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Rethinking Citizenship

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2013

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Altuna, A., & Suárez, M. (Eds.) (2013). *Rethinking Citizenship: New Voices in Euroculture*. Euroculture consortium.

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Jewish Heritage: Potentials for a European Civil Society

Sina Wohlgenuth

Abstract

From a tragic, neglected place to a dynamic, regenerated district of “universal value” – the meanings of Krakow’s historic Jewish area Kazimierz have dramatically changed in the last century. Local civic initiatives as well as international institutions such as the Council of Europe highlight the values of the rich Jewish cultural heritage especially in regard to the building of a European identity. This evokes questions about how, on a local level, the handling of Jewish heritage contributes to the creation of a European civil society. What meanings and purposes do civic agents ascribe to Jewish heritage and what role does Europe play in this process? These questions are particularly important in regard to the cultural anthropological definition of heritage, which focuses on the creational and inventive aspect of heritage for present purposes.

This paper deals with the reinterpretation of local cultural heritage in a European context, based on qualitative interviews with agents of cultural civic initiatives working in Kazimierz. After stating the concept of heritage and its potential for identity building, the paper examines the present handling of Jewish heritage in Kazimierz. It then discusses the role of the European level in dealing with Jewish heritage. This research illustrates how far Jewish heritage contributes to construct a European civil society. The paper highlights new ideas for further research on the constitution of European heritage.

Keywords: European heritage, Jewish heritage, identity, reinterpretation of culture, European civil society

Introduction

“After World War II Kazimierz was the ‘trash can’ of Krakow and then in the second half of the 70s a revival of interests began and people, young people, wanted to know what it was before.”¹ From his personal experience, the director of the Center for Jewish Culture, Joachim S. Russek, describes the changing image of Krakow’s Jewish district Kazimierz. Kazimierz – for centuries a vivid heart of Jewish culture with numerous religious buildings² – became a neglected, empty place after the War; the Jewish population shrank from a few thousand inhabitants to about one hundred today³. Since the end of the 1980s however new interest in the quarter and its history has arisen. Especially non-Jewish civic actors started to revive the district and to remember the rich Jewish culture, but also international organizations such as the Council of Europe or the European Union highlight the importance of Kazimierz’ Jewish heritage for European culture. Multiple actors thus create the Jewish heritage in Kazimierz and subscribe different meanings to it for diverse purposes. The Council of Europe thus inaugurated the program *European Routes of Jewish Culture*⁴ in 2005 which the Jewish heritage in Kazimierz is part of. It is hence given a *European value*. Nevertheless, it is not specified what exactly European heritage is. The founding treaty of the European Union only mentions the actions in the field of heritage such as “conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance”⁵. One purpose for finding a “common cultural heritage”⁶, highlighted repeatedly by the Council of Europe and the European Union, is however its importance for building a European identity among the people of Europe.⁷

This paper thus takes a bottom-up approach and deals with the reinterpretation of local cultural heritage by civic agents in Kazimierz in order to discuss the potential of Jewish heritage for constituting a European civil society. Thereby, the focus lies on the perceptions of Jewish culture civic initiatives largely taken up by non-Jewish citizens in Kazimierz, namely the Judaica Foundation-Center for Jewish Culture and the Jewish Culture Festival. I chose this sampling because they were among the first civic initiatives who introduced the revival of Jewish culture in Kazimierz,⁸ which is why a qualitative analysis of them can best display the adaptation of disinherited culture from below for present purposes. In order to answer the question how the civic handling of Jewish heritage contributes to the creation of a European civil society, it is important to capture which

¹ Joachim S. Russek, Interview about Center for Jewish Culture by Sina Wohlgemuth. MP3 file. Krakow, 11 April 2012. In the following paper, statements which I indicate in the text as said by “Russek” or the “Center for Jewish Culture”, always refer to this interview. That is why I will not state it in the footnote anymore.

² During the interwar period, 82 prayer houses were situated in Kazimierz, cf. Monika Murzyn. *Kazimierz: The Central European experience of urban regeneration* (Kraków: International Cultural Center, 2006), 108.

³ Cf. Agnieszka Legutko-Ołownia, *Krakow’s Kazimierz: Town of Partings and Returns* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Bezdroza, 2004), 52.

⁴ Cf. Council of Europe, “The European Route of Jewish Heritage,” http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/routes/jewish_en.asp (accessed 5 May 2012).

