CHAPTER 2

Politics of Belonging: Concepts and Method

1 Politics of Belonging as an Intersectional Approach

We focus on studying citizens’ subjective sense of belonging as well as how their construction of belonging interacts with agendas to enhance it in and through EU cultural initiatives, which we consider as politics of belonging. We understand politics of belonging in EU cultural policy as constructing and conveying notions about Europe and the ‘European’ to a wider public through diverse discursive, narrative, and cultural resources, which help to justify the Union’s specific policies of European integration. In these processes, belonging functions as a discursive resource, which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion (see Antonsich 2010).

In our book, politics of belonging in the context of EU cultural policy is conceptualized through competing interpretations in the meaning-making processes of diverse actors. Our focus on audiences of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) events, participants in the European Citizen Campus (ECC) project, and visitors of heritage sites awarded the European Heritage Label (EHL) helps us to explore the plurality of positions and formulations of belonging to Europe from below. We investigate how the production of meaning and creation of narrative attachments to Europe and the ‘European’ take place among citizens who participate in the EU cultural initiatives as well as whether and how these initiatives contribute to the citizens’ sense of belonging. Instead of analyzing the reception of top-down EU narratives and their impacts on European citizens in different EU initiatives and their settings, we scrutinize how citizens’ attachment or non-attachment to Europe manifests from below by analyzing their participation, agency, and co-construction of Europe in various discourses and narratives. We view these acts and manifestations as part of Europeanization, which we explore as a process that creates a new form of social organization through producing a distinctive discursive field (Sassatelli 2010, 68). Our analysis tries to identify aspects of Europeanization common to our diverse sets of data as well as to explore the interaction between top-down and bottom-up processes included in these aspects.

Our approach to understanding belonging to Europe goes beyond a rigid division between macro-, meso-, and micro-level actors, since we understand notions and politics of belonging to be formed by a fluid interaction between manifold interpretations and circulation of ideas at different levels. According
to Yuval-Davis (2006, 197), the politics of belonging comprise “specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways”. Politics of belonging pertains to contestations to individual participation, membership, citizenship, social status, and specific narratives of identification (see Yuval-Davis 2006, 205). As Yuval-Davis (2006, 211) points out, the “[p]olitical project of belonging is primarily based on the identificatory and emotional level, it also assumes adherence to specific political and ethical values that are seen as inherent to good democratic citizenship”.

As such, the politics of belonging shares several aspects with identity politics. Identity politics is commonly associated with activism claiming recognition, collective rights, or cultural rights (e.g. Taylor 1994; Young 1995; Isin and Wood 1999; Stevenson 2001; Parekh 2008), and may be related to the micro-level activities of minorities, for instance. It can, however, also refer to identity-building efforts by macro-level organizations in dominant power positions, such as a state or the EU. Similarly, both micro- and macro-level actors can use politics of belonging to draw boundaries of belonging. Both politics of belonging and identity politics are based on constructions of social categories and divisions but the former is more useful for our approach. In this book, instead of identity politics, we prefer to use the term of politics of belonging, as it offers a broader, intersectional framework for exploring the interrelation and power relations between social locations, variables, and phenomena that influence people and policies of identity building and participation.

Cultural and political processes and practices of politics of belonging can be viewed as an “arena of contestation”, which can tell us about “social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments but also about the ways these are valued and judged” (Yuval-Davis 2006, 203). As Yuval-Davis argues, politics of belonging involve struggles related to membership and status, and reveal contestations “around ethical and ideological issues and the ways they utilize social locations and narratives of identities” (Yuval-Davis 2006, 203–204, 205; see also Yuval-Davis 2011, 118). We argue that in the context of EU cultural policy, politics of belonging are constructed through discourses that aim to situate people and, at the same, are shaped by specific social actors and through everyday practices. We explore how the politics of belonging to Europe is co-constructed, or imagined, from below, beyond the emphasis of institutional positions and interests from above. We understand the notions of Europe and the ‘European’ as fluid, contextual, and changing narrative constructions, discourses, and practices aimed at creating a certain order and meaning. In analyzing this, we are interested in the range of positions and analytical levels in citizens’ notions of belonging and non-belonging
to Europe that relate to "social locations; identifications and emotional attachments; and ethical and political values" (Yuval-Davis 2006, 199), as well as how they interrelate and connect to EU cultural policy.

