COLONIAL SENSITIVITY OF THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

Myth of Immaculate Conception regarding the birth of the European Economic Community

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The idea for the House of European History (HEH) was first suggested in the European Parliament in March of 2006, by German President Horst Köhler. Hans-Gert Pöttering, former President of the European Parliament, relaunched Köhler's idea during his inaugural speech on the 13th of February in 2007 in Strasbourg. While the idea for the HEH was launched in 2007, it would take 10 years for the museum to open its door to the public. Initially, the idea for the HEH was questioned, criticised, and sometimes even mocked by European institutions, various MEP's, historians, and academics. "A hobby project of a few men from the Brussels Bubble," "EU propaganda intended to further the European integration project," and "A pro-EU message of peace and unification" are just a few of the critical statements on Pöttering's brainchild[1].

There is an imbalance regarding the academic literature on different floors within the museum. Especially the fourth floor of the HEH, which focuses on post-war Europe, seemed rather undocumented. Besides, the literature study also reveals an academic disgruntlement regarding certain historical gaps in the HEH. Apparently, the post-war exhibition devoted so little attention to the end of Europe's overseas empires that visitors might be forgiven if they left thinking either that colonialism had been over long before the EEC began, or that colonialism had never ended at all.[2] The former director of the HEH acknowledges and recognises these historical gaps and states that certain events were not included to avoid "a mere overview of European history".[3] This contradicts the HEH's mission of enhancing and understanding European history in all its complexity, encouraging the exchange of ideas and questioning assumptions while raising awareness about the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations.[4]

In an attempt to fill both lacunae - academic literature on both the fourth floor and

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[a] In the GIES Honours Papers, students who wrote an exceptional master's dissertation under the supervision of a member of the GIES get the opportunity to present their main argument or findings in a concise paper.

representation of European colonial history throughout the museum - this paper seeks to answer the following question: 'How colonially sensitive is the House of European History with regard to the birth of the EEC?' This by means of a combination of both a literature study and in-situ research. To interpret the findings of the empirical analysis, an original two-dimensional conceptual framework was created. Both the composition and operationalisation of this framework are discussed in the second chapter. Prior to the in-situ research, three initial hypotheses (to be found in the third chapter) were formulated. The empirical analysis, in-situ research, and application of the original framework are discussed in the fourth chapter. The final chapter then revisits the hypotheses and formulates the conclusion.

The purpose of this research is not mere problematising. While the central research question and earlier mentioned lacunae might suggest otherwise, this paper truly intends to contribute to the HEH and its exhibitions. By problematising certain lacunae, problem solving simultaneously occurs since the museum could pick up on certain suggestions and thus become more colonially sensitive. However, the objective of this research remains analysing the colonial sensitivity on the fourth floor of the museum regarding the EEC's birth – not creating a list of suggestions for the HEH.

Chapter 1: From dental clinic to safe haven for European identity

The HEH, located in the Eastman Building, officially opened its doors to the public on the 6th of May 2017. The building was constructed in 1931 by George Eastman, an American philanthropist and inventor of the Kodak camera. Originally, it served as a dental clinic for disadvantaged children. Ever since 1985, the European Parliament has rented the building to accommodate several administrative services. As of 2017, the Eastman building is used to accommodate the HEH: a museum with a 4000 m² permanent exhibition, 1370 items, and a corresponding audio guided tour that is accessible in all 24 official EU languages. The museum consists of six exhibitions on five different floors, each focusing on a particular timeframe. This paper will specifically focus on the fourth floor of the museum, 'Rebuilding a divided continent', discusses post-war Europe and the tension on the European continent during the Cold War.

The introduction of this paper briefly touched upon the widespread criticism that the HEH had to deal with over the years. Especially right-wing groups never missed a chance to criticize, attack, and condemn the museum. While critics were to be found everywhere in the EU, some of the European Member States seemed to take the blue ribbon in this case. British MEPs from UKIP (UK Independence Party) referred to the HEH as 'the House of Horrors' or 'the House of the Smallest Common Denominator' - terms eagerly adopted by British tabloids – while portraying the museum as an expensive, ill-conceived palace of propaganda[5]. In 2011, an article published in the Telegraph stated that "[t]he British taxpayer's contribution to the museum, founded by MEPs 'to cultivate the memory of European history and unification', will be £18.6 million at a time when many museums and galleries in Britain are facing painful cuts in their funding"[6].

