to academic gatherings before this (examples being the 1st European Remembrance Symposium in Gdansk in 2012,²⁵² and the 'Is there a common

²⁵¹ Detutschlandfunk, *1914-2014 Ein europäisches Jahrhundert. Internationales Symposium 5. April 2014*. Available online at: http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/1914-2014-ein-europaeisches-jahrhundert-internationales.2014.de.html?dram:article_id=279432. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

²⁵² European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity. Available online at: <http://www.europeanremembrance.eu/edition2012/house-of-european-history>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

European identity' round table discussion, held on 6 February 2013 in Stuttgart, organised by the Landesmuseum Württemberg). Given their nature, one might argue as to how 'public' such events were. There were other similar presentations on the HEH, but the notable point was not the inaccuracy of one commentator, but the obvious lack of a robust public communication strategy for the HEH. This was to be the case right up to its very opening. At a broader level, the answer as to why the European Parliament decided not to talk about the museum has to be attributed to the way communication and the representation culture had developed during the previous decades. This Politics of Representation needs specific consideration.

Politics of Representation – Master Plan for the European Quarter in Brussels

In parallel to history politics studies, with its preoccupation with memory cultures and the associated institutions, there is a growing field of research known as the Politics of Representation, which combines urban studies, sociology, and semantics. This study field takes the visual, spatial and the symbolic qualities of representation just as seriously as the memory advocacy groups take seriously European Parliament's resolutions.

The concept of 'representation' was boosted by the Prodi-Verhovstadt think tank of 2001 (the year of the Belgian presidency at the European Council), which invited intellectuals to reflect on the needs and functions of a capital of Europe and the way in which Brussels could at best express them. This was succinctly put by Romano Prodi as: 'I want Brussels to become a place that all citizens of the union can relate to'²⁵³. At the heart of the research around the politics of representation is the semantic exploration of the urban development of the political capital of Europe. It asks if and how the traditional notions of place remain relevant in an era of increased interdependence and lightning-speed communications.

Carola Hein's study *The Capital of Europe: Architecture and Urban Planning for the European Union* reveals the long and fragmented tradition of ideas on the development of a capital of Europe, from the Middle Ages, through to the post-war 20th

²⁵³ Wise, M. Z., 'THINK TANK; A Capital of Europe? Brussels Is Priming'. *The New York Times*, 2 March 2002. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/02/arts/think-tank-a-capital-of-europe-brussels-is-priming.html> Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

century European unification project.²⁵⁴ And, more specifically, in *The Brussels Reader: A Small World City to Become The Capital of Europe*²⁵⁵, Eric Corijn, Professor of Social and Cultural (urban) Geography at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), systematically explores the development of the European village in Brussels around the time of Constitutional crisis in 2005, the latest phase of urban planning for the European Quarter. This heuristic study examines the urban dynamics of Brussels for the first time. Corijn focuses on the city's urban development from the point of view of its function as a European political capital and the upon the development and expected proliferation of the Master Plan for the European Quarter, which had been approved by the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region in April 2008. The Master Plan of the Quarter aimed to transform the area into a dense and diverse urban neighbourhood, bringing together both the city's leading European and international employment hot spot into a nexus of diversified housing, commerce and local infrastructure.²⁵⁶

In compliance with this Master Plan, among the major interventions in the urban landscape of the European Quarter over the last decade were the highly symbolic buildings of the HEH in the renovated Eastman building in Parc Léopold and the Europa building of the European Council, operational since the end of 2016. A new train connection, completed in 2017, linking the European Quarter with Brussels international airport in Zaventem and with the development of Rond-point Schuman, will complete the face lift up of what was previously an unassuming office block area.

Prior the Parliamentarium opened in late 2011, there were practically no public spaces purposefully constructed in Brussels to symbolise the presence and values of the European Union. It is surprising, perhaps, that this dearth of representation has not been of interest in academic circles, or amongst cultural journalists. This lack of interest thus far suggests that the research field of European representation politics, focusing on its in-situ expressions, is only at the very early stage of development.

One of the few exceptions to this is the work undertaken by Caspar Pearson. He takes an analytic approach in looking at the visual language of European public space, through a case study on the Parliamentarium, seeing it as representing a first step in a

²⁵⁴ Hein, C. (2004) *The Capital of Europe: Architecture and Urban Planning for the European Union*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

²⁵⁵ Corijn, E. and van de Ven, J. (eds) (2013) *The Brussels Reader: a Small World City to Become the Capital of Europe*. Brussels: Brussels University Press.

²⁵⁶ De Cannière, A., Roggemans, M-L. and Rouyet, Y. (2013) 'The Development of the European Quarter', in Corijn, E. and van de Ven, J. (eds) *The Brussels Reader: a Small World City to Become the Capital of Europe*. Brussels: Brussels University Press, p. 364.

‘truly Copernican revolution’ in the Parliament’s attempt to open up the ‘European Esplanade’ to the cultural activities. Pearson’s thought-provoking essay ‘EUtopia? The European Union and the Parliamentarium in Brussels’ examines the visual language of the Parliament’s Visitor Centre, from the point of view ‘how the Parliamentarium and its displays might be related to various conceptions of EU territoriality, mediating between an ‘informational’ conception of the EU and one that is grounded in a more traditional idea of space’.²⁵⁷ His study reiterates the ‘iconographic deficit’ (a counterpart to the ‘democratic deficit’), as it was famously put by Rem Koolhaas, one of the Prodi-Verhovstadt think-tank contributors and keen observer of Brussels political and urban landscape.

Pearson asks ‘what kind of visual and spatial imaginary does EU command’ in the impersonal headquarters of political power in Brussels? By way of an answer he points to the gateway to the European Quarter – the Visitor’s Centre. Here he finds ‘bold blocs of saturated colours’, where the ‘EU may be felt, as much as thought’, yet he notes that one of the most persistent motifs of the Parliamentarium is ‘the fragmentation of language and the deployment of texts’²⁵⁸. He questions who actually finds meaning here, who identifies with the message who’s meaning cannot be deciphered? This leads him not without irony to conclude that the ‘Failure to establish a fixed text appears to be written all over the Parliamentarium’s walls’, and this stands in striking contrast to, as it is reported by its makers, the Capitol Visitor Center or the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, USA. In this sense, the author remarks, ‘Parlamentarium might be considered a kind of constitutional centre with no constitution’, that is to say, without a fixed or comprehensive text. Parliamentarium fails to imbue European unification as any a sort of article of faith. He is of the opinion that this was unsurprising, ‘following the failure to establish the desired European constitution ... seems actively to celebrate the absence of a fixed text’²⁵⁹. Pearson concludes that ‘the attempt to construct a visual imaginary based on the language of contemporary art is unusual and daring’²⁶⁰. Indeed, the visual representation of EU with its constant use of overlaid, blurred text on the walls and panels, indicates an uncertainty and a lack of clear message. Such a post-modern approach is not espoused

²⁵⁷ Pearson, C. (2013) ‘EUtopia? The European Union and the Parliamentarium in Brussels’. *City: analysis of urban trends, theory, policy, action*. Vol. 17:5, p. 636.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 651.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

by national history museums in their representation of ‘nationhood’, for good reason; to avoid such a lack of clarity. Instead such institutions prefer to use a more classic iconography to reflect the nation-state representative practice. The Parlamentarium stands in a stark contrast to these older institutions in the interpretation approach adopted, but purposefully so. The Visitor’s Centre complies with the recommendations of the Prodi-Verhovstadt think tank report, which hoped that ‘the model for a European capital should not be that of national states’²⁶¹.

All in all, the Parlamentarium, and subsequently the HEH, was the first time the EU’s legislative body attempted to communicate with audiences by means of creative imaginary and purpose-built physical space. Both convey meaning within the politics of representation in a ‘hard’ form (in Koolhaas’s sense). The question Pearson poses in the conclusion of his essay ‘whether a markedly postmodern visual language is adequate to shape the imagery of a political body such as the EU, or to construct a workable visual and spatial imaginary’²⁶² still remains open. What is clear though, is that in starting with the Parlamentarium in 2011 and continuing with the HEH in 2017, the European Quarter as a public space has been strengthened in its mission of ‘communicating Europe’. Such buildings stand as an apotheosis of the decades-long struggle of the modern-day EU to develop strategies to establish a cultural legitimacy and construct the European public.

Generic concepts of ‘the public’

History provides some interesting lessons in developing strategic solutions for addressing the EU deficits in securing the loyalty of subjects, the European public.

Luuk van Middelaar, the former speechwriter of the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, distinguishes ‘with a nod to history’ between three such strategies: the ‘German’, ‘Roman’, and ‘Greek’. The notions of ‘our people’, ‘to our advantage’ and ‘our own decisions’ correspond accordingly in three different models of ‘making the public’ and sustaining communication with citizens. He suggests that according to this classification the ‘German’ strategy relies on a cultural or historic identity shared by the rulers and the ruled; the ‘Roman’ strategy bases its appeal on the

²⁶¹ European Commission (2001) *Brussels, Capital of Europe*. Available online at: http://www.pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-mr/pbs/brussels_capital.pdf. Last accessed: 28 September 2017.

²⁶² Pearson, C. (2013) ‘EUtopia? The European Union and the Parlamentarium in Brussels’. *City: analysis of urban trends, theory, policy, action*. Vol. 17:5, p. 652.

benefits that people derive from a functioning political system with, historically speaking, the *pax romana* as its prototype; and the 'Greek' strategy, which rests on the periodic appraisal by the population of representatives, who in turn take decisions on their behalf.²⁶³

Van Middelaar's classification might suggest the sort of strategy, or a mix of strategies, to be favoured by the EU today, to secure public support for the European project as a whole, but it is also useful when it comes to the communication strategy to be adopted by such institutions as the HEH. Moreover, the three approaches have generic qualities that could be adopted for Europe's future development, as noted by other authors too. John Crowley and Liana Giorgi, in their book *Democracy in Europe: Towards the emergence of a public sphere* distinguish between three distinct narratives as a response to the legitimacy crises of the EU.²⁶⁴ The three narratives roughly match Van Middelaar's strategies: the first focuses on the importance of European identity or 'Europeanness' as a way to counter the weaknesses emerging in the legitimacy crises, the second emphasizes the 'Institutional reform' for the larger benefit of citizens, while the third accentuates the link between the legitimacy crises and the democratic deficit, that is to say, the lack of accountability between the governing mechanisms and citizens.

The same general division of three macro-understandings of the public sphere is also found in an analysis by Matteo Garavoglia. He distinguishes between a 'utopian European public sphere,' based on post-national patriotic constitutionalism and a shared identity as envisaged by Jürgen Habermas (identity centred German model), a more narrow and functionalist 'elitist public sphere' identified by Klaus Eder (legal regulation centred Roman model), and a 'fragmented and multifaceted public sphere', based on the Europeanisation of national public spheres as proposed by Jürgen Gerhards (polity and identity centred Greek model).²⁶⁵

These various threefold models for developing corresponding strategies across identity building, though applying the concept of collective memory as a mechanism for reinforcing participative citizenship, are at the heart of the intent of the HEH. As such

²⁶³ Van Middelaar, L. (2013) *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent became a Union*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 223.

²⁶⁴ Crowley, J. and Giorgi, L. (2006) 'Introduction: The Political Sociology of the European Public Sphere,' in Giorgi, L., von Homeyer, I. and Parsons, W. (eds) *Democracy in the European Union: Towards the Emergence of a Public Sphere*. London: Routledge, p. 1.

²⁶⁵ Garavoglia, M. (2011) 'Democracy in Europe: Politicizing Champions for the European Public Sphere', *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, IAI Working papers 11/14, pp. 8-9.

they give rise to such questions as, what type of public space is the museum of European history, and what 'public' is it seeking to empower? To answer such questions, we must have an understanding of the key attributes of a museum and how its spatial and visual practice can be used to create public space.

What public space is a museum?

As has been demonstrated, the EU embarked upon appropriating and putting to use the popular notion of public space and sphere in the wake of the democratic deficit debate (spurred on, among other things, by Habermas's and Derrida's call in 2003 for the need of strengthening constitutional patriotism of Europeans²⁶⁶). It did so for the purposes of framing the debate on an integrated Europe and giving it more definite contours. The general assumption was that the development of public sphere would enhance the EU's reputation as a fully-fledged participative democracy and thus secure its legitimacy. The public space and sphere, including the museum, as one of the central public spaces in the western world, has been used to these ends in Europe scene since the late 18th century.

A very useful and timely account of the museum as a public sphere is offered by Jennifer Barrett in her *Museums and the Public Sphere*. Barrett takes Habermas's concept of the public sphere, articulated in his classical study *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) as a starting point for her analysis. She makes an observation that Habermas's work has received significant critical response since its translation to English in 1989, within the disciplines of sociology, psychology and media studies in particular. However, until recently his work has not been widely applied to cultural studies. Barrett uses Habermas's theory of the public sphere in order to prove the centrality of a museum's institution within it.²⁶⁷

Habermas's classical public sphere theory attributes the emergence of citizen interaction in a democratic society exclusively to the rational literary discourse of the late 18th century, mainly in England and France. Perhaps paradoxically, there was a strong spatial connotation to the genesis of modern public sphere (from the milieu of cafés and to places of public gathering and exchange), which was the root of

²⁶⁶ Habermas, J. and Derrida, J. (2003) 'February 15, or, What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Core of Europe'. *Constellations*, Volume 10, Number 3, 2003, pp. 291-297.

²⁶⁷ Barrett, J. (2012) *Museums and the Public Sphere*. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing.

contemporary discussion on the public sphere, or more specifically, the European public sphere. It was very much communication-centred. Now it is almost exclusively focused on the role of the media in modern democracies and the potential of the new communication technologies, like the internet, to offer a platform for virtual public spaces which has effectively replaced the real, ‘hard’, physical public spaces.²⁶⁸ However, within the recent research on the European public sphere, especially amongst social scientists, the German historian Hartmut Kaelble is to the fore. He highlights the role of the media and mentions that around the watershed year of 2004 ‘plans were laid for European museums in Brussels and Aachen, as well as for important places of remembrance for hundreds of thousands of visitors’²⁶⁹. He thus acknowledges the physical character of the nascent European public sphere, not surprisingly perhaps given that at the time he was on the advisory board of one of these emerging European museums – the Bauhaus Europa project in Aachen. Nevertheless, invoking the physical aspect into the discussion about the public sphere remains more of an exception in German academia which is raised on the Kantian philosophy of a strict division between the rational and subjective – or between the textual and visually spatial discourses.

In relation to the notions of public space or sphere, Habermas draws on Immanuel Kant’s philosophical legacy of this strict division between the rational – literary, and subjective – arts domain, and consequently sees visual and spatial practices as being subjective and therefore to be excluded from the rationally-formatted public sphere. This did not seem to bother the European establishment at all, given its appropriating and internalising of the notion of public space and sphere by the EU policymakers without any restrictions in broadest possible terms. The universal usage of the notion of public space, be it the Parliament’s representations in the capitals of the member states, the new museum in the Parc Léopold, the Commission-organised Citizen’s Dialogues, or the various virtual and physical platforms, is but a replication of the older ideas of *Öffentlichkeit* or *publicité* but this time not shunning arts and spatial discourses to be fully embraced by the public sphere.

²⁶⁸ Crowley, J. and Giorgi, L. (2006) ‘Introduction: The Political Sociology of the European Public Sphere,’ in Giorgi, L., von Homeyer, I. and Parsons, W. (eds) *Democracy in the European Union: Towards the Emergence of a Public Sphere*. London: Routledge, p. 5.

²⁶⁹ Kaelble, H. (2013) *A Social History Of Europe, 1945-2000: Recovery and Transformation after Two World Wars*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 203-214.

What were, according to Habermas initially and exclusively rational-literary and verbal discourses, in the hands of EU who require broader communication actions, loses this strict division. Thus, the problem which Barrett sees in Habermas's classical theory of the public sphere – the virtual absence of visual and spatial discourses – is effectively solved in the problem-solving rhetoric being used by the top EU politicians and policy makers. For the EU, as the strategic planning documents prove, there was little by way of theoretical or technical argument when it came to the development of the public sphere for cultural ends. That is to say, in the drive to advance the European integration debate and to put it on a supranational level, there was little consideration as to whether, in Habermas' terms, the literary-rational or the subjective visually-spatial approach should be followed. Or, to put bluntly, if there was little consideration on whether there is any danger in applying arts for political ends. In practice, as exemplified by the Parliament visitor's centre and the HEH, every means seem to be justified. The strong subjective connotation of the arts as primarily visual and spatial – thus prone to manipulation – apparently did not impede the EU establishment unconsciously adopting this approach for the future museum's role as a public space or sphere.

Arguably if there is any conscious concept of how the public sphere and space could be used for Brussels and for the European public sphere at large, it was perhaps closer to a mix of the Habermas's strictly rational – consensus-oriented concept of literary and verbal practice, and the concept developed by Hanna Arendt. The latter draws on the example of Greek polity, as both a spatial and an organisational structure, thus is one which constitutes the holistic public sphere. Arendt's public space is rather sustained by stories, events and acts which materialize in brick and stone, instead of Habermas's textual discourse.²⁷⁰ As the Luk van Middelaar's reading of Arendt's classical *The Human Condition* goes, the public space rose out of the Greek desire for immortality, the desire to be remembered in words and deeds, whereas 'the organisation of polis ... is a kind of organized remembrance. It assures the mortal actor that his passing existence and fleeting greatness will never lack that reality that comes from being seen, being heard, and, generally, appearing before an audience of fellow men'²⁷¹.

²⁷⁰ See Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

²⁷¹ Van Middelaar, L. (2013) *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent became a Union*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 302.

While sometimes called ‘uncomfortably anti-modernist’²⁷², Arendt’s model appears to offer the prospect for the exploration of the visual dimension of the public sphere in the context of Brussels as the political capital of Europe. As such it could be used in the modern context for conceptualizing expressions of European politics or representation, especially its ‘hard’ expressions like the Parlamentarium, HEH, European Esplanade, and the European Quarter in Brussels in general.

To put this dichotomy of the seemingly conflicting literary-rational and visually-spatial practice in the context of the European museum and history politics scene of the last few decades, one has to recall, for instance, the degree of turbulence caused among public intellectuals and historians back in the 1980s by the new museum proposal of the conservative German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. The German House of History, from its outset, was viewed with suspicion by the German liberal intellectuals who had been close to Habermas’s interpretation of the public sphere as an exclusively rational literary discourse. Minding the political and intellectual controversy or the so called *Historikerstreit* about the role of the Nazis and Germany with progressive Habermas defending the ‘uniqueness of the Holocaust’ position against right-wing intellectual Ernst Nolte’s relativist positions, the scepticism towards a new national museum of conservative party can be the more understandable. Progressives saw the new museum and deployment of arts, accordingly, as a subjective intrusion into the public sphere, which should be shaped exclusively by rational debate. In other words, in their view it was an attempt by the ruling conservative party to indoctrinate citizens by means of imagery. As such it alluded to events of the recent past, when under the authoritarian National Socialist regime, the arts and politics of nation were meant to merge into an overwhelming *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This dispute shows how persistent the Kantian tradition, in its Habermasian interpretation, still was in 1980s in the German speaking world, and suggests why the German intellectuals, consciously or not, felt uncomfortable with the resurrection of the concept of a ‘House’ for creating a new historical museum of national importance, with its specific purpose of shaping a new national identity.

The connection between the National Socialists’ use of visual and special symbols for ideological purposes in pre-war Germany and the concept of a ‘House’ was

²⁷² Crowley, J. and Giorgi, L. (2006) ‘Introduction: The Political Sociology of the European Public Sphere,’ in Giorgi, L., von Homeyer, I. and Parsons, W. (eds) *Democracy in the European Union: Towards the Emergence of a Public Sphere*. London: Routledge, p. 8.

too close for comfort. It recalled, for instance, the supplanting of the traditional ‘museum’ with the *Haus der Rheinischen Heimat* (House of the Rhenish Homeland) in Cologne as a place of propaganda. According to Kathrin Hieke, the title of the House of the Rhenish Homeland, which was dismantled after World War Two and its collections distributed among several other Cologne museums,

... reflected the shift in emphasis: the title ‘museum’ was considered to be out of date and therefore any notion of the conventional historical museum was replaced by ‘house’. This term depicted an active centre alive to the needs of the community and general public, coupled with a greater emphasis on the increasingly important National Socialist concept of ‘homeland’ (*Heimat*).²⁷³

The application of the term ‘House’ in the context of developing a contemporary history museum, therefore, has a tradition which stretches back into the interwar period in Germany, where it is associated with Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967). Adenauer, later to be the German Christian Democrat leader, initiated the *Haus der Rheinischen Heimat* while mayor of the city of Cologne in 1926. It opened to the public under the National Socialist regime in 1936 with a clear message of German political greatness. The original concept of this museum, according to Hieke, was that it was to be educationally ground-breaking and innovate where the form is subservient to message.

The idea of a House of History can thus be traced through a succession of German Christian Democrat leaders, starting with Konrad Adenauer in the interwar period, followed by Helmut Kohl in the Cold War era of the 1980s, and more recently it was espoused by Hans-Gert Pöttering, in his capacity of the President of the European Parliament. While linking the Adenauer’s project to idea developed fifty years later by Kohl for the German House of History is somewhat speculative, it being linked by party affiliation and the consequent usage of the term ‘House’, the link between Kohl’s and Pöttering’s vision on a museum project is less disputable. One of the three distinct strategies for the legitimization of a political order, discussed above, was the ‘German’ strategy that is characterised by a reliance on a cultural or historic identity shared by the rulers and the ruled. In this instance the ‘identity’ is that of the Christian Democrat

²⁷³ Hieke, H. (2013) ‘The Rhineland Museum of 1925. The Short Life of a Grand Plan’. *Museological Review. Museum Utopias Conference Edition*, no. 17. Leicester: University of Leicester, p. 9.

model, which with some case-specific modifications can be traced back to Adenauer, as the pioneer of this museum-specific communication form.

While that was a heated public debate around the time of establishing the House of History in Bonn as part of the *Historikerstreit* or dispute of historians, there was no equivalent level of academic or general public debate as regards the plans for the HEH in Brussels. On the one hand this can be explained by the fact that the HEH acted within the Brussels bubble, and thus was distanced from the traditionally heated national public debates, and on the other hand, while it was part of the European public sphere concerned with history and memory, the Parliament's communication work at the time was notably immature. The virtually non-existent debate about the theoretical foundations of the future museum can be linked to the fact that apart from few history politics advocacy groups, teacher associations and academia in a broader sense, there was at the time no real notion of a European public at large who would be interested in discussing issues of European history as they might appear in the future museum. Admittedly, the 'public' for the HEH at the time of its conception was but a 'public of experts' and as such it confirmed the elitist model of how the EU bodies were being operated.

To sum up the appropriation of the concept of public space and sphere by the EU establishment: the logic adopted in the European governance legitimization attempted at the time was based on the idea that the more European public space/sphere there was, the stronger European democracy would become. This presumes the adoption of all three models discussed earlier. For instance, contrary to the scepticism identified by Habermas and Derrida towards any notion of a 'European public'²⁷⁴, one can observe a surge of moderate optimism in this regard at that same time. Fuelled by a belief in the technological prowess of the new media, Andre Wilkens, a founding member of the European Council on Foreign Relations, recently commented that,

In Habermas's sense, the crisis has been a catalyst for the development of a European community: It has created a public, in which communication flows are filtered and synthesized so that they condense into several issue-specific public opinions. Since all of Europe was affected by crisis simultaneously, all member

²⁷⁴ Habermas, J. and Derrida, J. (2003) 'February 15, or, What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Core of Europe'. *Constellations*, Volume 10, Number 3, 2003, pp. 291-297.

states that had adopted the common currency were forced to find solutions together.²⁷⁵

But it remained to be seen which of the models of European public space would be adopted for the HEH, and which model would eventually be preferred by the European public. And which would be most suited to achieving the vision for it held by Schulz and Hans-Gert Pöttering, for whom the HEH was supposed to become ‘a locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow, ... a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union.’²⁷⁶ The fundamental question was if HEH would be able to establish itself as an opinion maker, following the axiom that ‘political debate in the public sphere follows power’²⁷⁷, thus being able to play alongside the main actors in the field – the mass media outlets, think tanks, and academia.

All in all, the conception of European public sphere is of crucial importance for understanding the role of the HEH in the European Quarter in both its ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ forms. This leads me to a matter of memory cultures and history politics which serve as a driver of these processes to which I turn next.

²⁷⁵ Wilkens, A. (2014) “Public.eu”. *The European*. Available online at: <http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/andre-wilkens--2/8191-technology-and-the-european-public-sphere>. Last accessed: 28 September 2017.

²⁷⁶ Committee of Experts, House of European History (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*. P. 5. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 8 October 2017.

²⁷⁷ Van de Steeg, M. (2012) ‘The Making of a European Public Sphere: Media Discourse and Political Contention’. *West European Politics*, Vol. 35:2, p. 426.

Chapter 4

European memory cultures and history politics: debate and application

The long-standing European Museum of the year award (EMYA) judge and elected director of the European Museum Forum (EMF), Massimo Negri, in his introductory essay to a volume entitled *European debate about forms and content of city museums*, reviewed the work of the EMF in highlighting new trends in European museum scene, with potential to influence further development of the sector. He stated that,

In its work for the systematic recognition of museum innovation in Europe ... the European Museum Forum has been able to evaluate new museum experiences ... starting with the Council of Europe Museum Prize which was awarded to the House der Geschichte (House of History) in Bonn in 1995.²⁷⁸

This trend saw the emergence of a distinctively new type of historical museum. While focused on recent and contemporary history, it has its roots in the post-war German tradition of the meticulous engagement with the recent past. The approach has influenced museum practice across continental Europe yet has not until now received much attention in the museum literature. Nor in general has the nexus between memory cultures and political power, from which this new type of museum emerged, been adequately examined as noted by American²⁷⁹ and European²⁸⁰ scholars.

While this new approach influenced the European museum sector through professional networks and vocational exchange – the horizontal spread of the allied ideas – Negri attributes the spread of this approach to the vertical or top-down impact coming through the political establishment, which,

²⁷⁸ Negri, M. (2008) 'City Museums. Forms and Content. A European Debate', in Campanini, G. and Negri, M. (eds) *The Future of City Museums in Europe: experiences and perspectives*. Bologna University Press: Bologna, pp. 218-219.

²⁷⁹ Müller, J-W. (ed.) (2002) *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁸⁰ See, for example, Troebst, S. (2013) 'Die Europäische Union als "Gedächtnis und Gewissen Europas"? Zur EU-Geschichtspolitik seit der Osterweiterung', in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) (2013) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, p. 98; Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, p. 10.

... later led to a Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly to the governments of member countries in order to encourage the establishment of similar museums all over Europe, which is an extremely rare case of a direct declaration on the subject of museums by one of the oldest European political organisations.²⁸¹

The uniqueness of this intervention, the only one of its kind since the EMF's establishment in 1977, requires closer scrutiny. Especially so as it began a contemporary process of the politicisation of museums, which were now seen as vehicles that are expected to address questions of common concern, serve as public spaces for dialogue and deliberation, and infrequently are given 'a responsibility to fix the situation'²⁸².

The EMYA awards scheme is there to 'encourage the contribution of museums to a greater understanding of the rich diversity of European Culture'.²⁸³ Giving the Council of Europe Museum Prize to the German House of History gives rise to a number of questions. What was it about the House of History that has attracted attention of the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Culture, Science and Education? How did this action lead to several governments of EU states setting up their own respective Houses of History? What were the particular characteristics of this distinctively new type of historical museum that made it instantly recognizable and distinct from its peers? What was its epistemological and methodological basis? And why has it proved to be so problematic for those wishing to follow the German contemporary history museum blueprint? These are the main questions addressed in this chapter while cross-referencing the areas covered in the previous chapters of this study.

To address these, and to put the House of History in context, one needs to have a picture of the broader institutional, political, and academic discourse associated with memory debate and remembrance practices as they relate to current day EU history politics.

²⁸¹ Negri, M. (2008) 'City Museums. Forms and Content. A European Debate', in Campanini, G. and Negri, M. (eds) *The Future of City Museums in Europe: experiences and perspectives*. Bologna University Press: Bologna, pp. 218-219.

²⁸² Conn (2010: 9) cited in Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 3.