⁵ European Union, *Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version), Treaty of Maastricht*, 7 February 1992 (Official Journal of the European Communities C 325/5: 24 December 2002), Article 128, <http://www.eurotreaties.com/maastrichtec.pdf> (accessed 7 May 2012).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Cf. Raymond Weber, “Role of heritage in a changing Europe,” in *Forward planning. The function of cultural heritage in a changing Europe*, ed. Council of Europe (2001), 5, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/Resources/Publications/ECC-PAT%282001%29161_EN.pdf (accessed 28 April 2012).

⁸ Cf. Legutko-Ołownia, “Krakow’s Kazimierz”: 42f.

meanings and purposes the respective civic initiatives ascribe to the Jewish heritage and what role Europe plays in this process of the reinterpretation of local heritage.

Therefore, the main empirical data are composed of two qualitative in-depth interviews with responsible persons of the Center for Jewish Culture and the Jewish Culture Festival. In order to support and test the interviews I did participant observation in Kazimierz, including conversations with citizens who live in the district about their interest in Kazimierz and the development of their perception of Jewish culture. Content analysis of the institution's websites gives an additional insight into their heritage narratives and symbols.

The theory is mainly based on the classical concept of *invented tradition* by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger which serves as a framework to explain the features and functions of heritage. This paper thus refers to the heritage concept, which focuses on the creational and inventive aspect of heritage for present purposes. Since the EU and the Council of Europe supports the purpose of heritage as enabling citizens to discover their common European identity, this relation between the heritage concept and identity building is then examined to state the background of the paper. The second part deals – on the basis of the empirical analysis – with the civic handling of Jewish heritage by focusing on the meanings and purposes those non-Jewish civic initiatives ascribe to the heritage in the present. The last chapter discusses the “European significance” of Jewish heritage.

This paper aims to show a civic approach to European heritage and identity through Jewish heritage. Since this paper follows a qualitative bottom-up approach by being based on expert interviews in Kazimierz, it does not claim to be representative for all civic agents' viewpoints in the district. It serves moreover as a case study in order to highlight new ideas for further research on the constitution of European heritage from below.

I. Concept of heritage

“Heritage is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past.”⁹ According to this quote by the Jewish American folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, heritage encompasses the past, the present and the future. Its significance however lies in the present where heritage is constructed for contemporary purposes.¹⁰ Taking this as a basis, this chapter examines the constitution of cultural heritage by focusing first on its functions for present circumstances and secondly on its relation to identity.

I.a. The functions of cultural heritage

⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Theorizing Heritage,” *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 3 (1995): 369.

¹⁰ Cf. Gregory J. Ashworth and Brian Graham, “Senses of Place, Senses of Time and Heritage,” in *Senses of place: senses of time*, eds. Gregory J. Ashworth and Brian Graham (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 7.

The cultural anthropologist Ullrich Kockel highlights that “cultural practices and artefacts only become ‘heritage’ once they are no longer in current, active use.”¹¹ Thus, he argues that heritage is detached from the transmission of tradition, but that uses of cultural objects and practices, described as “heritage”, differ radically from its traditional purpose.¹² This understanding of heritage as a “present-centered”¹³ concept incorporates however a number of conflicts. If heritage is detached from the past, the first question is who inherits it. Since it is selected from history to serve the present it must be accepted and desirable for someone, as the heritage scientist Monika Murzyn remarks as well.¹⁴ In the case of Jewish heritage, the issue of disinheritance is crucial, as it can also be observed in Kazimierz. Because of the Holocaust, entire Jewish districts were deprived of its inhabitants and its religious local functions had no users anymore. Today new agents such as the diverse Jewish culture civic initiatives, the tourist industry, international organizations, visitors and citizens claim to revive it with different intentions.¹⁵ This illustrates a dissonance in heritage because different actors on different levels ascribe to one and the same site different meanings.¹⁶

This phenomenon of putting cultural artifacts and events into new contexts can be explained by the theory of *invented tradition* from the British social historian Eric Hobsbawm: “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”¹⁷ According to this definition, invented traditions require rituals or symbols to legitimize them. In the case of Jewish heritage it would refer for example to the adoption by non-Jewish organizations dealing with Jewish culture of the old Judaic symbol *menorah*, the seven-branched candelabrum. However, the most important characteristic of the concept is that traditions are invented as responses to novel situations by referring to old ones. Hobsbawm connects this innovative aspect of tradition to the constant change in modern society that demands new attempts to structure the social life and to represent continuity.¹⁸ Jewish heritage as well was revived at a time of great social upheaval, after the fall of Communism, which is why its rediscovery can be interpreted as an attempt to find new values and to reorganize the life world.

