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Defining Europe: Cultural Heritage Policy and Identity

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Working Paper Series

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Abstract

Constructivist theories from International Relations have long been interested in the European Union and its identity. Nonetheless, there is a lack of studies from the critical constructivist strand which, unlike its conventional counterpart, tries to explain how identities are created by discourse. This study seeks to explain how European identity is constructed and reinforced by the EU's cultural heritage policy, using The European Heritage Label as case study. This initiative's 48 selection panel reports, 38 promotional videos, and 10 site descriptions were used as data. The methodological approach employed was qualitative with Topoi Analysis as a sub-category of Critical Discourse Analysis. The results show that the EU's cultural heritage policy reinforces the categories of *inclusive identity,* while at the same time, but with less frequency, also constructs a more *exclusive* European identity. These findings have relevant implications for theory, future research, and the EU itself.

Introduction

The process of European integration has brought the Member States of the European Union (EU) closer in the political and economic spheres. However, obstacles like the 2008 financial crisis have led the EU to actively seek the expansion of the integration process into the cultural sphere by building a European identity. The purpose of this is to create legitimacy around the integration project and cohesion among European citizens. A political tool that has been gaining relevance for identity-building is cultural heritage policy, a phenomenon described by Prutsch (2013) as the *EU's move to history.* This kind of initiatives seek to appeal to European citizens' feelings of belonging by fostering a common heritage through narrations of the past (Lähdesmäki, 2019). The aim of this study is to explain *how* European identity is constructed and reinforced by the EU's cultural heritage policy.

European identity as research object has been approached in academic literature from a variety of fields. For instance, significant work comes from the field of Political Science (Lengyel, 2013; Haller and Ressler, 2006; Karolewski, 2013) and Psychology (Curtis, 2016; Duckit and Sibley, 2016; Aspinwall, Richter and Hoffman, 2001). Contributions from multiple fields has led to a divergence of conceptualisations, levels of analysis and methodologies. Thus, it results essential to indicate that this study sets itself on the field of International Relations (IR) and understands *identity* as defined by the Constructivist paradigm of that discipline. Constructivists give identity a central role for understanding global politics. A predominant debate within this theory takes place between its two main strands. One the one hand, Conventional Constructivists (Wendt, 1992; Katzenstein, 1996; Adler, 1997; Ruggie, 1998) and on the other, Critical Constructivists (Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Weldes, 1996; Zehfuss, 2002; Weber, 2013; Hopf, 1998). The former are concerned with the role that identity plays as an explanatory factor of state behaviour, while the latter seek to explain *how* identities are constructed.

By using Critical Constructivism as a theoretical framework this study attempts to fill a research gap concerning the need for more discursive approaches for studying European identity (Arkan, 2014; Diez, 2016). This theory sustains that identities are produced by discourse and gives agency to states, or entities like the EU, in the process (Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Weldes, 1996; 1999; Arkan, 2014). The nature of identity can be *inclusive* or *exclusive.* The first one is based on acquired characteristics while the second one is based on inherent ones (Rumelili, 2004, p. 37).

In order to study the effect of cultural heritage policies in this process, the European Heritage Label (EHL) was used as a case study because it is the flagship initiative of the EU in this policy domain. The EHL distinction has been awarded by the EU to 48 sites around the continent based on their *European significance* and importance for collective identity. This policy has already

attracted significant research, but this study will fill another research gap by employing an approach from IR and Critical Constructivism. At the beginning of this study it was expected that the EHL would reproduce the EU's customary discourse about its core values, but certain sites with the Label that revolve around themes beyond EU integration suggested there might be new elements. Thus, this study argues that the EU's cultural heritage discourse impacts the construction and reinforcement of a European identity by making it more *exclusive* instead of only *inclusive*.

Given the role that critical constructivists allocate to discourse in the constitution of identities, the qualitative methodology employed was Topoi Analysis, a sub-category of Critical Discourse Analysis. The qualitative data available from the EHL initiative consisted on official EU material such as selection panel reports, promotional videos and site descriptions.

The relevance of this study goes beyond the contributions it might have for academic literature because it has societal implications. The reason for this is that the results could help understand *how* the EU is defining its own identity, where it is drawing boundaries and *who* fits into its conception *European*.

This study will begin by introducing a literature review about the main academic debates and contributions in the fields of Constructivism, European identity and cultural heritage policies. It will be followed by the research design section, which explains in detail the data used, the operationalisation of variables and the methodology. Afterwards, the analysis section will present the results and findings with tables, quotes and explanations. Finally, the conclusions will discuss the results in more detail and provide suggestions for further research.

The main findings of this study show that the EHL does reinforce the *inclusive* spectrum of European identity that is constantly promoted by the EU in the discourse of its core values. However, the findings also indicate that this initiative is contributing in the constriction of the *exclusive* spectrum of European identity, although with less frequency. This was done by including in the sites' narrative themes such as religion and certain cultures in other historical periods, among others, as the *roots* of European citizens today. The implications of these findings for theory, future research, and the EU itself are discussed in detail throughout the final sections.

State of the Art

In order to define European identity, it would be necessary to geographically demarcate Europe, for which a central issue has always been, where does *Europe* end and begin (Wallace, 1990; Neumann, 1998). Being a geographical construct, Europe has no natural or pre-given boundaries and changing its parameters has been a practice throughout the centuries, including during period of EU integration (Rumelili, 2004, pp. 39-40). The EU is argued to be amidst an *identity crisis* in

which it struggles to define the concept of *Europe*, who is *European* and what elements should constitute a *European identity* (Weiss, 2002; Jenkins, 2008).