Along with the UK, Poland was frequently featured in the debate against the HEH. Shortly after the official opening of the museum, the European Parliament dedicated a conference to the museum, organized by Polish MEP Anna Fotyga and the PiS delegation: the Polish right-wing Law and Justice Party. At this conference, former Polish President Kaczynski stated that the HEH did not meet the 'two conditions that are necessary for a common European project to succeed': common roots and the abandonment of imperialist and neo-imperialist aspirations[7]. Next to the HEH's exhibition, the financial aspect of the project caused massive upheaval [8]. Still, the realisation of the museum ended up costing 'several millions' below the originally estimated expenses[9]. The annual costs for the security and operation (close to €11.5 million, paid by the

European Parliament), however, increase every year.

Aside from the political criticism, the museum's usefulness and purpose has been questioned by various academics and historians. For instance, professor van Weyenberg (Leiden University) is not in favour of prioritising a European common history, which is according to her a myth. Instead, she calls for a critical look at this museum and an analytical look at the European perception of history. Rigney agrees with van Weyenberg by describing the HEH as a museum that narrates European history in a top-down manner which is not compatible with the museum's mission[10]. Despite the European Parliament's strong emphasis on a diverse, inclusive, and nuanced HEH, several authors [11] seem to agree that the HEH contains historical gaps. While the HEH succeeds in illustrating how the European colonial superpower was guilty of exploitation and racism in the 19th century, it simultaneously fails to acknowledge that these colonial relationships and structures remain relevant to this day and therefore fails to display an inclusive history that leaves room for debate and pays attention to different experiences and stories within the EU[12]. On top of that, there's a lack of regard for the memories of those who have lived through the European colonial vicissitudes: a remarkable blind spot given the museum's emphasis on shared memories. Especially since these memories and experiences are both part of the shared history of European citizens as well as the shared history of those who lived in the former colonies[13]. Despite this academic criticism, little has been written about the representation of European colonial activities in the post-war era – especially the Inner Six's remaining colonial ties at the time of the EEC's birth.

Chapter 2: Decolonising strategies and the Myth of Immaculate Conception

To analyse the colonial sensitivity of the HEH regarding the birth of the EEC, a theoretical framework was sought within postcolonial literature. However, none of the proposed frameworks specifically measured colonial sensitivity. Therefore, a unique, two-dimensional conceptual framework was created. The first dimension was developed by using Sabaratnam's Typology of Decolonising Strategies (2011).[14] Four decolonising strategies were used to determine how HEH should portray 'the other' (all regions and countries that were still colonised by or under the rule of founding members of the EEC by 1957) and 'the self' (the Inner Six, the founding EEC members) to be considered colonially sensitive. Given the objective of this research, a second dimension was added based on 'Eurafrica' by Hansen and Jonsson (2014) in order to define the Myth of Immaculate Conception and applies this concept to the 'other' and 'self'.[15]

2.1 Sabaratnam's typology of decolonising strategies

In an attempt to rethink world politics by focusing on alternative research topics, Sabaratnam developed a theoretical framework that resulted in an innovative typology of six different decolonising strategies that can be used to further structure the overall decolonial perspective.[16] The first dimension of the original conceptual framework was created by using four of these decolonising strategies and applying them to the question of how the HEH should portray 'the other' and 'the self' to maintain a colonially sensitive approach. By using 'the other' and 'the self', and especially by juxtaposing these two constructions, the notion of 'othering' is introduced. Brons states that the concept of othering originates from Hegel's dialectic of identification and instantiation in the encounter of the self with some other in his Master-Slave dialectic.[17] Othering has grown into a theoretical school of thought through feminist and postcolonial theory and thanks to critical theorists such as Spivak, Said, Bhabha and Fanon. Given the central objective of the HEH ("exploring how history has produced a common European memory and continues to influence the lives of EU citizens today and in the future"[18]) it is likely that the practice of othering is used throughout the HEH. When exploring and analysing a so-

called common memory, 'the self' is at the centre of this analysis which makes the presence of 'the other' undeniable.

