



RICHERS

RENEWAL, INNOVATION AND CHANGE:
HERITAGE AND EUROPEAN SOCIETY



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D4.1 European identity, belonging and the role for digital CH

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the results of a qualitative study that examined the importance of (digital) Cultural Heritage for identity-building processes within European communities and its role for the development of a European identity. European identity as a unifying factor should not be seen as a way to transcend other identities - individual, ethnic, local, national, and community identities - but as an opportunity to acquire a sense of belonging to a greater community on the continent, a 'community of culture united in diversity'. The Identification with Europe and a sense of belonging is also based on values that teach people to live together, to respect their differences whilst searching for elements of unity.

At first, the report provides an analysis of the opportunities offered by the availability of large amounts of digital content of the European heritage, published by institutions or cultural authorities. The research examines digital practices to identify the characteristics that can support the strengthening of a European identity, which methods are tangentially less suitable for this purpose and what the challenges, limits and future perspectives of the interaction with digital technologies are.

Moreover, this study explores diverse European minority communities and their relationship to Cultural Heritage itself, analysing how they represent, preserve and transmit their heritage in digital format to keep alive a sense of belonging with their home countries or wider communities. The potential of digital technologies is examined to enable them to reflect on their own particular cultural identities and to engage critically with mainstream Cultural Heritage. Methodologically, the study was informed by desk research, analysis of Cultural Heritage websites and empirical research carried out through interviews, a multinational focus group and survey as well as six case studies with European communities in the UK, Italy, Netherlands and Germany.

Key Findings

Role of digital Cultural Heritage for enhancing a European Identity

The aim of this part is to explore the ways in which large volumes of digital cultural content can facilitate the construction of a European identity and strengthen a feeling of belonging to a Europe of cultural pluralism. For this, an analysis of five Cultural Heritage websites offering curated European Cultural Heritage content has been undertaken:

- *Europeana* – www.europeana.eu
- *Europeana 1914-1918* – www.europeana1914-1918.eu
- *Europeana 1989* – www.europeana1989.eu
- *Euromuse* – www.euromuse.net
- *Inventing Europe* – www.inventingeurope.eu

Additionally, exploratory research among twenty European citizens of different nationalities, age and gender was undertaken. Of utmost significance for the European citizens that took part in this research was the representation of all European people and cultures on the websites that have been presented to them: European digital Cultural Heritage content should be inclusive and reflect cultural pluralism through a network of interrelated identities and their interactions. For all respondents, European Cultural Heritage is intrinsically related to language diversity. There is a lot still to do for multilingual access and multilingual content that would reflect European cultural diversity with digital Cultural Heritage and foster a better understanding of the commonalities and differences among European cultures.

This research has also revealed that there is a need for better mediation and contextualisation of the content as well as further participative offers. Moreover, the findings reveal a trend towards a more personal and lively connection with Cultural Heritage. Although the majority of the respondents were interested in Cultural Heritage objects from the collections of museums, fewer than half of them considered that this was giving a sense of belonging to Europe. On the contrary, individual testimonies of historical events were more likely to awaken a feeling of European belonging among all age groups. It is also necessary to explore new ways to mediate content by making best use of novel ideas and innovative technologies, and also to connect digital Cultural Heritage with living heritage practices, especially for younger audiences.

Moreover, the strategic use of semantic and linked data technologies can facilitate access to European Cultural Heritage and can enhance digital practices that could foster a sense of European belonging among people of diverse origins. In the framework of European Cultural Heritage digital applications, these technologies enhance access and discoverability of content and support language and cultural diversity. By linking to external resources, they provide rich documentation and contextual information or background information about Cultural Heritage objects in an innovative as much as cost-effective way. Semantic representation of knowledge and linked data has the potential to increase innovation and their use can result in a number of breakthroughs in Humanities research. Benefits for the wider audience include a better understanding of information through contextualization, easy access and re-usability.