In the following, we discuss the core concepts framing our analysis of the politics of belonging and our discussion of how Europe, the ‘European’, and belonging to Europe is understood by European citizens. We then present our understanding of how the core concepts interrelate and connect to the EU’s politics of belonging. We move on to introducing our method, ethnography of Europeanization, and show how this enabled us to explore the variety of notions of and meanings attributed to the idea of Europe and the ‘European’ in our data.

2 Interrelation between Belonging, Identity, Culture, Citizenship, and Participation

Cultural policy with its identity-building and participatory agendas (see Chapter 3) is the EU’s means of promoting cultural Europeanization. Based on parallel reading of the EU cultural policy documents, ethnographic data of our three cases, and prior research, we understand the politics of belonging in the EU cultural policy as formed by the entwinement and intersection of five core concepts: belonging, identity, culture, participation, and citizenship. The choice of these concepts shapes our framework for interpreting and contextualizing notions of belonging to Europe both from above, by the EU cultural policy initiatives, and from below, by the people participating in them. Notions of the ‘European’ and belonging (or non-belonging) to Europe are created by simultaneously strengthening certain narratives and perspectives on the one hand and negotiating social and communal meanings and boundaries of belonging on the other. The five concepts reflect the EU’s attempts to build and deepen the relationship with its citizens by creating Europe as a common cultural space (see Calhoun 2007, 296). Even though these concepts can be theoretically distinguished, our empirical analysis (Chapters 4–7) indicates how in practice these five concepts interrelate in multiple ways.

2.1 Belonging

The concept of belonging differs from politics of belonging although they are closely linked (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). As Calhoun (2007, 286) writes:

Everyone belongs, though some people belong to some groups with more intensity and often less choice than others belong to any. Such belonging
matters not only as a subjective state of mind – not insofar as it feels either good or bad to individuals. It matters also as a feature of social organization. It joins people together in social relations and informs their action.

Belonging to and identification with a particular entity is constructed through contested narrative and discursive processes of cultural distinction, social demarcation, and political border-making between identities and representations through time and geographical space (see Hall 1990, 1992; Bauman 1992; Massey 2005; Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006, 204, 2011). In our approach, belonging is interpreted as forming a place-space, practice, resource, and biography that is created and (con)tested in terms of producing a feeling of home and alienation at the same time (see Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis et al. 2017). Thus, the concept of belonging encompasses both personal feelings of belonging to a certain group, place, or social location and the understanding of belonging as a resource that has affective dimensions (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011, 6; see also Anthias 2013). Therefore, the construction of diverse narratives of belonging can be investigated along multiple social categories and (non-)identifications. In our view, the concept of belonging allows us to understand diverse social processes that shape the individual’s sense of belonging and relationship to a specific entity, such as Europe, also based on the ideas of citizenship, participation, and membership (see Yuval-Davis 2011). Thus, belonging relates to the creation of boundaries and borders affected by different historical trajectories and social realities, which are not only bound by ancestry, ‘authenticity’, and places of origin (Anthias 2013; Yuval-Davis et al. 2017).

Belonging refers to the individual’s dynamic processes of constructing conformity with specific political value systems and social locations at multiple levels that determine the individual’s relationships with groups, communities, institutions, and entities and equally enable a personal experience of involvement (see Baumeister and Leary 1995, 498; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011; Čeginskas 2015, 18). Yuval-Davis (2006, 199) describes belonging as encompassing processes of self-identification or identification by others, in a stable, contested or transient way. Even in its most stable ‘primordial’ forms, however, belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations.