²⁸³ European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) was founded in 1977 under the auspices of the Council of Europe, with the aim of recognizing excellence in the European museum scene and encouraging innovative processes in a museum world. Available online at: <http://www.europeanmuseumforum.info/emya.html>. Last accessed: 28 September 2017.

The Council of Europe's engagement in the process of raising the profile of this distinctively new type of a historical museum was an early example of a non-governmental body like EMF reflecting political ambitions. The recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, noted by Negri, to the governments of member states to establish museums of a kind of the German House of History, shows how close the non-governmental EMF was in influencing the political decision-makers in the process of fostering museum innovation in Europe.

It appears that both of the largest EU governing bodies, the Parliament and Commission, backed by the Council of Europe (the oldest international European organisation, comprising 47 member states), had a unanimous vision on the need to build a European museum. They also shared a belief that such a museum would deal with the civic and political education of Europeans and be based on the German contemporary history museum blueprint. Had there not been this daring and innovative, and, one must admit, highly successful contemporary history museum in Bonn to draw on, most likely there would be a very different take on the musealisation of Europe in Brussels, if any at all.

In retrospect, the 1995 Recommendation alone did not lead to the Parliament's decision to establish a 'House of History' museum, in keeping with the Council of Europe's aspiration. Nor did its in 2002 report *The spirit of Europe in museums* which suggested that 'A practical way forward would be for the Council of Europe to initiate a feasibility study on the concept of a Museum of Europe'²⁸⁴. Nevertheless, the records demonstrate a clear connection between the main protagonists in the HEH project and the Council's reasoning on how a museum, in the mould of the German House of History, could be used for the political education of citizens in the EU member states. In this instance it was the influence of the micro-network of politicians and academics extending to affect the awarding of this most politically charged of EMYA prizes. As it happened, Miguel Angel Martínez, then President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, was among the judging panel of Assembly in 1995 which awarded the prize. Later this Spanish Socialist MEP and vice-president of the European Parliament became one of the champions of the HEH, alongside Hans-Gert Pöttering.

²⁸⁴ Council of Europe (2002) 'The spirit of Europe in museums'. Documents Working papers. 2002 Ordinary Session (Fourth part) 23-27 September 2002. Volume VII Documents 9468 & 9501-9537. Report Doc. 9503 – 15 July 2002. (Rapporteur: Gerrit Valk, Netherlands, Socialist Group). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, p. 12. Available online at: <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=9806&lang=EN>. Last accessed: 31 May 2018.

Since the awarding of prize in 1995, he was acquainted with the then President of German House of History, H-W. Hütter. This relationship between the two men demonstrates the direct connection between the awarding of the prize to Hütter's museum, the Council's recommendation to the governments of member states, and the later development of the HEH. It should also be noted that the connection between the EMF and the HEH was further consolidated with the appointment of Taja Vovk Van Gaal, (albeit after several failed recruitment attempts) as APT leader. She was chosen not least, or perhaps even because of, her credentials as a long-standing judge on the panel of EMF. Indeed, she presented this role as one of the selling points of her portfolio.²⁸⁵

The use of the German blueprint of contemporary history museum has already been examined in relation to similar projects in the Netherlands and France, both of which failed due to changing political fortunes of the ruling parties who initiated them, or as a consequence of the negative public referendum outcome. It remains to be seen if the Austrian *Haus der Geschichte* project, launched anew in early 2015 after more than a decade of political struggle, will finally open its doors.²⁸⁶ The Austrian project follows the German model of contemporary history museum in that it was announced by a political figure in power, states that its legitimacy begins by starting with a blank sheet of paper, and draws on a pluralistic collective memory concept instead of the one based on national history and identity. Apart from methodological and epistemological toolkit, which follows precisely the German role-model, the driving force behind the Austrian House of History is a leading modern historian (or *Zeitgeschichtler* as German speaking countries would have it), Oliver Rathkolb. He is a professor at the Institute of Contemporary History in Vienna and one of the core members of the Academic Committee of the HEH. So here again we can trace a direct connection between a protagonist of the German prototype labouring on a similar type of museum in Vienna and the HEH.²⁸⁷ But apart from the figure of Prof. Rathkolb himself, one has only to look at the composition of the Academic Committee of the Austrian project, where

²⁸⁵ Academic Committee, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting on 8 December 2012. PE457.987/BUR/GT.

²⁸⁶ Oliver Rathkolb gives the programme of the Austrian House of History project in this interview, explaining its core principle: memory instead of identity. 'Haus der Geschichte wird „kein braves Nationalmuseum“'. *Die Presse*, 28 January 2015. Available online at: <http://diepresse.com/home/zeitgeschichte/4649227/Haus-der-Geschichte-wird-kein-braves-Nationalmuseum?from=rss>. Last accessed: 28 September 2017.

²⁸⁷ Renowned Austrian contemporary historian (*Zeitgeschichtler*) Professor Oliver Rathkolb is managing editor of the magazine *Zeitgeschichte* since 2002. Available online at: <http://www.verein-zeitgeschichte.univie.ac.at/zeitschrift-zeitgeschichte/redaktion/>. Last accessed: 14 April 2018.

among others one finds both the Director of German House of History, H-W. Hütter, and one of the most prominent European memory scholars, Aleida Assmann, to realize that the Austrian project undoubtedly stands in the same tradition of the German post-war school of historiography, which constitutes the epistemological and methodological basis of a House of History as a contemporary history museum concept.

Having looked at the Council of Europe's Recommendation and the impact the award-winning German House of History had on the further development of the Brussels project, we should ask how exactly this type of museum, developed from a 'protestant like laborious "work-up" of the past'²⁸⁸, came into being in early 1990s? What determined the urgency for this laborious work to be done? Who were the people behind the concept and what influence their formative thinking?

These are questions addressed when examining the genesis of contemporary history as a discipline in its own right and its impact on formation of contemporary history museum – a House of History – as we now know it.

Genesis of contemporary history as a discipline

It is widely acknowledged that in the early phase of European integration the process was driven to a large extent by informal and formal networks of like-minded politicians of the post-war era. The fundamental idea on which these politicians all could agree and the programme they developed was based on the Christian Democrat ideas of political identity and vision of Europe. In the chapter on Christian Democrat Network's impact on the genesis of the so called core Europe (Benelux countries plus France and Germany), Wolfram Kaiser applies Actor-Network Theory, to point out that it was not only that generation of leading politicians, like Adenauer and Schuman, who shared similar ideas on Europe's future straight after the war, but 'the cooperation in networks helped the political elites to socialise in their preference of core Europe also the younger politicians like H. Kohl and Leo Tindemans'²⁸⁹. These two politicians in particular would later play a crucial role in the history of European integration, including impact of their policies and decisions on the development of European

²⁸⁸ Peters F. 'Polens Streitgeschichte kommt ins Museum: Wie neue Museen in Danzig und Warschau die polnische Geschichtskultur verändern'. *Zeitgeschichte-online*. Available online at: <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/geschichtskultur/polens-streitgeschichte-kommt-ins-museum>. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

²⁸⁹ Kaiser, W., Leucht, B., Rasmussen, M. (eds) (2009) *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Policy 1950-72*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 102.

cultural outlook, not least – museum scene. The Adenauer – Kohl – Pöttering lineage in initially German and later European history politics, with its palpable legacy in museum field, has been outlined above. Similarly, the legacy of the Belgian politician Tindemans who, in turn, paved the way for a European politics of representation, pursued through his recommendations on establishing more robust communications and strengthening the authority of the European institutions.²⁹⁰

There is a direct correlation between the emerging contemporary history discipline in post-war Germany, the formation of a new type of historical museum based on this school of thought, and as a consequence change of the methods of work in a broader European museum sector. The new type of museum – recent and contemporary history museum of Kohl's era – was a sub-product of the newly established contemporary history discipline, and as rule comes into existence simultaneously with the leading political figure taking the highest office and announcing a new cultural programme. It was a museum born of a sheer political will, built from scratch, without a collection or staff or premises at the time of announcement. This new institution focuses on living memory, or more specifically collective memory at the core of its business as per the scope of interest of the contemporary history. As a separate field of academic enquiry contemporary history or *Zeitgeschichte* emerged in Germany during the latter part of the 20th century and was to go on to have a notable influence on policy-making, first at the national, and later at a European level.

Scholars of recent European history admit that after the war Germany was in a situation where they were deliberately forced, by the international community, to embark on a thorough examination of its criminal Nazi past. Norbert Frei, for instance, explains how in Western Germany since 1945 has gradually developed a new sense of history.²⁹¹ A platform for this new sense of history was established through a new research centre being built in Munich and a new research discipline, that of contemporary history, being formulated. Conceived straight after the war under the title of German Institute of the History of the National Socialist Era (*Deutsches Institut für Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Zeit*), the Institute of Contemporary History Munich was opened on suggestion by the Allied Forces in 1949. From the outset it was

²⁹⁰ European Commission (1976) 'European Union: Report by Mr Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, to the European Council'. *Bulletin of the European Communities: Supplement 1/17*. Available online at http://aei.pitt.edu/942/1/political_tindemans_report.pdf. Last accessed: 21 May 2018.

²⁹¹ Frei, N. (2005) *1945 Und Wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen*. München: C. H. Beck.

funded by the German government and the State of Bavaria. Since 1953 it has published a quarterly journal on contemporary history and over the decades it has developed into a leading research centre in the field, covering both the Nazi legacy, and the more recent post war decades of soviet domination in the Eastern Germany.²⁹²

Of its staff, Timothy Garton Ash said, 'Theirs are strange careers, progressing smoothly from the study of one German dictatorship to another, while all the time living in a peaceful, prosperous German democracy. The results are impressive'²⁹³. In his essay about different ways of dealing with recent dictatorial past in post-communist countries, Ash singles out Germany as unique in several respects. Most of all because the Germans had nobody else to blame for their past; neither for the public elections of 1933, which brought Hitler to power, nor after the war. The so-called *Anschluss* or the joining together of the communist bloc was voluntary, voted by a majority of East Germans, which makes their case notably different to that of other communist bloc countries. Ash calls it an 'extraordinary German self-occupation'²⁹⁴ which bestows upon that nation a special role in critically examining its past, and thus serving as an example on a European level for developing a self-critical memory culture. Or, as Aline Sierp puts it, 'German politics of memory have turned into a sort of template for other nations'²⁹⁵.

In the same vein, in view to what Germany has accomplished in the examination of its Nazi and Communist past, Ash says that perhaps Germans did not dare to use word 'truth' in their investigation of East Germany under leadership of Joachim Gauck, a former President of Germany. To pursue 'truth' per se would not have had same cathartic effect, as in a typical Greek tragedy, but Germany has been the only country in Europe to have tried to analyse its recent past on a national scale, doing so immediately after unification and with an adequate resource allocation. The Gauck Report comprises 15,378 pages and is now seen as an invaluable resource for students of the East German dictatorship, in much the same way as the transcripts of the Nuremberg trials are for the students of the Third Reich.²⁹⁶ While the successor states of the former Soviet Union,

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ash, T. G. (2002) 'Trials, purges and history lessons: treating a difficult past in post-communist Europe', in Müller, J-W. (ed.) *Memory and power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 278.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, p. 151.

²⁹⁶ Ash, T. G. (2002) 'Trials, purges and history lessons: treating a difficult past in post-communist Europe', in Müller, J-W. (ed.) *Memory and power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 277.

together with Poland, Hungary and other countries, could blame the soviet occupants on installing their dictatorship, they were tempted to say ‘it was them not us’. But Germany could not do so, its position was unique. After unification the archives of the Stazi (the East German state secret police) were opened, with the exception of the records of the East German foreign ministry. These proved a treasure-trove to scholars, journalists, writers, filmmakers and the like. Given such special circumstances, Germany had no choice but to invest in contemporary history development, and this inevitably was to have a direct knock-on effect in the museum sector. In a sense, this is what qualifies Germany to be at the vanguard of the European memory debate – the extraordinary and relentless German scrutiny of its nation’s memories, which has generated this very special outlook on its recent past. Neil MacGregor, in his *Germany. Memories of a Nation*, poignantly highlights this and its impact through the example of the *Siegestor*, the Victory Gate in the city of Munich, with its inscription – ‘Dedicated to victory, destroyed by war, urging peace’:

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the role of history in Germany today is that, like this arch, it not only articulates a view of the past, but directs the past resolutely and admonishingly forward.²⁹⁷

In other words, it was inevitable that it should be the Germans who advanced to the leading position within contemporary history writing in Europe in the post-war era. The circumstances and dictates of others meant that they created a new discipline in its own right, with its distinct epistemology, methodology, and terminology. Over time these approaches were increasingly exported to other countries, especially after collapse of the communist bloc, within which after 1989 the liberated societies faced not dissimilar problems to those set before the German Federal state after 1945. Germany is the only country in Europe that had fully gone through ‘transitional justice’. Not once, but twice; after Nazism and then again after the fall of communism.²⁹⁸ The outcome for being one of the morally most tormented nations in Europe was for Germany to develop remarkable skills of self-critical examination. These were targeted towards achieving reconciliation; reconciliation of a split German nation and between East and West

²⁹⁷ MacGregor, N. (2014) *Germany. Memories of a Nation*. London: Allen Lane, p. xxviii.

²⁹⁸ Ash, T. G. (2002) ‘Trials, purges and history lessons: treating a difficult past in post-communist Europe’, in Müller, J-W. (ed.) *Memory and power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 266.

Europe after 1989. This is reflected both in scholarly debate and in various public history representations. It was German academia that pioneered the contemporary and conceptual history studies, with its critical and painstaking examination of the recent past, which proved to be a new discipline of historiography in its own right. A characteristic feature of the contemporary history approach was to look at history as it *is* ‘experienced’ by witnesses and their descendants. The emphasis on the present tense gives a decisive impetus for memory studies, one which was to become a ‘memory boom’ that was to have repercussions in museum world.

Just as we can identify the development of modern source-based history as science in 18th and 19th century Germany (with Leopold von Ranke as its most prominent voice), we see the emergence of reformist histories like the French Annales School of the first part of 20th century, and appreciate the distinct features of Marxist historiographies both in Britain and in continental Europe which dominated the scene in post-war Europe, so now it is possible to identify the distinguishing characteristics of contemporary (*Zeitgeschichte*) and conceptual (*Begriffsgeschichte*) history. Both are a by-product of postmodernity with a strong potential for being used along the lines of applied history. As such it is having a particular influence on the work of our museums especially in continental Europe.

Terminology and methodology of the *Zeitgeschichte*

In essence, the German school of contemporary history revolves around the question ‘what should nations do about their difficult past?’ In his analysis of the school’s contribution to historiography, Ash turns his attention to such German neologisms as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and *Gedchichtsaufbearbeitung* (‘getting in terms with the past’ and ‘working up the memory’, accordingly). Noting that there are no equivalent words in English, he says,

The presence of not just one but two German terms does indicate that this is something of a German speciality.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 265.

The concept of contemporary history, however, has more to offer than what appears at first glance these obscure notions alone. While it encapsulates the struggle of dealing and overcoming the difficult past, it also has tremendous implications for history politics. In this field too the Germans have rushed ahead of other European nations, again precisely because of their relentless engagement with the difficulties of a 20th century past. Thus, a third German neologism emerged – *Geschichtspolitik* – which stands for history politics. According to Troebst, it has its origins in the *Historikerstreit* or the famous dispute of historians of the 1980s, and from where it has migrated into Polish and Russian languages.³⁰⁰ The French and Anglo-Saxon equivalent is the term ‘politics of history’ or ‘history politics’, a concept which is gaining currency. In English it is more accurately associated with the term ‘memory politics’, used to by some to describe the realm of a government’s interest in the field of the past.³⁰¹ While it has specific connotations in the German and European contexts, the term ‘history politics’ was originally coined by a American historian, Howard Zinn, in 1970s, in connection with civil rights issues. In Anglophone countries it has been popularised by authors such as Timothy Garton Ash³⁰², Jeffrey Herf³⁰³, Jean-Werner Müller³⁰⁴ and others. But it is through the German efforts of dealing with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and *Diktaturbewältigung*, that history politics has become the research field in its broadest definition, involving modern historians, sociologists, political scientists and ethnologists.

The German historians themselves acknowledge and indeed are proud of the fact they pioneered and are the undisputed experts in contemporary history, as it has emerged from the trauma of National Socialism. In the foreword to the study on town planning in Europe, *A Blessing in Disguise. War and Town Planning in Europe 1940-1945*, authors provide a revealing analysis of contemporary history development in the post war era. Here it is said that the discipline of contemporary history took off in the

³⁰⁰ Troebst, S. (2013) ‘Geschichtspolitik. Politikfeld, Analysenrahmen, Streitobjekt’, in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, pp. 15-16.

³⁰¹ Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, pp. 17-18.

³⁰² Ash, T. G. (2002) ‘Trials, purges and history lessons: treating a difficult past in post-communist Europe’, in Müller, J-W. (ed.) *Memory and power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 265-283.

³⁰³ Herf, J. (1997) *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

³⁰⁴ Müller, J-W. (ed.) (2002) *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

early 1960s in the German Federal State.³⁰⁵ This roughly coincides with the political shift to the Left in 1963, with its ‘increased engagement with the dark sides of Germany’s history’³⁰⁶. The term originally referred to any research concerned with ‘an era within living memory’ while the main focus of interest in the early 1960’s was, perhaps predictably, ‘the manner in which the National Socialist regime functioned’. Now, nearly 60 years later, commentators admit that little has changed regarding the scope and interests of contemporary history, saying that ‘these issues are still the central themes of contemporary history students’³⁰⁷. But between times the European memory debate has expanded to include the democratisation of former dictatorial regimes in Southern Europe since mid-1970s (Spain, Portugal and Greece), and the legacy of the communist dictatorial past after 1989.

Following this very German mission of reconciliation and reunification of the continent, pursued on the basis of their own tormented nation, the leading actors in the field of contemporary history show a clear inclination towards transcending the exclusively national memory debate and bringing the relevant issues to the transnational, European level. In other words, the agenda of memory agents today is consciously to go beyond the constraints of national historiography. With its close links to popular culture and the memory boom of the last decades as a side-effect, contemporary history, with its strong tendency to exceed the boundaries of the nation-state-history-writing, has proven a useful tool in the hands of champions of a ‘European memory framework’. Undoubtedly, academics and museum practitioners, who support the shared or collective memory concept (itself based on the German contemporary history school), like to see themselves as champions of building a common European memory culture. Or alternatively, Europeanising the various national memory debates. Some of the most vocal proponents of a European memory framework also aspire to a federal Europe. One of the leading scholars of the German cultural memory school, Aleida Assmann, is forthright about the goals of the memory debate,

³⁰⁵ Düwel, J, and Gutschow, N. (eds) (2013) *A Blessing in Disguise. War and Town Planning in Europe 1940-1945*. Berlin: DOM Publishers.

³⁰⁶ Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, p. 146.

³⁰⁷ Düwel, J, and Gutschow, N. (eds) (2013) *A Blessing in Disguise. War and Town Planning in Europe 1940-1945*. Berlin: DOM Publishers, p. 7.

If national memory is not thought within a common framework of shared historical consciousness, the project of United States of Europe will remain an empty dream.³⁰⁸

The desire for federalism here is unmistakable. Though, perhaps more important for museological thought is Assmann's observation that, since 1980s, this new branch of research has been looking explicitly at the role of imagery in building community identity. In both tendencies, this preference for consolidation of society and symbolic imagery, transferred easily into the epistemological and methodological base for the emerging contemporary history museum, which in a German post war historical school of thought became manifest under the title of a 'House of History'.

If in the early days of contemporary history development questions were asked on the degree to which it should be driven by moral and/or political concerns, and to what extent it should be treated as a national subject. After five decades of argument contemporary history has reached a point where it has a distinctive trans-national character. It has its own methodology of memory research, with a particular emphasis on oral and living memory, its own journals, conferences, and its own specialist scholars, most of whom show a strong tendency to look beyond national history borders. Chris Lorenz is particular on this point, saying that the so-called spatial and temporal turn brought about by the contemporary history transcends the former epistemological framework of a modernist historicity that was confined within borders of a nation state. Contemporary history, with its presentism historicity regime, has taken in a different *telos*, one in which the nation-state paradigm has been gradually dismantled to be replaced by sub- and supra-national paradigms.³⁰⁹

Regarding this gradual change in perceptions of memory and of history regimes, Bauerkämper points out that the memory cultures in the decades after 1945 were still anti-pluralist, the exception being Germany.³¹⁰ Elsewhere in Europe nations had developed a victim memory, alongside the glorious victory memory. This was evident in both the communist bloc and in the allied countries. It was only in the 1980s that the social memory moved to include a more inclusive collaborative dimension, and for the

³⁰⁸ Assmann, A. (2007) 'Europe: A Community of Memory?'. *GHI Bulletin*, No. 40, p. 23.

³⁰⁹ Lorenz, Chr. (2010) 'Unstuck in Time. Or: the Sudden Presence of the Past', in Tilmans, K., van Vree, F. and Winter, J. (eds) (2010) *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 67-95.

³¹⁰ Bauerkämper, A. (2012) *Das Umstrittene Gedächtnis: Die Erinnerung an Nationalsozialismus, Faschismus und Krieg in Europa seit 1945*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, p. 372.

memory discourse to become more self-critical. Since then the process a ‘Europe as a memory field[s]’ (*‘Gedächtnisraum[s] Europa’*) (Szneider) started to take shape. Over the post-war period and until the 1980s Europe had not developed a coherent communicative and cultural memory, rather, it was a ‘mosaic of different memory cultures’³¹¹, as Bauerkämper puts it. He distinguishes between the various nationally and ethnically essentialist memory cultures that emerged in the different European countries, depending on their place and role in both world wars, and the emerging universally-integrative, transnational memory culture that was to act as a counterpoint to it. The critical self-reflective European memory culture developed since the 1980s, has expanded to include a Holocaust memory, but Bauerkämper is of the view that this dimension has not established itself as an uncontested basis of a transnational European memory.³¹² Indeed, while the Holocaust was at the heart of the contemporary history programme initially ‘worked-up’ in light of the National Socialist crimes, it was later joined by other similar themes, notably the Stalinist and state communism crimes, thus a series of competing ‘memory frames’³¹³ emerged. Nevertheless, these seemingly competing themes were seen as complementary, in as much as both were linked by the concept of victims and the victimhood when dealt with within contemporary history. While the current-day Russian official history politics continues to be built on the concepts of heroism and victory over the World War II period, in what is called in Russia the Great Patriotic War, it is fair to say that the memory debate within contemporary history in Europe has gone in the opposite direction, with its stress around the concept of victimhood, as has been noted by Włodzimierz Borodziej, the Polish modern historian and the chair of the Academic Committee of the HEH. For Borodziej the central references in today’s history politics debate remain World War II, the impact of Stalin and decolonisation³¹⁴, but all are now being viewed through a victimhood lens, which has unexpected implications for a professional historian’s work,

Entry of the concept of victims or in other words trauma in the science of history has taken the professional historians by surprise as it predominantly was

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid., p. 27.

³¹³ For discussion on European memory frames see Littoz-Monnet, A. (2011) ‘The EU Politics of Remembrance’. Working Papers in International History, No. 9 / October 2011, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Genève.

³¹⁴ Borodziej, W. (2013) ‘Geschichtspolitik und “Konkurrenz der Opfer”’, in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, p. 162.

brought up by agents of memory from the circles of civic society, not professional historians. This is where historians confronted the limits of their expertise because these were the witnesses who play a central role here while the role of historians appear to diminish.³¹⁵

This remark clearly indicates that the entry of the concept of victims into the scholarly contemporary history debate has been closely linked with the concept of memory. More precisely, the idea of a common collective memory grew out of the increased popularity for popular history and the, so called, memory boom of the 1970s and 1980s.³¹⁶ As such, interest in collective memory in contemporary society is comparatively recent phenomena. Introduced by the interwar French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, it was largely ‘reintroduced into the German and international debate from the 1990s onwards by Pierre Nora and Aleida and Jan Assmann’³¹⁷. Since then it has become a key concept in understanding the current memory debate and therewith the associated history politics. But Borodziej’s raises a note of concern within his observation and suggests the presence of the more conservative school of historiography still holding positions in the world of academia. Elaborating on the memory concept, Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, in their introduction to volume of essays, *A European Memory: Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, outline what was at stake regarding the differences in our understanding of what history is as an academic discipline,

History as ‘science’ is a translation from German *Wissenschaft*. Since the nineteenth century, the writing of past has been seen in Germany as analogous as description of nature, or *Naturwissenschaften*. In English speaking cultures, history has never categorized as a science. Instead, it was relegated to the arts.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 165-166.

³¹⁶ As of the advent of memory boom, some observers (e.g. Chris Lorenz, Jay Winter) attribute it to the fading away of the post-war promise of unbundled economic growth with its future good life prospects in mid 1970s, paradoxically accompanied by more free time, higher education, and overall better financial situation of the post-war generations. For an in-depth analysis of memory boom in contemporary historical studies see, for example, Jay Winter (2000), ‘The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the “Memory Boom”’ in *Contemporary History Studies*. Available online at: https://archivo.cartagena.es/doc/Archivos_Social_Studies/Vol1_n0/16-winter_generation.pdf. Last accessed on: 28 September 2017.

³¹⁷ Mork, A. (2012) *Presentation of the House of European History*. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Symposium of European Institutions dealing with 20th Century History, Gdansk, Poland, 14-15 September 2012. Available online at: <http://www.europeanremembrance.eu/edition2012/house-of-european-history>. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

³¹⁸ Pakier, M. and Stråth, B. (eds) (2010) *A European Memory: Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, p. 5.

At stake was the autonomy of professional historians, their ‘scientific’ authority now coming under threat from the various memory cultures, each functioning essentially as bottom-up civic movements.³¹⁹ From amongst various authors came the differentiation between the essentialist notions of collective memory and the assessment of memory practices as nothing but a discourse about past events, and how to order and interpret them. In other words, history had to be seen as collective memory, or as Halbwachs understood it, as something constructed by social context and decisively non-essentialist. Assmann follows Halbwachs’ interpretation of collective memory as a ‘social frame’, with its dictum that ‘no memory is possible outside shared social frames’³²⁰. She explains the ‘memory boom’ of recent decades as an ‘immediate effect of ... loss of the historian’s singular and unrivalled authority’³²¹. Giving an overview of classification of memory, Assmann differentiates between individual and social memory, ‘both formats cling to and abide with human beings and their embodied interactions’, and sees political and cultural memory as ‘durable carriers of symbols and material representations’³²². This differentiation between the individual and the collective memory, and further differentiation between active and passive memory as signalled by the Commission’s consequent use of the notion ‘active remembrance’ in their ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme (2007-2013; 2014-2020), is crucial in understanding how the concept of memory is fundamental to EU history politics. These terminological and conceptual nuances in relation to HEH as a product of European Parliament communications work will be explored in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Considering the growing role of civic society actors in the memory debate and the use of the arts to present it, it is not surprising to see museums being considered as one of the best structures suited for this work. Museums uniquely enable visitors to experience representations of memory cultures in three dimensions. What is fundamentally important in the approach taken by the contemporary history museum, is that it looks at memories through the eyes of witnesses or more, put another way,

³¹⁹ This observation suggests that the reception of the memory boom with its subjective arts-like understanding of history typical to Anglo-Saxon tradition might have been one of the channels through which memory concept has found entry into a more rigid continental understanding of history as science, thus mutually influencing the development of contemporary history. On the other hand, the major contributor to the success of the concept of memory in continental Europe since the 1980s was the French political scientist and publisher, Pierre Nora, with his *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984–1992).

³²⁰ Assmann, A. (2010) ‘Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past’, in Tilmans, K., van Vree, F. and Winter, J. (eds) *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 37-39.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid., p. 42.

through a prism of ‘experience’. It is therefore frequently a ‘hot’ topic for debate, not a home of ‘cold’ archival history. Consequently, the potential to mobilise audiences through ‘experienced’ history, which everyone can relate to, inevitably attracts history politics in its various expressions, such as public holidays, rituals, monuments, and not least museums. It is a commonly acknowledged fact that political elites try to ‘create traditions, build commemoration and construct identities’³²³ and therefore the notion of politics is necessarily associated with a social engineering of sorts. However, in a more positive, perhaps realistic light, history politics in Western democracies is an example of a playground of competing interests. According to Troebst, the notion of history politics, as understood in the German tradition where this neologism originated during the late 1980s in association with the mentioned above dispute of historians, has to be essentially understood as a process of social deliberation (*gesellschaftlicher Aushandlungsprozess*).³²⁴ It belongs to the public sphere, not a means of forced indoctrination, as was common under authoritarian regimes. In other words, depending on how it is presented, contemporary history can be seen as a contributor to democratisation of the memory debate and its presentation in the public sphere through a museum. This was certainly the view of the former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, a politician who played ‘the role of facilitator in the democratic debate [while] historians and the curators freely carry out their function to convey their knowledge and reading of European history’³²⁵.