⊗ *'The other'*

Sabaratnam's first principle, pointing out discursive Orientalism, is strongly based on the insights of Edward W. Said on how Orientalism subordinates the East to the West and how it laid the foundation for Western colonialism. According to Said, the contribution of Western academics, writers, and intellectuals to the image of the Subordinate East has also strengthened "the idea of a European identity that is superior to all non-European peoples and cultures"[19]. Agency, the ability to act or to choose how to act, is also inextricably linked to this. According to Said, the established discourse perceives all non-Western countries as those that "beseech domination" [20]. Therefore, countries that have been colonised in the past are treated as objects of another subject, the West, which in turn perceives those countries as areas with a lack of agency that are in some paternalized need of external control. Sabaratnam's first decolonising strategy attempts to raise awareness of how Western political discourses and systems of knowledge objectify and thus minimise the South.

Sabaratnam's fourth strategy draws attention to the human experience of the subaltern, those that are normally excluded or suppressed by modernist history. Inspired by Fanon's engagement with the importance of phenomenological aspects of colonialism, Sabaratnam pleads for analysing world politics from various alternative and subaltern perspectives while incorporating Spivak's ideas on subaltern experiences. Sabaratnam also relies heavily on the standpoint theory wich stems from the feminist school of thought and assumes that knowledge systems are strongly attached to a social hierarchy stratified by personal characteristics such as race, gender, and class[21]. According to Harding, the top of social hierarchies lose sight of real human relations and the true nature of social reality whereas those at the bottom have a unique and more insightful standpoint because their marginalised positions make it easier to explain social and natural problems.[22]

⊗ *'The self'*

Sabaratnam's second and third principles, the deconstruction of historical myths of European development and challenging Eurocentric historiographies, are used to signify 'the self'. With the deconstruction of historical myths of European development, Sabaratnam attempts to get rid of the long-standing view of the European superior and enlightened continent that had an overall advantage over the rest of the world. She questions and challenges this Eurocentric perception of the world by using Hobson's ideas on the relations between East and West. By challenging Eurocentric historiographies, Sabaratnam criticises the assumption of Hobsbawm that colonial territories only become relevant from the moment their fate intertwines with the fate of their coloniser. Sabaratnam also advocates for reasoning through connected histories rather than various geographically delineated histories reproduced from a Western perspective.

2.2 The EEC's birth: Myth of Immaculate Conception or cunning geopolitical plan?

In 'Eurafrica', Hansen and Jonsson examine the relationship between European integration and colonialism while elaborating on the complete exclusion of this relationship from both EU studies and histories of colonialism. Colonialism and decolonisation have been crucial in the European quest for a collective sense of European identity among the citizens of the EU. However, this influence is yet to be recognised and prioritised in European identity politics. By scrutinising the historiography of European integration and recovering its colonial and geopolitical dimension, the authors want to address the lacuna in studies of Europe and place the history of European integration on a new foundation. They claim that all discourse that portrays European integration as an anti-colonial project is a myth, a foundational tale of pure

origins, of an Immaculate Conception, which sets in place the main elements of a wishful and idealised European identity[23]. The authors perceive this as a threat to critical thinking since it reduces the European project to something unrelated to the European imperialist project - which it is not. They believe in the inseparable connection between Europe and Eurafrica: the one could not have existed without the other. This belief aligns with Coudenhove-Kalergy's dictum: 'To save Africa for Europe, is to save Europe by way of Africa'[24].

Hansen and Jonsson are unanimous that Eurafrica was indispensable for both Europe's geopolitical and economic survival: a dynamic that was nurtured by Founding Fathers of European integration and convinced Eurafricanists like Guy Mollet who believed that Eurafrica was the solution to the world's problems[25]. The authors designate the Paris Conference of February 1957 as the decisive moment of the EEC's colonial settlement while delivering the EEC as such - meaning that without a colonial agreement, there would not have been a European integration agreement and vice versa[26]. As regards the European states, pre-EEC, they believe that Eurafrica enabled them to legitimise their remaining influence over the African continent concerning the matter of anticolonial movements, whilst never abandoning their role as patronising protector[27]. Simultaneously, Eurafrica enabled African states to make a compromise with their former colonial rulers from 1957 onwards: advantageous for both parties, but at the expense of the majority of the African population who experienced decolonisation as non-existent[28]. Hansen and Jonsson believe that the real agenda behind the EEC's birth was to adapt international relations and economic means of production to a new world order in which African states remained dependent so European states could maintain their control over African resources[29]. Afterwards, Eurafrica disappeared from the political agenda as the EEC facilitated European intervention on the African continent in a more efficient and less costly way: by using development aid and diplomatic advice.