Scholars commonly define belonging as a fundamental human need that includes spatial and temporal meanings and relates to emotional attachments
and constructions of home and safety shaped by everyday practices and experiences, social relations, and memories (e.g. Medved 2000, 76; Blunt 2005, 506; Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis et al. 2017). Theories of spaces of places and flows (Castells 1996, 1997) or scapes of cultural global flows (Appadurai 1990) help to understand the complex dynamics in processes of belonging that intersect people’s social practices within territorial boundaries and their exposure to multi-directional and transnational cultural flows. While places play a role in people’s spatial and social forms of organization, new cultural flows and technological processes transform such spaces and produce hubs of interaction and connection “at the interface between places and flows and between cultures and social interests, both in the space of flows and in the space of places” (Castells 1999, 302). Appadurai’s concept of scapes stress the interrelation between the local and global in and through distinct dimensions that result from global and transnational processes and emphasize their relevance for the “situatedness of different sorts of actors” (Appadurai 1990, 50).

The emphasis on the dynamic interrelation and connection between distinct spaces or scapes in these models help to conceptualize the construction of belonging not as closed systems but as open processes. Accordingly, we understand belonging to be formed by contemporary logics of social organization and manifold cultural flows, which affect people’s participation and membership, including diverse political and social identifications – such as citizenship, ethnicity, and religion – as well as individual agency, and practice. Our concept of belonging emphasizes the social features and structures that shape people’s personal meaning-making in the world, in relation to communities and society and to social and cultural practices of the everyday (Block 2006, 28). However, belonging tends to be ‘naturalized’ and invisible in everyday practices, and only becomes articulated and politicized when under threat (Yuval-Davis et al. 2017, 230).

Belonging is often used interchangeably with identity, and both concepts can be understood as dynamic, fluid, and multidimensional processes of creating attachments and establishing boundaries at individual and collective levels (Antonsich 2010). Lately, however, the concept of identity has been criticized by several scholars for lacking analytical power (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 2; Kendall and Wickham 2001, 156; Yuval-Davis 2006; Lähdesmäki et al. 2016). Instead, the concept of belonging has been perceived as a more accurate depiction of the individual desire for and processes of creating attachment to people, places, or modes of being, which implies a process of becoming rather than a stable social or cultural status, or identity (Probyn 1996, 19; see also Bell, 1999; Skrbiš et al. 2007, 262; Antonsich 2010). Thus, belonging is an active relation between individuals and communities that point to people’s
active participation in such processes. In our book, while acknowledging the analytical distinction between belonging and identity, we find both concepts equally important for exploring politics of belonging through people’s personal meaning-making.

### 2.2 Identity

Questions of identity are central to political debates in Europe, and the EU has actively participated in the construction of a European identity in the context of its integration politics, not least through EU cultural policy, as further elaborated in Chapter 3 (e.g. Sassatelli 2002; Bruter 2003; Lähdesmäki et al. 2020a). EU cultural initiatives, including those studied in this book, use culture strategically, in an attempt to transmit specific positions and values to the wider European public (Sassatelli 2009; Lähdesmäki 2014a, 2014b; Niklasson 2017; Lähdesmäki et al. 2020a). In this context, various studies on EU cultural policy (e.g. Shore 2000; Sassatelli 2009; Patel 2013) and on European identity (e.g. Delanty 1995, 2005; Risse 2003, 2006; Bruter 2003, 2004, 2005; Beck and Grande 2007; Antonsich 2008; Pichler 2008, 2009) have highlighted the complexity and controversial notions embedded in the idea of ‘Europe’ and the ‘European’. Depending on the discursive situations in which they are produced and defined, their meanings vary, and they can be used to include or exclude people, whether intentionally or not, and thereby create divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Researchers commonly understand identity in the plural, i.e. identities, and emphasize the dynamic nature of their constructions, which are not stable but fragmented, contested and continuously in process (see Hall 1996, 4; Hermann and Brewer 2004). Identifications and social locations, in terms of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, social background, education, language, religion, and so forth, while not fixed for life, provide significant orientation for people and root them in their everyday social and cultural practices (see May 2001, 39; see Block 2006, 28; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2017). They help to determine a person’s self-identifications as well as identifications ascribed externally by others. Through their identities, people are able to position themselves, position others, and actively engage in processes of constructing belonging (see Block 2006, 29). Frequently, identity is explored in terms of its psychological dimension and personal meaning for the individual or a collective entity but this poses the danger of viewing descent and cultural and social identifications in an exclusionary way that connect to specific political agendas of inclusion and exclusion (see Eriksen 2007, 4). Social locations and identifications do not need to explain people’s everyday practices of constructing belonging, as studies on transnational families and migration reveal (e.g. Fail et al. 2004; Bryceson and
Vuorela 2002; Gouldbourne et al. 2010; Čeginskas 2015). As Yuval-Davis (2006, 201) points out:

Without specific social agents who construct and point to certain analytical and political features, the other members of society would not be able to identify them. Rainbows include the whole spectrum of different colours, but how many colours we distinguish depends on our specific social and linguistic milieu.

It is important to recognize that identities are not constructed “along one power axis of difference” but in plural power relations in society (Yuval-Davis 2006, 200). Therefore, we use both concepts, belonging and identity, to look for the intersection and interrelation of various agendas and practices regarding identity building and participation. In addition, the concepts enable us to explore identity and belonging from below, showing how they condition and are conditioned by social interactions and social structures, in the context of social justice and equality.

2.3 Culture

The concept of belonging plays a central role in the EU’s cultural policy (see Chapter 3). The EU attempts to construct belonging to the Union as not only in terms of political and economic integration, but also as a social and cultural community formed by European citizens (see also Shore 1993, 2000, 25). Hence, culture in this project can be perceived as an instrument of politics of belonging as Yuval-Davis (2006, 197) defines it: a particular way of constructing a certain kind of belonging to a collectivity and, at the same time, constructing that very collectivity (see also Block 2006, 28). In the context of Europe, politics of belonging and culture intertwine in discourses and practices, both in processes of official policy-making and in competing individual and group interpretations of meanings, in which various actors participate in creating social relations and a certain political order in society (Mouffe 2005).

Thus, culture is a crucial element in the EU’s politics of belonging and complements the European politics of institutionalization and integration. As it has a strong symbolic potential for the construction and reproduction of narratives of belonging, culture (including cultural heritage) creates the images and memories of a society. In our book, we understand culture predominantly from an ethnological and anthropological point of view, rather than solely in terms of so-called high culture (e.g. literature, art, music, and so forth), which often becomes associated with an underlying exclusionary and racist connotation of a ‘progressive civilization’. In our understanding, culture refers to
diverse practices, traditions, and rituals that are inextricably linked with people’s everyday way of life and meaning-making in the world. Memory plays a central role in these processes by shaping narratives of the past and affecting agency. Hence, the concept of culture intersects with the notion of belonging and identity by evoking meaningful cultural and social relationships and networks in the everyday that affect an individual’s relationship to a specific entity (Lawler 2002, 252; see also Smith 2006; Antonsich 2010; Kisić 2017; Yuval-Davis 2017, 231). We understand culture as providing a space for constructing, sharing, and contesting multiple discourses of identity, belonging, non-belonging, inclusion, and exclusion that produce the social and political contexts for discussing Europe and performing belonging to it (see also Chapter 3). Culture can provide spaces of negotiations that break with essentialized categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’, enabling the formation of fluid conceptions and complex meanings of Europe and the ‘European’ (Sassatelli 2009, 14; see also Anthias 2006, 2009). Nevertheless, using culture to legitimize the idea of a European community can also enforce exclusion and foster boundaries. Our focus on visitors to heritage sites and participants of cultural initiatives helps us to investigate the construction of belonging from below that shape their notions and their subjective attachments to Europe and to research cultural phenomena connected with processes of Europeanization.