In order to address this puzzle, research about European identity has been carried out from a wide variety of disciplines, such as political science (Lengyel, 2013; Haller and Ressler, 2006; Karolewski, 2013) and psychology (Curtis, 2016; Duckit and Sibley, 2016; Aspinwall, Richter, and Hoffman, 2001), among others. Luhmann (2017, p. 1263) argues that the problem with such a variety of approaches is a divergence of conceptualisations of identity. Therefore, it should be highlighted that this study is set within the field of International Relations (IR), particularly on the literature of Constructivist theories, which determines the approach taken to study and understand *identity*.

Constructivism and Identity

The end of the Cold War brought with it the *constructivist turn* in International Relations (IR) theories. Constructivism came to the fore in this context because recent events had undermined the explanatory hegemony of the two dominant rationalist theories of IR, Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism (Das, 2009, p. 961). The reconfiguration of the global order led to an intellectual transformation within the discipline by bringing new approaches that took into account factors previously overlooked by the mainstream theories (Lapid, 1996; Checkel, 1998). Foremost among these factors stood *identity*.

During the nineties, one of the main debates among IR scholars was essentially about the independent variables that explained state behaviour in world politics (Hagström and Gustafsson, 2015, pp. 4-5). Rationalist mainstream IR theories had previously treated a state's identity and its interests as exogenous and given factors that did not alter its behaviour (Ruggie, 1998, p. 13; Weber, 2013, p. 63). The new Constructivist theories gave *identity* a central role for explaining and understanding international relations (Zalewski and Enloe, 1995, p. 280).

The term *Constructivism* was coined by Nicholas Onuf (1989), who sustained that in spite of some ontological and epistemological similarities to the mainstream IR theories of the time, Constructivists understood the socio-political world as a construct. This theory sought to understand *how* such construction takes place (Onuf, 1998, p. 20). Other Constructivist scholars like Wendt (1999) and Katzenstein (1996) further challenged the rationalist dominance within IR by introducing a theoretical framework based on *identity,* which is a construct subject to change, as an explanatory factor of a state's interests and, consequently, of world politics. Other non-material factors that Constructivists use in their analysis are culture, norms, beliefs and ideas (Alexandrov, 2003, pp. 33-34).

In spite of the prominence that *identity* occupies in Constructivism, there is a lack of consensus regarding its conceptualisation, the understanding of how its construction takes place and the choice of research methods (Alexandrov, 2004, p. 34; Arkan, 2014, pp. 4-5). It is not a uniform theory and different strands of it have emerged (Devine, 2008; Das, 2009). A common twofold division of the Constructivist theory is into the *conventional* and *critical* strands (Arkan, 2014, p. 25).

Conventional Constructivism is a theory that attempted to set itself as a middle ground between rationalist and reflectivist approaches in IR (Fierke, 2010, p. 183). The leading conventional constructivists (Wendt, 1992; Katzenstein, 1996; Adler, 1997; Ruggie, 1998) have a similar research agenda and epistemology to the mainstream IR theories. They differ in their incorporation of ideational and non-material factors into their analysis, which they want to prove have a causal or semi-causal effect in a state's interests and behaviour. It could be said that the conventional strand perceives identity as an independent variable.

On the other hand, Critical Constructivism is a strand that branched off during the late nineties. Its scholars criticised their conventional counterparts for their emphasis on using the state as research object and their embrace of positivist epistemology (Buzan and Hansen, 2009, pp. 197-198). One of its main points of contention with the conventional strand was in the manner to understand and conceptualise *identity*, along with the factors that produce it (Hopf, 1998, pp. 183-185; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001). While conventional Constructivists assume that a state's identity simply exists and treat it as an explanatory factor, critical Constructivists seek to understand *how* identity is created and treat it as a research object (Zehfuss, 2002, p. 89).

A distinguishing factor of Critical Constructivism is the importance it attributes to discourse. Fierke (2014, p. 185) claims that this theory gives language a role of intermediary between the *signifier* and the *signified*. Additionally, it gives agency to states in the process of identity construction since it is not something that they simply possess, but also actively and explicitly define and pursue (Buzan and Hansen, 2009, p. 199). States create identities through discursive representations, for instance, of peoples and countries (Weldes, 1996; 1999). This discursive approach to identity seeks to explore the myths associated with the identity-formation processes (Hopf, 1998, p. 183).

Critical Constructivists also highlight the practice of *othering* in identity creation. This means that identities are constituted in relation to differentiation, which does not necessarily mean that a state employs discourse about outsiders, but the assumption of collectiveness already presupposes certain boundaries that exclude those on the outside (Doty, 1996, pp. 136-137; Wendt, 1999, pp. 74-75). Rumelili (2004, p. 37) claims that the nature of identity, which is discursively

constructed by differentiation, can be divided between *inclusive* and *exclusive.* According to the author, the former is based on acquired characteristics, such as *democratic*, while the latter is based on inherent characteristics, for instance, *Islamic*. The purpose of her two-fold division is to indicate how when identity is constructed based on acquired characteristics the *others* outside its boundaries are on a position of temporary difference, because they can change. However, when it is based on inherent characteristics, the *other* is placed on a position of permanent difference.

European Identity and Constructivism

Constructivists within the field of IR have long been interested in the European Union (EU) and its identity, in spite of it not being a state. The reasons for this is not only the EU's power and influence on the world stage, but also the fact that the EU is an unprecedented political entity of that kind because it has, or is attempting to have, its own transnational identity (Arkann, 2014, p. 22). Most studies within this IR theory have been carried out using the conventional constructivist strand (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009; Cerderman, 2000; Shore and Black, 1994). One of the leading works was done by Manners (2002), who concluded that the EU is a polity based on values and would not base its identity on exclusion, but rather on those key norms and values, such as liberty, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Fewer contributions have been made to the field with the discursive approach that the Critical Constructivist strand advocates for. The studies done in this area have focused particularly on the practice of *othering*, explained in the previous section. Waever (1998, p. 100) argues that the EU portrays the European *self* against various *others*, which tend to be the Islamic Middle East, Russia and Europe's own past of war and totalitarianism. In the case of Russia, others have claimed that the pattern of its inclusion and self-exclusion occurs because it stands as a non-democratic alternative to the EU, making the conception of European identity to follow a geopolitical logic (Prozorov, 2009; Diez, 2004). A study by Morozov and Rumelili (2012) claimed that *othering* Russia helps the EU to consolidate its self-perception as a community based on liberal values, while *othering* Turkey challenges the EU's self-perception as a multicultural actor. Especially since the end of the Cold War, the EU constantly defines itself as more progressive and morally superior than its neighbours (Morozov and Rumelili, 2012, p. 42). Research about the EU's rhetoric has also been carried out by using *Normative Power Europe* as a case study (Diez, 2016).