Consequently, the concept of *invented tradition* has three functions, according to Hobsbawm, that are transferrable to heritage as well. The first is that invented traditions establish or legitimize institutions, status or relations of authority.¹⁹ Thus, institutions dealing with heritage are legitimized to inform about it, to handle it. Another purpose of invented tradition is “socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior.”²⁰ In this case, heritage serves to transmit values and beliefs that people are going to incorporate. This purpose is especially relevant regarding cultural programs that seek to inform or educate about (Jewish) heritage. The last function

¹¹ Ullrich Kockel, “Reflexive Traditions and Heritage Production,” in *Cultural Heritages as Reflexive Traditions*, eds. Ullrich Kockel and Máiréad Nic Craith (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan: 2007), 20.

¹² Cf. *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³ Gregory J. Ashworth, Brian Graham, and John E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising pasts: heritage, identity and Place in Multicultural societies* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁴ Cf. Murzyn, “Kazimierz”: 54.

¹⁵ Cf. Jonathan Webber, *Rediscovering Traces of Memory: The Jewish Heritage of Polish Galicia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 89f.

¹⁶ Cf. Gregory J. Ashworth and John E. Tunbridge, *Dissonant Heritage: Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 20.

¹⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

mentioned by Hobsbawm about invented tradition is that it establishes or symbolizes social cohesion.²¹ This part is linked to the above mentioned question of ownership, since as the planning scientist Gregory Ashworth highlights, “all heritage is someone’s heritage and therefore logically not someone else’s”²².

I.b. The relation between heritage and identity

All these mentioned features of heritage also play a role in the constitution of identity. The political sociologists Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford state four aspects of identity that help to show that it is closely linked to heritage.

The first feature of identity, given by the two authors, is that it “arises only in relation to social action and is processual or constructed.”²³ Thus, heritage is a social construction as well because, as the heritage experts Gregory Ashworth and John Tunbridge note, heritage is contested through social interaction and consumption. These ascribed meanings however change depending on time and place.²⁴ The second aspect of identity according to Delanty and Rumford is that “identities have a narrative dimension.”²⁵ This aspect corresponds with the notion of heritage that seeks to establish continuity with the past and that thus, as Brian Graham and Peter Howard promote, allows to locate lives in linear narratives.²⁶ Thirdly, identity “concerns a relation of self and other by which the identity of the self is constituted in symbolic markers.”²⁷ This is linked to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that, according to Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge, play a crucial role in the formation of heritage as well. The aspect of alterity is fundamental for both – identity and heritage – because *the other* is needed in order to define oneself in counter-distinction and to render oneself specific and differentiated.²⁸ Delanty’s and Rumford’s last aspect is that identities are multiple.²⁹ The human being does not have only one affiliation but plurals which can be related to each other in different ways. For this paper I mainly focus on the *onion model* that Thomas Risse presents. The onion model refers to multilayered identities, which means that everyone in a smaller community is also part of a larger one.³⁰ Thus, somebody from Kazimierz would also identify with Krakow, Poland and then maybe with Europe.

To conclude, the two models from Hobsbawm and Delanty and Rumford illustrated that heritage and identity function according to the same mechanism and that heritage is thus able to create identities.

²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 9.

²² Ashworth, Tunbridge, “Dissonant Heritage”: 21.

²³ Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe. Social theory and the implications of Europeanization* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 51.

²⁴ Cf. Ashworth, Tunbridge, “Senses of Place”: 5f.

²⁵ Delanty, Rumford, “Rethinking Europe”: 51.

²⁶ Cf. Brian Graham and Peter Howard, “Heritage and identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, eds. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 6.

²⁷ Delanty, Rumford, “Rethinking Europe”: 51.

²⁸ Cf. Ashworth, Graham, Tunbridge, “Pluralising pasts”: 4.

²⁹ Cf. Delanty, Rumford, “Rethinking Europe”: 51.

³⁰ Cf. Thomas Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres* (New York: Cornell University, 2010), 24f.

II. Civic handling of Jewish heritage in Kazimierz

“Social and civic initiatives relating to Jewish culture quite naturally became the key inspiration of the revitalization of the Jewish cultural heritage of Kazimierz.”³¹ As this statement by Monika Murzyn-Kupisz illustrates, Jewish heritage is stimulated by civic initiatives. In this regard, this chapter analyzes the handling of Jewish heritage by two of the first civic initiatives in the field of Jewish culture in Kazimierz, by answering the main characteristics of heritage: *who* does *what* for which *purposes*?