2.4 Participation

The concepts of belonging, identity, and culture are crucial to constructing and imagining community (Anderson 1991) and intersect with the concepts of participation and citizenship that define membership in a (political) community. In the EU, both citizenship and participation are used to create belonging to the EU and Europe. Citizens’ participation in public decision-making and civil society activities crucially contributes to the development of democracy and social justice. In the context of the Union’s cultural policy, the involvement of EU citizens in cultural initiatives is considered central for creating a sense of belonging to Europe and rendering the ‘European’ a tangible reality that at the same time helps to legitimize the EU as a political community (see Mäkinen 2018, 193, 194). The EU’s cultural initiatives and programmes are examples of how Europeanization intermingles top-down-governed politics of belonging with EU citizens’ individual conceptualizations from below. In practice, people participate through a wide range of cultural activities, such as by taking part in cultural events (ECOC) and workshops (ECC) or visiting a heritage site (EHL). People’s experiences and meanings encounter and intersect with narratives of belonging to Europe produced by macro and meso level actors related to cultural initiatives. Through these EU cultural initiatives, the
visitors and participants engage in forming, transmitting and contesting cultural narratives and discourses used to construct belonging and identity in the European context, thereby affirming or limiting the EU’s politics of belonging.

The understanding that in the EU cultural policy initiatives, participation is embedded in the EU’s participatory governance, helps to interpret the role and space of visitors and participants in relation to the EU’s politics of belonging. In participatory governance, citizens’ participation is seen as part of good governance and as a partnership between citizens and the administration that lends legitimacy to decision-making (e.g. Cruikshank 1999; Dean 2010, 192–204, 263–264; Newman et al. 2004). As such, it is characterized by governmentality, typical of liberal and neoliberal governance, which through its technologies of agency seeks to produce subjectivities and guide conduct so that the objects of governance themselves participate in fulfilling the objectives of governance (Cruikshank 1999; Dean 2010; Foucault 1991). The participatory practices on the border between governance and citizens, as in the EU’s cultural initiatives investigated here, can both promote and limit citizens’ participation and democracy. Their complex implications for the agencies, modes, and effects of participation as well as for the relation between citizens and governance are hotly debated in academia (Michels 2011; Moini 2011; Mäkinen 2018; Nousiainen and Mäkinen 2015; Newman 2005; Newman and Clarke 2009; Papadopoulos and Warn 2007). In our book, we explore participation and agency of citizens in terms of their constructions of Europe and belonging that connect to issues of such as citizenship, inclusion, and exclusion, through their subjective meaning-making of Europe and the ‘European’.

2.5 Citizenship

Participation is closely associated with citizenship. In our approach, citizenship intertwines with subjective feelings of membership and belonging, in terms of “a politically engaged and critical conceptualization; one that engages with social relationships in all their messiness, taking account of action, process, power and change” (Waterton and Smith 2009, 5). While our three case studies reveal plural conceptions and meanings of belonging to Europe among the respondents and interviewees, belonging as EU membership is still determined by concrete political and legal aspects of citizenship. Citizenship defines the relationship between an individual and a political entity, such as the EU, by providing access to membership, setting rights and duties, and entitling citizens to participate in a specific societal entity (see Wiesner et al. 2018, 8). By shaping people’s roles and belonging, citizenship is ingrained in different modes of power struggles that take place through performed and negotiated positions and ‘banal’ practices in the everyday (see Billig 1995). While
citizenship is a necessary element in democratic societies that facilitates belonging through practices in all political, social, and cultural dimensions of society, it may not only include, but also exclude and form boundaries. In the rhetoric of the EU’s policy documents, citizenship is frequently associated with the notion of ‘European identity’ and connotes with a vaguely defined feeling of ‘Europeanness’ as well as membership in the EU, whereas its democratic and transformative potential as a channel for citizens to use power and make claims is not emphasized (Mäkinen 2018).