Given the more reduced number of contributions from the Critical Constructivist strand to the literature about European identity, a research gap has been highlighted by Diez (2016) and Arkan (2014). They mention that there is a need for more research about the EU's discourses surrounding the topic of identity and the delimiting functions this practice has by creating boundaries. Filling such a gap could help shed more light into the *building blocks,* or categories,

upon which the EU is discursively constructing its own identity. In some way, it helps to better understand what being *European* means for the EU. Additionally, this study could be novel within the literature of Constructivism and IR because it focuses on the impact that the EU's cultural heritage policies have on identity formation.

European Union's Cultural Heritage Policy

Over the past two decades, the EU has increased its interest and initiatives in the domain of cultural policy, a tendency that has been called the *EU's move to history* (Prutsch, 2013, p. 36). The reason is that the EU perceives the lack of a strong collective identity among its more than 500 million citizens as an obstacle (Lähdesmäki et al. 2020, pp. 11-12). It is believed that culture and heritage can be useful political tools for promoting legitimacy around the goals of increased political, economic and social integration (Shote, 1993, pp. 785-786). Initiatives in this domain seek to appeal to European citizens' feelings of belonging by fostering a common identity and cultural heritage through narrations of the European past (Lähdesmäki, 2017; 2019).

Critical Constructivist theory is also concerned with these kind of policies. Diez (2016, p. 330) claimed that the fixing of boundaries by discourse in the process of identity formation can be done by a variety of actors and means, including the arts and the media. Additionally, *heritage* is understood by some scholars as a political negotiation of identities (Waterton and Smith, 2009). Cultural heritage policies have the ability to construct and re-construct identities by deciding which stories, people, and values to include or exclude, causing boundaries and meaning to be constantly evolving (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, these policies are of interest to Critical Constructivism and its emphasis on discourse for two main reasons. Firstly, because according to Van Huis et al. (2019), *narratives* are an effective tool in cultural heritage policies because they construct reality by employing language that is filled with meaning and creates boundaries around communities and identities. Secondly, because the discourse reproduced in them is *Authorised Heritage Discourse*, a term coined by Laurajane Smith (2006). It refers to the practice exercised by groups in power, such as governments and organisations, of defining what does or does not qualify as heritage.

The flagship initiative of the EU in this policy domain is the *European Heritage Label* (EHL). It began in the year 2006 as an intergovernmental scheme but was transformed into an official EU action in 2011 (EC, 2017, p. 2). Its objective, as outlined in Article 3 of the Decision No. 1194/2011/EU is:

> Strengthening European citizens' sense of belonging to the Union, in particular that
> of young people, based on shared values and elements of European history and

cultural heritage, as well as an appreciation of national and regional diversity (EP

and EC, 2011, pp. 3-4).

The EHL is a distinction awarded to cultural heritage sites with *European significance* that are diverse in nature, since they consist of sites, monuments, landscapes or even intangible material (EC, 2017, p. 5). So far, 48 sites have been awarded the Label (see Appendix 1 for complete list). Something that distinguished the EHL from other heritage initiatives is that it does not focus on the tangible aspects of cultural heritage, such as the conservation or physical protection of the sites, but rather emphasises on the sites' symbolic value (Lähdesmäki et al. 2020, p. 240). Criticism arose during the intergovernmental phase because there was a lack of clear criteria and diverse interpretations when it came to the sites' *European significance.* It was because of this that the European Parliament, Council, and Commission decided to transform it into an EU action, a process that finished in the year 2011 and consequently stripped all sites of the Label, indicating that in order to re-apply they would have to do it following the new selection process (MacCoshan et al., 2018, pp. 18-19).

The new selection process determined that sites would be pre-selected at the national level, but the final decision would rest at the EU level, more specifically, in a newly-created *European Panel* of independent experts (EP and EC, 2011, pp. 4-5). The Panel's decision would depend if the sites could correctly justify their *European Significance*, for which new criteria was also established in 2011. If the sites' justifications and narratives were rooted in 19th century national values, they would be rejected (EC, 2017, p. 19). The new criteria was introduced because during the intergovernmental phase, national-level interpretations and narratives of the awarded sites were seen as an obstacle for the project's goals (Lähdesmäki and Mäkinen, 2019, p. 47). Narratives employed throughout the EHL initiative are meant to tell European citizens *who* they are and *where* they came from (Lähdesmäki et al. 2020, p. 241).

This particular initiative has already attracted a significant amount of research from a variety of fields, mainly by a team of scholars based in Finland (Kowalski, 2015; Lähdesmäki, Thomas, and Zhu, 2019; Lähdesmäki et al., 2021; Lähdesmäki, 2014; 2016b; 2016a; Čeginskas et al., 2021; Lähdesmäki, et al. 2020; Lähdesmäki and Mäkinen, 2019; Kaasik-Krogerus, 2020; Mäkinen, 2019). In their studies, they often employed an interdisciplinary approach, drawing insights from fields such as heritage studies, cultural studies, political science, and EU Studies. Some of the topics explored were the government of heritage, engagement and participation in heritage, its gender dimension, the geopolitics involved, among others. Some of the relevant findings for the purpose of this study are that there is a *Europeanization* of the narratives of the EHL sites, which are usually

understood from a national point of view. Also, it is argued that the EU engages in the *politics of affect*, which aim at *moving*, impacting, and appealing to the emotions of the recipients of heritage material. However, various of these studies use ethnographic methodologies, such as participant observations, interviews, analysis of documents and fieldwork at some of the EHL sites. Some follow an individual level of analysis. The studies that focused on the narratives employed in the initiative differ from this study in terms of research aims, theoretical framework and methodology.