The empirical basis of this chapter lies in the analysis of two qualitative topic-centered interviews with experts of the Center for Jewish Heritage and the Jewish Culture Festival. Joachim S. Russek is the director and founding member of the Center for Jewish Culture; Robert Gądek has been working in Kazimierz since 1994 and for the Festival since eight years. Both of them are not Jewish which however was not a selection criterion given their key role of their civic initiatives in the process of the Jewish heritage formation in Kazimierz. Since their statements however do not claim to be representative for the entire initiative, an analysis of their websites as well as of the symbols they use shall diversify the approach. During the field work I also talked to random citizens living in Kazimierz, whereas the choice was influenced by their capability of speaking English. All of them were coincidentally young, non-Jewish academics. The evaluation of the interviews was inspired by the grounded theory of Anselm Strauss und Barney Glaser which promotes to work out categories that were mentioned by the interviewees.³² The three following sub-chapters illustrate thus these codings, which present the core themes mentioned in the interviews regarding the civic initiatives’ role in the constitution of heritage, the meanings they ascribe to it as well as their purposes.

II.a. Agents

Since this paper focuses on the *civic* approach, this term needs further elaboration. Both interviewees stressed continuously that they are civic initiatives, the ideas for which came from the “grass-root level” as Robert Gądek from the Jewish Culture Festival formulates it for example. Both institutions were founded by non-Jews, whereas the interviewees highlight the close cooperation with Jews. Thus the director of the Center for Jewish Culture says:

The idea was formulated for the first time in the second half of the 80s and the best way to describe it would be to say: It is a civil and civic initiative (...) and the founding fathers were mostly people from the University circles, including Krakowian Jews as well, sometimes those who live abroad.

³¹ Monika Murzyn-Kupisz, “Reclaiming memory or mass consumption? Dilemmas in rediscovering the Jewish heritage of Krakow’s Kazimierz,” in *Reclaiming memory. Urban regeneration in the historic Jewish quarters of Central European cities*, eds. Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jacek Purchla (Krakow: International Cultural Centre, 2009), 371.

³² Cf. Earl Babbie, *The Practices of Social Research* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2007), 380f.

The Festival was initiated based on an idea of “authentic fascination with Jewish culture”³³ as the founder of the Festival, Janusz Makuch, formulates it. Robert Gądek stresses especially the “practical co-operations”³⁴ with other local agents in Kazimierz and highlights that they support and influence one another. In consequence for him “the most important aspect is cooperation between people.”

Moreover, the two civic initiatives illustrate in themselves the concept of heritage quite well. In this regard, the symbolism of the locations as well as of the emblems they use will be in the focus first. The change in the function of the building accommodating the Center for Jewish Culture is thus a prime example of the heritage concept itself. Before the war, the building was used as *Beit ha-midrash*, a “house of study” where students learned about the laws of Judaism³⁵. After the initiators of the Center had rebuilt the edifice that was ruined during war-time, the building today serves as a cultural institution where mainly non-Jewish people can learn about Jewish culture. This function as an intellectual place is also reflected by their program, which promotes for example lectures, exhibitions and classical music concerts from and about Jewish artists. The building and the Jewish religious symbol *menorah*, the holy candlestick, serve as a logo for the Center for Jewish Culture.³⁶ By this symbolism as well as by the choice and function of the place, the Center situates itself in the narratives of traditional Jewish culture.

The Jewish Culture Festival however presents itself in a more modern and young way on their website. They do not refer to Jewish tradition in a comparative obvious way, but they put more focus on the *lived, contemporary* Jewish culture.³⁷ The Festival takes place in Kazimierz as well, whereas the main event – *Shalom*, “the biggest Jewish concert stage in the world”³⁸ – is located on the Szeroka Street. “It is actually a wide square, which has been the centre of the Jewish town since the 15th century”³⁹, as the Jewish heritage scholar and tour guide Agnieszka Legutko-Ołownia states. Today it is a central place in Kazimierz, embedded in plural functions, which is symbolic for the Festival as well. Thus, it is a place of remembering and practicing religious life as for example the Orthodox Synagogue St. Remuh is still in use and the Old Synagogue now hosts an exhibition. Furthermore, Szeroka Street is a place of commoditization, entertainment and leisure time, with its Jewish-style cafés and restaurants offering Jewish food such as *gefilte fish* and Klezmer music. But it also serves every day needs by having a hostel and hairdresser.⁴⁰

Through these symbolisms, both locations are thus reinvented for present purposes in continuity with the past in order to legitimize its functions as civic agents in the field of Jewish culture.