In the case study chapters of this book, the discussion of the politics of belonging is constituted by the five core concepts introduced above. Each of these concepts serves to connect the theoretical framework to the empirical data, helping to contextualize and approach Europe and the ‘European’ from different perspectives, in the specific context of ethnography of Europeanization. In essence, they enable understanding the complex and constructed processes of belonging(-making), identity projects, and politics of belonging from below. As our case study chapters deal with EU cultural initiatives with different thematic emphases, the core concepts emphasize their entwined nature and show how belonging is composed through them. The case studies share a critical stance on power relations in processes of producing narratives and meanings. Through our core concepts, we can examine the multiple, multi-layered, and contested nature of the narratives and meanings produced in our empirical data – such as European identity, European cultural heritage, or European citizenship – as well as the dynamics of their production processes.

3 Ethnography of Europeanization

Following our understanding of the politics of belonging, we believe that a multifaceted and multi-sited ethnographic approach is needed to research and understand the numerous discursive and narrative ways in which the notion of Europe and the ‘European’ become voiced and manifested from below. Although our three distinct case studies exemplify different cultural initiatives implemented through the EU’s top-down politics of belonging, all three are connected by our multi-sited and holistic exploration of processes, connections, and associations of belonging to Europe. Due to the nature of Europeanization and the transforming cultural mobilities that have broadened and changed the locations of cultural production (Marcus 1995, 97), the EU’s politics of belonging manifests simultaneously at multiple sites and levels. This requires immersion in multiple locales and attention to interconnected processes of Europeanization.
The EU’s cultural activities, such as the ECOC, ECC, and EHL, create the opportunity and space for encountering a wide range of discourses that reflect people’s subjective thoughts, notions, and understandings. At the same time, these sites of contact and encounter are themselves situated in different geographical locations, so they hold and transmit multidimensional and multi-layered understandings and discourses about Europe and the ‘European’. Rather than producing “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973) of the objectives and effects of the various cultural activities in question, we try to explore Europe and the ‘European’ in terms of ongoing processes and narratives produced and governed by social actors at different levels and places. To investigate a wide range of diverse conceptions of Europe and belonging and how they are generated in these processes, we require a versatile methodology.

Our core methodology can be described as an ethnography of Europeanization (for more details see Lähdesmäki et al. 2020a; Turunen et al. 2020). Ethnography of Europeanization refers to both the process of conducting research by ethnographic means and the written output of our research (see Koskinen-Koivisto, Lähdesmäki, and Čeginskas 2020). Thus, it helps to both examine and describe societal processes, practices, and transformations in Europe – but equally, as a written product, our research participates in establishing patterns of Europeanization. Traditionally, ethnographic methods refer to longitudinal observation and participation that allow researchers to immerse in social environments for a considerable amount of time. However, depending on the scope, time resource and field of research, ethnography can be conducted in a shorter time period and through experimental modes of approaching the data collection and interpreting findings (see Lähdesmäki et al. 2020b).

Processes of cultural Europeanization are part of politics of belonging and integrate a multitude of meanings, interpretations, and positions that circulate between and affect multiple actors at different levels along horizontal and vertical axes. We use ethnography of Europeanization as a methodology to research the processes of cultural Europeanization in dealing with the construction of ‘Europe’ and the ‘European’. This multi-sited ethnography facilitates scrutinizing politics of belonging to Europe as a complex, multi-layered, and transnational cultural phenomenon that is constructed in both collective and individual processes at different levels: the micro (e.g. European citizens participating in cultural initiatives and actions), meso (e.g. heritage practitioners, project managers), and macro (e.g. EU cultural policy makers) levels. Studies on the EU’s cultural policy predominantly focus on the meso- and macro-level actors for analyzing their roles in the context of Europeanization (see Chapter 1). Our research offers a novel approach to cultural Europeanization by focusing on European citizens who do not deal with EU initiatives and policies.
in their everyday professional life but are the intended addressees of these initiatives and their actions. While participants of the ECC workshops were aware of the European dimension of the project, visitors to ECOC events were already less aware of these events representing part of the EU policy, and the majority of the EHL visitors, with only a few exceptions, did not know that their visited heritage sites belonged to a specific EU action.