Consequently, this study seeks to fill another research gap by employing a different methodology and insights from IR Constructivism to study the EHL.

Case Study Justification

The EHL has the explicit objective of promoting a shared heritage and identity among European citizens. The 48 sites with the Label were selected at the EU level by a panel of experts, based on their *European Significance* (see Appendix 1). Because of this, the initiative provides a good example of *Authorised Heritage Discourse* since the EU has agency in building a European narrative around each selected site. Consequently, this cultural heritage policy goes in line with the reasoning of the Critical Constructivist theory of IR, which explains that identities are reinforced and constructed through discourse. The EHL's main emphasis on symbolic value and narratives provides an opportunity to understand how the EU defines European identity.

Furthermore, the EHL also poses an interesting case for answering the research question. The literature review about European identity explained how some previous studies have led to conclusions about the EU being a polity based on values and explanations of its usual targets of *othering*. However, many of the sites awarded the EHL are related to themes well before and beyond the usual rhetoric around the EU integration project, but presented by the EU as European heritage and identity. Given the fact that identities are constantly changing, the EHL might help to better understand the *EU's move to history* and the manner in which it may be influencing the evolution of its identity. Because of the nature of some sites in question, it might be inclining more towards the exclusive spectrum of identity instead of the usual inclusive one.

Therefore, this study began with the hypothesis that the EU's cultural heritage discourse impacts the construction and reinforcement of European identity by making it more *exclusive* instead of only *inclusive.*

Research Design

Data

The EHL initiative and its 48 awarded sites provide three sets of qualitative data that were used to answer the research question. The first one are the selection panel reports drafted by the panel of experts at the EU level (EC, 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019). These official documents justify

each site's selection, emphasising their *European Significance*, which is the section of the report that will be analysed. The second set of data is composed of the EHL's official promotional videos of each awarded site. The videos can be found in social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook managed by the EC, as well as in the EC's official website about the EHL (Creative Europe, 2021; EC, 2021a; 2021b). These videos, with an average duration of four minutes, present each site with a narrative that highlights their *European Significance*, accompanied by appealing images and emotional music. There are 38 videos that have been produced so far. Therefore, the third set of data are the *site descriptions* in the official EHL website (EC, 2021b) for those 10 sites that still have no official video.

Operationalisation of Variables

The research question guiding this study is: how is European identity constructed and reinforced by the EU's cultural heritage policy?

The dependent variable, or research object, in this study is *European identity*. Although lacking an explicit definition, it is understood under a Critical Constructivist theoretical framework. As was previously explained, scholars in this strand argue that identity is socially constructed by discourse and is subject to change. The way to translate this concept into measurable factors is inspired by Rumelili (2004, p. 39), who in her study of the EU's rhetoric of *otherness* employs the term *identity criteria*. It makes reference to the content of identity, which in her study is criteria such as liberty, democracy and human rights. This study will explore the *identity criteria* of the European identity built by the EHL, dividing it into *identity categories*. Rumelili (2004, p. 37) also claimed that the nature of *identity criteria* could be divided into *inclusive* and *exclusive*. The former is based on acquired characteristics and the latter on inherent ones.

The independent variable, or explanatory factor is the EU's cultural heritage policy, specifically the EHL. Following the ideas of Critical Constructivism, this initiative impacts European identity via discursive practices, since it uses the EU's official rhetoric. The way to measure the impact of (X) on (Y) is by making a division between the *identity categories* into *pre-existing categories* and *emerging* categories. The *pre-existing categories* are obtained from the literature review, EU actions and treaties. When they appear in the EHL they reinforce those aspects of European identity, because they had already been there in the past. The *emerging categories* are the new ones that appear during the analysis and their impact is the construction of new aspects of European identity, showing its evolution.

As was mentioned in the previous section, this study will begin with the hypothesis that the EU's cultural heritage discourse impacts the construction and reinforcement of European identity by making it more *exclusive* instead of only *inclusive*.

Methodology

Given the relevance that Critical Constructivists attribute to discourse as a creator of identity and the data available from the EHL initiative, the qualitative methodology employed in this study is Topoi Analysis, a sub-category of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The methodology of CDA draws insights from philosopher Foucault (1975), who believed that discourse is a set of linguistic categories linked to an object. Following Foucauldian logic, the way in which the EU uses its discourse about identity throughout the EHL initiative can influence the way in which the content of such an identity is understood. Gil (2000) also claims that discourse is a means by which social reality can be constructed. He also explains that discourse is rhetorically organised, which means that is seeks to establish a version of the world against other competing versions. Bryman (2012, pp. 537-538) points out that the aim of Critical Discourse Analysis is to explore the meaning that discourses give to certain phenomena.

Topoi Analysis, a sub-category within this methodology, is also based on the ideas of Foucault (1991). It attempts to identify thought and argumentation schemes within a text, called *topoi*, or *topos* in singular. Burroughs (2015, p. 169) argues that in a text there can be multiple *topoi* and that they can be inferred, rather than just explicitly mentioned.

In order to answer this study's research question, the discourse employed throughout the EHL initiative was analysed by identifying thought and argumentation schemes that will be grouped into *topoi.* What was previously explained as *identity categories* refers to the same idea of grouping discursive content and in the case of this study is a concept that is a synonym of *topoi.* This methodology allows to understand, in numbers, which European *identity categories* the EHL reinforces and constructs. It also helps shed light into the nature of the identity in question. Additionally, this approach also fills a previously-mentioned research gap.