Digital (Cultural Heritage) practices of European communities

Furthermore, this study analysed the digital (Cultural Heritage) practices of the following European communities from a 'bottom-up' perspective:

- The community of Romani people from Coventry (UK)
- The protestant community in Italy
- The Jewish community in Rostock (GER)
- The virtual community of Marrokko.nl (NL)
- The Dutch-Surinamese Communities (NL)
- The Spanish-speaking community in Berlin (GER)

All communities that were analysed within the case studies used digital technologies to strengthen their community tie and identity, apart from the mainstream, through various forms of communication depending on the user group. Digital technologies have been used both for communication processes within the communities and for maintaining close contacts with their homelands or a worldwide diaspora. Often especially younger generations with a higher educational level and well knowledge of the community's and the mainstream culture, develop innovative new ways of mediating their Cultural Heritage on virtual community platforms that go far beyond information and documentation purposes. Community platforms such as *Marokko.nl* offer a successful combination of information and interaction, high media richness and a high percentage of participatory elements. They leave space for a lively, immediate reception of the European Cultural Heritage, as well as its discussion and exchange and offer the possibility of a flexible and individual engagement with the community's culture.

Although digital Cultural Heritage represented in online collections of official cultural institutions serve as extremely rich sources of information, they are not regarded as necessity for maintaining the community's culture in the everyday life. This generally results in the creation of digital Cultural Heritage, especially in the form of intangible heritage, notably music and dances, which are mediated through living media practices and form an essential part of the community's everyday life.

Simultaneously digital technologies have the potential to increase awareness and understanding of multiple alternative and minority communities and their heritage, facilitating dissemination of information all over the world for a more open, inter-cultural approach.

Nevertheless, the research also showed that at present time, there is still much more potential in engaging with especially digitally relatively inactive migrant groups, such as the community of Romani people from Coventry. Moreover, especially communities with older members like the Jewish people in Rostock or communities with a low spending-power have no or limited access to digital technologies and therefore to digital cultural artefacts that might connect them virtually with aspects of their own culture that they have not experienced for some time. In the context of the digital literacy gap that divides Europe significantly, this is a huge deficit, since the study revealed that digital media can be used for bottom up activism and provides means for individual and community voices excluded both from mainstream media and society.

Perspectives

Instead of a strict separation of groups it is important to connect the European communities to build understanding for foreign cultures and create European cohesion by stressing (cultural) similarities and fostering cultural exchange. In this sense innovative digital tools that start with the people's digital practices and demands have the potential to support an awareness of cultural pluralism, by providing new ways of dealing with Cultural Heritage as an engaged experience.

Furthermore the research revealed that an improved contextualisation of Cultural Heritage content is needed to make comparisons between the different European cultures and communities more evident. Important steps towards a contextualisation of Cultural Heritage have been undertaken with the development of Linked (open) Data, better ways of implementing the technology more meaningful should be developed, for discovering parallels and commonalities between different European cultures.

This research showed that there is a need for digital resources that are uniting the past and the present, since the current attempts are yet too academic and a consideration of the user's demands has not taken place sufficiently. Moreover, European citizens deal, in particular, with contemporary forms of tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage, the re-use of which is often restricted by IPR. Therefore it is necessary to think about easing copyright restrictions in favour of closed communities.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Europe that we live in today is not only limited to a geographical space, but also covered by historical, political, economic, legal, cultural and identity dimensions that influence our values, political decisions and daily lives. Europe - that is still the vision of ideals of democracy, the welfare-state, equal opportunities, tri-partite social partners, cooperation, justice, human rights, solidarity and dignity – is facing an ever faster changing globalised and digitally connected world.