Our ethnography of Europeanization scrutinizes the meanings that visitors and participants in the EU’s cultural activities give to the idea of Europe, and how their constructions correlate with the objectives of the EU’s cultural policy to form ‘a community of Europeans’. We use ethnography of Europeanization to investigate discourses from below about belonging to Europe in terms of cultural phenomena and social and cultural practices that relate to processes of meaning-making, human interaction, and everyday experience (see Clifford and Marcus 1986). Our approach enables us to analyze not only multiple layers of meanings attributed to the notion of Europe from below but to explore processes of producing narratives and discourses in the context of power differences, inclusion, and exclusion in Europe that involve different people and multiple locales (see also Marcus 1995; Falzon 2009, 1). Our analysis of the citizens’ narratives and responses about communities and belonging in Europe sheds light on the ways, in which citizens participate and co-construct Europeanization. Thus, it helps to understand the larger framework of Europeanization by exploring how participants and visitors share and support– or resist and reject – certain conceptualizations of Europe as well as how their conceptualizations interrelate with the EU’s politics of belonging.

The participants and visitors to EU cultural initiatives and actions, who our book focuses on, represent a predominantly privileged share of population among European citizens. Our ECOC data included some respondents belonging to the non-privileged minority of Roma but we did not identify other vulnerable or marginalized people or groups in our data, such as refugees. This can be interpreted not only as a limitation of our study but also of the explored EU initiatives and their implementation. Despite this significant limitation, we believe that our approach and specific focus on participants from three different EU cultural initiatives offer a deeper qualitative interpretation of meanings of Europe and the ‘European’ from below– in contrast to some other larger quantitative data collections, such as the Eurobarometer.

Our ethnography of Europeanization is field-based and in our empirical Chapters 4–6 we cite the rich ethnographic data from our field research, which manifests the plural, complex, multidimensional, and contested processes of constructing belonging. The quotes reveal different views and perceptions people hold about Europe and the ‘European’. The data-driven approach helps
us to make visible meaning-making processes from below by giving people a voice, which in turn may trigger new interpretations and understandings of how Europe can be perceived as a changing, contested, and contextual construction. Our ethnography of Europeanization also reveals how interviewees and participants in our case studies engage with core concepts of politics of belonging: culture, identity, belonging, participation, and citizenship.

We combine several traditional ethnographic methods for our data collection (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; Culhane and Elliot 2016), including questionnaire surveys (ECOC), qualitative, semi-structured interviews (ECC and EHL), and participant observation (in all three case studies). The case study of the ECOC (Chapter 4) uses the responses to questionnaires (n = 893) distributed among the audiences of different cultural events in Pécs (April, May, October 2010), Tallinn (May 2011), and Turku (August 2011). In addition, responses from a pilot online study (n = 532) conducted in Pécs (2010) prior to the fieldwork on the ECOC are included. The data allows both for quantitative and qualitative analysis of the ECOC audiences' responses.

The data for the case study of the ECC project (Chapter 5) was collected in two art laboratories held in Strasbourg and Freiburg in the summer of 2014. These laboratories were organized for exploring the topic of European citizenship, focusing on the themes of 'roots' and 'home'. The data consists of qualitative semi-structured interviews with participants in the art laboratories (n = 15). Additional data included thematic writings and motivation letters by the project participants and an extended participant observation at the closing conference of the ECC project and in the exhibition of the art works from the laboratories in Antwerp in June 2015. In our qualitative analysis, the meso- and micro-level constructions of Europe in the project are juxtaposed with macro-level discourses in the official EU documents related to the EU programme that was funding the project.