³³ Janusz Makuch, “The Jewish Cultural Festival: between two worlds,” in *Reclaiming memory. Urban regeneration in the historic Jewish quarters of Central European cities*, eds. Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jacek Purchla (Krakow: International Cultural Centre, 2009), 46.

³⁴ Robert Gądek, Interview about Jewish Culture Festival by Sina Wohlgemuth. MP3 file. Krakow, 16 April 2012. In the following paper, statements which I indicate in the text as said by “Gądek” or the “Festival (for Jewish Culture)”, always refer to this interview. That is why I will not state it in the footnote anymore.

³⁵ Cf. Jewish Encyclopedia, “Bet ha-midrash,” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3191-bet-ha-midrash> (accessed 30 April 2012).

³⁶ Cf. Center for Jewish Culture, “Home,” www.judaica.pl (accessed 24 April 2012).

³⁷ Cf. Gądek, “Interview Jewish Culture Festival”.

³⁸ Jewish Culture Festival, “Events: Shalom on Szeroka Street,” <http://jewishfestival.pl/shalom-on-szeroka-street,307,event-program,en.html> (accessed 30 April 2012).

³⁹ Legutko-Ołownia, “Krakow’s Kazimierz”: 48.

⁴⁰ For an in-depths analysis of the revitalization of Kazimierz, cf. Murzyn, “Kazimierz”.

II.b. Meanings

“It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them – how we represent them – that we give them a meaning.”⁴¹ This quote by the sociologist Stuart Hall is transferrable to the valorization of heritage. Thus, according to Graham and Howard, “it is meaning that gives value (...) to heritage and explains why certain artefacts, traditions, and memories have been selected from the near infinity of the past.”⁴² In order to analyze the handling and understanding of heritage in Kazimierz, I worked out the significances that the interviewees give to Jewish heritage.

In order to capture the scope that encompasses the civic initiatives’ understanding of heritage, it is first important to mention their target groups. “We [the Center for Jewish Culture] are extremely open and the target group is the mainstream of the society in Krakow, in Poland, including foreigners”⁴³; “It was kind of taboo for Poles, so their idea [the idea of the founding fathers of the Festival] behind the first Festival was to introduce Jewish culture into the mainstream of Polish culture.”⁴⁴ These statements already point to the problematic Polish-Jewish relation that has existed over centuries.⁴⁵ After the Holocaust, until the fall of communism it was difficult to gather information about Jewish heritage sites, the communist authorities made, according to the American-Jewish writer Ruth-Ellen Gruber, all discussions about Jewish topics taboo.⁴⁶ The attempt to reintroduce Jewish culture into mainstream society can thus also be interpreted as means to fight indifference – which continues to be important in regard to a current survey of the Anti-Defamation League. This publication demonstrates that Poland is still one of the most anti-Semitic countries in Europe today.⁴⁷ The two civic initiatives thus ascribe a broader meaning for the mainstream society to Jewish heritage: that Jewish culture is part of everybody’s culture and that it is therefore to be accepted. They perceive its significance and importance not only on a local level but on an international level.

Another meaning is ascribed to Jewish heritage by the interviewees in opposition to the tourist industry’s handling of Jewish culture. They perceive tourist initiatives in Kazimierz as *the other* who create a “disneylandization”⁴⁸ of Jewish heritage and who play with stereotypes to fit the tourist’s expectations.⁴⁹ In order to describe their own initiatives, the interviewees use the adjectives *real*, *authentic* and *qualitative*. Thus the director of the Center for Jewish Heritage states for example: “And the first priority is, that this institution as long as it will be possible, will never become a ‘Disneyland-type’ of an institution, but something real!” Both initiatives thus ascribe the meaning of *authenticity* to the Jewish heritage. According to the Festival’s representative their presentation of Jewish culture

⁴¹ Stuart Hall cited in Ashworth, Tunbridge, “Senses of place”: 5.

⁴² Graham, Howard, “Heritage and Identity”: 2.

⁴³ Russek, “Interview Center for Jewish Culture”.

⁴⁴ Gądek, “Interview Jewish Culture Festival”.