The financial and economic crisis of the past eight years has cast not only doubt on the idea of a common Europe, but has also provoked subtle feelings of distrusts among European citizens and countries. Anti-European formal and informal political movements and organisations are emerging and gaining popularity, a few of them promote more or less nationalistic, xenophobic, fundamentalist and sometimes even racist ideologies, which find fertile ground among disillusioned people in their hope of a better common future.¹ Voices have been raised, claiming the failure of the multi-cultural society.² The solution of the Euro crisis is not just about the success of concrete economic policy measures, but also depends on the cohesion between the citizens of the various European countries.

In times of increasing societal changes, ‘a period in which the identities of the past are becoming (...) irrelevant and in which new identities, and new identity formations, are being created’³, the European Union officially understands cultural heritage, tangible as well as intangible, as a constant, an anchor in the people’s personal lives and key factor for creating European cohesion. Europe’s cultural unity is, paradoxically, based on an extraordinary rich cultural diversity and distinguished by multiple identities. Promoting an authentic European identity, based on cultural diversity is one of the great challenges of the coming decades.

Simultaneously, current independence movements such as the Scottish votes for independence (or the Catalan’s appeal for such) in 2014 reveal the increasing importance of local communities and identities. Notably, the Scottish strive for independence should not be understood as a vote against Europe (as they wanted to stay within the EU) but as a strive for recognition of their specific Scottish culture and identity. The European Union recognized cultural heritage as a key role to foster European integration and had set up several European (digital) cultural heritage projects, but are these efforts really sufficient? Is optimum use made of the possibilities that digital technologies offer for a European integration today? Are the existing efforts appealing to the European citizens? What about engaging directly with local communities as a new way of reaching European cohesion? These issues have not yet been considered enough. Therefore this study assumes that Europe’s highly active communities can be regarded as a source of positive dynamism, and especially engaging with those who suffer from societal repressions (diverse migrant groups as well as religious and ethnic minorities) bears huge potential. That is why there is a need for deeper investigations both about how diverse communities reflect on their specific cultural heritage and the need for a deeper understanding of their identity-forming processes. Are digital technologies a useful tool to provide new opportunities to facilitate access and interpretation of Europe’s rich cultural diversity and, in the end, can help to provide an additional sense of European identity?

¹ Resilient Europe 2014, 7.

² In 2010 Federal chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel stated ‘the multicultural society has failed’.

³ Macdonald 2003, 1.

2.1 ROLE OF THIS STUDY IN THE PROJECT

This research study is at the very heart of the RICHES project and its outcomes will shed further light on the recalibration of relationships. By examining the potential of digital Cultural Heritage for strengthening both a European identity and the identity of communities within a multicultural scenario there is an exploration of how communities now engage with their heritage in a changing digital world. As a starting point, this research has drawn upon the project's Taxonomy (developed as the foundation of RICHES research) when considering such complex issues as 'identity' and 'mainstream culture'.

Within the project's overarching research theme on the *Role of Cultural Heritage in European social development*, which aims to identify practices, methodologies and structures that can be applied to Cultural Heritage with the assistance of digital technologies and how they can contribute to the social development in Europe, the study investigates the role of digital Cultural Heritage in the development of a European identity based on diversity. Moreover it contributes to the understanding of how engagement with Cultural Heritage, identity and belonging can be facilitated by digital communication and contributes to forging a sense of European identity among people of diverse origins. It examines how networks of people and (official) organisations, enabled by digital communications, empower the transmission of Cultural Heritage within and across territories and communities.

By focusing on interaction with digital content alone, we may miss how both European and community identity is expressed and strengthened through social practices in which digital practices are used as support or as mediating tools. In relation to other tasks within the project, this study benefits from the project's research on the *Context of change for mediated and unmediated Cultural Heritage* as from the research on *Structures for community and territorial cohesion*, helping to understand how Cultural Heritage is used to reach and engage audiences, facilitate engagement, exchanges and interaction.