The case study of the EHL (Chapter 6) draws on qualitative and semi-structured interviews with visitors (n = 271) that were conducted between August 2017 and February 2018 at eleven selected EHL sites in ten countries. These interviews were part of a broader research project, which also included qualitative interviews with key EU heritage officials for the EHL, members of the selection panel appointed by the EU, and heritage practitioners working at the selected sites. For this case study, we focus on interviews with the visitors, which include a variety of national backgrounds, both EU- and non-EU citizens (see Annex 1). In the interviews, we asked visitors about their perceptions of the site and its exhibition and the notions of European cultural heritage and European identity to explore their personal constructions of Europe and belonging to Europe. Finally, Chapter 7 offers a synthesis of our findings.
from the three case studies and provides a more detailed reflection on who was involved in the interviews, projects, and surveys by discussing background information.

Our emphasis on participants and visitors in EU cultural policy activities connects to the view that experiential and everyday narratives play a key role in the complex and fluid constructions of (non-)belonging. The focus on such qualitative data also helps to reveal how people utilize and appropriate concepts and notions from macro- and meso-level discourses as well as to scrutinize potential contradictions in these concepts and notions. For instance, it became evident in our EHL data that many people contest the use of the term ‘identity’, which in their view stresses divisions and boundaries more than creating a sense of community (see Chapters 6 and 7). Consequently, these interviewees rejected the notion of a ‘European identity’ but this did not automatically mean they did not feel a sense of belonging to Europe or had a negative attitude towards the EU. Rather, our data revealed the interviewees’ negotiated attitude towards the complex term of identity and gave insights into their understanding of belonging as well as of how belonging to Europe and support for European integration are interrelated but not necessarily the same.

Our qualitative content analysis is based on hermeneutic close and repeated readings of the interview and survey data from the respective case studies. Through our analysis of the vocabulary, expressions, concepts, and metaphors in the data, we have formed thematic categories to demonstrate how the meanings of Europe and the ‘European’ are negotiated in each case. Our analysis was enriched by reflecting jointly on our various fieldwork observations (see Turunen et al. 2020 for details of this collaborative methodology). Co-production of data usually refers to the interdependent relationships between researcher, the researched, and the audiences towards whom the research is directed. In this book, we take co-production further, with a collaborative approach to understanding how Europe and the ‘European’ are constructed from below. This collaborative approach includes intensive discussions, which enabled us to analyze data together.

Producing, collecting and analyzing data together highlights the reciprocity in the process of research, making it a dialogic and multi-sided enterprise. For instance, the field context, social surroundings, time, and place may influence the roles of researcher and participants (see also Narayan 1993; Vasenkarri and Pekkala 2000; De Laine 2000; Ellis et al. 2011). Similarly, discussions between research colleagues may reveal new ways in which a specific topic is approached, discussed, and understood. Joint analysis is a new methodological
approach by which researchers are able to compare notes and ideas, and also to communicate and compare impressions, atmospheres, and affective experiences (see also Turunen et al. 2020; Lähdesmäki et al. 2020a). In our collaboration on the analysis and theoretical conceptualization, we were able to test different strategies and carry out small interventions that changed our perceptions and triggered a joint process of shared conceptual work.

The following case study chapters demonstrate our ethnography of Europeanization in practice. In them, we discuss in detail what kind of politics of belonging was implemented in the ECOC, ECC, and EHL initiatives, and how their visitors and participants engaged with this politics by adapting to, ignoring, or occasionally even objecting to it through their own constructions of Europe and the European. Our analysis is guided by respect for our interviewees’ and respondents’ notions of Europe and the ‘European’ in Chapters 4–6, we seek to illustrate the variety of conceptions of Europe and understand their premises. This variety manifests the richness of Europe and is a challenge for understanding Europe, as the analysis in Chapters 4–7 shows.

References