Hansen and Jonsson describe the relation between the foundation of the EEC and the African decolonisation as a gradual process that made the old system seamlessly transform into a new one, without changing the fundamental parameters determining the relation of Africa and Europe[30]. Eurafrica's disappearance from history thus enabled the Myth of Immaculate Conception of the EEC: the idea of the latter and later the EU as a pure origin and fresh start[31]. While Eurafrica may be underexposed in the current history books, it has never been more relevant. Hansen and Jonsson claim that a basic understanding of Eurafrican history is crucial in any attempt to understand the 'new scramble for Africa' and the role of the EU in this dynamic[32].

2.3 Original conceptual framework for the colonial sensitivity of the House of European History

For an exhibition to have a colonially sensitive approach, two out of six conditions from the first dimension of the framework should be present: one from each category ('other' vs. 'self'). The HEH undoubtedly had to adhere to certain limits, both in terms of space and quantity of information. This could result in the rebuttal that meeting all six conditions is too demanding. When the application of the first dimension categorises an exhibition as non-colonially sensitive, chances are slim that a debunking of the myth will follow since a colonially sensitive context is crucial. However, a colonially sensitive exhibition does not guarantee a debunking of the myth. Following the conceptual framework, an exhibition debunks this myth and is therefore colonial sensitive regarding the EEC's birth when meeting two conditions, one in both categories of 'the other' and 'the self'.

Figure 1: Original conceptual framework for the colonial sensitivity of the House of European History

	Colonially sensitive approach	Myth of Immaculate Conception of the EEC
'The other'	⊗ 'The other' is never objectified, patronised, or portrayed as in need of something only 'the self' can provide. ⊗ 'The other' has agency. ⊗ 'The other' and their human experience regarding what was imposed on them by 'the self' are treated with respect.	⊗ Recognition of the subaltern's share in the EEC's birth. ⊗ Representation of the subaltern experience as regards territorial decisions following the Treaties of Rome.
'The self'	⊗ 'The self' is deconstructed as the primary subject of world history. ⊗ 'The self' is not portrayed as superior. ⊗ The connection between the histories of 'the self' and 'the other' is recognised and respected.	⊗ Recognition of European motivations for Eurafrica. ⊗ Recognition of remaining inequality after the EEC's birth.

Source: Own synthesis, based on Meera Sabaratnam[33] and Peo Hansen & Stefan Jonsson[34].

Chapter 3: Initial hypotheses

1: The perspective of 'the self' is all-important

If the HEH does indeed adhere a predominant European point of view, this should be questioned and problematized since interaction with 'the other' were crucial to develop a common European identity. The histories of all Inner Six members and therefore the history of the EEC itself have been influenced tremendously by 'the other' ever since the beginning of Western colonialism. Therefore, 'the other' should at least be represented. This aligns with Sabaratnam's second and third decolonising strategies: challenging Eurocentric historiographies and the presumption of the West as the primary subject of modern world history and international relations.

2: Little to no attention to the human experiences of 'the other'

Whereas the previous hypothesis assumes the absence of a general subaltern stance, this hypothesis concentrates specifically on the representation of subaltern experiences and consequences of colonisation. There must be no subaltern stance to mention 'the other's' distresses and sorrows as regards suppression. That is of course only if the fourth floor mentions the European colonial atrocities. Colonialism needs to be approached as a shared European experience[35]. Therefore, the human experiences of those who were colonised contribute to the common European history and identity. If the HEH indeed aims to represent a shared European identity, human suffering caused by European colonialism should be represented.

3: The Myth of Immaculate Conception is not debunked

The preservation of this myth equals a perception of the EEC which discerns European integration as something that is irrespective from European colonial influence. It approaches the EEC as pure, immaculate, and free of colonial possessions. This third hypothesis can be divided into two sub-elements: the non-recognition of the EEC's colonial possessions, and therefore the nonrecognition of Eurafrica as geopolitical conception. The first part of this hypothesis assumes that the fourth floor doesn't represent

the Inner Six's colonial possessions as part of the EEC, neither in the present nor the past. If this is indeed the case, it is likely that Eurafrica is not mentioned on the fourth floor. This non-recognition can be perceived as a preservation of the myth. Failing to debunk the myth wouldn't make sense if the HEH truly wants to represent the common European history and identity since Eurafrica was indispensable for both Europe's geopolitical and economic survival[36].