While this could be said about the HEH, which indeed had delivered an independent historian’s ‘reading of European history’ (as explored in Chapters 5 and 6), some observers are less optimistic about the prospects for contemporary history and history politics in general, and how they are manifest in museums, in securing the healthy development of a public sphere. Norbert Frei, Reinhart Koselleck, and Jürgen Habermas, for instance, on several occasions have all spoken against what they see as the instrumentalization of history, by which they mean the transformation of history as

³²³ Troebst, S. (2013) ‘Geschichtspolitik. Politikfeld, Analysenrahmen, Streitobjekt’, in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, p. 19.

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

³²⁵ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

science into the politics of history in the hands of politicians.³²⁶ Notwithstanding these reservations, contemporary history, or at least that which falls within the living memory or which advocates looking at historic events *as they are* ‘experienced’ by various affected groups, has become increasingly internationalized and grown in popularity. This trend was especially notable in continental Europe since the turn of the century, but especially after the EU enlargement in 2004. Projects like the HEH, along with a number of the European Parliament’s declarations³²⁷ and the Commission’s funding programs (such as the ‘Active European Remembrance’ action point in the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme 2007-2013; 2014-2020)³²⁸ clearly demonstrate this. In short, it is history politics that orchestrates the declarations, programmes, and venues associated with collective memory or frequently more pointedly – remembrance. Indeed, the proactive character of Commission’s engagement in history politics is underlined by the terminology itself, which promotes ‘active remembrance’ instead of a mere safeguarding of ‘memory’, so disguising the orientation, which is much like the nationalisms of nations.

The rise of contemporary history and the activities of various kinds of storytellers in the business of memory (both collective and mass individual) have to be viewed in the context of the geopolitical events of the last two decades. The debate on the implementation of history politics on a European level indirectly led to the establishment of the HEH as well. But was there a demand by European public at large for such expression of history politics?

³²⁶ Troebst, S. (2013) ‘Geschichtspolitik. Politikfeld, Analysenrahmen, Streitobjekt’, in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, pp. 21-22.

³²⁷ Since EU enlargement in 2004, a considerable number of documents have been adopted by European Institutions in the field of history politics which attests to the huge intensification of the memory debate at the European level. Here a selection, following Bottici, Ch. and Challand, B. (2013) *Imagining Europe. Myth, Memory and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press: *European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2005 on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of Second World War in Europe* (<http://j.mp/1DMQ1iY>); *European Parliament resolution of 27 January 2005 on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-semitism and racism* (<http://j.mp/1DMQdyD>); *EU President’s Berlin Declaration of 25 March 2007 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome* (europa.eu/50/docs/berlin_declaration_en.pdf); *Declaration of the European Parliament of 23 September 2008 on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinist and Nazism* (<http://j.mp/1sTXRGs>); *European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism* (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20090401IPR53245+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>); *EU Council (General Affairs and External Relations) conclusions of 15 June 2009 on European Conscience and Totalitarianism* (<http://j.mp/1sDMSqdl>); *Report from the Commission to the EP and to the Council of 22 December 2010 The memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe* (<http://j.mp/1J82gKB>); *EU Council (Justice and Home Affairs) conclusions of 10 June 2011 on the memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe* (<https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/JHA-conclusions-10062011.pdf>) Last accessed on 28 September 2017.

³²⁸ European Commission. *Europe for Citizens Programme for the period 2014-2020*. Available online at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens_en. Last accessed: 25 March 2018.

Looking for a unifying European narrative

The debate about a European narrative started with a question, why, given that it has been the focus of so many academics, is there so little or almost no popular discussion about a European narrative? Having discussed earlier the scope and nature of contemporary history, with the collective memory debate at its heart, one needs examine how much demand there is for such a narrative and how such a demand is met.

Speaking about the current narrative on European integration, and its acceptance by the broader public, Guisan observes that ‘what is striking in the case of European integration is that such narratives are almost entirely missing’³²⁹. Brussels, as the political capital of Europe, is where this narrative should or could originate, but she says that ‘MEPs are just beginning to grapple with the diverging mindsets that shape everyday action, and they sponsor increasing number of memory and history books, exhibits and even the creation of a large museum by 2014 (sic)’³³⁰. The EU governing bodies are funding various programmes concerned with the European narrative, but Guisan is of the view that, ‘these projects offer a fragmented view of the past rather than unitary mindsets’³³¹. Indeed, recognition of such fragmentation provides us at least with a starting point from where the set of actors and proposed narratives as ‘memory frames’ can be examined. The Council’s role in facilitating various ‘vectors of identification’³³² over the last decades using historic narratives is scrutinised later in this chapter, but here it is useful to give a broader perspective of what is at stake when we talk about a narrative for Europe.

For somebody in search for a popular European narrative it is tempting to go as far back as to the Holy Roman Empire, when one can see the start of the struggle on who could legitimately speak on behalf of Europe. With a slight ‘nod to history’, one should keep in mind that the roots of the renowned ‘German obsession with the past’ goes way beyond the need of just getting to terms with the legacy of the National Socialism and the state socialism alone. Putting the role of Germany in a broader historic perspective, the British historian Brendan Simms, in his account on the struggle

³²⁹ Guisan, C. (2012) *A Political Theory of Identity in European Integration: Memory and Policies*. Abingdon: Routledge, p. 2.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 53.

³³² For discussion on European vectors of identification see Littoz-Monnet, A. (2011) ‘The EU Politics of Remembrance’. Working Papers in International History, No. 9 / October 2011, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Genève.

for supremacy in Europe since 1453, gives this central European country a leading role in keeping the balance of power on the Continent,

The empire, and its successor states, has also been the principal source of political legitimacy for anybody who wants to speak for Europe. For hundreds of years, the major protagonists have sought the mandate of Holy Roman Emperor, to take up the legitimacy of Charlemagne. Henry VIII wanted it, so did Suleiman the Magnificent, Charles V had it, French kings from Francis I to Louis XVI sought it, Napoleon seriously thought about it, the echoes in Hitler's 'Third Reich' could not be clearer, and the European Union originated from the same area and in that spirit, though with very different content. In short, it has been the unshakable conviction of European leaders over the past 550 years, even those who had no imperial aspirations themselves, that the struggle for mastery would be decided by or in the Empire and its German successor states.³³³

This had long-term historic implications in post-war Germany, not least effecting the conception and development of the contemporary history discipline, with its strong effects on the history museum scene in Europe. It is an additional argument in favour of the German blueprint of a contemporary history museum – a House of History – that has been chosen as a model for a museum in the political capital of Europe. Against the backdrop of what has been discussed earlier, it seems inevitable that there were the German politicians and scholars closely linked through professional, religious, and political ties, who were the driving force of the concept of the HEH. More particularly, these included former employees of the German House of History in Bonn and adepts of the German contemporary history school. However, not even the Germans themselves have written on the history of the making of the German House of History, with its seat in Bonn and branches in Leipzig and Berlin. Nor has a report on the emerging 'outpost' in Brussels, with its core message of European unification in the heart of European political capital, been presented thus far. This leads us to conclude that the apparent institutionalization and objectification of memory, with its museological implications, have so far not become a high priority among the memory

³³³ Simms, B. (2014) *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy, 1453 to the Present*. London and New York: Penguin Group, p. 5.

debate champions and students. There are, however, hopeful signs that this is about to change now as the HEH is up and running and accessible for examination. While the access to its internal workings has been limited, a few studies have attempted to look behind the scenes and to examine the institutional functioning of the HEH thus far.³³⁴

In the process of developing the narrative for the HEH, the fragmentary nature of the European memory field became very obvious. One of the main tasks of the HEH permanent exhibition was to try to consolidate the divergent memories, bringing all towards a single European memory framework. Since the 1980s the idea of a single, consensual account of the Holocaust has been questioned. This trend accelerated after 1989 when the communist bloc collapsed, and opening a window to competing memory framework, namely that 'Nazi and Stalinist crimes as equally evil'. Littoz-Monnet has observed that confronting these two memory frames did not automatically lead to an era of critical self-examination of the past in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe, as was the case in the reunited Germany. On the contrary, what emerged was a new surge of nationalism and a new era of myth-making.³³⁵ This is reflected in the constant arguments among historians about the possibility of collective memory as such. They are divided between those who stand for history politics (and see an opportunity to foster or engineer a collective memory, by means of research grants, books, monuments and museums) and those who either deny communality and stay within the frames of exclusive national historiographies, or exclude possibility of a shared European memory in principle. There is a clear demarcation line between scholars on both sides; between those who are critical about the whole notion of collective memory and those who are more positive about it. For instance, Polish historian Jedlicki says that such a thing is impossible because 'memory is always and only individual'³³⁶. In turn, in the German historian Eder's view on the formation of transnational identity in Europe is possible only in remembering the national memories together, just as the title of his essay suggests – 'Remembering National Memories

³³⁴ Apart from *Exhibiting Europe in Museums* project and sustained interest of the associated therewith researchers Wolfram Kaiser and Stefan Kränkenhagen, few more studies have looked at HEH from different angles. E.g. political scientist Littoz Monnet does not look at the HEH directly but in her analysis of communication strategies exercised by European institutions in the field of memory politics: *The EU Politics of Remembrance* is giving a comprehensive account of European level memory politics which influence the process (Working Papers of International History No. 9 / October 2011). In turn, the Yale university sociologist Hilmar in his MA thesis gives an account on how European institutions create a symbolic power through a narrative of unity: *Narrating Unity at the European Union's New History Museum: A Cultural-Process Approach to the Study of Collective Memory*. See bibliography for references.

³³⁵ Littoz-Monnet, A. (2011) 'The EU Politics of Remembrance'. Working Papers in International History, No. 9 / October 2011, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Genève.

³³⁶ Jedlicki, J. (2005) 'East-European Historical Bequest en Route to an Integrated Europe', in Eder, K. and Spohn, W. (eds) (2005) *Collective Memory and European Identity: The Effects of Integration and Enlargement*. Burlington and Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 37.

Together: The Formation of a Transnational Identity in Europe'³³⁷. Considering the mechanics of collective memory, with its distinctive 'frames' of social, cultural, and political memory, as explained by Assmann, who argues that collective memory of any sort cannot be understood in terms of essence and metaphysics, but 'in terms of individual participation in social frames'³³⁸, a larger memory discourse was initially boosted by events of 1989 and then by the EU enlargement of 2004. Chronologically the accounts of Eder (2005), Littoz-Monnet (2011), Leggewie (2010), Troebst (2013), Sierp (2014) and others support the assumption that the expansion eastwards triggered the process of history politics at the European level. This catalysed the entry of history politics into the European political realm, and gave rise to the issue on how to steer this delicate process within which very diverging memories and interests sometimes collide.

Bauerkämper's suggested dialogical memory (*Dialogisches Erinnern*)³³⁹ offers one way of using diverging memories in building a trans-national memory culture. The broad discourse on memory has also seen the emergence of various memory lobbyists at the European Parliament, to the point where European Union itself has become the 'locus of conflict over the interpretation of the past'³⁴⁰ in the larger 'battlefield of European memories' (Leggewie). It is only since 2004 that EU has the current constellation of actors in place who are seeking to establish a European memory framework of their own making, while the role of Germany with its experience of working up and reconciling memories becomes pivotal in keeping the balance on a European scale. The relative novelty of transnational European memory debate explains why there have been yet so few studies about the nexus of memory and political power on a European level, but the HEH offers one such case study.

³³⁷ Eder, K. and Spohn, W. (eds) (2005) *Collective Memory and European Identity: The Effects of Integration and Enlargement*. Burlington and Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 197.

³³⁸ Assmann, A. (2010) 'Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past', in Tilmans, K., van Vree, F. and Winter, J. (eds) *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p. 37.

³³⁹ Bauerkämper, A. (2012) *Das Umstrittene Gedächtnis: Die Erinnerung an Nationalsozialismus, Faschismus und Krieg in Europa seit 1945*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.

³⁴⁰ Littoz-Monnet, A. (2011) 'The EU Politics of Remembrance'. Working Papers in International History, No. 9 / October 2011, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Genève, p. 28.

Politics of history – battlefield of memories

Claus Leggewie and Anne Lang, in what is considered the only systematic account of the EU history politics in German language thus far³⁴¹ – *The Battle for European Memory (Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung)* – describe the process of history politics as a battlefield of memories. These authors observe that one facet of the debate is legalistic in character. It is shaped by the concept of transitional justice, which in the hands of memory advocacy groups acquires the character of a political weapon destined for a courtroom. This signals that the memory debate has distinct legal connotations, and thus essentially it is a battlefield not that much different from other the sectors of high European politics. Leggewie and Lang offer a schematic in a form of seven concentric circles, through which they symbolise the current state of play of the European memory debate. It has the Holocaust at its core, surrounded by themes of the Gulag, ethnic cleansing, wars and crises, colonial crimes, history of migration, and finally encompassing everything concerning European integration. In general, there is a clear understanding that the further East from the ‘core Europe’ one goes, the more important and alive such history politics becomes. This is due to the legacy of the soviet era still being fluid and, some would say, unresolved (as illustrated, for instance, by the on-going lustration of the KGB files in Baltic states). But another on-going factor in the prevalence of history politics is the perceived threat associated with the resurgence of authoritarianism and geopolitical opportunism of the modern-day Russia. The understanding and acknowledgment of the nature of both totalitarian regimes of 20th century is seen in many eastern European states as a proof against any deviation away from the values of democracy and self-determination, just as the memory of Holocaust is seen as a preventive measure against anti-Semitism and the resurgence of the far right in the Western part of Europe.

Bauerkämper believes that if nations are opened up to how other nations remember and memorialise WW2, National Socialism, Fascism and Holocaust in Europe, transnational commemoration and a pan-European memory can be gradually achieved. So far, however, Europe has not developed any form of unified memory culture, which could serve to guide citizens and further legitimise the EU. Yet, the

³⁴¹ Troebst, S. (2013) ‘Die Europäische Union als “Gedächtnis und Gewissen Europas”? Zur EU-Geschichtspolitik seit der Osterweiterung’, in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) (2013) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, p. 98.

governing bodies are attempting various means for achieving it. In regard to these attempts Littoz-Monnet put forward the thesis that the EU identity politics which formed cultural policies of the 1970s and 1980s influenced the communication policies in early 2000s,

Officials from DG Culture also perceived the current ‘memory boom’ (Winter 2000) as a window of opportunity for constructing new European spaces of communication around common remembrance actions. Therefore, the decision was made to tackle memory issues via the path of communication policies, rather than cultural policies.³⁴²

In other words, cultural heritage was recognised as an effective instrumental tool by the Council of Europe as far back as the 1950s, but it was picked up latterly by the Commission (starting with the *Declaration of European Identity* of 1973) as a means of engendering greater legitimisation for the European Community. Initially it was framed by such terms as ‘common heritage’, ‘founding events’, and ‘grand moments of European integration,’ each in its own time and with associated policy actions, but none of these have proved particularly appealing to a broad audience in the geopolitically turbulent times of 2000s. Instead, in the first decade of the century, the switching from a ‘cold’ to ‘hot’ memories was regarded by Littoz-Monnet as a ‘skilful attempt from the part of EU institutions to transform remembrance process into a genuine vector of identification to the EU’³⁴³. The success of this approach, says Littoz-Monnet, can be explained by ‘referring to already existing narratives at the national level’, which helped the EU institutions to ‘prepare the ground for the EU to become a new locus of conflict over the interpretation of the past’³⁴⁴.

There are numerous theoretical and practical difficulties associated with developing a European public space, built upon the concept of the ‘EU as a locus of memory debate’. One of the most obvious, of course, is centred on the choice and selection of memories. Scrutinizing the HEH permanent exhibition as an embodiment of this debate, one can anticipate questions as to why the new museum of Europe does not explore the early precursors of European unification, such as the Holy Roman

³⁴² Littoz-Monnet, A. (2011) ‘The EU Politics of Remembrance’. Working Papers in International History, No. 9 / October 2011, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Genève, p. 18.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

Empire or Christianity *per se*, except in a short introduction to the exhibition, rather than jumping straight into the modern era. As it stands, according to the current EU regime of history politics, remembrance of totalitarianisms of the 20th century stands as the central subject of European memory and therefore could be expected to take centre stage in the permanent exhibition of HEH. In adopting this approach, the HEH follows the blueprint of the German House of History, with its epic narrative of European unification coming through the defeat of both totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, which complies with the ‘European memory framework’ (Sierp) as conceived within the various European Parliament declarations and Commission programmes which strive at consolidating the so far fragmented EU policy field.

The thrust of European history politics over the last decade, with its focus on the main historic events that shaped European destinies and the associated issues of transitional justice, has effectively side-lined research on the European integration as such. This has had a direct impact on the HEH. For instance, given the many previous decades of involvement in the field of history by the European Commission (the European University Institute in Florence since 1976, the European Union Liaison Committee of Historians since 1982, and the Monnet Professor Chairs sponsored by Commission at various European universities, to mention but a few initiatives), it might seem odd that, with one exception, none of these institutions nor their academic staff, were involved in creation of the HEH. The exception was the one APT curator who had the experience of specific training at the Institute in Florence, and who came to the HEH project with an expert knowledge of European integration. Thus in its instigation there has been no visible influence of any of the Commission structures and services on the HEH project, except for the very basic cooperation with its archives for the acquisition of historic materials later in project development.³⁴⁵ This suggests that, given the shift of focus in EU history politics from the EU integration history proper to a preoccupation with European destinies in a globalised world, the European Parliament’s influence reached a point of such ascendancy that it overcame that of the Commission. Since 1990s the Commission has drastically reduced its ambitions in the field of general European history, focusing instead on the less controversial area of the

³⁴⁵ In a preparatory phase of HEH project prior the APT was recruited and the shift of focus visibly moved from the *longue durée* perspective and the ‘European integration proper’ to a more global view on Europe’s modernity, the EP coordinators of HEH project had established a contact with European Institution’s Archives in order to collaboratively start working on the future HEH collection. As the later process record shows, apart from the historic material requests on part of APT curators to EU archives already in production phase, these early contacts didn’t result in any coordinated collecting strategy. European Parliament ‘House of European History. Preliminary Works on the Collection: Meetings with the European Institution’s Archives’ on 9 March 2010. 439.714/BUR/GT

history of the Commission itself. Oriane Calligaro in her study on the EU's promotion of Europeanness since 1950s, gives a detailed account of Commission's actions in the field of history, particularly in the realm of European integration studies. She points out that as a consequence of several ill-fated historical research projects, attempted in the 1980's and which gave rise to some disgruntlement amongst some member states³⁴⁶, the Commission has not pursued an active role in making European history, but rather has delegated it to researchers and to non-governmental memory agents. This was essentially because the so called 'Europeanist' approach to history championed by Lipgens, Giraut, and Duroselle, which promulgated the myth of nationalist history writing (labelled by Ernst Gellner the myth of 'sleeping beauty' in that it only needed to be reawakened) had been utterly discredited.³⁴⁷ This in itself was not the cause of the Commission withdrawing from pursuing an influence on history politics altogether, but it did influence those from whom it commissioned such history work – the authors who compiled history books and wrote school curricula and other similar projects. It is notable that the Commission's strategy in history field during the 1990's was based on the repeated launch of oral history projects (the typical contemporary history method of data sourcing) by the Monnet Professorial Chairs in the History of European Integration. Pointing out the substantial decrease in the Commission's interest in the history field since middle of 1990's, Calligaro nevertheless admits that as a consequence of its sustained actions in this field, the 'temporal and spatial status of Europeanness has evolved over six decades of European integration'³⁴⁸. To substantiate this, she quotes Marc Abélès who calls the early days of European project 'Monnet's method', and according to which 'Europe was above all a project oriented toward the future', 'a de-historicized Europe (which unfolds in a time without memory)' but also 'a de-territorialized community (a space without territory)'³⁴⁹. This observation supports the division of historicity into the regimes discussed earlier, wherein the formerly dominant modern mode of historicity was effectively replaced by the postmodern – a regime of presentism historicity that had grown out of the memory boom and the popular interest in the past. While before (pre-1973) history studies still operated in a

³⁴⁶ Notably Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's *Europe: A history of its Peoples* (1990) which presented a clearly teleological view on European integration and was therefore largely dismissed as an attempt of using interpretation of the past as legitimizing arguments of ideological positions.

³⁴⁷ Calligaro, O. (2013) *Negotiating Europe. EU Promotion of Europeanness since 1950s*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 63.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

‘regime of historicity as oriented toward the future’, the regime changed in Europe after the 1973 economic crisis. As the future of Europe was then seeming to be more uncertain, there was an increased popular interest in heritage. This coincided with the creation of the Liaison Committee of Historians by the European Commission, to theorise on ‘projections aimed exclusively toward the future were no longer sufficient catalyst of unity’ and ‘European integration required historical justification’³⁵⁰.

The oral history projects supported in the 1980s and 1990s, in collaboration with Monnet History professors, and later initiatives of Commission in early 2000s (so as the Programme ‘Culture’ (2000-2006) and ‘Europe for Citizens’ (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) with its emphasis on action point ‘European Remembrance – EU as a peace project’), all aimed to address the diverse aspects of Europe’s traumatic memory. Calligaro critically observes that with the institutionalization of the memory of Nazism and Stalinism, the diversity of memory debate decreased because the Commission’s Active European Remembrance programme did not allow the EU to support any other ‘territories’ of European traumatic memory, such as colonialism or imperialism. With hindsight this attests to a growing Euro-centrism within EU history politics. Theorising further on the then current historicity regime, Calligaro notes the ‘deterritorialized Community’ as a dominant idea of the ‘founding fathers’ of the European project has been supplanted by an increasingly territorialized European Union, one in which the most immediate past is turned into memory. The process itself is accompanied by the attempt to involve the public in various ways for engaging in exchange of ideas. One such example was the New Narrative for Europe³⁵¹, but there were other master narratives being promoted by the EU governing bodies, notably – the HEH.

Calligaro is generally correct in her observation that the HEH was planned to become an objectification of the EU’s history politics that was determined to see the ‘re-uniting’ of Europe’s history after World War II will also be one of its main objectives:

Such a project, situated in the heart of Europe’s governing center, strikingly embodies a recentering of Europe’s public representation.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

³⁵¹ European Commission, *New Narrative for Europe*. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/new-narrative/index_en.htm. Last accessed: 3 October 2017.

³⁵² Calligaro, O. (2013) *Negotiating Europe. EU Promotion of Europeanness since 1950s*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 186.

Since the announcement of this new museum of Europe by Pöttering in 2007, all eyes have been on Brussels as the expected materialisation of the official version of the European memory debate beyond rhetoric.

Hic Bruxellae, hic salta!

Apart from the various declarations and funding programmes, through which the EU pursued a shaping of remembrance on the crimes of 20th century totalitarian and autocratic regimes, the HEH was in the eyes of memory scholars expected finally to become the long-awaited objectification of the European history politics *per se*. A commentator of European history politics, Stefan Troebst, in anticipation of opening the House exclaimed, ‘Hic Bruxellae, hic salta!’, sardonically suggesting that it would be much more difficult for the EU establishment to actually deliver a real European history politics project, rather than for it to issue prognostications and declarations on history politics or allocate funding for various actors in the field. At the core of the HEH project was the need to maintain a balance of power – a function that in the matters of transnational European memory befits the Germans the best, of striking compromises between viewpoints and the need to respect the feelings of the different interest groups. This explains the very attentive and cautious attitude towards every lobbying attempt in the museum development process; all were seen as a potential threat in upsetting the balance. Generally, the lobbyists were kept a bay, but there was something peculiar about the fact the HEH drew upon the work of some of these advocacy groups, its representatives attended their conferences and used the vocabulary of the memory debate, and yet it avoided developing close ties with the leading agents of the memory field. This included the supranational ones, such as the conservative Platform of European Memory and Conscience, let alone lobbyists associated with progressive or socialist politics. But, was there any alternative in developing a narrative for the conservative position on Europe’s unification, post the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, to paying the associated price of adopting a European memory framework?

This leads one to speculate what would have happened if, for example, instead of following this strict line on collective memory or even remembrance, to use the terminology of the Commission and Parliament, the HEH had opted instead for drawing on the more pluralistic concept of universal human rights, as propagated by the Council

of Europe, and set against the global social justice debate based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, with its distinctive terminology and system of historic reference points? Would this have led the project in a different direction, one that was less Eurocentric and more transatlantic and global in its outlook? Surprisingly, any sustained criticism of the EU governing bodies regarding a distinctive European memory framework is a rare thing, but not wholly absent. When the collective European memory framework reached the point of unassailable ascendancy, having deposed such alternative narratives based on ideas of common heritage, the founding events, or even unification visions of both federalist and regionalist camps, some critical voices standing against what is called the ‘memorialization of history debate’ could still be heard.

One of the most vocal critics was the Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou. He saw the memory debate being pushed by historians and political leaders as having but one single common denominator – the victim and the discourse of victimhood – and that there was a form of ‘competition’ amongst the supporters of the memory debate between them concerning Stalinist victims, and the strongly-felt need to place them on an equal footing with those who had suffered under Nazi crimes. Lagrou denounces the memory discourse as being exclusively retrospective and increasingly ritualised, one that aimed at strengthening communal bounds and asserting claims on identity. As such, he states, ‘a commemorative discourse of victimhood is very much the opposite of a dynamic engagement with the present, but rather a paralysing regression of democratic debate’³⁵³. To substantiate his view, he set out five propositions, which he felt it was essential to debate. These may be summarised as,

1. The discourse of victimhood is a universal source of legitimacy, offering a new language with which to formulate claims.
2. The notion of victimhood is non-partisan – it does not tolerate contradiction. Victimhood is a category of identity and not a political proposition and does not generate overarching solidarities.
3. The discourse of victimhood is static, retrospective, passive and, in a paradoxical way, nostalgic.

³⁵³ Lagrou, P. (2010) ‘Europe as a place for common memories? Some thoughts on victimhood, identity and emancipation from the past’, in Blaive, M., Gerbel, Chr. and Lindenberger, Th. (eds) (2010) *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust*. European History and Public Spheres, Vol. 2. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, p. 283.

4. The discourse of victimhood is essentialist and comprises such immutable, hermetic categories as genocide, which as a legal construct is destined rather for the courtroom than the historical understanding established through democratic debate. However, the process of coming to terms with the past does start with admission of that past and making sense of it in a form of ‘drawing politically useful conclusions’. It cannot be outsourced to foreign tribunals, experts or commissions;
5. Finally, the discourse of victimhood is always framed in a manner that renders it sacred and, as such, it is at times both inviolable and discriminatory.

Lagrou considers the memory debate’s juxtaposition between remembering and forgetting as a false premise. Instead of this binary scheme he suggests that the polemic is between public and political perceptions of diverging victimhood interests. It is not without a degree of irony that he notes that the phantom of forgetting is an unlikely threat to societies obsessed with past; one’s absorbed by nostalgia and which ‘no longer dare[s] to conceive the future and that have a dearth of new projects and utopias’³⁵⁴. Furthermore, the discourse of victimhood in his opinion fuels the discourse of identity, but it is an identity that is ‘an autistic discourse, binary, static, exclusive and intolerant’ and that is fundamentally ahistorical and impervious to democratic debate. Lagrou concludes:

Let us be honest: is the European project today all about preserving the past and inventing identity, or is it an exciting and forward-looking project in a 21st century in need of new horizons, new utopias, a common language and a new and dynamic concept of history?³⁵⁵

In Lagrou’s propositions we encounter, if not an alternative programme, then at least a challenge to the current regime of presentism in memory discourse and the overarching memorialization of history with its obsession with victimhood and trauma. We might only add that what is striking in view to European memory debate, is that it is very rare that a positive memory experience would play any major role in shaping social memory, be it the democratisation of the Eastern bloc or the celebration of the

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 287.

spread of human rights and social justice across the continent and beyond, not to mention other new and daring lines of enquiry around the concept of 'identity'.