Finally, the research on *Digital libraries, collections, exhibitions and users* will benefit from the methodology developed for this study, not only how to approach the user needs and expectations, skills and digital literacy, but also regarding the practices related to mediation of digital cultural contents. Moreover, this research will benefit from the recommendations for the quality of the websites, best practices for the implementation of the technologies, as well as user responses. In addition to these project relationships the research undertaken within this study provides important evidence to support new policy recommendations on improving inter-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A great deal of research has already taken place within the domains of social sciences, history and humanities considering questions of identity and belonging in Europe and the role of Cultural Heritage.

This has encompassed both the role of traditional or analogue forms of Cultural Heritage for the development of a shared European identity as well as local community identity of migrant groups.⁴

⁴ The EUROIDENTITIES project (March 2008 – February 2011) gained insights into the evolution and meanings of a European identity or identities from the 'bottom up' perspective of the individual through autobiographical narrative interviews of five specific sensitized groups. See Euroidentities 2008-2011.

In parallel huge advances have been made in the domain of ICT for the digitisation of European Cultural Heritage and now, in the digital era, it is time to consider the possibilities that digital technologies open up to all segments of society, including heritage, community and identity.

The methodological approach of this study combines insights provided by historical perspectives together with an exploration of how the contemporary society interacts with Cultural Heritage and digital heritage. Therefore, the research design is distinguished by an exploratory mixed-method study that includes desk research, expert interviews, surveys, focus-groups and case study inquiries in order to receive valid results across a diverse cross-section of European society. Coordinated by SPK, the six partners brought in their specialty knowledge and expertise.

Extensive desk research was undertaken, examining not only the complex term 'identity' but also the various notions of 'European identity' in relation to a European Cultural Heritage and its engagement with digital technologies. Official documents produced by the European Commission as 'identity builder'⁵ have been taken in consideration, since they reflect the set of policies established in order to develop a common European identity from a 'top-down' structure. 'Identity', 'European identity' and '(minority) community' are keywords of this study and of great significance for the whole RICHES project. Thereby the project's *CH Definitions and Taxonomy* definition of 'identity', 'Cultural Heritage' as well as 'digital Cultural Heritage' are used as a starting point of our considerations and, with regard to the second part of this deliverable, connected to the notions of local, regional or community identity and Cultural Heritage as well.

To examine the potential of large amounts of digital cultural content to strengthen a European identity, an analysis of five Cultural Heritage website has been undertaken. The websites were selected according to a set of criteria paying also attention to the possibilities that digital technologies can offer to enrich the content:

- *Europeana* – www.europeana.eu
- *Europeana 1914-1918* – www.europeana1914-1918.eu
- *Europeana 1989* – www.europeana1989.eu
- *Euromuse* – www.euromuse.net
- *Inventing Europe* – www.inventingeurope.eu

These comprehensive websites are hosted by non-profit organisations and partly supported by the European Union, presenting not only information on Cultural Heritage objects the way they are accessible on online databases, but, some of them, offer participative elements or curated European Cultural Heritage content for specific target groups and require to comprise as many European cultures as possible. How can these large volumes of digital cultural content empowered by innovative technologies bring people in Europe closer together, contribute towards cultural pluralism in Europe and a European identity based on cultural diversity?

To build upon a deeper understanding which digital practices have the potential to strengthen a European identity and which digital technologies and methods are less suitable for this purpose, work was undertaken with users themselves, undertaking an exploratory research and user analysis among 20 people of different nationalities, age and gender. Among them gender is represented with seven men and 13 women and ages range from 27 to 78 years. All of them have a European

⁵ Bee 2008, 437.

nationality: German (10), British (1), Italian (1), Spanish (1), French (3) and Greek (4), and except six individuals, all others are currently living or have previously lived outside their country of origin, in one or more European countries (14), frequently also outside Europe (8). The participants who responded to the survey and user analysis inquiry speak at least one more language beside their mother tongue: one (4), two (7), three (8), and even four languages (1) and they all have a higher education degree (Masters or PhD). Their professional activity is mostly within the cultural and educational sector (research, teaching, humanities). Five of them have professional activity in the field of cultural informatics, museum documentation and digital media and can provide deeper understanding of the possibilities and current technical strategies of visualising European Cultural Heritage content. Moreover this random sample gathers people with a strong multi-cultural background and experiences through contacts with other cultures.