The methodology was applied with the software *Nvivo*, which helps in the process of what Lee and Fielding (1991) named *computer-assisted qualitative data analysis* (CAQDAS). This kind of software does not help with decisions about coding the data or interpreting the results, those tasks remain in the hands of the researcher (Bryman, 2012, p. 591). First, the three sets of qualitative data were loaded into *Nvivo.* The 38 EHL promotional videos were manually turned into transcripts because this study focuses on the discourse employed and visual data is out of its scope. The other two sets of data were already in text and were uploaded into the software as they were found. Then, the material was read and interpreted, manually selecting relevant sentences or paragraphs, deciding into which *topoi* or *identity categories* they should be coded. One of the main features of the software is that after the coding phase it helps visualise the total coding references for each *topoi* or *category.* Results are presented and discussed in the next sections.

Analysis

For carrying out the data analysis, two sets of *identity categories*, or *topoi*, were generated. As was previously explained, the *pre-existing categories* are based on contributions from previous Critical Constructivist studies about European identity (Waever, 1998; Prozorov, 2009; Diez, 2004; Morozov and Rumelili, 2012), the Decision No. 1194/2011/EU (EP and EC, 2011) and EU treaties such as the Treaty of Amsterdam (EP, 1997, p. 8). These *identity categories* are usually found in the EU's identity rhetoric and can therefore be expected to appear in the EHL, although with an unknown frequency before the analysis. On the other hand, the *emerging categories* are based on those themes that were not found in the literature review or EU treaties, but were created as those themes were appearing during the analysis of the EHL's discourse. The following table shows both sets of categories:

Table 1. Topoi for Analysis

Pre-existing Categories of Identity	*Emerging Categories of Identity*
Peace	Christianity
Democracy	Judaism
Liberty	European Art and Culture
Human Rights	History before EU
The Rule of Law	Greeks and Romans
Global Influence	European Transnational Experience
Diversity	Transition to New Political System
EU Integration	European National Cultures
Founding Myths	
Othering	
European Education and Science	

Old and New Topics

Once the three sets of qualitative data were loaded into *Nvivo*, a detailed reading and interpretation of its content was carried out in order to code phrases or entire paragraphs into the corresponding identity category. Sometimes phrases and paragraphs fitted into more than one category. The purpose of this was to detect patterns and repetitions in the EU's narrative about EHL sites. After the analysis, it was possible to know which of the to sets of *identity categories* surfaced more. This was done by quantifying the number of coding references for each group, which the following table illustrates:

Table 2. Pre-existing vs. Emerging Categories
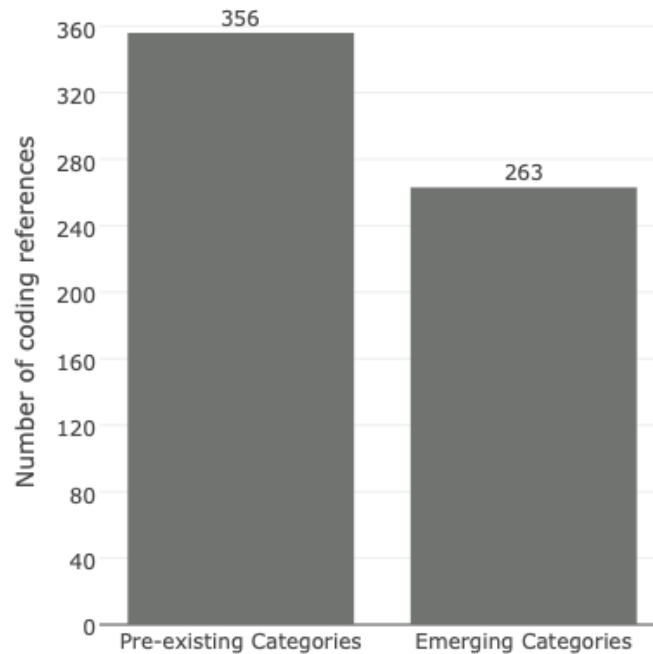
From a total of 619 (f) coding references, the *pre-existing identity categories* (f=356) obtained more mentions than the *emerging identity categories* (f=236). This means that the EHL's discourse on identity reinforces the usual rhetoric employed by the EU, which tends to be about themes such as the promotion of liberal values, anchors European identity on the integration process, makes reference to the block's founding myths and exercises the practice of *othering.* At the same time, although with less frequency, the EHL's discourse on identity also brought new themes that are not frequent in the EU's definition of identity. Among them were mentions of religion, historical periods well before EU integration, such as Antiquity, frequent accounts of political system transitions, highlighting the importance of European art and culture, and a transnational reinterpretation of European history.

Overall Results

The following table shows the overall results of coding references for each *identity category*, or *topos*, from both *pre-existing* (P) and *emerging* (E) ones:

Table 3. Overall Coding Results

Categories	Number of Coding References
European Transnational Experience (E)	92
EU Integration (P)	52
History Before EU (E)	52
Founding Myths (P)	49
Human Rights (P)	40
Peace (P)	37
European Art and Culture (E)	34
European Education and Science (P)	33
Liberty (P)	30
Diversity (P)	28
Rule of Law (P)	26
Transition to New Political System (E)	24
European National Cultures (E)	22
Global Influence (P)	21
Christianity (E)	16
Othering (P)	16
Greeks and Romans (E)	12
Judaism (E)	8

The following subsections cover explanations and examples of the most frequent or more relevant *identity categories.*

European Transnational Experience

This emerging category was the most mentioned one (f=92). Throughout the EHL, a transnational reinterpretation of European history and events was made. By making mentions about people, events and sites that link more than one European country, it was argued that cooperation between different national groups that lived in the same territory or under the same administration was possible and desirable. The implicit message is that cooperation and integration makes Europeans more prosperous and free. The EU's goal of shifting nationalist narrative into a supranational, or transnational one is evident in this category. These arguments were illustrated using examples like the Roman Empire, the Hanseatic League, the Habsburg Empire, the Polish-

Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the shared experiences of war and genocide. Evidence of this discourse can be found in the following examples of the promotional videos of the *Dohány Street Synagogue* in Budapest and the *Union of Lublin* in Poland:

> The Dohány Street Synagogue represents everything what Europe is about today. Before the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, an Austrian architect built a synagogue in Budapest after he had studied synagogue-architecture in Spain. The temple carries elements of the Moorish style, it brings a flavour of Andalusia to Central-Europe. The ornaments reflect the magic of the East, the Arab world. The Synagogue, as a building, represents Europe's values: to adopt and safeguard what is beautiful, good and noble in other nations and cultures (Creative Europe, 2017).