Seen in this critical light, it appears that in its public history the HEH has decided to strictly and centripetally to follow the pattern of Europeanisation of memory with its implication of focusing predominantly on the reconciliation of diverging European experiences of the 20th century, thus standing firmly amid the conservative Eurocentric position on EU history politics. But there is more to the novelty of the concept of HEH to be discovered which transcends the usual boundaries of official EU remembrance politics. I discuss the centrifugal aspects of HEH concept in the closing chapter.

When the HEH opened its learning and public programmes were unostentatiously less Eurocentric. They emphasised the more universal issues of human rights and social justice. According to the former Learning Coordinator of the HEH, Alan Kirwan, 'German museological perspective did not eventually win the day within the Learning Dept as can clearly be seen with the thematic educational resources ... In fact, the learning offer was the only area to not converge with the Germanic agenda'³⁵⁶. Kirwan admits the fact that there was criticism of the Germanic approach. Other forms of museological approaches were voiced by other curators and educators, knowledgeable of the Anglo-American style of museology.

Indeed, the agenda on the memorialization of history, which dominates the EU history politics scene, eventually won the day in the permanent exhibition, and thus it stands in notable contrast to the learning resources prepared by the team of educators schooled in an Anglo-American style of museology. The extensive thematic material made available for teachers and students on the HEH website³⁵⁷ is linked to social justice and other activist agendas, such as human rights and migration. This activist stand was embedded in the Learning Mission Statement and as such provides evidence that there were competing arguments within the interpretative approaches and presentation. This obvious contrast between the two approaches, the Germanic emphasis on memorialisation, and the notion of a museum as an agent of change (known as such through various Museums Association initiatives in UK such as

³⁵⁶ E-mail from Alan Kirwan to author, 8 January 2018.

³⁵⁷ See *Educators and Teachers* resources at HEH website. Available online at: <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/educators-teachers>. Last accessed: 25 March 2018.

*Museums Change Lives*³⁵⁸), resulted from the team of educationists being recruited and starting work at the point when the Design Masterplan had already been approved. All that the newly arrived educationists could do was add a layer of learning onto the approved narrative and design structure in the attempt to make the whole more Universalist and proactive.

It has to be mentioned that the themes of universal human rights, tolerance and intercultural dialogue that strongly feature in the Council of Europe work and characterize the Museum Prize it annually awards within the EMYA scheme, were overshadowed by the more forthright memorialization of history agenda in the HEH. Nevertheless, the social justice and wellbeing agendas propagated by the initiatives originating from the UK museum sector, notably from the Museums Association and National Museums Liverpool, with its Social Justice Alliance for Museums and the Federation of Human Rights Museums, were already there in the Learning Mission statement of the HEH, before the formal connection was made by the HEH to these organisations. However, the incorporation of these themes was reinforced due to the focus of to the HEH Partnership Programme, which allowed some personnel from the international museums scene who espoused these themes to become involved with the HEH programming. For instance, following the invitation by David Fleming (then both Director of National Museums Liverpool and President of the Museums Association), for the HEH to become a member of the Social Justice Alliance for Museums and the Federation of Human Rights Museums on the occasion of the HEH 2nd Partner meeting on 11 December 2014, the HEH accepted the invitation and became an institutional member, thus allying itself to the working principles and mission of these two organisations.

Such partnerships, together with the topics presented at conferences, meetings and podium discussions point to the themes occupying the minds of the community of contemporary historians at the time. During 2014 and 2015 the curators of the HEH were invited to contribute to a number of key events. This was the period when the exhibition content was being finalized, but the very demanding production phase had yet to start, and it was prior to when attendance at such meetings by APT members was to be drastically limited by the DGCOMM. After having looked at the theoretical genesis, terminology, methodology and epistemology of contemporary history,

³⁵⁸ See Museums Association's vision for museums impact *Museums Change Lives*. Available online at: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1001738>. Last accessed: 25 March 2018.

alongside its implications for European history politics and reactions to it, it is necessary to examine the practical side of the European memory debate, as represented by the various presentations at meetings and podium discussions as these provide a fruitful background for HEH development.

European memory debate in practice

The year 2014 marked the centenary of the beginning of World War One, and a number of high profile conferences dedicated to questions of commemoration, memory cultures, and memory politics both at the national and particularly European level, took place in a number of countries. Curators from the HEH were invited to contribute to several of them. Curiously enough, this was not replicated in 2015, which marked the 70th anniversary of the ending of World War Two. An exception was the ‘Remembrance of the Second World War 70 Years After. Winners, Losers, Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders’ conference, organised by the European Remembrance Symposium and held in Vienna in May 2015. In the European Parliament itself conferences were organised by the European People’s Party and the European Left on this subject. This demonstrably attests to how much more disputed and controversial the 1939-1945 conflict is perceived to be within European academic and political circles, when compared with World War I. But it also illustrates the growing Left wing stand against the ‘revisionism’ of history, particularly the diminution of the role of the Red Army in liberating Europe from the Nazism.

A notable conference, *1914-2014 – Der Weltkrieg im Museum* (‘Word War I in Museums’), was held by the German Historical Museum in Berlin on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition to mark the centenary of that war. With object loans from the UK, France, Poland, and Russia, its curators opened the floor for discussions on collective European memory. While this chapter of European history is interpreted in markedly different ways within the countries it involved, it was obvious that organisers of the exhibition and the conference, sought to find a positive vision of European recent history and they were hopeful of arriving at a collective European memory through the associated discussions. In her talk at the conference, the APT leader of the HEH, Taja Vovk van Gaal, presented the view that museums play a crucial role in this discussion, as a ‘mirror and impulse for it’ and that ‘there can and will be a European identity that absorbs the various memories including the one of the World War I’ and the building of

such museums as the HEH will have a ‘healing impact’ on divided memories. She elaborated on this at another high-level conference of the international museum community in 2014, ‘Museums and Politics’. This was organised by the three National Committees of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) from Russia, Germany and the United States. It took place in St-Petersburg, Russia, between the 9th and 12th September, and proved to be one of the most controversial European museum conference in years. It caused a split in the international museum society, just as the contemporary arts biennale ‘Manifesta’ in State Hermitage Museum, which was running in parallel, split the arts community. The factions were divided over the question whether or not it was ethical to attend the event, which some saw as being overshadowed by Russia’s annexation of Crimea earlier in the year and its continuing aggression in South-East Ukraine. The HEH chose to participate, an action that did not go unnoticed by the critical conservative wing of the international museum community. In an e-mail of 21st August, the Founding Director of the Museum of History of Polish Jews and a Polish ICOM member, suggested that Vovk van Gaal withdraw from participation at this conference on the following grounds: ‘Our job and mission is the heritage not the current politics, but we shall not remain indifferent to realities of contemporary world. We should not send a wrong signal and put us in a position of complicity to an aggression, like in this case.’³⁵⁹ In short, the St Petersburg conference polarised the museum community over the mandate and responsibility of museums on issues of recent and contemporary history, and to what degree the sector should involve itself with politics and power. As it happened, in the context of Russia’s recent expansionist politics, the ICOM Russia did not avoid suspicion of having been compromised in this regard.

Alongside these two conferences, the most high-profile event in a similar vein was that organised by the German Federal Foreign Office on the subject of European Commemoration. It was held in Berlin during December 2014 and the by now officially appointed HEH Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork, participated, giving a presentation on the subject of the creation of the exhibition of the HEH with its focus on 20th century European integration history. Both Berlin conferences were attended by high political figures; Chancellor Angela Merkel opened and participated at the one held in German Historic Museum, and the German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter

³⁵⁹ E-mail to Taja Vovk van Gaal from Jerzy Halbersztadt on 21 August 2014.

Steinmeier did the same for the December 2014 conference organised by the German Institute of Foreign Relations (*ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen*). The aim of the latter conference was to explore ‘European Commemoration’ and as it was held at the end of a year rich in conferences and exhibitions about the centenary of the WWI, it was to reflect on that year’s commemoration projects. To this end it brought together over one hundred leading scholars, artists, education experts, and professionals, from a broad range of fields.

The *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*, an organisation well-known for its involvement with civic education in Germany, held its annual Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE) conference ‘1914-2014: Lessons from History? Citizenship Education and Conflict Management’ from the 16th to 18th October in Vienna, Austria. At this conference Andrea Mork presented the concept of HEH.

Another similarly focused conference, ‘Remembering Democracy in Germany. History of Democracy in Museums and Commemoration Sites in Germany’³⁶⁰ was held jointly by the five leading political foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany named after political figures of Konrad Adenauer, Otto von Bismarck, Willy Brandt, Friedrich Ebert and Theodor Heuss. This was held in Leipzig on the 23rd and 24th October and turned out to be the only conference among many in 2014 that deliberately focused on a positive memory in the context of the successful democratisation of the DDR and the representation of the united Germany in museums. It was attended by the Content Coordinator who gave a presentation of the Brussels project.

It should be noted that members of the HEH were not proactive in seeking opportunities to present at these conferences. It staff were invited to speak, which in itself showed the growing visibility of the project in the academic and vocational museum sectors during this time. APT leader and curators were invited to give an input into all of these events either as speakers or workshop facilitators, which pointed to interest in the HEH mainly in the wider German-speaking realm of academics, government representatives, politicians and civic education actors. It was seen as yet another indication of Germany’s special interest and role in the European memory debate and the associated mindset, it being strongly shaped by the sense of responsibility of the instigator of the two deadliest wars in human history, and that now seeks to overcome the trauma through the reconciliation of memories at a transnational

³⁶⁰ Originally in German - *Erinnern an Demokratie in Deutschland. Demokratieggeschichte in Museen und Erinnerungsstätten der Bundesrepublik*.

level. Examining the conference programmes, with their accompanying texts, provides a revealing insight into the themes and topics of collective interest of those attending. Central to these were the questions on how to find mutually agreeable ways to build transnational memory and to establish sites of memory – *lieu de mémoire* (Pierre Nora 1981-1992) – both physically and mentally. The general trend in the conferences dealing with memory was the predictable linking of history studies with the contemporary political situation, in the light of critical citizenship education. This was exemplified by the Vienna conference whose goal was to examine conflict resolution in the light of recent history, keeping in mind that what is at stake right now are the liberal democratic values which, it was said, need to be defended against the rising authoritarianism evident within some of the EU members states and in its bordering countries. Looking at the involvement of the HEH curators and management personnel in these events, it is evident that the HEH was considered as a place of common European memory in making. It was seen as potentially one of these *lieu de mémoire* – places of collective memory – that was already constructing such memory in line with the high expectations of its stakeholders. It remained to be seen if the HEH would live up to these expectations with a programming that appealed to community of European memory students.

Among those initiatives of note originating from academia, the European Observatory on Memories initiative has to be mentioned. On the occasion of its first colloquium entitled ‘Memory and Power. A transnational perspective’ its organisers invited HEH representatives to the launch of the project. This Research Group on Memory and Society, established within the University of Barcelona, aims at building a network of European institutions ‘to analyse and understand the different historical and memorial practices of our recent past’³⁶¹. Such projects suggest that there is a growing body of evidence regarding the public use of memory in Europe and its relationship with power. Predictably enough, the HEH case study, which was presented by curator Martí Segú Grau, played a central role at this colloquium and made the audience aware of its objectives. As this conference related to the transnational – European memory debate, it is not surprising that in the end of the day both organisers and attendees inevitably came to see the Brussels project as an outward expression of EU history politics.

³⁶¹ The European Observatory on Memories. Available online at: <http://europeanmemories.net/>. Last accessed: 4 October 2017.

The annual conference of European Remembrance – ‘Symposium of European Institutions, dealing with 20th Century History’, took place in Prague in 2014. It was attended by HEH curator Zofia Woycicka, who participated in a panel discussion. And a conference organised by the European University Institute in Florence in February 2015, ‘Public History and the Media’, a curator associated with this institute, Étienne Deschamps, gave a lecture entitled ‘Narrating Europe in a Museum? The House of European History’. This constituted the single occasion when the HEH was connected to European University Institute in Florence, itself established and sponsored by the European Commission.³⁶²

Somewhat different to the WWI and WWII commemoration exhibitions and conferences of 2014 and 2015, but of vital importance for the development of museology in Europe, were the EU-funded meetings focusing on the Europeanisation of museums. HEH staff attended several of these, including the ‘EuroVision – Museums exhibiting Europe’ (EMEE)³⁶³. This European museum development project aimed at developing contemporary concepts and design ideas through which visitors could get a ‘multi-perspective, synesthetic access to transnational objects and their different layers of meanings’. Here again, as might be anticipated, the collective memory concept, with a clear Europeanisation of memories was to the fore. The emphasis was upon putting greater value on museum objects. Following this classic tenet of museology, with its root in material culture, there was the ‘simultaneous appreciation of objects as elements of the local, regional, national and European collective memory [and that these] should become more visible and perceivable’. On the occasion of EMEE partner meeting in Stuttgart from 29th to 31st October 2014, a curator of the HEH, Kieran Burns, presented the future exhibition plan. Thus, the EMEE was the first occasion when the content and scenography realizations of the Europeanised history in HEH was first given out. In turn, the results of EMEE project were subsequently seen in the final exhibition, shown at the Parlamentarium at the end of the EMEE project in 2016. They provided a valuable insight into an alternative to the HEH methodology of Europeanisation of museums and musealising Europe. In the next chapter, against an extended theoretical background, the differences between the HEH and the EMEE approaches to the

³⁶² European University Institute, *Public History and the Media*. Available online at: <http://ifph.hypotheses.org/352>. Last accessed on 4 October 2017.

³⁶³ European Commission sponsored project *EuroVision – Museums exhibiting Europe (EMEE)*. Available online at: <http://www.museums-exhibiting-europe.de/>. Last accessed: 4 October 2017.

musealisation of Europe will be looked at in detail, especially how the two approaches constitute different museologies of Europe as a language of art.³⁶⁴

To sum up, contemporary history as a discipline in its own right had its genesis in the post-war Germany and was to have particular implications for the museum sector. The development of contemporary history studies was facilitated by the particular political climate of Western Germany, first with its turn to the Left in 1963 and then the later turn to the Right in 1982. Both sparked and facilitated the memory debate, out of which the concept of history politics in its present understanding emerged.³⁶⁵ A by-product of the history politics approach was the birth of a distinctively new type of historical museum, that of recent and contemporary history, as exemplified by the German House of History in Bonn. Accompanying the memory boom of the 1970s and 1980s, and rediscovery and appropriation of the concept of collective memory in reconciling and building a European 'community of memory' (Assmann) starting the 1990s, the contemporary history movement at large provided set of epistemological and methodological tools to the museum sector. The German House of History implemented these and thus became the prototype and a blueprint for a number of national and a supra-national 'Houses of History', most of which have failed as a result of their politicised character.

Nevertheless, these projects established the 'recipe' for the contemporary history museum that, when viewed against the background of institutional and EU history politics, became the role model for this particular type of museum in Europe. The idea of a collective European history was not universally accepted and there were arguments for and against the collective memory concept in academic circles. These centred around the questions of what competing memory frameworks that shape the current European memory debate are and can an overarching European memory framework actually be realized. Competing approaches to the practical realization of exhibition projects, which have Europe at their heart, is the subject of next chapter.

³⁶⁴ For museology of Europe as language of art see Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) 'Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.' EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press.

³⁶⁵ Troebst, S. (2013) 'Geschichtspolitik. Politikfeld, Analysenrahmen, Streitobjekt', in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, pp. 17-19.

Chapter 5

The Museology of Europe: The Europe of remembrance or the Europe of the regions?

Martin Roth, the former director of Victoria and Albert Museum in London, in an interview given to the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, discussed the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, terming it the German cultural mega project of the decade. This project was unusual inasmuch as having secured a large investment of public funds it atypically looked outside Germany for its leadership. It secured a leading figure from the international museum scene, the former director of British Museum, Neil MacGregor, as the chair of its Advisory Board. This Board, for a new institution due to open in 2019, is, according to Roth, ‘trying to respond to a question nobody has asked’³⁶⁶.

The late Roth’s observations included the comparison of the Humboldt Forum to the German Historical Museum initiated under Chancellor Helmut Kohl after 1989. That museum was conceived in essence as an answer to *Historikerstreit* about the role of Holocaust and Nazis in the Second World War. He concluded that there were immense difference between the debate during the turbulent 1980s, which resulted in what became the European prototype of contemporary history museum, exemplified by the both historical museums of Kohl’s era in Bonn and Berlin, and the debate today. Now, the rationale for a new large scale national museum project is not as clear in the minds of the public. It is difficult to disagree with Roth who was of the view that a precisely formulated question is crucial to the foundation of any new museum concept. However, he omits to mention the emergence of a new paradigm in the cultural agenda of Germany, one which differs from that of the post- Cold War decades. This new paradigm includes a respect for the outlook of the personalities involved, with their views revealing just as much about the concept of the new project as any official statement might. In this instance, bringing on board somebody like Neil MacGregor to assist with the development of a new national museum based on Berlin lays down a marker about the future character of the museum. It is to become a place ‘that brings together diverse cultures and perspectives and seeks new insights into topical issues

³⁶⁶ Interview with Martin Roth ‘Diesen Mut muss man haben’. *Die Zeit*, 17 October 2015. Available online at: <https://www.zeit.de/2015/40/victoria-albert-museum-london-martin-roth>. Last accessed: 3 June 2018.

such as migration, religion and globalization'³⁶⁷. This marks a significant change in German national museum politics, for not only does it represent a turn towards the more universalist-humanizing agenda, but it is also a conscious attempt to connect the 'high art' of museum making with entertainment for people from all backgrounds and walks of life.

The latter point was confirmed by MacGregor himself, in an article for *Die Zeit* on the occasion of 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.³⁶⁸ Here the inaugural artistic director of the Humboldt Forum speaks about tradition of fostering unity among the rich and poor through building their enjoyment of art at such places as the British Museum and the National Gallery in London, he previously being the Director of both institutions. This approach was a response to the demand of the government that the public should find greater resonance on involvement with such institutions. The direct link with the British Museum, through MacGregor, was a conscious attempt to activate that appeal (often so direct in the likes of Shakespeare) to connect both the high and low strata of society through tapping into popular history, and perhaps not least being an attempt to deflect the criticism that this was a wholly nationalistic project being developed on a site with notable political associations. This approach is not immune from controversy and criticism, but it has apparent cultural diplomacy benefits and has become a lucrative aspect within the strongest European economy. Thus, the direction of German museum development in the 21st century is clearly, and once again, that of 'emulation – a desire to catch up in status and symbolism – with Paris and London'³⁶⁹. The aim is to rebuild the image of Berlin as a true world metropolis, on a par with the other two capitals, in which the whole world, or at least the whole of Europe, is brought under one roof. It seems that the Humboldt Forum project developers are trying to break away from the (until now) internationally respected and highly regarded image of the post- Cold War Germany; one built on a 'norm entrepreneur' in relation to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*³⁷⁰, and on the '*Weltmeister* in the cultural reproduction of their country's versions of terror'³⁷¹. It is an attempt to create a different national

³⁶⁷ *What is the Humboldt Forum?* Available online at: <https://www.humboldtforum.com/en/pages/humboldt-forum>. Last accessed: 14 April 2018.

³⁶⁸ MacGregor, N. 'Shakespeares 400. Todestag'. *Die Zeit*, 21 April 2016, Nr.18.

³⁶⁹ Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) 'Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.' EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 20.

³⁷⁰ Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, p. 151.

³⁷¹ Timothy Garton Ash cited in Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, p. 137.

museum brand, one which sits alongside the contemporary history museum (so powerfully represented by the German Historical Museum in Berlin and the House of History in Bonn) and yet finds new ways of dealing with important public issues other than exclusively through the lens of a moral obligation resulting from a collective national guilt. Maybe this turn will come to be seen as an attempt to return to the idea of Germany as an old cultural nation, a *Kulturnation* indeed? In other words, the Humboldt Forum perfectly exemplifies the emancipation of a tormented nation who has successfully completed its programme of ‘getting in terms with the past’ and which is now confidently adjusting to a new role. This new role establishes Germany as an international cultural broker. Thus, while Germany was the initiator and exporter of the memory debate to a broader Europe after 1989, it is undergoing yet another transition, while the Europe to the East from Berlin is just getting started on their own ‘remembrance programmes’. Brussels, then, is in danger of being overtaken, as it maintains an allegiance to the now older trend of seeking to achieve a balance between the Holocaust-centred remembrance practices of the Western Europe and the condemnation of both totalitarianisms of the 20th century of the Eastern Europe as its main selling point of the HEH.

This chapter commenced with a timely reminder that each public museum project, especially the building of a new institution, should preferably be anchored in a public debate preceding its initiation and accompanied by a continuous fine-tuning of its core principles and programming in the run-up phase and after its subsequent opening. Also, that it is an imperative that alongside the policy decisions, possibly influenced by social engineering objectives driving the project, room should be made for public discourse and involvement. These qualities can legitimise the investment made in a new institution and are characteristic within the Humboldt Forum, established within a nation with strong tradition of public deliberation. Like the Humboldt Forum, the HEH seeks to represent a society, but one concerning the European demos in the making, rather than a national identity. The key question, then, is, what image of Europe does the HEH project? Or, in other words, what museology of Europe as a language of art³⁷² does it speak? In short, what is the HEH as a museological act?

³⁷² Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) ‘Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.’ EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 6.

Following on from the previous chapter, where the genesis of contemporary history museum as a by-product of the German post war school of contemporary history was examined, together with how the HEH is rooted in that tradition and how it represents this particular vision of Europe on a supra-national level, it is now necessary to examine the practical realization of this aspiration, as manifest in the exhibition design and accompanying it public debate. Roth has identified a trend current within Germany that is seeing a shift in how it wishes to project its image to Europe and the wider world. It is a change of perspective, from a specifically national preoccupation with the memory of the 20th century, to a more pluralistic and universal agenda, following the example of the encyclopaedic British Museum. With this in mind, it is feasible to now differentiate between a 'Europe of remembrance' and a 'Europe of the regions', using such designations as working titles to distinguish between the two modes of imaging and interpreting identities within Europe. In fact, these run in parallel with the two different traditions of 'museology of Europe as a language of art' (Knehl) that is applied by governmental and non-governmental actors 'when processes of musealisation run up against processes of Europeanisation' (Kaiser). And even if in the light of the genesis of the contemporary history museum it is obvious which of the two prevails in case of HEH, the possibility of an alternative museology of Europe, as a counterpoint, is worth examining as it is likely to emerge as what a museum of Europe in a more general sense could be.

What kind of museology of Europe?

In a European Parliament press conference of 17th February 2016, the initiator of the HEH, Hans-Gert Pöttering, announced that the museum would open in November 2016. The following day an article appeared in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, written by Pöttering and the former president of European Commission, Jacques Delors. It addressed the challenges facing Europe today, especially in regard to the migrant crisis. They appealed to the values of the European unification project stating that European unity was based on a community holding those values. The article also indicated that these issues will be facilitated on a European level by the House of European History, due to open in later that year.

For reasons explained before, regrettably there has been barely any public debate around the conceptualization of the HEH. Neither was one developed in the run

up to its scheduled opening in November 2016, or before its actual opening in May 2017. One could make a number of suppositions on why there was this lack of any public debate on the need for a museum like this in European society, or around the eventual expectations of what it should bring to European memory debate. In its development phase the HEH did dip its toe in the water in this regard, when it commissioned Eurobarometer to undertake a survey among focus groups of teachers and students in several European countries³⁷³, testing the exhibition themes and structure, but these results cannot be seen as representative of the expectations of the European audience at large. Nor did the unpublished survey report in any way contributed to the European memory debate that is at the heart of HEH.

The comparatively low media interest around the HEH may be put down to the paucity of information made available. It was only sporadically looked at in international academic circles, but there was too little material to allow an analysis of expectations, which made drawing any front-end conclusions difficult. However, what little evidence there was connecting the HEH prior its opening with the latest European memory research³⁷⁴ shows it being seen as part of the EU elite's agenda to mobilise history to legitimise its cause. The associated reactions and insights need to be examined against the backdrop of the HEHs overall concept, as it is represented in the script of its permanent and the first temporary exhibitions as a major source of the HEH as a museological act.

It should be stressed from the outset that the crucial difference between a museum studies perspective (the museum first and foremost as a repository of material culture from which histories are drawn), and that of memory studies, is that the latter starts with the ideology (in this case EU history politics) and then seeks to find how is it represented, among other, via material culture and scenography in a museum as a product of these politics. This has resulted in a somewhat uncritical assumption on the part of EU policy students, that the European Parliament's initiated museum necessarily follows the hard-line Europeanisation agenda of the EU history politics without questioning the material and spatial language (material culture and scenography) that is used to achieve these ends. For students of the European memory debate it goes without saying that the HEH as a museum of Europe will necessarily be at the forefront of

³⁷³ European Parliament (2012) 'House of European History: Aggregate Report/September 2012'. Eurobarometer Qualitative Studies. Conducted by TNS Qual+ at the request of the European Parliament. Not published internal document.

³⁷⁴ See cited here authors such as Calligaro, Sierp, Littoz-Monnet, Bottici.

shaping 'European memory framework' (Sierp), along the lines of 'Active European Remembrance' as one of the European Commission's 'Europe for Citizens' programme (2007-2013; 2014-2020) action points has it. The EU mobilization of the concept of collective memory along the lines of active European remembrance in sustaining a 'commemorative discourse of victimhood'³⁷⁵ has very few opponents. Necessarily, it brings a very specific means of expression along it, which were generally expected from HEH to be reproduced.

Adopting an approach rooted in museum studies though, would, by definition, result in a much more critical debate. It may not have allowed the EU's attempts of making use of a museum to convey a particular message to be taken so much for granted. Instead, it would likely have continually referred to its core business, the selection and interpretation of material culture and the concepts underpinning it, to reveal how Europe has reached a particular point, rather than drawing prior conclusions on what political ends it serves or aspires to, not the other way round. The question about the primacy of an idea in making a House of History, rather than it being a collection of objects, as in a regular historical museum, is discussed at some length in the Chapter 6. In preparation for this, the two distinctively different approaches to museology of Europe as a language of art and the thinking are scrutinised, as these underpin any decision on the selection of objects and the interpretation within each particular exhibition on European history.

Until the opening of HEH in May 2017 there had been virtually no opportunity for the interested layman, let alone the professional, to engage in discussion about 'imagining Europe' in the HEH. Nevertheless, the HEH will predictably become a locus of debate about Europe given the current levels of interest and discussion on such matters as mass migration, the prevalent terrorism threat, rising nationalism, separatism movements, armed conflicts right on the EU borders and the overall doubt in sustainability of the European project, not least due to Brexit. Against this backdrop one might expect a museum of Europe to address such common concerns against the background of a rich historical presentation as an open public space for it to facilitate debates as advertised by the European Parliament's DGCOM. However, it will be the footfall, the subsequent press coverage, and the interest shown by academia and the

³⁷⁵ Lagrou, P. (2010) 'Europe as a place for common memories? Some thoughts on victimhood, identity and emancipation from the past', in Blaive, M., Gerbel, Chr. and Lindenberger, Th. (eds) (2010) *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust*. European History and Public Spheres, Vol. 2. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, p. 283.

general public that will be the real test for the Parliament's strategy of quiet progress over almost a decade. Its approach may have provided a momentum and expectation amongst memory students for the realization of a vision of European history in a museum, but the HEH's function is far from clear as a museological act to museum students.

Conventionally a new public museum starts with a key question on what it is fundamentally there for. In this case, what is the HEH about? The question is not just about a narrative in a strict sense but the concept as such. To examine this specifically in relation to the HEH, we should start with the introductory audio-visual and the text of the introduction to the exhibition. These begin by asking: 'What is Europe? Is it a place? An idea? A people?' The original answer in the proposed draft text was direct, Europe is all of these things plus a 'shared way of thinking'. Such clarity and succinctness on what the museum was about was short-lived. In the final draft before signing off the production, this sentence was stripped from the script to be replaced by a much more diffuse expression: 'a shared past, shared cultures, and a shared multifaceted history'. It seems that the initial formulation was seen to be too strong a statement, and there were linguistic considerations too. The German interpretation of 'shared' (*geteiltes*) implicitly means both shared and divided, common but not uniform; whereas in English it has a clearer, more affirmative meaning. This example is just a footnote in examining the process of 'imagining Europe', which shows that disagreement just as much as the 'shared way of thinking' should be considered European *sui generis*, running throughout its multifaceted history. Notwithstanding the irony within the disagreement on the exact wording on what Europe is, the curators involved did agree upon the idea of collective memory as the basis for their work on the project. There was, however, little choice in accepting this as the central organising principle for the HEH, as the alternative – the concept of collective identity – was deemed too 'top-down' and not substantial enough to counter the trend for collective memory on the rise for decades both in the Anglo-Saxon world and in Continental Europe.