The group was asked to explore the selected websites and answer questions concerning their views on European identity, the relevance of the contents in relation to European Cultural Heritage and the digital practices that can enhance a feeling of belonging to Europe. Can such big volumes of cultural content strengthen a feeling of belonging to Europe and to which extent allow the technologies implemented to access and understand the content?⁶ The answers of the participants varied according to the time spent on each website. Some of them focused on the websites that they considered most appealing and interesting to them. Others took the time to explore in depth all the websites and provide all the answers. The qualitative research and user analysis had an exploratory character. The results of the user analysis may indicate what current versions mean to the users and can be a starting point for deeper analysis. Nevertheless, the answers give important insights as to the wishes and the digital practices of the participants with a potential to enhance a European identity as well as to the potential and limitations of such a purpose of the websites.

The following part examines to what extent specific technologies such as multilingual technologies, Linked (open) Data, and semantic representation of knowledge can be applied to large volumes of cultural content in digital format, and the contribution they can provide to the construction of a European identity and its integration with the existing multicultural scenario of Europe.

While SPK is responsible for the first part of this study, with input from other task partners implemented, the second part can be seen as a collaborative work of all task partners. Thereby each partner selected a community within their own country or region to analyse in a case study, stressing the local character of our issue:

- The community of Romani people from Coventry (UK)
- The protestant community in Italy
- The Jewish community in Rostock (GER)
- The virtual community of *Marrokko.nl* (NL)
- The Dutch-Surinamese Communities (NL)
- The Spanish-speaking community in Berlin (GER)

The communities that have been selected as they mirror both the cultural diversity of the European society and complex processes of identity-formation. Small migrant groups such as the Romani people who do not claim to a state or nation but with a strong traditional cultural identity and religious groups such as the members of the protestant Waldensian church in Italy or the Jews of Rostock show the great cultural diversity of Europe and the community of young economic migrants

⁶ Thereby evaluation must be a responsibility of the creators of the digital platforms and services and should be regularly conducted. For Europeana 1914-1918 currently an online survey is running aiming to help improving the quality of the website, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KMKJ7RD> (accessed April 25, 2015).

from Spain pays tribute to the current difficult economic and social situation of Europe. In contrast to the Romani and Jewish people they do not show any strongly visible identity but are rather defined by a language group and inhabiting a common geographical space. The case study of the digital community of *Marokko.nl* finally provides deeper insights into digital processes of identity-formation. In order to receive comparable results a joint methodology and interview plan with common questions have been developed that was used during the face-to-face work with community members themselves. The partners of this research study adapted the guidelines to the needs and specific background of the communities they did research on. Finally, SPK integrated the different chapters and evaluated similarities and differences to develop the conclusions.

2.3 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

As described earlier, this report is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the importance of Cultural Heritage for identity and belonging of European citizens and the role of digital Cultural Heritage in the development of a European identity. It concentrates on an analysis of the opportunities offered by the availability of large volumes of digital content of European heritage, published by institutions or cultural authorities. The research examines digital practices to identify the characteristics that can support the strengthening of a European identity, which methods are tangentially less suitable for this purpose and what the challenges, limits and future perspectives of the interaction with digital technologies are. Thereby, the main emphasis is placed on multilingual technologies, linked open data, GIS mapping and semantic representation of knowledge.

- What are the technologies strong points in relation to analogue media?
- Can digital practices related to these digital technologies strengthen a European identity and enhance European integration within a multicultural scenario?
- Does the implementation of such technologies facilitate access and enhance the understanding of cultural contents related to European Cultural Heritage?
- Are these websites indeed instruments for communication, reciprocal understanding and self-representation in common virtual spaces?