> This event sealed the constitutional union of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, resulting in the creation of a commonwealth republic with a single parliament, an elected king, one currency, and religious and ethnic tolerance. Thus, the sites in Lublin stand as physical reminders of a unique entity in European history and an important milestone in the development of democratic principles (Creative Europe, 2014).

European Identiy and History

EU Integration (F=52) is a category in which European identity was constantly anchored in the integration project of the EU. An example of this is found in the promotional video of Robert Schuman's House:

> This office is where, at the end of April 1950, Robert Schuman comes to take a few days' rest. He opens his briefcase and reads the letter that Jean-Monnet gave him a few hours earlier at Gare de l'est in Paris. This is where he draws up the first version of the 9 May speech and where Europe is born (Creative Europe, 2014).

History before the EU (f=52) got the same number of mentions. The historical periods under this category were diverse and not related to the EU, but the way in which they were presented in discourse was meant to justify EU integration, even if thousands of years separated both events. For example, this passage of the promotional video of *Carnuntum Archaeological Site* in Austria:

> We could learn a lot from the Romans, even if it's two thousand years ago. It looks to us very actual because the achievements of the Romans are very actual today. Talk about the freedom of movement of goods and persons, which is one of the core values of the European Union. Look at the Roman system of justice, it's the base for all modern justice systems. Or look at the Latin language, which is the base of many European languages (Creative Europe, 2013).

There was also a constant reminder of the two World Wars, the Holocaust and Cold War as *Founding Myths* (f=49) of the EU. This is how Camp Westerbork, a former Nazi concentration camp in the Netherlands is presented:

> The European Union should convey the message that these places, no matter how bleak they may be, also play a role in Europe's history. What's more, they constitute a strong basis precisely for European cooperation (Creative Europe, 2013).

Core Values of the EU

The core EU values, *Human Rights* (f=40), *Peace* (f=37), *Liberty* (f=30), and the *Rule of Law* (f=26), were constantly articulated in the narrative, often paired with *Global Influence* (f=21), which refers to the EU's goal to promote them worldwide. These categories are part of the EU's usual rhetoric. As an example, this passage in the promotional video of the *Peace Palace* in The Hague:

> The Peace Palace is thus an icon and a symbol of Peace and Justice in Europe and in the word, a Peace Shrine, stressing at the same time the significance of European efforts for peace processes (Creative Europe, 2013).

European Art and Culture (f=34) and *European Education and Science* (f=33) were frequently mentioned as core elements of identity, stressing the importance of preserving and promoting them. The importance of research, intellectual exchange and innovation are described as a common feature throughout European history.

Although the aim of the EHL initiative is to avoid nationalist interpretations of the sites, in order to promote with a European narrative, national identities of Member States are not completely left out. In fact, nationalism is not seen in a negative light in events when it was used as a tool for resisting oppression, particularly against the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent, Nazi Germany. When national, and not European, interpretations were made they were coded into *European National Cultures* (f=21).

Othering

The practice of *Othering* (f=16) was previously explained in this study. The explicit targets of it in the EHL are those regimes or empires in Europe's history that were authoritarian and non-democratic. Nazi Germany was often mentioned but not as much as the Soviet Union, which is described as a former threat to the values now embodied by the EU and how, after its dissolution, its former area of influence in Central and Eastern Europe, *reunited* with Europe. The following example is from the promotional video of the *Pan-European Picnic* that took place near the border between Austria and Hungary:

On 19 August 1989 the Pan-European Picnic was organized and a group of German refugees arrived at the picnic. They broke through the border and entered the free world. This was the event that could be considered the beginning of Europe's reunification (Creative Europe, 2014).

Religion

Among the less frequent topics, but of high relevance, were the *emerging categories* of *Christianity* (f=16)*, Judaism* (f=8)**, Romans and Greeks** (f=12). These themes are not common in the EU's rhetoric about European identity. The manner in which they are presented is relevant because it was hinted that the roots of Europeans are Judeo-Christian and come from Antiquity. In all the data Islam was mentioned only a couple of times, in the context of promoting tolerance and diversity, but not as part of European identity. This kind of discourse appears in the promotional video of the *Olomuc Premyslid Castle and the Archdiocesan Museum*, found in the Czech Republic:

The most prominent bishops and archbishops were enthroned here. On the other hand, it is a place which reminds us of our roots in Christianity, Judaism, and Antiquity, and points to our European identity (Creative Europe, 2015).
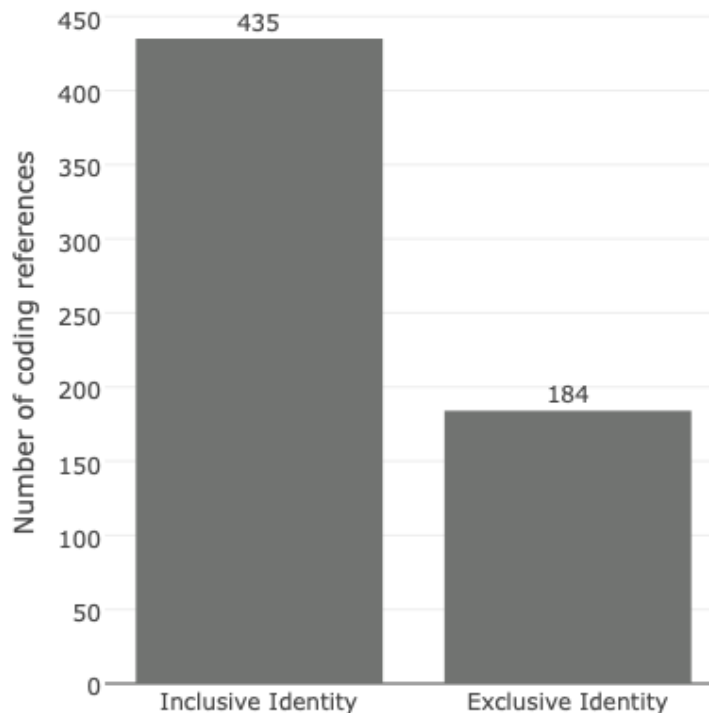
Inclusive and Exclusive Identity

In order to fully answer the research question, the last part of the analysis consisted in dividing all *identity categories* into two new groups. The division was inspired by Rumelili's (2004, p. 37) explanation of the *inclusive* or *exclusive* nature of discursively-constructed identities.

The categories grouped into *Inclusive Identity* were *European Transnational Experience* (f=92)*, EU Integration* (f=52), *Founding Myths* (f=49), *Human Rights* (f=40), *Peace* (f=37), *European Education and Science* (f=33), *Liberty* (f=30), *Diversity* (f=28), *Rule of Law* (f=26), *Democracy* (f=24) and *Transition to New Political System* (f=24). The criteria for grouping them together is that the identity criteria they promote is based on acquired factors. That means that those outside such boundaries are in a position of temporary difference, because they might change.

The categories grouped into *Exclusive Identity* were *History Before EU* (f=52), *European Art and Culture* (f=34), *European National Cultures* (f=22), *Global Influence* (f=21), *Christianity* (f=16), *Othering* (f=16), *Romans and Greeks* (f=12) and *Judaism* (f=8). The criteria for this group is that the identity criteria they promote is based on inherent factors, which means that those outside its boundaries are in a position of permanent difference.

The following table shows the results of dividing the total coding references (f=619) between the *Inclusive* and *Exclusive* identities:

Table 4. Inclusive vs. Exclusive Identity

In other words, the European identity promoted in the EHL's discourse could be said to be considerably more *inclusive* (f=435) than *exclusive* (f=184). However, it is worth noting that most of the categories grouped as *Inclusive* came from the *Pre-existing categories*, while most of those grouped as *Exclusive* came from the *Emerging categories.* This means that the inclusive spectrum of European identity was already a trend before the EHL and that some of the themes introduced by this initiative might be drifting European identity towards a more exclusive spectrum.

These results validate this study's hypothesis, which argued that the EU's cultural heritage discourse impacts the construction and reinforcement of a European identity by making it more *exclusive* instead of only *inclusive*.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explain the impact that the EU's cultural heritage policy has on the reinforcement and construction of European identity. In order to answer the research question, IR's Critical Constructivism was used as a theoretical framework and the European Heritage Label as a case study. Following this theory's logic, the EU has agency in building its own identity through the use of discourse. Among the 48 sites awarded the EHL (see Appendix 1) many were not directly related to the EU and its typical rhetoric, something that can be seen as part of the trend that Prutsch (2013) called the *EU's move to history.* Because of it, this study had as a hypothesis that the EU's cultural heritage constructs and reinforces European identity by making it more exclusive instead of *only* inclusive. Critical Constructivist's discursive approach to identity facilitated the use of Topoi

Analysis, a sub-category of Critical Discourse Analysis, as methodology. The EHL's promotional videos, selection panel reports and site descriptions were used as qualitative data and analysed with the *Nvivo* software. After finishing the analysis, the hypothesis was validated and the results presented in the form of numbers and examples.

This results demonstrated that the EHL mostly *reinforces* those *identity categories* often promoted by the EU and that have been explained in other studies of the field regarding European identity (Manners, 2002; Diez, 2016; Morozov and Rumelili, 2012). This customary rhetoric consists on defining European identity as diverse, multinational, defender of peace, human rights, liberty, and the rule of law around the world. Along this line, European identity is also anchored in the integration process, making the EU embody *Europeaness* and the legitimate source of power in Europe. When it comes to mentions of previous historical periods, European history is narrated as a process that led to the ultimate and desirable goal of creating the EU. This rhetoric coincides with a pioneering study by Manners (2002) which claimed that since the EU is a polity based on values, it would not base its identity on exclusion, but rather on those norms it considers central.

Another component of the EU's usual rhetoric is the practice of *othering*. Previous studies about this had found that the EU's usual targets of differentiation are Russia, the Islamic Middle East and Europe's own past (Waever, 1998; Rumelili, 2012; Prozorov, 2009; Diez, 2004; 2016). However, in the case of the EHL the first two are absent. The constant trend was to construct European identity in opposition to the authoritarianism in Europe's past, particularly making reference to the Nazi and Communist regimes.

The results of this study demonstrated that the EHL not only *reinforces* the EU's usual rhetoric surrounding identity, but it also brings new themes, which impacts the evolution and construction process of European identity. Although these *emerging* themes surfaced with less frequency than the *pre-existing* ones, they make a more relevant contribution to the academic literature and discussion. These new themes included mentions about religion, Antiquity and other historical periods not related to the EU. Greeks and Romans are mentioned as the roots of European civilisation. Although religion was not a frequent topic, the mentions of it and numerous EHL sites of religious importance result of high relevance for discussion. This is because the role of Judeo-Christian roots in European identity has been part of a debate for long. It is worth asking, in case the trend to include these themes in future initiatives continues or intensifies, if the EU is could engage to some degree, even if accidentally, with *civilizationist* rhetoric.