The concept of memory is absolutely crucial for understanding the mode of presentation in the HEH. It is evident from the very start that the first thing a visitor is introduced to is this concept, along with its implications for the way in which the story in the exhibition will be told. The visitor is confronted with an introductory question, is

there a ‘shared European past’, a communality in its history upon which a ‘reservoir of European memory’ that could be built? The visitor is left in no doubt that for the HEH there certainly is a ‘common European history’, because ‘if the answer is no, any further discussion would be superfluous’³⁷⁶. The exhibition therefore purposefully begins with the subject of memory, which elevates it to the level of being the superstructure, the organising principle and the framework within which this contemporary history museum operates. Psychologically, the functioning of memory is explained as a selective process of remembering and forgetting, one that constantly oscillates between memorizing and oblivion, and in so doing making sense of the past in order to explain the actual situation. Essentially, it is bound to deal only with what is relevant and important here and now, as seen through the lens of social, i.e. communicated memory, hence the ‘presentism regime of historicity’ (Calligaro) in today’s memory debate and its inevitably highly politicised character. It is as if the curators were telling the visitor to forget about lingering in a nostalgic past, set aside the pure enjoyment of material culture for its own sake, and instead understand from the very beginning that the House of History is made specifically to activate your critical reflection. Consequently, it will never be a neutral space.

In a contemporary history museum like the HEH, the question of finding ‘communality’ within the ‘reservoir of European memory’ is essential to the exhibition. This resonates precisely with Winter’s observation that ‘everywhere in the Anglo-Saxon world, historians young and old have found in the subject of memory, defined in a host of ways, the **central organizing concept** of historical study, a position once occupied by the notions of race, class, and gender’³⁷⁷. As for those older organising concepts, one can observe that these other themes have certainly not vanished, but ‘have been reconfigured and in certain respects overshadowed by the historical study of “memory”, however defined’³⁷⁸. Memory as a concept, bound to individuals and communities, rather than nations, turns out to be a handy method of historical imagining for such a supra-national museum as the HEH, because it effectively

³⁷⁶ Mork, A. (2012) *Presentation of the House of European History*. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Symposium of European Institutions dealing with 20th Century History, Gdansk, Poland, 14-15 September 2012. Available online at: <http://www.europeanremembrance.eu/edition2012/house-of-european-history>. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

³⁷⁷ Winter, J. (2007) ‘The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the “Memory Boom” in Contemporary Historical Studies’. *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1, no. 0, p. 364.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

transcends the national historical constraints with its sub- and supra-national, or, in case of Holocaust memory – universal reach.

How does the HEH make use of this organising principle to stage its museology of Europe as a language of art? If in the previous chapters this question was examined in a more theoretical way, here it is time to examine its practical realization.

Museology of Europe in the HEH

Collective memory as a ‘central organizing concept of historical study’ (Winter) is applied right at the beginning of the exhibition; the introductory part takes the visitor on a journey to selected ‘basic historical concepts’ (Koselleck) from the ‘reservoir of European memory’ (Mork), which are expected to match the criteria of: a) being originally European, b) having spread all over Europe, and, c) having been considered as distinctive hallmarks of European culture up to now.³⁷⁹ Surprisingly perhaps, the exhibition does not pursue the presentation of these basic and distinctively European historic concepts much further. Instead, it leaves it in the introductory part which briefly presents the visitor the overall guiding principle of memory, through highlighting key concepts such as, philosophy, democracy, the rule of law, humanism, slave trade, the French Revolution, colonisation, Christianity, the Enlightenment, the 19th century national movements and revolutions, capitalism, Marxism, and, finally, the Holocaust. From these it selects the French Revolution of 1789 and further national revolutions of the 19th century and the first steps towards globalisation as the trigger for European modernity. Thus, it becomes the actual starting point of the narrative.

The introductory part of the exhibition, therefore, can be technically seen as a selection of European *lieu de mémoire*, to use Pierre Nora’s terminology, both in its content and its message. It is essentially a recollection of souvenirs before the narrative of HEH, in the strict sense, starts. That is to say, the selection of places of memory as a reference to the rich European *longue durée* cultural memory serve here only as a background for active social or communicative forms of memory that focus on much more recent historic events of the 20th century. It is important to distinguish here between the Holocaust-centred memory of the German-speaking countries, as represented by such figures as Jan and Aleida Assmann, and the French version of

³⁷⁹ Academic Project Team, House of European History, *Fields of Research: the bases for the Permanent Exhibition themes*, p. 2. June 2011, PE 466.069/BUR/GT.

cultural memory introduced by Nora's pioneering *Les Lieux de mémoire*. The latter was developed in a slightly different manner, based on an encyclopaedic list of memory places, as such it transcends the traditionally rather narrow confines of the popular German memory debate that dominated the development of the HEH and to which the overall narrative of HEH is a proof. The mind-set of historical research bound to the German paradigm of *Zeitgeschichte*, i.e. contemporary history, concerns the passage to modernity in particular. This is what Reinhart Koselleck, in his conceptual history or *Begriffsgeschichte*, calls 'Sattelzeit' – 'the "saddle-time" referring to the period from 1750 to 1850, during which concepts took on their contemporary modern meaning.'³⁸⁰

The history of ideas (Arthur Oncken Lovejoy) or intellectual history (Quentin Skinner and the Cambridge School) in its German version termed conceptual history (Reinhart Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*) is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6. Here it is important to highlight its global implications for the choice of the museology of Europe as a language of art. The influence of this school of thought, which operates with long periods of time, is easily recognizable in the reading of the HEH as a visualization of the history of concepts in the first place. The exploration of concepts concerning the definition of modernity in the introductory part of the exhibition consequently leads to the core question behind the HEH – how was it possible that after the age of rationality, which propelled Europe into modernity, could such horrific break of civilisation happen? Or, in the words of Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork, 'how did extreme rationality turn into extreme irrationality in the 20th century?'³⁸¹ This is followed by a post scriptum with a clear moral implication commonly associated with the Germanic cotemporary philosophy of history – what should be done to prevent it from happening again? According to Jan-Werner Müller, Koselleck's view of basic historical concepts (*Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*), was driven in essence by 'a coming-to-terms with the past and a coming-to-terms with the present – but of modernity more broadly.' Informed by a 'somewhat sceptical perspective on modernity as an age of "ideologizations" ... 'the modern age was diagnosed as one of actual or latent ideological civil wars' because 'modern concepts demanded change, political

³⁸⁰ Müller, J-W. (2014) 'On Conceptual History', in McMahon, D.M. and Moyn, S. (eds) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 84.

³⁸¹ Interview with Andrea Mork, *Curating in a Pan-European Framework*. Available online at: <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/focus/curating-pan-european-framework>. Last accessed: 17 May 2018.

movement, and, ultimately, conflict'³⁸². This approach which engages with the modernity 'more broadly' as a one way road to ideological conflicts of the 20th century and the resulting from it catastrophe, clearly resonates with the well-known 'Never again!' motto that has been a dictum of the German memory debate ever since the Cold War and provides at once a rationale for the language of art for its museology of Europe. This museology of Europe is based on a Europe of the 'Shared and Divided Memory', as one of its exhibition galleries has it in title. It does not however explicitly draw on the concept of collective (American version) or cultural (German version) long-term memory in its aspiration to build a 'reservoir of European memory' (Mork). And unlike the *longue durée* cultural history vision of Europe, which would accentuate cultural and perhaps religious communalities, the narrative of the HEH essentially boils down to the memory of the two World Wars and rebuilding of Europe from the rubble. The continuous reflection throughout exhibition concerns continental Europe's inherently conflicting and crisis-ridden concept of modernity as opposed to, for example, the Whig positivist historiography of British modernity.

In aspiring to present the overarching scenographic metaphor of 'Europe's journey into modernity' (Mork) the HEH adopts a novel approach in the narrative, presenting for the first time within the European museum scene the Western and Eastern European memory cultures of the 20th century on an equal footing. In doing so it could be said to implicitly reflect the current state of the play across the EU's history politics. Needless to say, besides the internal frictions of whose memory culture will dominate, the placatory factor of a 'reservoir of European memory' comes at a price, namely, narrowing the memory field to mainstream memory cultures of the EU member states. It struggles to include the competing memory cultures, notably that of the modern-day Russia on equal footing with memory cultures of Nazi and State communist crimes because of its conceptually preconceived character.

Memory versus Remembrance

A small detour is necessary at this point, to reflect upon the notion of a 'Europe of remembrance', which can be juxtaposed with the idea of a 'Europe of the regions'. This comparison accentuates the differences between the two approaches to imagining

³⁸² Müller, J-W. (2014) 'On Conceptual History', in McMahon, D.M. and Moyn, S. (eds) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 78.

Europe in the context of the HEH. It can be said that the ‘Europe of remembrance’ is an envisaged objective of the EU history politics, which aspires to build a ‘European memory framework’ (Sierp) used in order to strengthen civic society and to develop European public space and sphere amongst the European citizens. The transition in the EU history politics from the ‘identification vector’ (Littoz-Monnet) of common long-term cultural heritage that still dominated in the 1990s, to the current regime which has focused down on the remembrance of the tragic events caused by both totalitarianisms of the 20th century, was explored in Chapter 4. Here it is important to highlight that the concept of collective memory, as advanced over the last 70 years by the likes of Halbwachs, Nora, Jan and Aleida Assmann, and, not least Paul Ricœur whose inquiry into the phenomenology of memory and remembering has established itself as the conceptual substrate, which has then been politically appropriated in EU history politics. It has been from this root that European political identities have been fostered, especially over the last decade.

Ricœur in his phenomenology of memory introduced the differentiation between active and passive memory (*mneme* and *anamnesis*), between memory as a *souvenir* and the active recollection:

The phenomenology of memory begins deliberately with an analysis turned toward the object of memory, the memory (*souvenir*) that one has before the mind; it then passes through the stage of search for a given memory, the stage of anamnesis, of recollection; we then finally move from memory as it is given and exercised to reflective memory, to memory of oneself.³⁸³

This distinction between passive and active memory is at the heart of the concepts ‘collective memory’ and ‘collective remembrance’. The first is seen as ‘affection (pathos) claiming a truthful relation to the past, memory as a kind of knowledge, and the active search of recollection, memory as praxis, in the second’³⁸⁴. Chaira Bottici and Benoit Challand in their enquiry into European memory politics stress that this active side of memory is overlooked by critics of collective memory

³⁸³ Ricœur, P. (2004) *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago & New York: The University of Chicago Press, p. xvi.

³⁸⁴ Askin, R. (2009) *Mneme, Anamnesis and Mimesis: The Function of Narrative in Paul Ricœur’s Theory of Memory*. Forum for Inter-American Research (FIAR). Available online at: <http://interamericaonline.org/volume-2-1/askin/>. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

when they see in it only as a metaphysical hypostatization.³⁸⁵ Therefore, in order to avoid this pitfall, they suggest following the recommendations of such authors as Winter and Sivan, who use the concept of ‘collective remembrance’ as part of a distinct process, instead of embracing the notion of ‘collective memory’ which is often taken to denote a museum object.³⁸⁶ Admittedly, the HEH as a museum necessarily could have found itself entangled between these two different ways of understanding memory. Conscious or not, it did not follow the suggestion by Winter and Sivan expressed in their *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* who advocate to use the notion of ‘collective remembrance’ which would then underline its active stance and thus align the HEH vocabulary with that of Commission’s ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme and similar expressions of EU official remembrance policy. Instead, it stayed in what is termed in this division as a passive mode of memory indeed denoting museum object.

In appreciating the differentiation of active and passive memory proposed by Ricoeur and his interpreters, one can certainly recognize that his views are reflected in the thinking of the European Commission, as evidenced in the exact terminology seen in its documents. The Council of the European Union Regulation for setting up the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period 2014-2020 was adopted unanimously. It contains an action point on European Remembrance, which focuses on totalitarian regimes:

‘European Remembrance’: This strand of the programme focuses on Europe as a peace project. We must keep the memories of the past alive while we build the future. The programme will support initiatives which reflect on the causes of the totalitarian regimes that blighted Europe’s modern history, look at its other defining moments and reference points, and consider different historical perspectives. Remembering the lessons of the past is a pre-requisite for building a brighter future.³⁸⁷

The crucial difference, which is manifest in the nuances of terminology along with its implications for the HEH narrative, is discussed in more detail in the closing

³⁸⁵ Bottici, Ch. and Challand, B. (2013) *Imagining Europe. Myth, Memory and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 50-51.

³⁸⁶ Winter, J. and Sivan, E. (eds) (1999) *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 9-10.

³⁸⁷ European Commission, *Europe for Citizens Programme*. Available online at: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/>. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

chapter. Here it is suffice to say that the HEH vision of a European history, while aligned with official EU history politics, because it is part of it, lacks the component of 'active remembrance' in its official communication as a way of mobilising the European public.

It should be noted, however, that the appropriation of this terminology and the overall European memory programme happened organically with the development of the HEH. It happened practically and without dispute, except on those few occasions when demands were made for 'more culture and art' and thus more of a long-term cultural memory in the HEH instead of remembrance of the dark past.³⁸⁸ In this the Academic Committee and the Board of Trustees always had the full backing of the Parliament's bureau, while the APT navigated the waters of history politics avoiding of the partisan positions of the various memory lobby groups. Even the change of the Parliament's presidents in the six years of HEH production did not change anything in this respect; both the Polish conservative Jerzy Buzek and the German socialist Martin Schulz, and finally the conservative Italian Antonio Tajani, all supported the realization of the HEH as a place for European collective memory. How much this was driven by their subscription to the purity of the concept and how much was governed by the pragmatism needed to see the project through remains open to question.

That the concept of a 'Europe of remembrance' with the emphasis on both totalitarian regimes, but specially the Holocaust, has since 2004 shifted to the centre in European identity building arsenal, has been confirmed by Pavel Tychtl. He arrived at this conclusion from the perspective of having worked on the 'Europe for Citizens' programme within the European Commission. In writing about the EU founding myths, Aline Sierp provides a broad overview, showing how the Holocaust was identified as the negative founding myth of European integration. As an affirmation, she quotes Tychtl, 'The Holocaust is a real watershed in Europe's modern history – this is where European integration starts. This means that remembering the origins of European integration must include Holocaust remembrance'³⁸⁹. She further argues that the EU's sudden interest in this element of WWII history has to be set within an attempt to create an overarching political identity beyond the institutional framework of the EU. As per

³⁸⁸ In this regard telling is observation of Gero van Randow. In an article about Fidesz leader's and the Prime Minister's Victor Orbán's illiberal democracy, he is quoting Orbán adviser, Maria Schmidt, who has been saying that 'On the gravestone of the German soul I would write the following: suffocated by their leftist elite and the Holocaust rituals'. *Die Zeit*, 14. April 2016.

³⁸⁹ Pavel Tychtl cited in Sierp, A. (2014) *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. New York: Routledge, pp. 124-125.

exhibition design of the HEH, the European establishment has indeed succeeded in bringing about this vision of European collective memory.

Reservoir of European memory

The fundamental acceptance of German contemporary memory debate tradition explains why from all possible starting points for a narrative of Europe, the HEH chooses, as one would think, the least obvious one. Unlike the by now dysfunctional Musée de l'Europe – whose permanent exhibition started in the era of high Middle Ages around the year 1000, when the Christianisation of Europe was to all intents and purposes complete, but before the confessional schism had taken place³⁹⁰ – the HEH's narrative, except for the mentioned *lieu de mémoire* (Nora) or the basic historic concepts (Koselleck) in the introduction, did not look for a common denominator much beyond the forces and defining features of Europe's modernity. Not even the former European unification project – Christianity, which was 'eclipsed by "Europe" (defined as geographical notion in a relationship of distance with other part of the world) in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century'³⁹¹ – is explored in any depth before leaping into the modernity of the 19th century and the conflicts of the 20th century. That is to say, the age of scientific breakthrough, of industrialisation, of rationality, of the emergence of the bourgeois and of overall modernisation, is only seen as a necessary prelude to the extreme irrationality of the 20th century, conceived as the catalyst for the European political unification project. Certainly, this could be technically explained by the argument that the Academic Committee has assigned curators in the final version to reserve up to 60-70 percent of the exhibition space for the post-World War Two European integration, as noted by Kaiser.³⁹² This would, however, be too simplistic an explanation. Therefore, before going into the actual European memory debate, as it is reflected in the HEH exhibition and looking at the few reactions to it, we should look in more detail at what was not included in the 'reservoir of European memory' (Mork), and as we shall see, this was largely Europe's pre-modernity.

³⁹⁰ Compare Pomian, K. (2008) 'Das Brüsseler Projekt', in Kreis, G. (ed.) (2008) 'Europa als Museumsobjekt'. *Basler Schriften zur europäischen Integration*, Nr. 85. Basel: EuropaInstitut der Universität Basel, pp. 18-22; Kaiser, W., Krankenhagen S., Poehls, K. (eds) (2012) *Europa Ausstellen: Das Museum als Praxisfeld der Europäisierung*. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, p. 145.

³⁹¹ Greengrass, M. (2015) *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648*. London: Penguin Books, p. xxvi.

³⁹² Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 7.

To the informed visitor with some museum-going experience, but unacquainted with the concept of a House of History, it might appear peculiar that in a museum of Europe the very unification project of the continent, over a millennia in the making, is almost completely missing. The exceptions being the introductory section and the final multimedia exhibit within which is a short synoptic audio-visual that acts as a kind of flow of consciousness and which plays back various recognizable symbols, places, and people of European history. It may also seem strange for such a visitor that in a museum of 'Europe' neither the Roman Empire nor its erstwhile successor in the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation with Charlemagne as Europe's towering unifying figure, nor the Renaissance, nor the world discoveries or the Enlightenment, feature to any great extent within its exhibitions. On the other hand, the approach adopted within the House of History would not come as a surprise to someone with a basic background knowledge of the German contemporary history paradigm, bound as it is to social and communicative memory, and less to the long-term cultural memory. But this distinction was not clearly defined at the outset, as will be shown. Instead it developed over the first six months of the concept phase in 2011, after which it was bonded into the thinking on the project and remained practically unchanged thereafter. Even with the few occasional and refreshing interventions by some members of the Academic Committee, who recommended more culture, or resignedly sought not another Holocaust museum (Mária Schmidt), or that more of a famous 'European' personalities and earlier history (Matti Klinge) be incorporated into the permanent display, the exhibition concept continued relentlessly. It remained in general terms focused on a 'Europe of remembrance', a theme that was fixed in the *Final Design* (2014) and became ready for production by end of 2015. At this point there was virtually no way of changing its course, neither from the side of the advisory bodies, nor the curators, let alone in response to a view of the general public. This remained the pattern even though a panel of external experts (mostly university history professors, plus some members of the Academic Committee) were invited to comment on the proposed exhibition content. It was obvious that their role was one of verification of the exhibition texts and their input was limited to appreciation and minor corrections, and not to changing the content itself.³⁹³

³⁹³ Members of the external proofreading (HEH permanent exhibition text validation) panel: Prof. Emmanuel Voutiras, Prof. Luisa Passerini, Prof. Laurence van Ypersele, Prof. Dr. Lutz Raphael, Prof. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Prof. Bella Tomka, Prof. Ludger Kühnhardt, Prof. Miard-Delacroix, Prof. Ivan Berend, Prof. Pieter Lagrou, Prof. Oliver Rathkolb,

In order to understand how the *Final Design* plan of the HEH reflected the centrality of the Holocaust and the totalitarian regimes, and how central these aspects were considered to be to European remembrance, and indeed what is left out from this vision, we need to revisit the original *Conceptual Basis* for a HEH dating from 2008. In the final presentation of the HEH reading of European history, excepting the previously mentioned introduction, it practically skips over the whole chapter set out in the *Conceptual Basis* entitled ‘The origins and development of Europe until the end of the 19th century’. As shown earlier, in its final iteration, the exhibition begins with the formation of nation states against the background of the modernising and revolutionary ideas that spread across the continent. The narrative set out in the *Conceptual Basis*, which was elaborated upon at considerable length by the experts, started with the story of the formation of high culture in antiquity, moving through the Greco-Roman worlds, Middle Ages, Renaissance, the importance of Christianity as a cohesive force, the Reformation, and the French Revolution, each being cited as the basis of modernity.³⁹⁴ A critical observer may be puzzled by this omission, believing it to be essential in gaining a broader contextual understanding of Europe’s modernity. How, they might ask, can we understand modern Europe without appreciating the sudden insecurity caused by internal religious tensions, the impact of the Ottoman threat, and the influence of the world discoveries of the 16th century? Besides, putting so much emphasis on attributing the genesis of the name and idea of Europe to the ancient Greek myth, the rediscovery of this notion in the transition phase to the modern times remains curiously underexplored. While the case for setting a narrative stressing the cultural and civilizing influences alongside the dominant memory of recent historical events philosophy for creating a European memory framework was strong, it was largely turned down by the HEH. It was consciously not adopted because it was seen as too essentialist, patronizing, and therefore dangerous, in that it might substantiate various nationalistic and regionalist identity building, each having strong consequences in the geographic dimension. As Greengrass notes, the dismantling of the first great project on European unity – Western Christendom – saw Europe reconfigured as a series of geographic identities, both national and regional. While this had its own civilizing

Prof. Bozo Repe, Prof. John Kent, Prof. P.Machcewicz, Prof. Jean-Jacques Puissant, Prof. Eric Corijn, Prof. Ulrich Herbert.

³⁹⁴ Committee of Experts, House of European History (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 8 October 2017, pp. 11-15.

impacts and gave rise to various European elites, it is an aspect of European history which the HEH, at least in its permanent exhibition, fails to address:

Shakespeare and Montaigne almost never used the word 'Europe' in their writings while the French philosopher Louis Le Roy wrote of 'our mother Europe', using the term to describe a whole civilization with a complex history, a dynamic present and a positive future.³⁹⁵

This view that Europe's future was associated with the new world discoveries and with ideas of liberty and emancipation was first propagated by the Protestant movement, arising from the Reformation. The time when European intellectuals consciously start using the self-reference 'we Europeans', can be dated back to Francis Bacon who 'grandly referred' so as early as 1605:

It was America, which was essential in defining what those values, and that identity, was: America enabled them to reconfigure Christendom as a geographical entity, a space they increasingly knew as 'Europe'.³⁹⁶

If it had not been for the discovery of America, 'Europe' would not have existed. Here it is important to note that the word 'Europe' became utilized instead of 'Christendom' first by the Protestants, especially when they wanted to demonstrate that the cruelties which occurred in Europe's confessional conflicts were as great, if not greater, than those of supposed 'savages'. In other words, the discovery of the Americas crystallized the idea of Europe once again as a geographical entity, previously described as such by the ancient Greeks. Protestantism essentially brought into circulation the notion of Europe as a civilizing project, accompanied by an emancipation from what were thought to be the corrupt practices of Roman Catholicism. Following Sir Isaiah Berlin, liberal thinking as such was in essence a child of Protestantism. The consequence of which was the humanism – 'a form of secularised Protestant individualism'³⁹⁷ while the civil liberties, the rule of law, democracy, and human rights

³⁹⁵ Greengrass, M. (2015) *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 28-29.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Isaiah Berlin's inaugural lecture as Oxford's Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', p. 17. Available online at: http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/published_works/tcl/tcl-a.pdf. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

followed its suit. While the HEH hails such principles, the pivotal part played by the Renaissance and the Reformation in embedding them in European identity is not examined in much detail in the exhibition. One can only speculate how the HEH's overall narrative would have looked if it have adopted a chronology with an earlier start. But what this curatorial choice does do is to exert a museological influence on the perception of the 'reservoir of European memory', preferring not a 'Europe' in the traditional sense – as a geographic and civilizing concept – but a Europe that is a political project of late modernity. This would seem to be its underlying purpose.

The introductory part of the exhibition offers some insight into European art from the period of Antiquity, Renaissance, Enlightenment, together with some modern and contemporary examples. It features the myth of Europa in various artistic forms as presented in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It was exactly through this ancient piece of literature that educated people in the Renaissance and the age of Enlightenment learned about the myth of Europa. The myth consolidated the idea of Europe as a geographical space. In parallel the exhibition shows some maps of Europe: an early one presenting the known world and the Mediterranean Sea as the centre of the universe, and later modern global maps showing Europe as a distant and rather small extension of the gigantic Asian landmass. Here, for instance, Europe is presented both as a continent of regions and also singularly, depicted a 'Queen' Europe, famously anthropomorphized by Emperor Ferdinand's cartographer, Johannes Bucijs Aenicola. Greengrass notes that this geographic conceit was popularized when it was incorporated into later editions of Sebastian Münster's famous *Cosmographia* (1544) and became very popular among the intelligencia.³⁹⁸ The understanding of Europe as a single geographic entity therefore is crucial for understanding the transition to modernity; gone is the concept of an area united through the dogmas of Christian beliefs, to be replaced by the idea of it as a space in a wider world. Europe's 'age of discovery' was not simply of far-away new worlds, it was also that of its own spatial identity. Thus, the historic roots of the Europe of the regions concept.

In the HEH though, these Renaissance spatial representations of Europe are presented in a particular way. There is an obvious attempt to link them with the more recent visualizations of Europe as a geographical space, and specifically with the current day European unification project. The original understanding of 'Europe',

³⁹⁸ Greengrass, M. (2015) *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 30-31.

united under Christendom giving way to a geographical projection that mapped its divisions, that delineated its political, economic and social fragmentation³⁹⁹ is imbued now with a completely new meaning. The former geographic and civilizing notion of Europe is inverted in the HEH and reshaped along the lines of a Europe as a political project of modernity. Uninhibitedly Europe in the HEH thus becomes a Europeanisation project of the EU elites, pursued both politically and financially, as an attempt to mobilise European modern history towards Europe as a project of late modernity. It is undoubtedly a peace project as the Commission's 'Europe for Citizens' programme supported action point 'European remembrance – the EU as a peace project' has it, but its reductionist approach to darker chapters of 20th century that HEH was bound to address in its main corpus within the permanent exhibition nevertheless appears constraining in several aspects. Re-establishing Europe as a community of values again, a new Christendom, though with a different frame of reference than the former unification project, in a paradoxical way appear restrictive, not expansive; for in the HEH it does not consider the wider realm of European cultural influence and thinking, for instance, of Russia, Turkey, and the Caucasus.

Europe in the HEH, accordingly, is not merely a geographical and civilizing notion with its exemplary material culture (soft and silent), but a Europe as a project; one which seeks to build a sense of community of (secular) values through a notion of collective memory. Furthermore, it might be assumed that the alternative programme of Europeanisation, one built on a collective of regional identities, would not only be too weak a concept to reap political dividends of Europeanisation through objectification of collective memory in a museum like HEH, but it falls short as a counterpoint to an idea of federal Europe or – 'more Europe' as the Brussels jargon has it. A Europe of the regions implicitly points in the opposite direction. It espouses national and regional identities and different modernities that do not always match the EU borders and which sometimes are at odds with the political aim of 'more Europe' not least in the realm of history and cultural politics.

One such problematic regional identity is that of the Baltic Sea region. Unavoidably this includes St-Petersburg, as one of the great European cities of the north, and the current day Kaliningrad which has become a Russian buffer zone sandwiched between two EU countries and the Baltic Sea. Such conflicting visions of

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 675.

Europe were not necessarily examined by the Academic Committee in detail in its meetings but nevertheless can be traced in some of its members academic writing. One such, the leading Finnish modern historian, Matti Klinge, according to Stefan Troebst, caused a wave of indignation back in the 1990s with his book *The Baltic World*.⁴⁰⁰ In this he reminded the reader that the North-West part of Russia had always been populated by Baltic Sea people and that they had dominated the region over several centuries. Consequently, Russia has to be considered an integral part of his North-East Europe (a controversial descriptor in itself) and thus it could not be excluded from Europe's historic, political and cultural histories. With this Klinge comes into conflict with the dominant political view and runs against the official historiography of Scandinavia, Poland, and the Baltic states. Alongside similarly critical Hungarian member of the Academic Committee, Mária Schmidt, Klinge retrospectively is frank about his failure in broadening the scope of HEH's narrative:

There were in particular two aspects in which I did not succeed in convincing the Academic Project Team. Firstly, the part dedicated to earlier history is, in my opinion, definitely too weak. Secondly, the presentation of European History mainly follows the view of the victors of the Second World War, which, to my eyes, is propagandistic. This was criticised during Board meetings; Mária Schmidt in particular formulated her critique very well. Also, the view taken on contemporary history is already rather old-fashioned ... There was too much NATO ideology and too little understanding of the losers' way of thinking ...⁴⁰¹

Similarly, the application of the Europe of the regions paradigm could cause uncertainties across the Mediterranean realm, with its strong Islamic, North-African, and Jewish traditions and ways of life, some of which are seen as having a clearly different concept of modernity.