⁴⁵ For the history of Polish-Jewish relation, cf. Ezra Mendelsohn, “Poland,” in *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 11-84.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ruth Ellen Gruber, “Beyond virtually Jewish...balancing the real, the surreal and real imaginary places,” in *Reclaiming memory. Urban regeneration in the historic Jewish quarters of Central European cities*, eds. Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jacek Purchla (Krakow: International Cultural Centre, 2009), 69.

⁴⁷ Cf. Anti-Defamation-League, *Attitudes towards Jews in ten European countries*, prepared by First International Resources, LLC (New York, March 2012), http://www.adl.org/Anti_semitism/adl_anti-semitism_presentation_february_2012.pdf (accessed 18 August 2012).

⁴⁸ Russek, “Interview Center for Jewish Culture”.

⁴⁹ This often criticized development of commodification of Jewish culture that is going on in Kazimierz with its Jewish-style boutiques, cafés and souvenir kitsch is profoundly explained in: Ruth Ellen Gruber, “Beyond virtually Jewish”.

seeks to “fight stereotypes” and Russek emphasizes as well that “Jewish culture is something more than just *gefilte fish* and *Klezmer music*.”

The cultural anthropologist Regina Bendix examines the concept of authenticity and refers first to the dual meaning of the Greek term *authentes* which means on the one hand “one who acts with authority” but also “made by one’s own hand”⁵⁰. The focus of the contested concept of authenticity lies according to these definitions on the ownership and the unique production of items, which means in this context that the civic initiatives create their own Jewish culture. Since authenticity does then not exist but is always a creation, Regina Bendix develops this debate for situation nowadays and stresses authenticity as “a quality of experience: The chills running down one’s spine during musical performances, for instance, moments that may stir one to tears, laughter, elation.”⁵¹

Both civic initiatives stress profoundly this notion of authenticity as a *deeper experience*, whereas the tourist industry again plays the counterpart for self-representation. Both interviewees highlight thus the time aspect that is crucial for a “deeper experience”. Tourists visit Kazimierz only for short time; therefore they only can “scratch at the surface” – to use Gądek’s words – meaning visiting some synagogues, going to one museum and enjoying then Klezmer music and Jewish style food. In contrast to this “tourist rush”⁵², the Center for Jewish Culture perceives itself as a place where you can go deeper into Jewish culture thanks to their cultural program. The Festival highlights this point as well: “We don’t want our audience to be only passive consumer of Jewish culture. But we also like to give them the chance to personal experience that”, which is why workshops play a crucial role in their programming. This fact of experiencing Jewish culture, is interestingly also mentioned by the questioned citizens, they all highlight the “special atmosphere” of the urban scene with its bars and cafés on the one hand and the Jewish history of the place on the other hand where you can meet people and exchange opinions. Thus Ola, a Polish student says: “By living in Kazimierz, I have learned much more about Jewish culture, every day.”⁵³

In consequence, the civic initiatives do not ascribe fixed meanings to the heritage. Moreover, they create the opportunity for their audience to develop their own meanings via a more intense involvement with Jewish culture.

II.c. Purposes

The first aim of dealing with heritage that was mainly mentioned by Russek from the Center for Jewish Culture is the *competition* for visitors: “So there is no secret, I mean you have to do whatever is possible to convince your public that it is not a waste of time if you come on this or that evening to an event which is being offered by us.” Thus, this statement contains financial issues as well as the fact that there is a need for having a clear profile in the conglomeration of Jewish heritage offers. Heritage thus serves as legitimization for the existence of the institution, as explained earlier by Hobsbawm’s three functions of invented tradition.

⁵⁰ Cited in Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity* (Madison: Wisconsin, 1997), 14.

⁵¹ Bendix, “Authenticity”: 13f.

⁵² Russek, “Interview Center for Jewish Culture”.

⁵³ Ola Dabrowska cited in Sina Wohlgeuth, field diary. Unpublished transcript. Kazimierz, 15 April 2012.

The main purpose however which was mentioned by both interviewees is the *educational* aspect of presenting Jewish culture. The director of the Center for Jewish Culture sees the involvement with Jewish culture, the fact of learning about the past, as a prerequisite “to understand the present”. In addition, both interviewees perceive this fact also as crucial for the identity building process. From his point of view as non-Jewish, Polish person, Joachim S. Russek states: “So, it took us quite a long time to realize that by knowing literally nothing about Jews, we are cutting off an important element of our identity.” Robert Gądek from the Festival connects the importance of knowing about and experiencing Jewish culture to Risse’s *onion model* of identity and heritage: “Now I would say, people experiencing the Jewish culture during the Festival, they quite often, if not in all of the cases, they say ‘this is part of *our* cultural heritage’ created by Jews, but this is something that is ours as well.” This ambition of imparting the interconnectedness of Jewish and mainstream culture is also addressed by Piotr, a Polish philosophy student who has been living in Kazimierz for four years. He highlights that he has always been interested in the relationship between Polish and Jewish people. Thus, Piotr even looked for Jewish ancestors, “but unfortunately, I have none,” he says. By living in Kazimierz, he thinks he has learned more about commonalities between Jewish and Polish culture, which is why he realized even more that “our histories are connected”.⁵⁴