Rogers Brubaker (2017) coined the term *civilizationism*. It refers to the phenomenon in Northern and Western Europe in which populist political parties often described as nationalist are indeed *civilizationist*. This is because the opposition between the *self* and *other* used in their rhetoric

is done in broader terms than just the nation. Political parties like the National Front in France, the Northern League in Italy, or the Austrian Freedom Party have made a surprising shift in recent years and increased references to Christianity as a central theme in their rhetoric (Marzouki, McDonnell and Roy, 2016). Brubaker (2017) argues that this might result confusing because this region is the most secular region in the world, but the Christianity invoked by then is a *civilizational* and *identitarian* one, not *religious* per se. This means that it is a matter of belonging but not of believing. Christianity is described by them as Europe's *culture* and not *religion* and they constantly call for *defending the Christian roots of Europe,* particularly against Islam (Marzouki, McDonnell and Roy, 2016). Brubaker (2017, pp. 1202-1203) points out that a surprising turn in *civlizationist* parties is their breaking with former anti-Semitic rhetoric in order to redefine Jews as fellow Europeans. An example of this is when they talk about the *Judeo-Christian* roots of the continent.

This past argument does not mean to claim that the EHL's discourse is *civilizationist*, but rather that there are some elements in it that if intensified in frequency, could resemble that political tendency in some ways. In fact, the results of this study proved that the identity promoted by the EU through the EHL is more inclusive than exclusive in nature. However, although those *exclusive* elements based on inherent characteristics were less frequently mentioned, their presence has considerable relevance because it could be showing a shift in the EU's rhetoric. In fact, it puts into question claims such as the one made by Manners (2002) two decades ago, in which he argued that the EU would base its identity on its values. This initiative, which uses culture and history, is a sign that the rhetoric about identity is shifting toward something less abstract than only values.

The results of this study are relevant for a variety of more reasons. They contribute, particularly to the field of IR, by filling a research gap signalled by Arkan (2014) and Diez (2016) concerning the need for more discursive approaches for studying European identity. When it comes to the literature about the EHL, this study also made a contribution by employing a new theoretical and methodological approach. The relevance of this topic is also attributed to the fact that it helps understand the boundaries set by the EU's discourse when constructing an identity meant for more than 500 million people.

The limitations of this study are at the same time opportunities and suggestions for future research. The purpose of studying European identity in the field of IR is to better understand the EU's behaviour in world politics. However, the effects that these findings could have on such behaviour are out of the scope of this study. They might be of interest to conventional constructivists, who tend to understand *identity* as an independent and not dependent variable. Also, this study sought to understand the effects of cultural heritage policies on identity, but other initiatives besides the EHL were out of its scope. Therefore, the findings alongside with the

theoretical and methodological approach could be useful for studying other cultural heritage initiatives. A final limitation of this study is that it takes into account the 48 EHL sites that have been awarded the distinction so far. Since the EU has the goal of reaching 100 EHL sites by the year 2030 (EC, 2017), it is not possible at the moment to analyse the final version of the initiative and whether the trends and results identified in this study continued.

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Appendixes.

Appendix 1.

Selection Year	EHL Site	Location (Member State)
2013	Camp Westerbork	Netherlands
2013	Archaelogical Site of Carnuntum	Austria
2013	Great Guild Hall, Estonian History Museum	Estonia
2013	Peace Palace	Netherlands
2014	Pan-European Picnic Memorial Park	Hungary
2014	The Historic Gdansk Shipyard	Poland
2014	Museo Casa de Gasperi	Italy
2014	Robert Schuman's House	France
2014	Franja Partisan Hospital	Slovenia
2014	Kaunas of 1919-1940	Lithuania
2014	Residencia de Estudiantes (Madrid)	Spain
2014	The Charter of Law of Abolition of Death Penalty	Portugal
2014	Hambach Castle	Germany
2014	The 3 May 1791 Constitution	Poland
2014	Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra	Portugal
2014	Sites of the Peace of Westphalia	Germany
2014	The Union of Lublin	Poland
2014	Archive of the Crown of Aragon	Spain
2014	Abbey of Cluny	France
2014	The Heart of Ancient Athens	Greece
2015	European District of Strasbourg	France
2015	World War I Eastern Front Cemetery No. 123	Poland
2015	Mundaneum	Belgium
2015	Franz Liszt Academy of Music	Hungary
2015	Historic Ensemble of the University of Tartu	Estonia
2015	Imperial Palace	Austria
2015	Sagres Promontory	Portugal

2015	Olomuc Premyslid Castle and the Archdiocesan Museum	Czech Republic
2015	Neanderthal Prehistoric Site and Krapina Museum	Croatia
2017	Maastricht Treaty	Netherlands
2017	Village of Schengen	Luxembourg
2017	Bois du Cazier	Belgium
2017	Sighet Memorial	Romania
2017	Former Natzweiler Concentration Camp and its Satelite Camps	France and Germany
2017	Javorca Church and its Cultural Landscape	Slovenia
2017	Fort Cadine	Italy
2017	Dohány Street Synagogue Complex	Hungary
2017	Leipzig's Musical Heritage Sites	Germany
2019	Three Brothers	Latvia
2019	Lieu de Mémoire au Chambon-sur-Lignon	France
2019	Werkbund Estates in Europe 1927-1932	Germany, Poland, Czech Republic and Austria
2019	Site of Remembrance in Lambinowice	Poland
2019	"Zdravljica" – The Message of the European Spring of Nations	Slovenia
2019	Kynzvart Chateau – Place of Diplomatic Meetings	Czech Republic
2019	Colonies of Benevolence	Belgium and Netherlands
2019	Living Heritage of Szentendre	Hungary
2019	Underwater Cultural Heritage of the Azores	Portugal
2019	Archaelogical Area of Ostia Antica	Italy

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