As is widespread in the representational strategies of the national museums, and also in Brussels, the European language of art appears as 'conceptually too low a

⁴⁰⁰ Troebst, S. (2002) 'Klātbūtne austrumos: Krievija un ziemeļaustrumu Eiropa', in Rādiņš, A. (ed.) *Baltija – jauns skatījums*. Riga: Atēna, p. 72.

⁴⁰¹ Klinge, M. (2018) 'A Nordic View', in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 262.

resolution at which to interpret material culture'⁴⁰². This being the norm, it makes the case for showing Europe as a political project of modernity even more obvious in the HEH. Arguably this is the reason why there was to be comparatively little of a 'silent Europe' within the HEH, where the 'European' object stands alone, is allowed a broadening of its meaning by standing as evidence, and not being subservient to a preconceived idea, but this approach is far from self-explanatory. This capacity of the transnationalising of museum objects is an undervalued mode of representing Europe in the permanent exhibition of the HEH. Unlike the national museums, which use objects and artefacts to illustrate the advancement of civilisation, the HEH's approach prioritizes concepts and ideas. Expressed in a history politics jargon, it inevitably attributes a much higher status to 'Europe of collective memory' or, seen in the light of EU official rhetoric, even 'Europe of remembrance' as a central tool of Europeanisation over the 'Europe of the regions'. This value judgment is perfectly mirrored in the structure of the HEH content, where the permanent exhibition is designed along the lines of the 'hard Europeanisation' through collective memory, while the first temporary exhibition entitled 'Interactions. Centuries of Combat, Commerce and Creation' operates with some elements of the 'soft Europeanisation' as represented by putting more accent on museum objects and their meanings. The latter mode of representation is explored next.

Europe of the regions

National museums are to the fore in showing Europe through the language of the museum artefact, the language of art. Their described approach is that of a Europe of the regions, highlighted by the objects on display, and presented in a manner which effectively encapsulate the museology of Europe, with its stress on culture and aesthetics. Typical of this alternative to official EU history politics approach, for example, were two exhibitions presented at the National Museum of Denmark – 'Museum Europa: An Exhibition about the European Museum and Europe' (1993) and 'Europe Meets the World' (2012). In the 1993 exhibition the Danish curators showed the connections across Europe through the sciences, arts and philosophy and

⁴⁰² Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) 'Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.' EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 11.

represented in the classification and scenographic methods applied in the European museum tradition. As such the exhibition demonstrated how such representation changed over time. The ‘Museum Europa’ was an exhibition about the museum exhibition in European tradition. It examined the European museum idea as such and explored how objects played central role in disclosing the various ways Europeans see themselves. In adopting this approach, it stands as being diametrically the very opposite of the HEH model, which started with a set of concepts that it wanted to illustrate. In turn, the ‘Europe Meets the World’ exhibition begins with the question – What is a European object? Its curators then follow the logic of Greengrass in saying that probably the most ‘European’ artefact of this exhibition was the anti-Catholic propaganda tankard produced in present-day Belgium around 1550. Why it is so specifically European? Firstly, they say, that represents a demonstration of the battle for truth and power, it is mass-produced, and it symbolises that sense of ‘disagreement’ which runs like a red thread throughout European history. In saying that, the Danish National Museum curators repeat Greengrass’ dictum that in the age of Reformation the ‘perceptions of Christianity had now become so diverse that it was no longer possible to speak of one ‘Christendom’ (Christianitas)’; consequently, from then on, people began instead to speak of ‘Europe’⁴⁰³, but implying a Europe of the regions, not a homogenous whole. Hence the difference between two distinctively different museologies of Europe: one which starts with a ‘silent object’ and is material culture centred, and the other which starts with a concept and turns it into ‘illustrated story’⁴⁰⁴. The latter ‘still remains a minor phenomenon, though of profound significance to the future role of national history museum’⁴⁰⁵ and, as demonstrated, by extension to transnational museum projects like the HEH too.

Europe as a project

After having looked at the rationale behind the both museologies of Europe, as two distinct modes of the language of art in Europeanisation of museum sector, one can still clearly see that within the HEH they necessarily collide to a certain extent. While the

⁴⁰³ Christensen, L., Grindler-Hansen, P. et al. (2012) *A companion volume to the exhibition Europe Meets The World*. Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, p. 431.

⁴⁰⁴ Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) ‘Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.’ EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

‘Europe of remembrance’ and the conceptual approach clearly dominate, both approaches are based on the concept of memory. But it is the communicative or social memory that dominates in the exhibition at the expense of the cultural long-term memory. As it turns out, the museology of Europe as a ‘broadening of meaning’ as exemplified by some of these typically ‘European’ objects, gets much less attention. It is dwarfed by that museology of Europe which essentially revolves around the memory of victims as its key determinant. Specifically, ‘The ‘break of civilisation’ of the Shoah is the beginning and the nucleus of the European discourse of memory’⁴⁰⁶, in the museology of Europe of HEH.

Further proof of this can be seen at the actual HEH exhibition which features, for instance, a special room entitled ‘Memory of the Shoah’ covering the transition from the early phase of European integration until the 1970’s. Positioned chronologically in the exhibition space it sits at the point of beginning of a memory debate in Germany in the 1960s, thus it matches perfectly with the gradual change of the historicity regime in history studies, discussed earlier. The other memory room is placed chronologically too. Entitled ‘Shared and Divided Memory’, it is positioned in the timeline at the end of the Cold War post 1991. As the title and positioning suggests, the focus is on the diverging memories of the Communist regime in the Eastern Europe. Taken together both rooms try to balance Western and Eastern European memory cultures, reflecting the *European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism*⁴⁰⁷, which condemns both the Nazi and Stalinist regime crimes. Here alone the HEH can be seen as presenting the accepted premise for interpreting the episode of both totalitarianisms in recent European history.

The growing insecurity, however, and gradual fading away of that federalist dream makes the exaggeration as regards the dramatic state of the play of ‘Europe equal with the EU’ dogma by some top European politicians more understandable. ‘Europe is dead’, proclaimed Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Belgium in a public address on the occasion of the opening of exhibition in Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels BOZAR on the occasion of the

⁴⁰⁶ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*, p. 34. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

⁴⁰⁷ European Parliament, *European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism*. Accessible online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>. Last accessed: 5 October 2017.

‘60 Years of Cultural Cooperation in Europe’⁴⁰⁸, thus making a point that the post-war European unification project was in difficulties.

The Europe of the post-war unification project might well have stalled on occasion, to the point where some might have declared the federalist dream to be dead, but the same cannot be said of the Europe of the regions and culture. To recall, the latter was the byword of European communities at the time when the Council of Europe came up with idea of the Cultural Cooperation scheme back in the immediate post war era, as discussed in Chapter 1. Curiously enough, the start of cultural cooperation in Europe coincided with the time when the presentism regime of historicity had not gained dominance and the politically strongly preconditioned European collective memory had not yet become a watchword of European integration, first via the West German, later the East European perspectives. In the rhetoric of Reynders one can sense the exact meaning invested in the notion of ‘Europe’ today by some leading EU politicians, and what was expected by default to be represented in the HEH, as an integral part of European Parliament’s communication work. Credit, therefore, should be given to the APT and specially its Content Coordinator for ensuring that the exhibition narrative starts in the late 18th century, pushing the history horizon much further back than the Parliament’s institutional inertia of covering only its own recent history, that of the post war European unification project and the World War One by extension, would suggest. Shortly before the opening of HEH, on the occasion of meeting his successor at the European Parliament, President Antonio Tajani, initiator of the HEH Pöttering in essence ascertained this reductionist vision:

The exhibition reflects the changing European history since the First World War and contributes to the European identity of the citizens.⁴⁰⁹

This vision would practically align with the programme of the German House of History in Bonn (extending the narrative to WWI and interwar period only) but does the drawing on German model necessarily mean adopting its strategy in every detail?

⁴⁰⁸ Centre for Fine Arts BOZAR (2015) *60 years of cultural cooperation in Europe*. Available online at: <http://www.bozar.be/en/activities/81231-60-years-of-cultural-cooperation-in-europe>. Last accessed: 14 August 2017.

⁴⁰⁹ Hans-Gert trifft Pöttering trifft Antonio Tajani zum Meinungsaustausch in Brüssel, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Available online at: <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.47750/> Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

Modalities of the contemporary history museum

As a contemporary history museum in the making, the HEH conceptually followed the blueprint of the German House of History. In doing so, was it inevitable that it would necessarily end up looking like the museum in Bonn? The answer is ‘no’. While the HEH narrative is considerably influenced by this model, it is notably different. Firstly, it had a broader scope in its historic enquiry. In understanding the route taken by HEH, a helpful hand is given by the Jürgen Osterhammel’s almost Toynbeesque enquiry into 19th century, *The Transformation of the World. A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*. This text was formative and heavily drawn upon by the APT Content Coordinator when developing the exhibition narrative.⁴¹⁰ Based on Reinhart Koselleck’s conception of a *Sattelzeit* or ‘saddle time’, Osterhammel is deploying a specific notion of a historic periodization: the non-event-based model of historic epochs which allows him to suggest that the momentousness of 1500, as a watershed between the medieval and early modern Europe, is now in dispute, saying that an alternative approach speaks of a very long and gradual passage from the medieval to the modern world, so the boundary between the Middle Ages and the early modern age falls away:

1500 for a long time considered the undisputed orientation date in European history when numerous far-reaching innovative processes occurred together at this time: (late) Renaissance, Reformation, beginnings of early capitalism, emergence of the early modern state, discovering of maritime routes to America and tropical Asia; even going back to 1450s, the invention of book printing with movable type.⁴¹¹

Notwithstanding the fact that the HEH narrative starts with a clear moment in time, the French Revolution of 1789, drawing on Osterhammel’s way of interpreting history with the centrality of the very long passage from pre-modern to modern world, was one way the ‘Europe’s journey to modernity’ was addressed in the HEH. For all the facets of this fascinating era, HEH’s primary interest is the first wave of globalization of the 19th century that was characterized by Osterhammel as ‘acceleration and

⁴¹⁰ Interview with Andrea Mork, *Curating in a Pan-European Framework*. Available online at: <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/focus/curating-pan-european-framework>. Last accessed: 17 May 2018.

⁴¹¹ Osterhammel, J. (2015) *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 56.

chronometrization'⁴¹², and which stretched across the industrialised regions and cities, if not across the whole continent. This attests to a strategy of showing the formation process of the early forms of what will later define Europe as a community of values, characterized at that same time by driving forces of accelerating social reforms which will bring it to a brink of self-destruction in the 20th century. Here it is appropriate to mention that by the same token, the narrative of the future Austrian House of History, due to open in 2018, will start in the 19th century with the 'first globalisation around 1850 when economic and political structures change rapidly'.⁴¹³ These similarities are not coincidental. They have to be seen in the context of a larger German-speaking school of contemporary history to which the Austrian House of History undoubtedly belongs. By pushing the historical starting point of the narrative back into the 19th century, the concept of the contemporary history museum is picking up the challenge of stepping outside its comfort zone. One should note that the narrative and collections of the House of German History starts with the 'Year Zero', i.e. 1945. Pushing the starting point further back in time, however, requires it to present the material evidence from that period. However, the typical House of History is a 'politically announced' not a 'grown from collections' project, and thus has to look elsewhere for a solution to this deficiency. In the case of Austrian project, the National archives are said to provide long-term loans, and will, according to the Austrian modern historian, Oliver Rathkolb 'like the HEH does in Brussels', have to rely on loans from other collections. Here we see how the HEH becomes a role model itself for the future contemporary history museums to follow. By broadening its scope of interest and including the 19th century in its narrative, as well as the introductory survey into basic historic concepts as a building blocks of European cultural memory, the HEH is leading the way in contemporary history museum scene in Europe.

⁴¹² Ibid., pp. 67-76.

⁴¹³ 'Haus der Geschichte: ÖVP will lieber ein „Haus der Zukunft“'. *Die Presse*, 5 August 2015. Available online at: http://diepresse.com/home/zeitgeschichte/4793874/Haus-der-Geschichte_OVP-will-lieber-ein-Haus-der-Zukunft?direct=4816904&_vl_backlink=/home/kultur/4816904/index.do&selChannel=&from=articlemore. accessed: 5 October 2017.

The House of History – a role model

Looking at the impact of the German contemporary history museum concept and its potential modalities elsewhere in Europe, only the Austrian House of History at the time of writing is still in progress. Having previously looked at a number of failed projects broadly, it is worth revisiting one in particular due its innovative approach to the German concept of a House of History. The uncompleted Dutch Museum of National History, which while conceived with the German House of History in mind, did not follow the German way of making a contemporary history museum. The authors of the *Blueprint. Plans, sketches and story of the Dutch Museum of National History (2008-2011)* are explicit about the ‘blueprint’ for their envisaged museum. They admit that the new ‘independent museum that would showcase an overview of Dutch history’ should be ‘based on the German Haus der Geschichte (House of History)’⁴¹⁴, thus attesting to the role model status of the German original. The failed Dutch project is proof that even the explicit use of the German model does not necessarily mean that one should automatically follow its proposed structure and mode of representing history, which is very much determined by a classical linear presentation in foremost educational purposes. The Dutch proposed a completely different thematic and unmistakably postmodern representation of the concept entitled ‘The Worlds’. Here each of six themes of the exhibition: ‘Land and Water’, ‘Me and Us’, ‘People and Power’, ‘Body and Soul’, ‘War and Peace’, and ‘Rich and Poor’, would tell a story of the Dutch history in its length and breadth, breaking the confines of the historical scope of the modern Dutch state and moving away from the traditional chronological or even chrono-thematic presentation technique. The *Vision Document* of the proposed new museum neither confined the narrative to the contemporary history as is common in a typical House of History, nor did it suggest reproducing the traditional chronological representation of the German model. Moreover, when the specifically recruited members of the museum board were developing the exhibition script, the emphasis placed upon the national historical canon became less pronounced.⁴¹⁵ What were revealed through van Hasselt’s observations from the time were the difficulties encountered, the ‘... museum professionals mediation between political influences of

⁴¹⁴ Byvanck, V. and Schilp, E. (eds) (2012) *Blueprint. Plans, sketches and story of the Dutch Museum of National History (2008-2012)*. Amsterdam: SUN, p. 212.

⁴¹⁵ Van Hasselt, G. (2011) ‘The Dutch National Historical Museum: A National Museum for the Twenty-First Century’, in Knell, S. et al. *National Museums: New Studies from Around the World*. London: Routledge, p. 320.

government, professional groups, the media and the wider public turned out impasse in this highly controversial museum project'⁴¹⁶.

Had the Dutch National Museum of History be built, would it have resembled the *Haus der Geschichte*? In fact, the very opposite would likely have been true, considering the bold and playful way the Dutch museum professionals approached the task, as showed in their blueprint. Except for the few central themes of the 20th century that were inevitably to feature in the planned museum, it appears that the Dutch would have followed the German example only to a very narrow sense. They undoubtedly conceived their new national history museum as a teller of 'illustrated stories' (Knell) as per German model as a space for learning, exchange, and debate. However, there is no trace in the Dutch approach of a 'German obsession with history' (MacGregor) as a moral obligation to get to terms with the recent traumatic past. Instead it demonstrates a rather playful way of 'stimulating curiosity in history'⁴¹⁷, something that was not the most distinctive feature to the German approach to date. But the differences are more profound, in fact. Arguably the Anglo-Saxon tradition places museums in the domain of the arts and humanities, and thus offer a more informal means of instruction, whereas in the German Humboldtian tradition of education, museums are seen as part of the science of history, and consequently an extension of schools with a clear program of formal education. The Dutch, being closer to the British both geographically and in their way of programming education in museums, probably explains why the way they planned their contemporary history museum was so much more playful and postmodern than any German museum. While borrowing from Germans the idea of a museum as essentially a forum for debate, the Dutch dropped the traditionalist book-like, chronologically linear manner of telling the narrative. In short, the Germans appear to be the champions of the contemporary history and pioneers of the House of History concept – the museum as a facilitator of public debate, not though the champions of innovative methodology for conceptualizing and visualizing the exhibition narrative.

Also, the lesson to be learned from the Dutch Museum of National History as an example of a museum developed in an open society, is that the centrifugal forces of the freedom seeking non-conformity showed by the Dutch museum professionals undermined the project which otherwise might have be well on a good track to

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Byvanck, V. and Schilp, E. (eds) (2012) *Blueprint. Plans, sketches and story of the Dutch Museum of National History (2008-2012)*. Amsterdam: SUN, p. 11.

realization. And that this is a risk associated with any truly openly run public cultural project. Of course, the fact that should be born in mind is that practically no other nation in Europe, except the Germans, has such a solid consensus throughout its social and political strata about the basic historic facts and interpretation of the role of Germany and Nazis in the Second World War. Reaching such a consensus, despite or perhaps thanks to the historical controversy of the 1980s in the West Germany, made the German House of History in the end possible. The considerably more complex political climate in Brussels inevitably contributed to the decision to deliberately avoid mediation and communication on the HEH prior to its opening. Unlike the non-conformist Dutch museum professionals, the HEH developers complied with the internal rules and regulations of their employers, who were determined to avoid any risk of jeopardizing the project at any costs. Thus, unlike the Dutch, and indeed the prospective Austrian House of History, the HEH did not go down the road of consensus seeking, a practice now seen as crucial to all fields of museum work, and commonly accepted from management downwards, as a critical step to developing museum narratives and building collections.

Collecting Europe

Being European means that it doesn't really matter in what country you are, you still find a bit of common grounds with other people from other countries ... basic one is Christianity [where] theoretical reason and backgrounds are known and shared by everybody. Even if you are not a believer.

(V&A Medieval Christendom Galleries)

Compared to these older notions of what it was like to be a European, as exemplified in this description within the Medieval Christendom galleries at the V&A in London, one wonders if anything similar applies to memory, which is said to be the new 'central organizing concept of historical study'⁴¹⁸. Considering the multi-perspective nature of any pan-European narrative, it requires a great effort to accommodate these multiple voices, these multiple memories, into any exhibition. As mentioned before,

⁴¹⁸ Winter, J. (2007) 'The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the "Memory Boom" in Contemporary Historical Studies'. *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1, no. 0, p. 364.

remembrance can be at times more exclusive than inclusive, and thus alternatives are being sought. A museological alternative to a Europe of remembrance is that which follows a more pluralistic agenda for the concept of Europe, one built on regional identities accommodating multiple voices. Such an approach has been adopted at a number of recently opened museums, including the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin, and the Museum of Mediterranean and European cultures in Marseille. Both attest to the popularity of the culturally-based Europe of the regions concept, as opposed to the Europe of remembrance approach taken in Brussels. Both museums take an ethnographic approach, interpreting historic objects, events, and social phenomena in a broader trans-regional and European context over a long-term cultural perspective. It is no coincidence that both museums include the word ‘culture’, rather than ‘history’, in their respective titles. And their starting point and primary concern is with the exhibition and interpretation of objects, not the presentation of concepts and ideas.

A similar approach was encapsulated in an EU sponsored research project entitled the ‘Eurovision – Museums Exhibiting Europe’ (EMEE). This aimed to equip museums across Europe with a rationale of Europeanisation through ‘broadening of the meaning of objects’.⁴¹⁹ As mentioned previously, there are two distinctive different types of representation; one being a ‘soft Europeanisation’ that takes the form of cultural diplomacy and exchange, the other being a ‘hard Europeanisation’ as the tool of EU history politics. These two different approaches are represented in the evolution of the EU’s thinking on identification that has taken place over the last decades, and which were detailed in Chapter 4. While in the 1990’s and early 2000’s such EU funding programmes as ‘Culture’ emphasised the ‘soft’ approach associated with discovering and sharing the communalities of European cultural heritage, following the change of political climate brought by the EU enlargement in 2004 and the geopolitics of the day, the ‘hard’ line of European remembrance took precedence in the later EU funded ‘Europe of Citizens’ programme. Even though the overall EU objective of an ‘ever closer union’ remained constant, the EMEE project, in the light of Commission action point of ‘active European remembrance’ in the context of EU communication strategy, can be considered somewhat anachronistic by the time it closed in 2016. Hence, the direction of travel changed dramatically, becoming considerably more politicised and manifesting in the museum field as a Europeanisation based on EU history politics.

⁴¹⁹ European Commission sponsored project *Eurovision – Museums Exhibiting Europe* (EMEE). Available online at: <https://www.museums-exhibiting-europe.de/>. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

The global objective of the HEH, therefore, as per EU history politics, has not merely been to instigate a ‘change of perspective’ on museum objects in an attempt to Europeanisation of museums, but also to be a very concrete example of the remembrance agenda of the crimes of both totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. That is to say, Europeanisation is delivered here through the representation of Europe as a community of memory, where history is served through communicative memory accordingly, instead of simply presenting various perspectives on how museum objects can be interpreted from a trans-regional, European perspective. This Europeanisation programme signals a conscientious and targeted attempt to shape European memory culture with the far-reaching aim of creating a ‘European memory framework’ (Sierp). As already mentioned, the price to pay for this memory framework is to generate a certain intolerance towards any competing memory framework, notably that of modern-day Russia. And although the two different museologies of Europe – Europe of the regions and Europe of remembrance – undeniably have parallel concerns, when it comes to the language of their expression, they differ significantly as regards their political implications. While the Europe of regions approach is characterized as an inclusive material culture focused instrument of cultural diplomacy and exchange, the Europe of remembrance methodology is more frequently quite the opposite – a ‘battlefield of memories’ (Leggewie); its ‘legal categories are often destined for the courtroom rather than historical understanding or democratic debate’⁴²⁰.

If we compare the mission statement of the EMEE – the ‘Europeanisation of museum work through changing and broadening of perspective’⁴²¹ – with the view of the HEH, it appears that while Brussels pushed through the Europeanisation through remembrance model, the Europe of the regions model was adopted with EMEE. EMEE followed the more universalist agenda, pioneered and sustained ever since by the encyclopaedic museums of the Enlightenment era, like the British Museum with its famous slogan ‘the whole world under one roof’. With its constant and systematic endeavour of trying to find new ways of broadening the meaning of objects, it is associated with an institution which incorporates the notion of a world museum in pursuit of a universal humanizing agenda. This approach, as we know too well, is not

⁴²⁰ Lagrou, P. (2010) ‘Europe as a place for common memories? Some thoughts on victimhood, identity and emancipation from the past’, in Blaive, M., Gerbel, Chr. and Lindenberger, Th. (eds) (2010) *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust*. European History and Public Spheres, Vol. 2. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, p. 184.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

free from political frictions either. *The Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums* (2002)⁴²² initiated by the British Museum was sharply criticized by Mark O'Neill as regards its unresolved questions related to repatriation of objects to source communities and more broadly considering its patronising curatorial practices.⁴²³ The recent case with a section of Elgin marbles being shipped to the Hermitage for its 250th anniversary in 2014 showed anew this controversy. While this action elicited an objection by the Greek government, it was nevertheless designed to strengthen the idea of a common cultural ground among nations, which might be currently quite apart in political terms but nevertheless share the same cultural roots. The encyclopaedic museum's agenda of a soft approach of broadening perspective of museum objects, which appeals to universal human experience, has proved to be immensely successful elsewhere as a tool of cultural diplomacy. But because of the immaturity of the Europe of the regions concept within museums, it is too early to say yet if this approach can become a trend or make any lasting impact on how national museums interpret their collections. So, for now, 'the whole world under one roof' turned into 'the whole of Europe under one roof', or rather some regions of Europe, remains an exception. This so far has been tried and has proved popular at the new European ethnographic museums in Berlin and Marseille. The same cannot be said yet about the EU propagated approach, which 'attempts to break the mould of single national perspectives by integrating them into a common identity and value framework'.⁴²⁴ The viability of the EU's history politics in the European museum concept needs yet to be tested, with the HEH being presented at the forefront of the argument. The difference, however, between the re-interpretation of existing museum collections in a trans-regional European perspective (as in the EMEE project), and the way the HEH works, can be largely attributed to the unique way it has developed, both institutionally and conceptually as discussed further in Chapter 6.

Should the attempts to borrow the concept of the contemporary history museum come to fruition in France and the Netherlands, the fact that these museums were to be State funded and centrally placed as fora for debate, might have brought a new

⁴²² *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums*. Available online at: http://archives.icom.museum/pdf/E_news2004/p4_2004-1.pdf. Last accessed: 26 March 2018.

⁴²³ See O'Neill, M. (2004) 'Enlightenment Museums: Universal or Merely Global?' *Museum and Society* 2 (3), pp. 190-202.

⁴²⁴ *Historikerdialog* by Aline Sierp and Philippe Perchoc (2015) *Unifying Divisions – Politics of Memory in the European Union*. Available online at: <https://www.coleurope.eu/events/historikerdialog-aline-sierp-and-philippe-perchoc-unifying-divisions-politics-memory-european>. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

dimension to the whole idea of what a contemporary history museum is. Apart from larger political reasons for these failures, perhaps the concept does not fit easily in such nations, for unlike Germany they do not have a past which has galvanized the whole of society around the consensus or common purpose, of getting to terms with the collective trauma of its recent past. Brought to a European level only after the EU enlargement in 2004, this concept has been broadened significantly to accommodate the Eastern European perspective of condemnation of both totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, as well as the Southern European trauma of the right-wing military dictatorships. This, however, is the major stumbling block for the critics of the approach who in such a joint European memory framework see the possibility for the trivialization of the Holocaust and diminution of the East European victimhood paradigm.

How the 'hard' presentation of European unity through a shared historic experience and a collective memory will work in the HEH remains to be seen. So far, however, even the soft approach of Europeanisation of museums through agenda of change of perspective and broadening of meaning of collections has been perceived by European museum professionals largely as irrelevant, except when associated initiatives originating from the national museum itself are concerned. A remarkable exception was the Danish National Museum's series of exhibition since the 1990s, including the recent 'Europe Meets the World' (2012), which drew exclusively on its 11 million strong collections of objects to tell the 'European' story from a national point of view. Despite the fact that this exhibition was produced on the occasion of Danish Presidency at the Council of Europe and opened by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, in Copenhagen on 12 January 2012, there is not a single word mentioning this fact in the exhibition catalogue. The lack of recognition of the EU in such circumstances is not infrequent in more federalist minded countries and amongst the younger EU countries. Thus, this omission cannot but be interpreted as a silent message in support of the primacy of the Danish national view over that of the EU when it comes to European history. The broadening of meaning through the museum object will predictably stay the preferred approach in national museums, together with the pragmatism of drawing on their own collections and the long tradition of European encyclopaedic museum, in their bid to stay independent. On the occasion of the opening of Danish Presidency exhibition, Barroso praised the 'prudent management' of the Danish museum professionals:

I was also impressed by the fact that all the pieces, all the objects in this exhibition, come from the collection of this museum which is really a great demonstration of the traditional openness of Denmark. This comes from all parts of the world, not only from Europe – from Africa, from India, from the Americas. This is really impressive. There were no loans, so you have no debts. This kind of prudent management is very appropriate and let me congratulate you for that.⁴²⁵

Both conceptually and methodologically this stands in sharp contrast to approach taken in HEH following the blueprint of German House of History, which nevertheless is not always followed by similar projects. Neither the Dutch nor Austrian museums planned to build a collection, but for the most part to rely on loans from the network of state funded and municipal museums. In this respect they resemble, for example, the Centre of Fine Arts BOZAR in Brussels, which does not have its own collection either, but for many years has successfully served as a ‘vacant’ platform for various kinds of temporary shows, presented in cooperation with local and international partners. In turn, the building a collection of its own and securing long term loans from hundreds of institutions and private collectors across Europe and further afield has turned out to be one of the impediments for the HEH, both in terms of time and budget. The complications brought about by the sheer scale of this scoping extensive exercise were not envisaged. Similarly, an ‘institutional sclerosis’ arose due to the HEH not using pre-existing mechanisms. For instance, it did not draw upon the valuable work undertaken by the European Commission, with considerable investment, on harmonising collections mobility among museums in Europe. Nor did it use the tools developed by the international committee of museum experts in the EU funded project ‘Collections Mobility, Lending for Europe in 21st Century’⁴²⁶, with its outputs such as the Standard Long-Term Loan Agreement, or other practical tools at hand like the EU co-sponsored museum networks of NEMO and EMF. None played a practical role in the HEH’s collections work, thus making the HEH trail blaze its unique path and establish itself on its own terms in the international museum scene.