This leads to the third purpose the initiatives have in mind: to discuss the *ownership* of Jewish culture. Since both interviewees stress the importance to accept Jewish culture as part of the mainstream, they are aware of their role in producing Jewish heritage. This fact of negotiation is supported for example by the Polish sociologist Zdzisław Mach: “In a pluralistic society, where almost all interpretations are allowed and expressed in public debate, the skill to negotiate memory seems to be of a particular significance.”⁵⁵ Dealing with Jewish heritage means therefore to change the own perspective on what one incorporates in one’s own identity.

III. The role of the European level in dealing with Jewish heritage

“Coming back to the *European* element because, who knows, maybe this is one of the *most* important aspects of our work.”⁵⁶ After having examined how the respective civic actors in Kazimierz handle the Jewish heritage in Kazimierz and for what kind of purposes, this chapter examines the *European significance* that the civic initiatives encounter in dealing with Jewish heritage in order to gain new ideas about the constitution of European heritage from below.

“You know, I would say that this is one thing I will don’t like about the EU – their strict programming. And in fact – lack of real responses to the real need.” Robert Gądek problematizes herewith EU cultural programs which “stimulate people to create fictional co-operations.”⁵⁷ In addition, the fact that EU-funds still demand financial contribution from all participating partners is seen problematically. They exclude smaller institutions

⁵⁴ Piotr Nowak cited in Wohlgemuth, “field diary”.

⁵⁵ Zdzisław Mach, “Multicultural heritage, remembering, forgetting, and the construction of identity,” in *The Politics of Heritage and Regional Development Strategies*, Sebastian Schröder-Esch and Justus H. Ulbricht eds. (Weimar: Bauhaus-Universität, 2006), 31.

⁵⁶ Russek, “Interview Center for Jewish Culture”. Italics mine in order to highlight his emphasis.

⁵⁷ Gądek, “Interview Jewish Culture Festival”.

with lower budget as the director of the Center for Jewish culture stresses: “The [EU] programs are so constructed that they rather support institutions who are upper ones than institutions who are so to speak ‘on the edge.’” Both interviewees therefore highlight the importance of *civic involvement* on a European level as more effective. Even though, both institutions have already organized one EU funded project, they reflect the outcomes positively because the “idea was born naturally”⁵⁸. The representative of the Festival emphasizes: “But it was not a project according to EU clerks, it was something which was born in our mind and then it turned out that the European Union could be the supporter.” The bottom-up approach is seen therefore as the key point for successful cooperation: “We have to do it by ourselves, and it makes much more sense. Then you feel tight to an institution or you feel tight to an infrastructure when you are sharing also the responsibility.”⁵⁹

This point leads to the second potential of Jewish culture for the creation of a European identity: the need for *European solidarity*.

The Jewish heritage is a valuable element of the European cultural landscape, like the dome in Cologne. It is not just a church. It is a symbol of European culture and tradition. If we would agree on it, then we would have to make a next step. If this is our heritage then we should feel responsible for this heritage, regardless of our ethnic origin whether we are Jewish or not.⁶⁰

According to this quote, the director of the Center for Jewish Culture highlights the belonging of Jewish heritage to the European cultural landscape, which is why it requires the solidarity not only of the localities but of a wider range of people. The Polish art historian, curator of monuments and architect Andrzej Tomaszewski also stresses that preservation of heritage is only possible when one identifies with the monument, when one is committed, then the person would also take the responsibility.⁶¹ This co-operation between different agents at different levels is very apparent at the Festival’s sponsors and partners. Thus on the one hand, the public level is involved with the city of Krakow, the region Malopolska, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as well as the Embassy of Israel in Warsaw. On the other hand international Jewish foundations like the Taube foundation or the Koret foundation, both situated in the USA, support the Festival.⁶² The transnational solidarity however is especially important in the case of disinherited heritage, such as Jewish heritage. Tomaszewski points at the situation of heritage sites left by Germans in the Western Polish regions. Polish citizens identify more and more with them and handle them as their own; not in national categories, but as something that belongs to Europe, as common heritage.⁶³ Jewish heritage thus “tests how much European oriented we are”, says Joachim S. Russek, “it is a test for all of us in Europe how much we are able and willing to accept differences.”