Besides the afore mentioned specific digital technologies, digital practices associated to the digital contents – digital features of participation and sharing, social media practices as well as the implementation of personal stories related to cultural issues, are the subject of this research. Based upon these results, future online digital practices, methods and conditions for Cultural Heritage projects are outlined to stimulate a European identity amongst its users.

After examining the extent to which digital Cultural Heritage is being made available for the various communities of Europe from a ‘top down’ perspectives in the first part of this study, the research then concentrates on the communities themselves from a ‘bottom up’ perspective and their way of adopting digital Cultural Heritage for maintaining their specific cultural identities. Since Cultural Heritage ‘is recognised as major contributor to social cohesion and engagement as a way of bringing together communities and stimulating young people to engage with their environments’⁷, the second part of our study will shed new light on groups and communities whose cultural, social and economic lives and values may not be as well-known at a pan-European level. By considering the identity-forming processes within the community of Romani people in Coventry, the protestant community in Italy, the Jewish Community in Rostock, the various Dutch-Surinamese communities in the Netherland, the digital community of *Marokko.nl* as well as the Spanish-speaking community in

⁷ European Commission 2015, 5.

Berlin new ways of civic engagement in strengthening a European identity can be investigated. This chapter contextualises the European dimension of this study and gives insights into the multicultural scenario of Europe. It explores diverse communities and their relationship to Cultural Heritage itself, analysing how they represent, preserve and transmit their heritage in digital format to keep alive a sense of belonging with their home countries or wider communities. The potential of digital technologies is examined to enable them to reflect on their own particular cultural identities and to engage critically with mainstream Cultural Heritage⁸ as an important step towards solving conflicts between diverse identities that bear the risk of instability within the European Union.

In the final section of this study, future perspectives on the importance of digital technologies for identity-forming processes are outlined that may provide important evidence to support new policy recommendations.

⁸ The RICHES Taxonomy defines mainstream Cultural Heritage as: The types of Cultural Heritage, predominantly in the form of physical or tangible heritage, that are most frequently represented in the collections of institutions, carry the imprimatur of public and official bodies, enjoy some degree of public approbation or otherwise are most commonly accepted and widely recognised as heritage. [...] By definition, [...] all other forms of Cultural Heritage – intangible, popular, and everyday – may be considered to lie outside of the mainstream.

3. CONSIDERATIONS ON EUROPEAN AND COMMUNITY IDENTITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CULTURAL HERITAGE

'[...] it seems to me that perhaps the most important task facing the European Union today is coming up with a new and genuinely clear reflection on what might be called European identity, a new and genuinely clear articulation of European responsibility, an intensified interest in the very meaning of European integration in all its wider implications for the contemporary world, and the recreation of its ethos or, if you like, its charisma.' (Václav Havel, 1994)⁹

The speech of Václav Havel stressing the need for a European identity as a prerequisite for European integration was made twenty years ago, but is it still relevant? Since the economic crisis of 2008, there have been calls to revisit the European project. Today the severe social consequences of the crisis in southern European countries are very apparent, and have led to growing nationalisms, cultural regionalisms and extremist movements spreading across Europe. How can Europe grow together? The solution is not only about the success of concrete economic policy measures, but depends a lot on the cohesion between the people and multiple identities living together in Europe today. Is Europe inclusive and makes room for the identities of migrant and diasporic populations? Moreover, what is the relation between a European identity and other identities – individual, ethnic, local, national, and community identities? In addition, what is the role of Cultural Heritage in shaping those identities?