⁴²⁵ José Manuel Durão Barroso opening address at the ‘Europe meets the world’ exhibition, Copenhagen, 12 January 2012. Available online at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-7_en.htm. Last accessed: 12 April 2018.

⁴²⁶ European Commission funded project *Collections Mobility, Lending for Europe in 21st Century*. Available online at: <http://www.lending-for-europe.eu/about-us/>. Last accessed: 22 May 2018.

Changing cultural agendas in Berlin and Brussels

The Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans recently captured the prevailing mood:

The European integration has been for a long time driven forward paternalistically. It does not function any more.⁴²⁷

Through the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme, with its supported activity of ‘European remembrance – the EU as a peace project’, the EU elites aimed at activating civic society in rediscovering and reinforcing the legacy of the post war European unification. In a similar vein recent history was expected to get mobilized in pursuit of this overall objective in the HEH, as the European Parliament’s prestige project and as a significant aspect of its associated communication strategy. Still, together with Peter Lagrou, the European public effected by this social engineering is entitled to ask if, for all its good intentions of teaching especially young Europeans, the ‘memorialization of history’, of all possible ways of imagining and representing Europe, is in fact the preferred route to travel. Lagrou is also polemical when asking if the EU can actually mobilize citizens around some new vision of the future – ‘a daring new utopia’. After all, the vision of the HEH foresees the creation of a ‘locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow’.⁴²⁸ Institutionally it is just as much about the future as it is about the past.

The ‘active European remembrance’, as a mechanism of ‘hard Europeanisation’ that has resonated with EU history politics of the last decade, while not without individualistic interpretations amongst the APT which puts it in a broader context of Europe’s modernity, nevertheless is implicitly present in the final product of HEH. While admitting the necessity of shaping the historical debate and the need to raise general levels of awareness amongst citizens about the core values of Europe, the question remains on whether the EU in ‘using memory for public sphere formation’ (Sierp) is not running a risk of destabilizing the situation even further? Our vocabulary has been enriched of late by the neologism ‘hybrid war’, to describe the tensions with

⁴²⁷ Timmermans, F., ‘Wir sind zu unbescheiden’. *Die Zeit*, 28 April 2016, Nr. 19.

⁴²⁸ Committee of Experts, House of European History (2008) *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History*. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf. Last accessed: 8 October 2017.

Russia and in relation to the interpretation of the recent past. Inevitably, the HEH will be at the forefront of contested and divergent memory cultures in Europe for the years to come and thus ultimately will have to take sides.

The distinction between the Europe of remembrance and the Europe of the regions, as the hard and soft form of Europeanisation of museums, may be used as a working hypothesis in an attempt to approach the central question of this study about the HEH as a museological act, but it is not yet the final and complete answer. The examples cited show that the 'Europe as a community of values', that HEH aspires to represent, is something that requires a broad and deep historical knowledge before it can be fully understood. The evolution of current day values of Europe can hardly be deduced from the catharsis of the both World Wars and the post war memory debate alone. These values can be explained only from the perspective of comprehending longer historical processes, which involuntarily transgresses the temporal and spatial aspects of the 'Europe of remembrance' of the 20th century.

Although the HEH has broadened its scope significantly by including the flashback to the myth of Europa and the basic historic concepts prior starting the narrative in 19th century, as a EU project with its roots in the German school of contemporary history, it nevertheless makes the memory of the 20th century totalitarianisms its selling point. Will the European public buy into it? That remains to be seen. While Brussels is busy with making the Europe of remembrance work, a thing it does best when navigating through the battlefield of memories, Berlin as the symbolic and geographic origin of this debate is discovering and taking a different approach – one that aims at accommodating various world cultures within a humanizing agenda of a universal museum. Here, in the words of Humboldt Forum Founding Director, Neil MacGregor, 'The collections form the basis for an understanding of the interdependence of the world and allow [us]... to imagine and understand the world as a whole'⁴²⁹. It is pursuing this through critical and self-reflective cultural diplomacy and exchange undertaken by the likes of British Museum. If the Europe of remembrance is bound to the German paradigm of contemporary history, which has been now elevated to European level, the Europe of the regions stands in a tradition of a more distanced and cooled down view of Europe as a geographical and foremost civilizing notion in a wider world. And while EU history politics in a situation of dwindling popularity is

⁴²⁹ Founding Directors of the Humboldt Forum. Available online at: <http://www.humboldtforum.com/en/pages/founding-directors>. Last accessed: 19 April 2018.

geared towards activating European citizenship through remembrance policy, the Europe of the regions has a no less ambitious but less politicized goal of broadening perspectives through engagement with museum objects and making connections through culture. Both approaches respond to the government's demand to 'enable the public to find themselves in a museum'⁴³⁰ but via rather different means and objectives.

Would a different museum of Europe be possible? Certainly, but then it most likely would not bear the title of a House of History, which, although always adaptable to the current situation, is essentially delivered in a box with a clear set of instructions for use. One can perhaps only have one type of a museum of Europe at any particular time and place. In Brussels it appears to be a high time for the Europe of remembrance, which would finally mean getting to terms with the 20th century past and modernity more broadly. A critical view of 'Europe's journey to modernity' (Mork) as a core subject of the HEH, is the central theme of the closing chapter of this study.

⁴³⁰ MacGregor, N. 'Shakespeares 400. Todestag'. *Die Zeit*, 21 April 2016, Nr.18.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The House of European History as a product of conceptual history

On a purely theoretical level every museum starts with a concept. This may just concern its mission or overall objective, but such thinking can extend to a clearly defined programme setting out what and why it collects, researches and exhibits. This makes all museums essentially a product of initial abstract thinking. On a practical level, however, the crucial distinctive attribute of a museum – in its European conception – is that it always has a collection of objects; by definition it cannot remain a set of ideas. The fundamental debate on the superiority of the idealist over the empirical, or vice versa, as the basis of acquiring knowledge has been a perennial concern at the heart of the Western philosophical tradition. Seen in the light of the contemporary practice of museum-making, this old dilemma unexpectedly becomes relevant anew. In the closing chapter the position of the HEH towards this issue will be outlined. In museological terms this concerns the primacy of an object over the founding concept of a museum. Both philosophically and technically this is the key to understanding what the HEH is as a museological act.

The tradition of the primacy of an object dates back to the age of Pliny the Elder, who died in 79 CE. In his *Natural History* we find the earliest system of classification of the natural world capable of being translated into a physical collection.⁴³¹ This system became the basis centuries later for the museum in our modern understanding of the term. The museum became an institution inextricably bound up with preserving, studying, and communicating material culture (and lately, as per 2007 ICOM Museum Definition, intangible culture too⁴³²). At the beginning of this 2000-year journey, natural philosophy did not merely rely on ‘direct observation’ that would alone be deemed satisfactory for an idealist worldview, ‘but rather on series of judicious comparisons that in turn necessitated the establishment of study collections’⁴³³. Thus, all forms of proto-museums followed the method of empirical

⁴³¹ MacLeod 2000: 3-10, cited in MacGregor, A. (2007) *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven and London: Yale University press, p. 2.

⁴³² International Council of Museums (2007) *Museum Definition*. Available online at: <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>. Last accessed: 26 March 2018.

⁴³³ MacGregor, A. (2007) *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven and London: Yale University press, p. 1.

research. This included the collection of natural rarities, gemstones and artworks in the Roman times, of holy relics by the Church in the Middle Ages, the princely *Schatz-* and *Kunstkammer* and cabinets of curiosities in the Renaissance, as well as the organised scientific classification systems of the modern era. All contributed to the museum acquiring the distinctive profile of an empirically oriented institution in pursuit of exploring and making sense of the world through its collections of objects.

It was therefore the Aristotelian empiricist view, not Plato's idealistic philosophical tradition, that laid the foundations of methodological collecting and researching of objects, as a way to discover and understand physical world in its entirety as a system. It is to this school of thought and practice that the museum, as we know it, owes its existence. Or at least that view held sway for centuries, up until a few decades ago, during which time museum historians would have unanimously agreed that 'the role of an object in a museum is constitutive, then: without an object there is no museum'⁴³⁴.

The primacy of an object, and of collecting and collections *per se* dominated the development of modern European museological theory and practice in different forms from the seventeenth to twentieth century. But the empiricist methodology in acquiring knowledge and, accordingly, the primacy of an object was challenged by the postmodern enquiry of epistemology (see for example Foucault's *The Order of Things*⁴³⁵). In museum theory this shift was pointedly announced as 'the new museology'⁴³⁶. It signalled an attempt of a critical rethinking of the 'linear progressive history of an essentialist "museum"'⁴³⁷ which had dominated the scene thus far. Working through Foucault's concept of *epistemes* – 'the unconscious, but positive and productive set of relations within which knowledge is produced and rationality defined'⁴³⁸ – Hooper-Greenhill is pointing out that the 'function' of the museum, its principles of selection and classification in a contemporary museum, have radically changed in comparison to the conventional 'keeping and sorting the products of Man and Nature'⁴³⁹.

⁴³⁴ Grote, A. (ed.) (1994) *Macrocosmos in Microcosmo: Die Welt in der Stube: Zur Geschichte des Sammelns 1450 – 1800*. Opladen: Laske + Budrich, p. 13.

⁴³⁵ Foucault, M. (1970) *The Order of Things*. London: Travistock Publications.

⁴³⁶ Vergo, P. (ed.) (1989) *The New Museology*. London: Reaction Books.

⁴³⁷ Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992) *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 21.

⁴³⁸ Foucault, M. 1974: 191, cited in Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992) *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 12.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Latterly when the museum has been discovered, or more accurately rediscovered, as an essential component of the political sphere,⁴⁴⁰ the premise of the primacy of an idea, of setting the concept over the object, proves to have far-reaching consequences for the prospects of establishing new museums by the political elite. After Helmut Kohl initiating this trend in West Germany in the 1980s and Hans-Gert Pöttering taking it to European level in 2000s, hardly anyone nowadays, at least in the continental Europe, could be taken by surprise if a politician, upon taking up office, would announce establishing of a new historical museum, just as if it would be another major infrastructure project, regardless of the fact that there was no collection, no staff and no premises in place. This is because such similar announcements have been constant during the last decades – brought to completion or not – and the number of history museums started with a bare idea, a concept, instead a collection of objects has been notable. This is all the more evident when the number conceived within this late surge of museums of national (in case of the HEH even supra-national) importance is compared with the era of the birth of national museums and galleries in the 19th century.⁴⁴¹ That era saw the commissioning of artworks for national galleries on an unprecedented scale. It also saw considerable ethnographic fieldworks being carried out in order to save traditional ways of life endangered by the forces of industrialisation and presented as material culture through temporary and permanent displays.⁴⁴² In that regard there is certain resemblance with the current developments in Europe, but in itself it does not explain the museological innovation of the last decades, namely the contemporary history museum, sometimes manifesting under the title of a House of History. One might argue that, in examining the development of these new ‘conceptual museums’ while they are born from a concept, an idea, rather than from collection objects, the fact that they then assemble their collections over a certain period of time means that eventually they adopt the empiricist methodology. However, the very turn of imagining a museum (what once used to be an end product of a long and meticulous collecting and attributing process) first, and then looking for objects to match its

⁴⁴⁰ The political nature of the museum was established by Napoleon (compare Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Bennett 1995) and has since accompanied the perception of museums as politically powerful institutions. However, museum becomes politically powerful not simply as a public space but because of a perception, based on the efforts of the professional group and as stated in its code of ethics (see the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums), that museums are non-partisan sources of truth founded on the realities represented by objects.

⁴⁴¹ For the genesis of national galleries see Knell, S. (2016) *National Galleries: The Art of Making Nations*. London: Routledge.

⁴⁴² For example, see the history of the making of the National History Museum of Latvia: Kikuts, T. (2016) ‘Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition of 1896 – Witness of an Era’, in National History Museum of Latvia *Latviešu etnogrāfiskā izstāde 1896: Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition*. Riga: Neputns, pp. 17-87.

concept in a relatively short period of time (in case of the HEH it took ten years from announcement in 2007 to realization in 2017), is quite a novelty for a history museum in a considerably long history of European museum tradition. This innovation, to cite the former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, for whom establishing of the HEH was a ‘significant innovation in the way in which an advanced democratic system approaches its relationship with the past’⁴⁴³, turns the centuries-old axiomatic museological formula on its head.

Moreover, the conceptual approach that is the guiding principle of the HEH extended to both technical and historical-philosophical levels. It differs from a typical contemporary history museum, which as a rule is established to collect contemporary material culture that basically falls within the living memory and in doing so accomplishes some kind of history politics mission. Atypically the HEH historiographical and epistemological methodology derived from a philosophy of history that has its roots in the German post war anti-utopian mindset of critical self-examination goes much further than a typical history museum. Keeping in mind that the HEH was shaped by and along the lines of the methodology of contemporary history museum, as developed in Bonn, it came up short in its capacity to respond to the challenge of telling the full and long story of Europe, from its mythical origins to the British exit from the European Union. Herein lies the crucial difference and the innovative character of the HEH, when compared to more orthodox museums; it had to find its own roadmap through Europe’s past and apply a methodology untested in the European museum scene thus far. While the encyclopaedic approach served as a roadmap and inspiration for generations of collectors and scholars, who aspired to build ever more sophisticated and comprehensive classification systems for the physical macrocosm and then present them in the microcosm of the museum, the modern museum like HEH essentially aspires to do that same with the macrocosm of Europe’s history, but starts with the concepts, not objects. It is encyclopaedic in a different way; its programme being turned into collection of objects, not the other way around. Simon Knell in addressing the collecting problem facing museums in the 21st century, places the contemporary museum against the empirically grounded museum of an age of discoveries:

⁴⁴³ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*, pp. 2-3. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

Theirs was a world of discovery. Modern disciplines were formed and ways of knowing took on an empirical rigour which was made concrete in the new museum. However, by the late twentieth century this disciplinary framework had matured to a point of postmodernist deconstruction, and was now set in a world of digitisation and information networking. The ‘hard fact’ concept of knowledge gathering, which had underpinned earlier collecting, now became situated in a complex interconnected and overlapping jumble of media, methods and philosophies, which contributed to individual ways of knowing. Here, belief, personal meaning making and politics conflicted with, if not superseded, an earlier philosophy (however realistic in actuality) of disinterested and rational objectivity. In this new world, legitimacy and authority were manoeuvred into the arguments of one group to question the collecting and interpretive rights of another.⁴⁴⁴

Coupled with the concept of collective memory within a wider framework of conceptual history which underpinned the making of the narrative of HEH, there can be hardly more precise description of how its collecting policy for substantiating the narrative for the permanent exhibition has been negotiated. Provided that working with history in a museum is different from other disciplines which are object based or require collections to establish a language and logic, history has no need of objects and for the most part uses them as illustration. Except for some minor varieties of specialized history museums (art, design, military history etc.), history as a discipline is not based on an object technology as a language. What historians require is evidence that is purposeful and so the written word – or for that case the recorded voice-over that accompanies the visitor throughout the HEH – is much more powerful. Objects, by contrast, are ambiguous and interpretable – capable of manipulation, serving as an evidence for the narrative. Consciously or not, the whole collecting campaign HEH carried out was referred to as ‘evidencing’ material for the future exhibition. As mentioned above, the German Historical Museum in Berlin and the German House of History in Bonn pioneered this approach of a narrative illustrated by objects that serve

⁴⁴⁴ Knell, S. (ed.) (2014) *Museums and the Future of Collecting: Second Edition*. London: Routledge, pp. 3-4.

as a kind of evidence but which are being controlled by the narrative.⁴⁴⁵ With the House of European history this museographic technique has been taken to transnational European level.

The closing chapter shows how conceptual history and the associated museographic practice within the HEH has not only been aligned with the ‘basic assumption of contemporary museology ... that the collection is to be considered as means’⁴⁴⁶ but has transcended it, turning collection of objects into one of many scenographic tools in conveying the idea, the concept.

Conceptual history – a key to the HEH

Where should one look for a roadmap if assigned a task of building a museum of Europe? As pointed out in previous chapters, the *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History* from 2008 was supposed to point the way, but it played a fairly limited role in the actual developing of the exhibition concept. In an article comparing the two phases in the HEH project development; the one from 2007 to 2008 when the *Conceptual Basis* was created, and the implementation phase from 2010 onwards, Kaiser rightly admits that for various reasons the formerly advocated ‘*longue durée* representation of the history of Europe since Antiquity, which would still have centred on post-war European integration’ has shifted focus to the ‘short-term perspective on Europe since the 19th century’ while the history of ‘(Western) European integration proper has been marginalized’⁴⁴⁷. Kaiser attributes this outcome to the factor of composition of the APT where ‘the team of curators had only one member with deeper knowledge of European integration and its associated historiography, and the Academic Committee none’⁴⁴⁸. But apart from the profiles of the APT members themselves, the observation of the outcome of final exhibition has to be viewed against the background of larger historical philosophical programme within which HEH operated.

The APT itself never elaborated upon its methodology, either in the press, nor at academic conferences, nor in published material. Publicly it never explained the

⁴⁴⁵ Knell, S., Axelsson B. et al. (2012) ‘Crossing Borders. Connecting European Identities in Museums and Online.’ EuNaMus Report no 2. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 14. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, p. 13.

⁴⁴⁶ Van Mensch, P. and Meijer-van Mensch, L. (2010) ‘Collecting as intangible heritage’. *Collectingnet Newsletter*, 2010 (9), p. 2.

⁴⁴⁷ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

historiographical method applied in conceptualizing and realizing the exhibition narrative. But the presence of a certain school of historiography behind the narrative of 'Europe's journey to modernity' (Mork) was evident, albeit never explained in detail in any public communication, apart from a lapidary note in the publication *Building a House of European History* (2013) which made it clear that the exhibition would 'outline European history, beginning with the early myth, multiple perspectives on identity and the cultural heritage of Europe'⁴⁴⁹. It stated that this would entail a survey into 'Europe's entry into modernity'⁴⁵⁰ in order to understand its descent into war and destruction followed by central theme of the 20th century. But apart from this publication, the students of HEH project were left ignorant on the global justification for this particular choice of historic themes and chronological structure. This, of course, has led on many occasions to speculations on part of European studies, sociology, history, and social memory scholars (Kaiser, Sierp, Calligaro, Troebst) as to what should be expected from the new museum in Brussels when it finally opens. And rightly so because the detail of the historical-philosophical programme made public before the opening of HEH in May 2017 was limited. There were broad references to the 'shared or collective memory' and the catchphrase of assembling a collection that 'will become the 'nucleus' for a permanent 'reservoir of European memory'⁴⁵¹. But such generalisations only echoed the European memory debate that has grown exponentially in popularity since the end of Cold War.⁴⁵² They did not provide anything substantial and thus precluded any meaningful engagement with the narrative of the HEH by academia and the general public. The HEH did not explain, for instance, at what expense the previously in *Conceptual Basis* announced long-term historic perspective in the new museum, which features the combination of words 'Europe' and 'history' in its title, was dropped.

While the HEH official communications retained a commitment to the European memory debate, with its focus on the 20th century, it did not expand upon the method that determined its particular choice of the narrative structure, which stretches well beyond this era. In short, apart from the basic working principles of selecting themes and objects for display, the philosophy of history adopted by the HEH was never

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Lorenz, Chr. (2010) 'Unstuck in Time. Or: the Sudden Presence of the Past', in Tilmans, K., van Vree, F. and Winter, J. (eds) (2010) *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p. 67.

discussed and therefore the underlying conceptualization and the sources of inspiration could not be constructively questioned. Apart from Kaiser's comprehensive account of the structure and development of the HEH project which examines the contribution of key APT members to its narrative, the lack of communication on part of the HEH prior its opening in May 2017 prevented analysis of its historical-philosophical dimension.

Chapter 2 above, *From brainstorm to exhibition concept – developing content for the House of European History*, detailed the process of getting the structure of the exhibition in place prior to the concept design phase. The working method for devising the themes, topics and subtopics for the five exhibition floors was notably detailed, yet the conceptual framework behind these choices remained somewhat obscure. In all further chapters, particularly in Chapter 5 *Museology of Europe – Europe of remembrance or Europe of the regions?* where the question of the structure and the methodology underpinning the exhibition narrative was examined, it was concluded that it was the German post-war historical paradigm of *Zeitgeschichte* or contemporary history was the guiding philosophy. This provided useful insights into how the narrative of the post war era of 20th century was built, especially the distinctive features such as the centrality of the memory of Shoah as the nucleus of European memory debate and the overall task of getting to terms with the recent traumatic past in a post- Cold War Europe. However, it became evident that the methodology and epistemology of *Zeitgeschichte* was insufficient to cover the whole spectrum of the HEH narrative, just as the museological approach at Bonn is not the same as that applied in the HEH due to its much broader historical time-frame and the different subject matter of the permanent exhibition. The only instance so far where the conceptual framework of the new museum was evident, is in the short answer provided by the HEH Content Coordinator, Andrea Mork in 2015, to an interviewer for the Parliaments' internal blog:

Our narrative starts in the 19th century, where we identify and accentuate the driving forces which have been born in Europe during this period of time – be it **concepts** of democracy, people's sovereignty, liberalism, capitalism, socialism, the welfare state. In our exhibition we try to follow these ideas – how they developed on **Europe's journey to modernity**, how did extreme rationality turn into extreme irrationality in the 20th century?⁴⁵³

⁴⁵³ Interview with Andrea Mork, *Curating in a Pan-European Framework*. Available online at: <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/focus/curating-pan-european-framework>. Last accessed: 17 May 2018.

Without naming it per se, here for the first time the outline of the method applied in conceptualizing the HEH, the historical-philosophical dimension of the new museum, was expressed publicly. For a professional historian acquainted with the German school of *Begriffsgeschichte* or conceptual history, it would be clear from the start that the Content Coordinator of the HEH refers here to Reinhart Koselleck's ideas of the role of political language and its use in describing 'Europe's journey to modernity'. Koselleck edited a publication entitled *Basic concepts in History. A Dictionary on Historical Principles of Political and Social Language in Germany*⁴⁵⁴. This is the most visible embodiment of this school of historiography and the HEH was deliberately designed along the lines of Koselleck's critical historical philosophy of Europe's transition to modernity. By starting in the late 18th and early 19th centuries with identifying the formative principles captured in collective singulars of democracy, liberalism, capitalism, socialism, and following these concepts on as the basis of Europe's modern times, the introduction to the narrative and subsequently the narrative of the HEH itself closely follows the guidelines that Koselleck gave to the contributors and users of his lexicon before kick-starting of the project in late 1960s.⁴⁵⁵ The conceptual history was formulated to examine 'the dissolution of the old world and the emergence of the modern world in terms of the historico-conceptual comprehension of the process'⁴⁵⁶. Strikingly of all the historiographies of 20th century *Begriffsgeschichte* is the one – in a strict chronological sense – that is the least historic events based. As such it resembles Osterhammel's *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, with his non-event-based model of historic epochs, which was admitted by the Content Coordinator in that same interview to have been instrumental for conceptualizing the HEH. *Begriffsgeschichte* might also be said to be the least material-culture-related, and this element too has come centre stage in conceptualizing and realizing the HEH. So why did conceptual history, itself a product of linguistic turn in 20th century semantics, with its emphasis on concept over historical event or object, become so influential?

⁴⁵⁴ Original in German – *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*.

⁴⁵⁵ Koselleck, R. (1969) *Die Auflösung der Alten, die Entstehung der Modernen Welt: Richtlinien für das Lexikon Politisch-sozialer Begriffe der Neuzeit*. Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte, Bd. 11 (1967), p. 81.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

Why conceptual history in a historical museum?

Viewed against the backdrop of Koselleck's monumental work (in German speaking world *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* is commonly known by abbreviation 'GG'), it becomes clear that the narrative of the HEH permanent exhibition is in essence a product of the German version of conceptual history. It stands firmly in a long German tradition of idealist philosophy that 'aspires to transform the intellectual history into the history of discourse'⁴⁵⁷. It is the discourse or the process of debate that the HEH has always declared and admitted an interested in; one which focuses on understanding the basic historic concepts as the agents of change, instead of focusing on interpretation of facts and figures, as evidenced by objects, as in a traditional historical museum. Here Koselleck's approach, which is seen as 'more a procedure than a definite method'⁴⁵⁸ becomes an obvious tool for the developer of a conceptual museum.

When in late 1960s Koselleck's conceptual history set out to examine the eclipse the old pre revolutionary Europe of the *ancien régime* or, in Koselleck's own words, the *Alteuropa*, in the wake of emerging modern world, it did so by looking at the impact of political language in shaping the European destinies. One has to note that Koselleck devised this approach with the recent experience of National Socialism and Stalinism, together with his personal experience of being a prisoner of war, in mind. Koselleck was therefore naturally predisposed and not least determined to use the roots of the 20th century totalitarian regimes in examining the use of political language as the basic historic concepts that shaped and, in his opinion, continued to shape the social reality around him during his lifetime. His programme of conceptual history or *Begriffsgeschichte* 'as a means to theorize process of historical change'⁴⁵⁹ originated in the late 1950s and early 1960s in West Germany and 'can be interpreted as part of the linguistic turn'⁴⁶⁰ in Western philosophy. This attributes to language the central role in 'constituting' the reality. From here stems the general assumption of historiography as a discourse rather than strict discipline, although in the original programme given to the GG, Koselleck clearly spoke of conceptual history as a discipline of historical sciences in its own right. The most distinctive attribute of its method is that it applies at once

⁴⁵⁷ Tribe, K. (2004) 'Translator's Introduction', in Koselleck, R. (2004) *Futures Past: On the Semantic of Historical Time. Translated and with introduction of Keith Tribe*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. xx.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p. xvi.

⁴⁵⁹ Müller, J-W. (2014) 'On Conceptual History', in McMahon, D.M. and Moyn, S. (eds) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 77.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

synchronic and diachronic analysis of political language, i.e. the concepts. By definition it is bound to ensure the relevance of interpretation for today's understanding of the basic historic concepts for a contemporary user and 'can provide a "semantic check" and have a clarifying function for present-day political theorizing, especially if coupled with a convincing account of the present-day understandings of the experience of historical time'⁴⁶¹. This is precisely the approach taken in the permanent exhibition of the HEH.

When it comes to the period of time Koselleck is interested in, the so called 'Saddle time' (*Settelzeit*) from roughly '1700 to the threshold of our present day'⁴⁶², again it matches perfectly with the chronological core of the HEH exhibition at the expense of abandoning the *longue durée* cultural perspective initially advocated by *Conceptual Basis*. The 'Saddle time' is an era when, it is said, the concepts acquire their modern meaning under the influence of the processes of democratisation, ideologisation, politicising, and, crucially, temporalisation. This comes as a result of dismantling the existing 'timeless' order and kick-starts the era of 'horizon of expectations' as the core feature of modernity. As admitted by Koselleck in the last volume of his eight volume lexicon, which was over 20 years in making, the overall idea of GG was based on the opposition between *Alteuropa* and the political and industrial revolution that has helped to create a new type of society in Europe. Now, if a museum developer looks for a symbolic material equivalent to this new type of European society, would it be the Gutenberg's printing press from the mid-15th century or rather British made steam hammer of the 19th century that would represent it best? The answer seems obvious, the visitor entering the HEH will predictably encounter a replica of an 1840's steam hammer as the leading element of scenography at the start of exhibition narrative. At the same time no major defining concept is forgotten in the exhibition informed by conceptual history. Neither is democracy, rule of law, humanism, Christianity, nor colonialism, nor are the other darker chapters of European heritage left out from the view. However, they only play an introductory role to the main message, which for the HEH is the dialectics of modernity. The 'Saddle time' of the 18th and 19th century is just as central in HEH's permanent exhibition as it is in the Koselleck's programme, but it is not chronologically exclusive. There is no clear temporal finish line in this methodology, which includes more recent neologisms such

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 76.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

as ‘fascism’ thus enclosing historic subjects and experiences in the concepts of the 20th century. For Koselleck there is no contradiction in this because the envisaged result of conceptual history is that it is meant to become an aid for a semantic control mechanism of a contemporary use of political language. Or, in other words, a remedy to the deadly utopias and ideologies that originated from modernity’s instigated ‘horizon of expectations’ along with the democratisation, ideologization, politicising, and temporalisation of the political language. In this aspect, the HEH aspires to that same goal. It gives huge importance to political language and the hierarchy of meaning within it, as Koselleck has outlined in the guidelines to his hypothesis. Indeed, there is a direct correlation between his approach to conceptual history with its particular terminology and the criteria put forward by the Content Coordinator in selecting themes and topics for the HEH narrative.