Chapter 4: Empirical analysis

The fourth floor of the HEH consists out of five smaller exhibitions. Since this paper is a shortened version of a more extensive study, this chapter only provides the application of the conceptual framework to the relevant exhibitions. The thorough description of these exhibitions, together with the analysis of the exhibitions that didn't mention the EEC's birth, and an additional analysis of the representation of European colonialism on the third floor of the HEH can be found in the original study of this paper.

4.1 Rebuilding Europe

The first exhibition on the fourth floor focuses on post-war Europe, a continent in ruins, and puts a strong emphasis on the bipolar climate of world politics at the time. It should be no surprise that this kind of exhibition is dominated by 'the self' and the related European point of view. Still, this could easily go hand in hand with a certain level of representation as regards 'the other'. It is safe to say that this representation is non-existing, which results in an exhibition that fails to deconstruct 'the self' as the primary subject of world history. This Eurocentric approach is also confirmed by the maps that are used throughout this exhibition. All of them exclusively show the European continent, without mentioning countries and territories that were considered part of the European national territory such as French Algeria or the Belgian Congo. Even more so, when a map did include one of these countries or territories it was nowhere indicated as an actual part of Europe. Instead, it was covered up by other elements like a map legend. While 'the self' is not explicitly portrayed as superior in this

exhibition, the silence as regards the multiculturalism of Allied troops during both World Wars has a superior feel to it. Especially the French promises of basic human rights such as voting rights in return for military service of 'the other'. By neglecting this multicultural dimension, the exhibition also fails to recognise the human experience of 'the other' as regards these historical events. Given all this, it is impossible to argue that 'the other' is awarded the slightest amount of agency. The only condition of the first dimension of the framework met by the first exhibition is the one concerning portraying the other' as in need of something only 'the self' can provide. According to the conceptual framework, the first exhibition on the fourth floor does not adhere to a colonially sensitive approach. It is debatable whether the second dimension of the framework is applicable. However, the conception of Eurafrica was already established before the post-war era. At the time, some OCT's were considered part of the European national territory, knowing that these areas could be of great importance as regards a geopolitical Eurafrica. Therefore, the second dimension is indeed applicable to the first exhibition. When applying this dimension, none of the conditions seemed to be met. Eurafrica is never mentioned in the first exhibition. Consequently, there is no recognition of the European motivation for Eurafrica or the subaltern's share in the EEC's birth or the remaining inequality afterwards. Lastly, there is no attention to the subaltern experience of being considered part of the European territory. In short, the conceptual framework assessed the first exhibition as a non-colonially sensitive exhibition that didn't debunk the Myth of Immaculate Conception.

4.2 Cold War

The second exhibition illustrates the emergence of a bipolar world order characterised by two actors: the US and the USSR. The exhibition does recognise the existence of countries that didn't seek to join one of the two existing blocks. This could have been the impetus for a colonially sensitive exhibition. Unfortunately, this fell

through by the maintained, predominant European stance: discussing the Swiss neutrality rather than the Non-Aligned Movement or the subaltern quest of independence, and portraying Dag Hammarskjold as a political figure who was 'particularly intent in bringing peace to Congo', instead of using the specific cartoon to include the Congolese perspective on and experiences regarding their history of (de)colonisation. In the case of the Belgian Congo, the placement of the Lumumba painting (a dark recess of the bipolar corridor), and absence of some background information illustrates the HEH's attitude towards this part of history and the human experiences of those who lived through it.

In general, these examples portray 'the self' as superior and the primary subject of world history. The cartoon on Hammarskjöld, a white male and political figure who aims to restore peace in Congo, can be perceived as patronising and portray 'the other' as in need of something only 'the self' can provide. This also means that there is no representation of the subaltern share in histories, their agency, or experiences. The second exhibition on the fourth floor of the HEH fails to meet a single condition of the first dimension of the conceptual framework. Various parts of the second exhibition, like a 14-minute video montage on building various ways of European unity, provided several opportunites to acknowledge Eurafrica, the subaltern role in the EEC's birth and the subaltern stance in general. This was, however, not the case. Given the fact that none of the conditions of the second dimension are met, the conceptual framework assessed this exhibition as a non-colonially sensitive exhibition that didn't debunk the Myth of Immaculate Conception.