Models of European identity

The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 opened up completely new perspectives for enlarging a united Europe. Since the mid-nineties, social scientists engaged in European studies have been trying to delineate a European identity by investigating the complex relations between national identification and a European identity that grew in a space where European nations pre-existed¹⁰. The first social studies on “European identity” were based on convergence of politically different cultures and the models of identity construction have been applied to European identity¹¹. Analysis of European identity models has proved that these do not stand conceptually alone but are embedded in more general approaches of European integration¹². It has been suggested that national identity can have the opposite effects to a European integration – inclusive or exclusive, and also that a European identity could become an additional layer, providing a sense of integration with other social groups.¹³

European identity as difference: from one identity to multiple identities

In reality, identity is a more complex issue: contemporary identities can be individual or multiple, contradictory or complementary, and more or less adjustable to our decisions and to the circumstances of our lives. According to the definition provided in the project's Taxonomy, “the notion of ‘identity’ is generally used to describe how a person defines him or herself as an individual or in relation to a group or community”. Although the notion ‘community’ is highly contested, it defines groups of people that identify with certain traits, sexual orientation, ethnic or cultural

9 Havel 1994. Speech addressed to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 8 March 1994.

10 Duchesne 2012, 53-74; on the role of culture applied to contemporary European integration, Friedman, Thiel 2012.

11 Christiansen, et al. 2001.

12 Walkenhorst 2009.

13 Diez Medrano 2003; Jamieson, 2004, 1.

background or religion. They can [...] inhabit the same space, share a common history and ancestry, and comply with collectively accepted rites, norms and customs.¹⁴ A factor of cohesion for communities can be a shared identity of tradition, language and ideology, or, as Steven Vertovec stresses 'daily habits of perhaps quite banal intercultural interaction'.¹⁵ Sabiescu attests especially minority communities, communities that have been historically or at present part of socio-political formations controlled by another ethnic group, the capacity to be group-specific culture.¹⁶

In particular, 'when used to describe groups, the term 'identity' is often understood in opposition to others regarded as different'¹⁷ and discussions around belonging in terms of ingroup and outgroup equally affirm essentialist notions. For example, a Dutch person may primarily feel like a European (and not Dutch), when he is confronted with other, extremely different cultures (and identities) e.g. in his or her holidays in India. Within Europe, the nation state remains a most powerful way of belonging. But 'European Culture' is synonym with the identities which we can discover in the various national cultures', like 'a constellation of cultures' articulated by regional traditions, social and religious differences.¹⁸ Pluralism of regional traditions, languages, dialects and cultures is considered as the basis for a more meaningful experience of community, extended beyond their physical boundaries and geographical limits.¹⁹ As Morley and Robins have pointed out, 'to be European now is to be implicated in all three – continental, national, and regional – and being European is about managing some amalgam of these different scales of identity. How this is done will, of course, vary.'

A 'community of culture united in diversity'

Culture and Cultural Heritage are at the heart of the European project. From early on, emphasis on a 'Europe of diversity' has been opposed to a focus on policies promoting national identity and a discourse based on cultural diversity and its role for a European identity has been developed: 'European culture is marked by its diversity: diversity of climate, countryside, architecture, language, beliefs, taste and artistic style. Such diversity must be protected, not diluted. It represents one of the chief sources of the wealth of our continent. However, underlying this variety there is an affinity, a family likeness, a common European identity.'²⁰ Diversity is expressed through cultural pluralism that is marked today by an awareness of other identities. A unifying factor should not be seen as a way to transcend other identities but as an opportunity to acquire a sense of belonging to a greater community on the continent. Culture and Cultural Heritage are inextricably related to people, to their identities as well as to their choices for identification. As it is formulated in the definition of Cultural Heritage in RICHES' Taxonomy, 'Cultural Heritage is some form of inheritance (moveable, immovable, tangible or intangible) which has been selected (and reselected) by a nation or community. It is linked with (group) identity and is both a symbol of the cultural identity of a self-identified group (a nation or people) and an essential element in the construction of that group's identity'.²¹

¹⁴ Sabiescu 2013, 14.

¹⁵ de Wild 2012, 81.

¹⁶ Sabiescu 2013, 15.

¹⁷ RICHES Taxonomy, „Identity“, 27.

¹⁸ Eliot 1948, 50, 58, 120-121.

¹⁹ Morley and Robins 1995, 20.