The criteria put forward by Koselleck start with establishing a ‘hierarchy of meaning of the basic historic concepts’ to aid the contributors to and readers of such histories to distinguish which concepts qualify for selection; these included:

- Is the concept in common use?
- In what contexts does the term appear?
- Who uses the term, to what purpose, to address whom?
- How long has it been in social use?
- What is the valence of the term within the structure of social and political vocabulary?

According to Tribe, the English translator of some of Koselleck’s most essential work, he later shortened the list, emphasizing three qualities of language that the contributors should assess:

- the terms contributing to the question of temporalization,
- its availability for ideological employment,
- its political function.⁴⁶³

Against this background, it is relatively easy to see how the traces of conceptual history are found on a very practical level in content development at the HEH. For that we need to revisit the minutes of APT meetings for 2011, when the conceptual planning of the future exhibition took place. These show that when selecting themes and topics for the permanent exhibition, the APT used an identical approach to Koselleck’s in

⁴⁶³ Tribe, K. (2004) ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in Koselleck, R. (2004) *Futures Past: On the Semantic of Historical Time*. Translated and with introduction of Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, p. xv.

placing concepts within the hierarchy of meaning in the European history. A simple exercise of placing Koselleck's questionnaire next to the list of questions used by the APT reveals a clear overlap of basic historic concepts with the themes that one finds in the exhibition. An explanation for this can be found within the selection criteria the HEH applied in determining the exhibition themes:

Three main criteria determined the choice of the decisive aspects of European history, which would shape the narrative of the House: firstly, they must be events or processes which **originated in Europe**; secondly, they must have **spread across Europe**; and thirdly, they must still be **relevant today**.⁴⁶⁴

These criteria follow precisely the hierarchy of meaning that Koselleck provided to eventual contributors and readers of the lexicon. Thus, it is justifiable to say that Koselleck's guidelines for establishing a hierarchy of meaning of the concepts are reflected in these three criteria, which laid the foundation of the HEH narrative. Just as the museum-specific criteria of the geographic nature (i.e. Europe) from where the basic historic concepts originated, the other two – the spread across Europe and relevance today – perfectly match the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* criteria of the spread of use and the relevance, or valence, in a contemporary hierarchy of political vocabulary. In other words, the exercise that the APT was carrying out in early 2011 was to select the exhibition themes according to the hierarchy of meaning using Koselleck's ideologically potent 'collective singulars' that are all elaborated upon at length in the lexicon. Collective singulars, according to conceptual history, played a crucial role in the semantic change in the political use of language. In so doing language was made to affect the social reality by mobilizing different social classes and in so doing propel Europe into a political and economic modernity. In addition, Koselleck highlighted the general criteria of a diachronic perspective as a means of exploring basic historic concepts whilst supplementing this with synchronic insights so as to guarantee the heuristic meaning of them. This becomes clear when we examine how this was implemented at the HEH in the introductory section 'Heritage and Memory'. Here each basic historic concept is coupled with a contemporary example showing how it is

⁴⁶⁴ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*, p. 6. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

manifested today. For example, in the section entitled ‘Philosophy’ the bust of Socrates is paired with a picture of contemporary Slovene philosopher Slavoj Žižek, and under the ‘State terror’ part the blade of a guillotine is coupled with a contemporary image of a task force suppressing public protest on the streets. There are other similar pairings throughout this section of the exhibition.

Given the strength of this alignment between Koselleck’s ideas and the HEH’s narrative conception, it is interesting to note that there was no mention of conceptual history as the adopted method of historic enquiry within APT at the concept design stage. The minutes of the brainstorming meetings of early 2011 show a remarkably heterogeneous view amongst the newly recruited curators concerning the exhibition content. It was the *de facto* Content Coordinator, who came up with this clear set of criteria and brought structure to the patchwork of proposals, which spanned from the Roman Empire to European architectural styles. It is at this point that, for the first time, Koselleck’s guidelines indirectly come into play, with the three previously mentioned principles for establishing the hierarchy of meaning of the basic historic concepts being covertly applied. No reference was made to the source of this methodology nor was there a proposal that Koselleck’s original terminology should be formally adopted. It is during the brainstorms on ‘Top 10 topics for the House of European History’ on the 2nd and 3rd March 2011, that is to say, very early in the process of developing the exhibition content, that this approach was advanced by Mork. Subsequently, this methodology was taken on board and the three guiding principles were embedded into the project. In hindsight one can conclude that none of the other curators, museologists, administrators or assistants at that time proposed the adoption of an alternative philosophy of history for the HEH. Without another option, the view of the *de facto* Content Coordinator prevailed.

In the light of what we know about the micro-network of activists behind the idea of the HEH discussed above, it would be, nevertheless, inappropriate to argue that the HEH was but a mechanical process of replicating the model of the Bonn prototype. Instead, when it comes to practical realization of museum project, particularly one operating within a transnational political setting, the crucial influence of the leading protagonists behind the concept and its implementation on the ground cannot be overlooked. Andrea Mork, the *de facto* Content Coordinator of the HEH, who moved from Bonn to Brussels in early 2011 was one such. She fixed the structure of the future museum narrative and was, alongside the APT leader (who, in turn, had the museum

public quality oriented European Museum Forum background), the intellectual driving force of the APT. Mork was an Aachen-educated political historian who had already tested her concept for the HEH as a European museum at the Bauhaus Europa project in Aachen. She acted as its Content Developer while remaining a full-time curator at the House of History in Bonn. In early January 2007, only a few days after Hans-Gert Pöttering took office as President of the European Parliament and virtually coincidental with his announcement on the HEH, Mork made a presentation to a conference organized by Europainstitut in Basel, on the (by then already blocked by the general public) plans for the permanent exhibition for Bauhaus Europa in Aachen.⁴⁶⁵ The subsequent article was presented in a conference examining the by now two defunct Museums of Europe – the Bauhaus Europa in Aachen and Musée de l'Europe in Brussels. In it Mork gives a cryptic but nonetheless enlightening summary of the guiding principles of her concept,

The exhibition is linked to the everyday experiences of the visitors. It makes them aware of the special features of today's Europe and explains their genesis in a historical retrospective. What network of developments has allowed a specifically European culture to grow, with its world-historical peculiarities and differences with other cultures? How did the ancient heritage and the myth of Europe, cultural and linguistic diversity, Christianity and the papacy evolve, how did rationalism and the Enlightenment, individualism, industrial capitalism, the national state and parliamentary democracy as well as the social state emerge? **We focus on the big lines.** The exhibition is based on a **chrono-thematical approach**. We present nine key years, each marking a pioneering historic caesura, and thus combine greater thematic contexts by **representing striking tendencies in the history of society and the history of ideas**. A final chapter of the exhibition is devoted to the **current political issues of Europe**.⁴⁶⁶

The chrono-thematic approach combined with the history of ideas or concepts with its impact on changing social realities as the broad roadmap for exhibition scenography that did not dogmatically rely on objects is notable in the HEH. It echoes

⁴⁶⁵ Originally in German - *Bauhaus Europa in Aachen. Das Konzept für die Dauerausstellung*.

⁴⁶⁶ Mork, A. (2008) 'Bauhaus Europa in Aachen. Das Konzept für die Dauerausstellung', in Kreis, G. (ed.) 'Europa als Museumsobjekt'. *Basler Schriften zur europäischen Integration*, Nr. 85. Basel: Europainstitut der Universität Basel, pp. 23-24.

her previous approach at the Bauhaus Europa which was planned to be ‘not a museum but information, experience and co-decision place for a citizen-close Europe and a future-workshop for education and vocational training’⁴⁶⁷. In a slightly modified form, so as to accommodate the expectations of the Parliament, Mork implemented this philosophy at the HEH. Here, unlike in Aachen project, where the genesis of uniqueness of European culture was shown in a *longue durée* perspective, the focus is much more pointed to political history of the modern time. As such it was a vision of Europe more in compliance with the current day EU history politics which allowed deploying Koselleck’s methodology to its fullest.

The emphasis of the HEH exhibition on the 19th and 20th century, therefore, was determined by conceptual history, with its ‘Saddle time’ or the theory of historic times. Its narrative reveals an unapologetic perception of modernity as a problematic and as inherently conflicting, if not crisis-ridden, era in the European history. As such it directly mirrors Koselleck’s philosophy of history. So, out of many possible ways of telling the European story, the HEH chose a critical interpretation of modernity, following Koselleck’s dictum that the historian’s task is not to build identities but to question them. Admittedly, he was among those German intellectuals who raised concerns about the history politics which drew on the memory discourse as soon as it appeared on West German political agenda in early 1980s.⁴⁶⁸ They suspected that it might lead to new ideological manipulations. Against this historical-philosophical background which informed the making of HEH by a group of independent museum professionals, it is the more sobering to register that rather than it being a manifestation of the ‘historians’ task’, it was perceived as a materialisation of the views of the political elite behind the project. On the occasion of meeting his successor at the European Parliament, President Antonio Tajani in January 2017, Pöttering in essence repeats what he said in his programme speech ten years ago in 2007,

The exhibition reflects the changing European history since the First World War and contributes to the European identity of the citizens.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ On the position of R. Koselleck towards memory culture and history politics see Troebst, S. (2013) ‘Geschichtspolitik. Politikfeld, Analysenrahmen, Streitobjekt’, in François, E., Kończal, K., Traba, R. and Troebst, S. (eds) *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, pp. 21-23; Assmann, A. (2013) *Das Neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur: Eine Intervention*. München: C.H. Beck.

⁴⁶⁹ Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *Hans-Gert trifft Pöttering trifft Antonio Tajani zum Meinungsaustausch in Brüssel*. Available online at: <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.47750/>. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

Perhaps as a surprise to many, the HEH nevertheless internally builds its storyline in a subtler way, one in which the European identity has not been a declarative aim. Following the questioning and sceptical attitude towards the very notion of history politics, the HEH aspires to become a sovereign interpreter of 'Europe's journey to modernity' as a process through period of perpetual crisis. It could not do otherwise as it is bound by modernity's inherent conflicting character. Tribe sums up what is at the core of Koselleck's *Lexicon* programme, which set out to reveal the utopian character of ideologies of modernity, as a way of warning for his contemporaries:

Enlightenment rationalism raised the prospect of unending progress and human improvement, and this vision was transformed into a future, realizable utopia through its articulation in political programs of French, and later, European revolutions. These broke decisively with the closed and cyclical structures of eschatological world view in which predictions of the coming End of the world and Final Judgment set the limit to human ambition and hope.⁴⁷⁰

The present day EU, shaped in the post-war 20th century, is yet another manifestation of this modern, open and dynamic (as opposed to a closed and cyclic) structure of European societies, with an open horizon of expectations. However, by no means is the EU or its associated European integration project the subject matter of the HEH alone, instead, it is concerned with a critical encounter with European modernity as such. This broader context of dialectics of modernity that is at the heart of the HEH, has yet to be communicated to the public and debated within the Parliament, with its various policy-making and implementing departments. It is therefore not at all obvious to the outside world, not indeed to internal structure of the European governing institutions either, what the final intellectual product the new museum in the heart of European Quarter in Brussels actually is. Beyond the expectation that it will in one way or another represent the current state of play of the EU history politics with its agenda of remembrance, it is taken too much for granted within the structure of the Parliament,

⁴⁷⁰ Tribe, K. (2004) 'Translator's Introduction', in Koselleck, R. (2004) *Futures Past: On the Semantic of Historical Time. Translated and with introduction of Keith Tribe*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. xviii.

and as a consequence the APT and the policy-makers ‘talked past each other’ right up to the opening in 2017.

EU history politics materialized or the ‘semantic check’ of political language?

As noted above, official communication regarding the HEH has never made a reference to its sources of inspiration. It has not explained the broader historical-philosophical context for its presentations, nor has it elaborated upon its position within the ‘European Union remembrance policy’, which is recognized now as a distinct policy field of the European Union.⁴⁷¹ Instead, it kept repeating the well-known mantra about choosing the concept of collective memory (Halbwachs) instead of identity (compare Adorno’s *Negative dialectics* on the ideological character of a top-down identity agenda) as a guideline for building the narrative which focuses predominantly on the post war history and the Shoah as the starting point of European memory debate (Assmann). Perhaps the HEH was adopting a strategy of playing its cards close to the chest as a self-defence mechanism while operating in a highly volatile political environment; one in which a balance could be struck that allowed the project to remain on course, and where criticism was averted. Perhaps with the derailment of the Bauhaus Europa in mind, caused by too much criticism surfacing and it being killed by a negative outcome of public referendum⁴⁷², the communication work was purposefully kept undeveloped.

What was lost in taking this approach was discussion on the very philosophy of history that should have informed the exhibition and the whole museum project. This has had an awkward effect on the public perception of the House. Having been poorly communicated, it has been left in some sort of a grey zone of alleged ‘official EU history politics’. Seemingly everyone knows that this is operating behind the scenes, but nobody knows clearly what its influence is or its impact will be. The Chair of the Academic Committee of the HEH, Włodzimierz Borodziej, retrospectively describes the unease that has accompanied the project:

⁴⁷¹ Prutsch, M. (2015) ‘European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives’. Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, European Parliament, p. 21. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540364/IPOL_STU%282015%29540364_EN.pdf. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

⁴⁷² Kreis, G. (2008) *Ist Europa museumsreif? Von den Anstrengungen zur Europäisierung Europas*, in Kreis, G. (ed.) ‘Europa als Museumsobjekt’. *Basler Schriften zur europäischen Integration*, Nr. 85. Basel: EuropaInstitut der Universität Basel, p. 15

My academic colleagues often asked me, in tones ranging from the mocking to the impatient, about the ‘secret Brussels project’. I never had convincing answer to them. Expressing my conviction that the whole of the European Union was the worst marketed project in the world was not really enough. I still do not have a better answer as to why the House of European History fed all the outside world’s suspicions and knee-jerk reactions whenever ‘Brussels’ was mentioned, to such an extent and for such long time.⁴⁷³

Consequently, experts of European memory studies, both among the EU officials and independent academics, without contrary evidence saw the museum as characterizing the official and normalizing EU history politics (as was detailed in Chapter 5). It may be speculated that even if such a debate on history politics had taken place, involving a broader range of parties, this Parliament-sponsored museum would still be stigmatised as a vehicle for the EU message alone. But without such discussions the development of the HEH turned out to be a remarkably quiet and autonomous process, even within the structure of the European Parliament.

The apparent indifference on the part of the HEH towards the official European history politics became evident within those rare occasions of inter-departmental exchange. For instance, in a Dissent Conscience and the Wall (DCW) Symposium⁴⁷⁴, held in Brussels on 27th February 2015, Dr Markus Prutsch, a senior researcher and administrator at the Parliament with responsibility for culture and education policies, was sharing a panel with Dr Andrea Mork, the Content Coordinator of the HEH. While speaking on a subject of ‘European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives’ he stated that he saw the HEH as having a central role in the official EU history politics. At the same time Mork presented on a subject of ‘Musealising European History: A Utopian Challenge?’ and in doing so did not address this salient point, she neither denied, confirmed or challenged Prutsch’s view. It was as if the two were talking different languages and as a result – at least on a surface – looked like missing each other’s point. This can only be explained by the fact that the HEH, although in the system of the Parliament and larger European governing bodies family,

⁴⁷³ Borodziej, W. (2018) ‘The Academic Committee of the House of European History: Personal Impressions and Memories, 2009-2017’, in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 35.

⁴⁷⁴ *Dissent, Conscience, and the Wall* (DCW), a project run by the [European University College Association](#) (EuCA) and [Netherhall Educational Association](#) (NEA) between October 2014 and March 2016.

had developed such a degree of autonomy, that its thinking had become distanced from the exact vocabulary of official EU history policies. Indeed, revisiting the minutes from March 2011 SWOT analysis meeting proves this hypothesis. Here, discussing the threat for HEH being seen as a DG COMM propaganda tool, the *de facto* Content Coordinator argued that this would not happen ‘because our language is different than that of the DG COMM’⁴⁷⁵.

Kaiser confirms it in saying that the Parliament was forced to ‘rely entirely on the curators and professional historians to legitimize its museum as one that confirms to prevailing curatorial and historic standards’⁴⁷⁶. This dislocation is further explained by the fact that the APT members were on contract, charged with ensuring that the new museum conformed with professional standards and that it was only after the official opening in May 2017, that they were finally given a chance to become European Parliament’s officials (not all of them, however) in permanent posts. So, throughout the development process, with the exception of the Content Coordinator who has been appointed in permanent post already prior the opening, APT members formally maintained a degree of independence from the official EU line.

This discrepancy between the curatorial line and the EU’s official history politics becomes more evident by comparing the terminology that is used in the EU history politics rhetoric and official papers, and the vocabulary used by the HEH right up to its opening. While the Content Coordinator of the HEH would be speaking about the ‘reservoir of European memory’ in a very general way, Prutsch, in turn, would speak about ‘European remembrance’, in the same manner as the European Commission ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme does. Prutsch would also use the notion of a ‘European memory framework’ (Sierp), as the memory studies scholars like to put it, in a very specific way, referring specialized literature on European history politics which explore this nascent framework. On the other hand, the HEH never used such specific terminology neither internally nor in a final exhibition, thus confirming to it not having internalized this policy-specific thinking. This may be interpreted as the HEH either deliberately choosing not to subscribe to this line, or because it did not register with its staff because it did not feature highly within the museological background from which they were recruited. Indeed, if the EU remembrance policies with its aim of

⁴⁷⁵ Academic Project Team, House of European History, Minutes of the meeting ‘SWOT Analysis meeting’ of 24 March 2011.

⁴⁷⁶ Kaiser, W. (2016) ‘Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament’s House of European History Project’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 1.

developing European culture of remembering informed the development of the HEH, then it was in a very general way. More influential, given its prevalence in academic circles, is the memory paradigm along the lines of such like Halbwachs and Assmann, which is not necessarily identical with the European establishment's transitional-justice-oriented thinking. As mentioned above, the lack of coordinated action among the Commission and the Parliament's different Directorate-Generals and in the Parliament internally, had an effect that the official EU history policy and terminology was not communicated to the APT. As a result, it was not discussed in detail and did not influence the overall thinking or the final exhibition texts and the audio-recordings. For example, the Directorate-General for Internal Policies Culture and Education Committee published study, *European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives* sums up the current state of play in this EU policy field and attributes a central role to the HEH within it.⁴⁷⁷ Even so, this paper nor its contents were ever discussed by the APT.

As rightly admitted by Kaiser, since the recruitment of the APT in 2011, the HEH has never been exposed to any particular political pressure at the curatorial level as regards the EU history politics.⁴⁷⁸ To conclude, the distanced and reflective question – 'Is there such a thing as European memory?' (with which the narrative of the HEH starts) – differs significantly from the message of the 'Europe For Citizens' programme. It directly and unapologetically advocated 'active European remembrance', thus there was no question about it; it was the accepted basis or framework upon which a common European identity was to be shaped. The same goes for a sometimes playfully poetical instead of political-legal approach to showing and interpreting the events of the 20th century in the HEH. It does not explicitly call for justice for the victims of the criminal totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, as does the official EU history politics of the Parliament's various declarations. Instead, it commends the search for a common human ground in the attempt to reconcile diverging memories. As such, it is not adversarial in nature, which cannot always be said about the EU official history politics. Should the HEH have adopted a similar linear message, it would soon find itself in the front lines of diplomatic battles, ones that are fought between the various remembrance

⁴⁷⁷ Prutsch, M. (2015) 'European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives'. Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, European Parliament, p. 21. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540364/IPOL_STU%282015%29540364_EN.pdf. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

⁴⁷⁸ Kaiser, W. (2016) 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 55, p. 2.

fractions and advocacy groups. Such dissension would only lead to an impasse and negate any fruitful international museum cooperation. It should be mentioned, that the HEH has agreed to work with a number of Russian museums and these have supplied various original and replica objects for inclusion in the exhibition. Such co-operation builds mutual trust and strengthens professional ethics and confirms the validity of international museum standards, all of which transcend the politics of the day.

Speaking about consolidation of official European history policy in the last decades, Prutsch brings it to the point:

The European Parliament's defining National Socialism, particularly the Holocaust, and Stalinism as *the* main objects of European historical memory is in line with earlier (EC) political initiatives in this regard.⁴⁷⁹

Why has EU memory politics, especially in the last decade, chosen to focus exclusively on the traumatic past of the 20th century as the formative elements of European historic memory instead of focusing on events and concepts from earlier times, perhaps even previous eras of European unification? The answer is of course the increasing radicalization of the political climate in Europe and elsewhere due to the instability along the borders of the EU, both to the South and East. In light of this development, the 'soft Europeanisation' in the paradigm of the Europe of the regions as in the early days of European unification and as evidenced through museums objects as a language of art, no longer has currency in the current political climate. Tough issues have made the policy-makers turn to a 'harder Europeanisation', in which declarations and coordinated means of implementing history politics through education and research programmes are deemed more effective in solidifying what is meant by 'Europe'. Predictably, to go along the official EU history policy, Prutsch continues:

Expression of the inter-institutional convergence of interests towards the actual objectives of European historical memory is the absence of strong disagreement regarding the design of the Remembrance strand in the new Europe for Citizens Programme for 2014-2020 ... This enables us to talk about a European Union

⁴⁷⁹ Prutsch, M. (2015) 'European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives'. Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, European Parliament, p. 18. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540364/IPOL_STU%282015%29540364_EN.pdf. Last accessed: 7 October 2017.

remembrance policy, complemented by additional measures aimed at strengthening citizens' consciousness of a common European past and legacy such as the European Parliament's pushing for a House of European History in Brussels.⁴⁸⁰

Notwithstanding the nuances of the political background of the HEH, this appears as an official statement of what was expected of the new museum, specifically as a product of Parliament's communication work. It was seen as an instrument in the arsenal of 'EU's remembrance policy'. Technically this is not incorrect because the HEH was set up by the Parliament with an aim to 'engage visitors in critical reflection on what the European integration process means for our common present and for our future'⁴⁸¹. Nevertheless, one is entitled to rhetorically ask, if dealing with the past in 'passive reflection' often not more effective than 'active remembrance', of the associations with traumatic events? As rightly pointed out by Andrea Mork, Content Coordinator and the co-editor of the volume of essays summing up the HEH project development *Creating the House of European History* – published exactly one year after the opening of the new museum in May 2018 – 'memory is a contested and controversial field, used and abused for propaganda ends ... Present-day interests prescribe memory'⁴⁸². A historical museum located in the European Quarter in Brussels – in the heart of European memory debate both metaphorically practically – will be therefore unapologetically exposed to the question of European public: is the HEH an 'EU history politics materialized' or the 'semantic check' of present-day political language and imagery instead?

Conceptual history acquiring museum form

It would be an anomaly if a collective public intellectual entity, such as historical museum in a democratic society, with a mandate of academic independence, would not find itself perplexed when faced with the diktat of a political elite, even for the noblest purposes. In none of its public communication until the opening in 2017 or exhibition

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴⁸¹ European Parliament (2013) *Building A House Of European History*, p. 3. Available online at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/tenders/2013/20130820b/Annex_I-Building_a_House_of_European_History.pdf. Last accessed: 27 September 2017.

⁴⁸² Mork, A. (2018) 'The Narrative', in Mork, A. and Christodoulou, P. (eds) *Creating The House Of European History*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 141.

texts does the HEH speak about memory in relation to duty or obligation, nor does it use the term ‘remembrance’ which signals the legalistic and programmatic character of EU official history politics. Instead, it operates with questions and gentle reminders at best in helping to reconstruct recent historic events and to deconstruct the political language that stands behind it, but never with directives and ‘action points’. Admitting and being aware that ‘one of the most important lessons is that remembrance is not a natural process, but that it is, in many regards, compounded or forestalled by social conditions and historical circumstances’⁴⁸³, including the mechanisms of coordination of remembrance in society as the public museums, the HEH official stance nevertheless also after the opening is that of a critical mediator aiming ‘to become a “reservoir of European memory”, which sharpens the consciousness of European communalities by bringing together memories and traditions of different national and social groups’⁴⁸⁴. Thus far the HEH did not explicitly identify its programme or align its rhetoric with the EU remembrance policy.

If the hypothesis of the historical-philosophical basis of HEH as described above stands proof, it stands as the exact opposite of identity propaganda. Instead, it performs the function of a ‘semantic check’ on the current use of political language (Koselleck), including the one of the present-day EU history politics. Precisely because of this critical and questioning attitude, we should have no illusions that the HEH might be seen by the hardliners of the EU history policy as slightly old fashioned or perhaps even at odds with the EU normalizing stand in interpreting recent history. Indeed, it is a product of conceptual history, belonging more to the grand concepts of the Koselleck era of the 20th century than to the ‘battlefield of European memory’ (Leggewie) that permeates the international history politics of today.

Even in 1993, the year of the publication of the last volume of the Koselleck’s *Lexicon*, commentators were saying that the ‘modernity of concepts’ was fading away in the light of the events of 1989 in Germany, and the subsequent Velvet Revolution, which were driven by imagery not concepts. Today, it is commonly agreed that international politics are shaped by modern media, with messages increasingly framed visually rather than by the spoken or printed word. In short, since the totalitarian

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p. 140.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

regimes power of concepts has reduced.⁴⁸⁵ Thus, Koselleck's *magnum opus* appeared at the end of an era shaped by concepts, just before it was swept away by an era shaped predominantly by imagery. In the light of this, was the HEH's approach one of the last vestiges of this form of expression, perhaps arriving too late to the ball of grand concepts that propelled Europe on its journey to modernity? It is perhaps with this in mind that Jan-Werner Müller says in regard to Koselleck's project, that it is complete and closed, and only requires a proper representation in museum form:

A monumental achievement of scholarship ... – highly impressive, similar to pyramids, as far as the necessary time for completion was concerned (about twenty years), but never to be built again, even in different versions, and more of a museum really than anything anyone would consider for present-day use.⁴⁸⁶

Thus, with its sensitivity to political and ideological language, conceptual history along with Koselleck's negative dictum concerning history politics serves as a starting point for any critical discussion about the HEH. Combined with Habermas' scepticism of bringing arts into public sphere thus estheticizing politics, which necessarily reminded the post war generation of German intellectuals of the 20th century dictatorial past when national politics and arts was meant to merge into an overarching *Gesamtkunstwerk*, we should seek to understand what a historical museum entangled with European high politics and academically independent research and curatorship really is.

If the conceptual structures determine the structures of meaning, as per theory of conceptual history, what opportunities are there for a museum of conceptual history, like that of the HEH, to contribute to this theory and practice in order to make a better sense of the world and the course of history? These are some of the questions, to which the HEH, as a product of conceptual history ten years in the making, will now have to respond. Not least among these is a consideration of the role of an object in a museum of conceptual history, which by definition plays a secondary role – that of evidence – only.

⁴⁸⁵ Seibt, G., 'Die Begriffe Führen das Volk: Die Letzwerke der Geschichte sind die Welle Selbst'. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 March 1993, Nr. 75, p. 13.

⁴⁸⁶ Müller, J-W. (2014) 'On Conceptual History', in McMahon, D.M. and Moyn, S. (eds) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 80.

Jan-Werner Müller has also suggested that conceptual history should now move away from abstract social and political theory and broaden its scope to include or indeed focus upon everyday lived experience. In doing so it could include metaphors and images that structure social outlooks. Perhaps then Koselleck's project would arrive at what it promised but never entirely achieved. Now if the line of argumentation outlined in this closing chapter holds up, the HEH, as a museological act, stands a chance of becoming this missing link in the conceptual history between *Begriff* and *Sache*, between the concept and related object – the social reality that it represents in the overall theme of 'Europe's journey to modernity', thus closing the circle and finally delivering what conceptual history promised: 'to mediate between "social history and history of consciousness", or, put differently, "between language and reality"'⁴⁸⁷.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

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