4.3 Milestones of European integration I

Of all exhibitions, this one is best suited for debunking the Myth of Immaculate since it features the emergence of the EEC and the role of the Founding Fathers: political figures who played a crucial role in the creation of Eurafrica as geopolitical conception. The OCTs were perceived as the last hurdle the Inner Six had to

overcome to reach an agreement on the Treaties of Rome[37]. It all started out quite promising when the exhibition mentioned several OCTs on a displayed page of the Treaties of Rome, explaining the new customs procedure from the moment the Common Market was created. Despite this explicit reference, there's a lack of explanation on the OCT's or their role in the geopolitical structures of both the EEC and the Common Market which strongly benefited the European continent in the past and present. As a result, the connection between the histories of 'the self' and 'the other' (and the latter's share in the EEC's birth) is neither recognised nor respected. In addition, there is no recognition of the subaltern experience regarding European decisions on OCTs in the context of the Treaties of Rome. The persistent inequality after the EEC's birth also remains undiscussed which contributes to the lack of agency for 'the other'.

As for the exhibition on the Founding Fathers, the HEH goes to great lengths to glorify these political figures: the exhibition praises them for their pragmatic approach and striving towards European peace, human rights, and democracy which adds to the image of a superior Europe, a primary subject of world history. While their envisaged sphere of influence was not limited to mere continental Europe, Eurafrica is not mentioned once. By not recognising this Eurafrican dream, it is not possible to address or condemn the European benefits of such a geopolitical structure. The application of the conceptual framework revealed a lack of recognition towards the subaltern in combination with the glorification of 'the self'. The framework assessed this exhibition as a non-colonially sensitive exhibition that didn't debunk the Myth of Immaculate Conception. Despite all opportunities to recognise 'the other' or the subaltern share in the EEC's birth, the exhibition failed to do so, making it the least colonially sensitive of all exhibitions on the fourth floor of the HEH.

Chapter 5: Conclusion – "Some things we want to remember, some things we like to forget"

5.1 Initial hypotheses revisited

1: The perspective of 'the self' is all-important

Prior to the start of the in-situ research, a more European-minded stance seemed evident since the HEH aims to explore how history has produced a common European memory. The empirical analysis has indeed confirmed this predominant European point of view. None of the exhibitions succeeded in deconstructing 'the self' as the primary subject of world history. The European continent, perspective, and values were often portrayed as superior. This Eurocentric attitude was expressed in various ways such as the inappropriate use of certain maps that only covered the European continent, or the glorification of 'the self' as was the case with Dag Hammarskjöld or the Founding Fathers. The HEH is supposed to be a museum that represents European history "based on solid academic research in an open and larger framework of international and global historical developments, rather than a "narrow EU museum" [38]. It is safe to say that the findings of the empirical analysis cast doubt on this goal.

2: Little to no attention to the human experiences of 'the other'

Next to a predominant European stance, a lack of representation of subaltern experiences regarding European colonial suppression was assumed. Despite the low threshold, the empirical analysis revealed that none of the exhibitions passed the test of the first dimension. Of all conditions from the first dimension, acknowledging subaltern experiences and the intertwined histories of 'the other' and 'the self' were the least present. This resulted in neglecting the subaltern share in the EEC's birth, the non-recognition of possible subaltern struggles following the Treaties of Rome or integration into the Common Market. The lack of context on certain displayed pieces can also be perceived as a way of not recognizing subaltern experiences.

According to the three criteria formulated by the museum in the 2013 brochure, the recognition of subaltern perspectives should be included in the permanent exhibition of the HEH since it concerns a process that originated in Europe (European integration facilitated the relation between 'the self' and 'the other'), is spread across Europe (all Inner Six member made an agreement on the OCTs and thus the subaltern in the context of the Treaties of Rome) and is relevant to this day (OCTs still exist, as is the inequality between 'the other' and 'the self').