Consequently, Jewish heritage is reinterpreted by the civic initiatives in Kazimierz not only on a local level but in plural contexts. Monika Murzyn also describes this multilayeredness of importance: “[Kazimierz] carries important meanings mainly of a local, regional, and partly national dimension. Whereas, the symbolic significance of the Jewish

⁵⁸ Russek, “Interview Center for Jewish Culture”.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Cf. Andrzej Tomaszewski, “Gedächtnis und Geschichte. Erforschung und Schutz des Kulturerbes,” in *Erwachsene Nachbarschaft. Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen 1991 bis 2011*, vol. 29 of Deutsches Polen-Institut, eds. Dieter Bingen et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011), 297.

⁶² Jewish Culture Festival, “Sponsors and media,” <http://www.jewishFestival.pl/sponsors-and-media,17,p,en.html> (accessed 29 April 2012).

⁶³ Cf. Tomaszewski, “Gedächtnis und Geschichte”: 299.

heritage of the quarter reaches far beyond the Polish borders.”⁶⁴ Robert Gądek emphasizes that “Jews were the first real Europeans” and highlights the multiple networks of Jewish culture, “they [Jewish people] had an uncle in Berlin, an aunt in Zurich, they have other relatives somewhere in Russia.” But since not many people in Europe are aware of this, the Festival aims to show that Jewish culture is not only part of the past but also of the contemporary life. Therefore he suggests thinking of Jewish culture more “on a very global level.” This switching of perspective from the local context to a European context offers new opportunities in dealing with Jewish culture according to the director of the Center for Jewish Culture.

Conclusion

This analysis of the civic agents’ perceptions and meanings of Jewish heritage illustrated potentials that clarify the constitution of European heritage. Thus, dealing with Jewish heritage raises responsibility among citizens of Europe, it helps to define oneself in difference to others, it offers new ways of experiencing different aspects of society and it makes us understand the present. Those outcomes of Jewish heritage are also important on a European level when facing cultural diversity. Being involved with Jewish heritage tests how European-oriented we are, because it requires the ability to accept different cultural phenomena as our own and to identify with it; hence, to participate in a European cultural sphere.

In consequence, the fact that the Jewish culture in Kazimierz was only revived because citizens cared about it and identified with it, proves that heritage has the potential to construct identities. This can also be extended to the European civil society, which is, according to Mach “constructing its identity through a reinterpretation of its cultural heritage, a search for new symbols and the reconstruction of their memory.”⁶⁵ In the process of reinterpreting Jewish heritage in Kazimierz, its multicultural values are emphasized; people shall rediscover and incorporate these into their own identities. This willingness to engage with others and to be open-minded towards divergent cultural experiences is – according to the cultural anthropologist Gesa Heinbach – also the key feature of cosmopolitanism.⁶⁶ This cosmopolitan level, the integration of different viewpoints into one’s own, is seen by Delanty as the basis of Europeanization.⁶⁷

To conclude, this bottom-up research showed that European heritage has to be defined by citizens, because they share the responsibility and identify with it. Identity thus cannot be imposed from above but has to grow from below. However, this analysis is not representative enough in order to be able to fully explain the constitution of European heritage. Nonetheless, it highlights that the importance of European heritage does not lie in tangible monuments, but rather in the transnational, cosmopolitan meanings that citizens ascribe to it. Further research on the constitution of European heritage should therefore focus more on intangible aspects, so on the handling of heritage by citizens in order to

⁶⁴ Murzyn, “Kazimierz”: 102.

⁶⁵ Mach, “Multicultural heritage”: 31.

⁶⁶ Cf. Gesa Heinbach, “Die Europäisierung des Kosmopolitismus-Begriffs,” in *Projekte der Europäisierung: kulturanthropologische Forschungsperspektiven*, Gisela Welz and Annina Lottermann eds., (Frankfurt am Main: Kulturanthropologie-Notizen, 2009), 240.

⁶⁷ Gerard Delanty, “The Idea of a Cosmopolitan Europe: On the Cultural Significance of Europeanization,” *International Review of Sociology – Revue Internationale de Sociologie* 15, no. 3 (2005): 418.

capture the diversity and potential of European heritage for the constitution of a European civil society.

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