3: The Myth of Immaculate Conception is not debunked

The last of the three hypotheses formulated a provisional answer to the central research question. The first sub-element of this hypothesis was confirmed since the HEH failed to recognise the geopolitical importance of these countries and territories. For example: in the first exhibition, 'Rebuilding Europe', Algeria was not assigned a sphere of influence even though the country was considered an integrated part of the French national territory. According to the 2013 criteria, this recognition should be included since it concerns a process that originated in Europe (French Algeria as part of the French national territory), is spread across Europe (all other EEC countries recognised French Algeria) and is relevant to this day as the historical relation between these two countries remains influential. Next to the case of French Algeria, the maps used on the fourth floor, specifically the non-representation of the African continent, also strengthen the claim of non-recognition of these countries and territories. On top of that, there was no mention of Eurafrica, neither as geopolitical conception at the time of the EEC's birth nor in any other capacity. However, according to the 2013 criteria, the HEH should make mention of Eurafrica in the permanent exhibition. After all, the development of Eurafrica as geopolitical conception can be perceived as a process that originated in Europe, was spread across Europe, and remains relevant to this day (among others, in the context of the new scramble for Africa).

5.2 Findings and conclusion

The HEH pursues two goals: stressing the importance for modern Europeans of historical awareness and confronting the deep-seated assumption that European history is no more than the sum of its constituent national histories.[39] Davies argues that "the fathers of the European movement were inspired by the idea that we have learned from our past" and that "the HEH must expose the evil alongside the achievements" [40]. The findings of the empirical analysis indeed reveal an extensive representation of these achievements. The evil, however, is continuously kept in the dark. As for the content of the exhibitions, the HEH has two objectives: the promotion of a coherent historical and comprehensible narrative, on the one hand, and raising awareness about the existence of a multitude of different historical interpretations, points of view, and nuances of perception and memory on the other. While this paper cannot asses the first objective, it is safe to say that the fourth floor of the HEH failed in providing the envisaged plurality as stated in the second objective.

The empirical analysis showed that, following the first dimension of the conceptual framework, none of the exhibitions is colonially sensitive: an alarming conclusion given the very reasonable threshold. In case of a non-colonially sensitive exhibition, a debunking of the Myth of Immaculate Conception seemed unlikely. Therefore, following the assessment of the exhibitions, any debunking seemed virtually impossible. This assumption turned out to be correct as the empirical analysis revealed that none of the three exhibitions came close to questioning the Eurocentric perception on the EEC's birth, let alone a debunking the myth. Considering these findings, the conclusion of this research is that the fourth floor of the HEH is not colonially sensitive as regards the EEC's birth. The empirical analysis resulted in a confirmation of the initial hypotheses: the fourth floor of the HEH is characterised by a predominant, European point of view and the non-recognition of subaltern perspectives and experiences.

Throughout the fourth floor, colonial ties between the EEC and OCTs (but also countries as Algeria) were systematically silenced. On top of that, Eurafrica was not even mentioned once on the fourth floor of the HEH, even though key figures in the road towards European integration like Guy Mollet publicly admitted their Eurafrican vision on multiple occasions. Why conceal every aspect that could possibly harm the image of Europe as something pure, immaculate, and free of colonial possessions? Especially since the existence of Eurafrica meets all three criteria from the 2013 brochure and should thus be featured in the HEH. The process of creating the geopolitical conception of Eurafrica is originated in Europe, related to all Inner Six members, and continues to be relevant to this day: in postcolonial studies, and contemporary dynamics such as the 'new scramble for Africa'. On top of that, there is the inseparable connection between the European continent and the geopolitical conception of Eurafrica and how the one could not have existed without the other. Eurafrica's disappearance from the history of European integration and the history of colonialism highlights that colonialism, too, needs to be approached as a shared (Western) European experience[41]. Shared European experiences: the very thing that is claimed to be of paramount importance in the HEH. Therefore, neglecting the history of colonialism and the importance of Eurafrica in the EEC's birth goes against all claimed objectives of the HEH. Given all this, the third initial hypothesis was also confirmed.

"Some things we want to remember, some things we like to forget", a quote from Italian MEP Antonio Tajani that was included in the preface of the book 'Creating a House of European History'. With the conclusion of this research in mind, these words come across as wry and tone-deaf. Frantz Fanon once said that the European spirit is built on strange foundations. Yet, I refuse to believe that the European spirit propagated by the HEH is based on the conscious or deliberate silencing of historical events that do not fit into the museum's intended narrative. In saying this, I

am not condoning the silences. I am merely trying to provide some nuance in the debate. I realise that this research, as well as the conclusions, are very sensitive to the positionality of the researcher. This sensitivity could be perceived as an empirical weakness of the research. However, all research within social sciences is subject to the one conducting it and subjectivity should not detract from the empirical findings of a study. As for this research, intersubjectivity was sought by means of regular consultation with third parties such as my supervisor, professor Jan Orbie.

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