²⁰ Commission of the European Communities 1983, 5/83, 1.

²¹ RICHES Taxonomy, 22.

Culture can promote mutual respect and understanding of different identities and communities, as stated in the actions of the Council of Europe regarding cultural and natural heritage: ‘promoting diversity and dialogue through access to heritage to foster a sense of identity, collective memory and mutual understanding within and between communities; contributing to development that is linked to territorial cohesion, life style and relationships through the notion of heritage and landscape as community resources’.²²

Weaving a pattern of European identity through a common past

Moreover, heritage and identity are interconnected through a common past that, “provides a point of validation or legitimation for the present in which actions and policies are justified by continuing references to representations and narratives of the past that are, at least in part, encapsulated through manifestations of tangible and intangible heritage.”²³ A common Cultural Heritage and a common history can provide a sense of belonging amongst and between European citizens. Several projects and media platforms, analogue and digital, have been developed in order to research, disseminate and raise understanding of Europe’s long history. The most characteristic example is the Museum of European History aiming to present European history in its diversity²⁴, but also archaeological exhibitions highlighting the concept of European Prehistory²⁵.

Another question to ask is, how ideas of the future, as much as of those about the past, are embedded and nurtured in this approach. As the definition of Cultural Heritage in the project’s Taxonomy implies, ‘it is not just history but is an iterative, continuous process, which is concerned with contemporary ‘living cultures’ that may reinterpret and recreate their culture and can play a vital co-creative and participatory role in the expression, production and consumption of culture. Cultural Heritage reinforces a group’s ‘culture’, their way of life.’

European identity(ies) in a system of values and human rights

From geographical and territorial conceptions of heritage and identities, there is a shift towards the social value of Cultural Heritage and its relations to the people – citizens of Europe. Values are an intellectual heritage of the past. The example of connected rationality-based freedom and morality in favour of humanism and individuality is very important for (Western) European cultures, because of its influence on the style of living and orientation of each person and of entire groups.²⁶ The development of common values and common policies in Europe as a basis for a European identity are found in the *Charter of European Identity*, put forward by the Europa-Union Germany in 1995.²⁷ Cultural Heritage related to human rights is put forward in the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention).

²² Council of Europe 2015a, See also, Council of Europe 2015b with a list of related conventions.

²³ Graham and Howard 2008, 6.

²⁴ Huistra et al. 2014, 124-136.

²⁵ Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle Bonn, 1999; and the concept of permanent exhibition of Prehistoric collections in the Neues Museum, Berlin.

²⁶ Peterková 2003, 1.

²⁷ Approved by the 41st Ordinary Congress in Lübeck, 28th October 1995, by the Europa-Union Germany, http://www.europa-union.de/fileadmin/files_eud/PDF-Dateien_EUD/Allg._Dokumente/Charter_of_European_Identity.pdf

In this innovative document, the concept of the ‘common heritage of Europe’ is related to human rights and the fundamental freedoms and to cultural diversity.²⁸ The Treaty of Lisbon is based on the idea that knowledge and use of heritage form part of the citizen’s right to participate in cultural life as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The text presents heritage both as a resource for human development, the enhancement of cultural diversity and the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and as part of an economic development model based on the principles of sustainable resource use.²⁹ The European Expert Network on Culture (EENC) has highlighted, as first challenge, the need to explore and deepen the understanding of the values of heritage, fostering a discussion and further understanding on the meaning and value of Cultural Heritage in contemporary society. Heritage is related to issues of identity and diversity, which are of increasing relevance in Europe.³⁰

Identification with Europe and a sense of belonging, based on values that teach people to live together, to respect their differences whilst searching for elements of unity finds more support among European citizens. The cultural foundations for a socially integrated Europe seem to be given, as the citizens of the European Union recognize themselves highly as equals, few social cleavages are visible regarding equal rights for citizens from other EU states, and people largely follow these values in everyday practice.³¹

²⁸ Council of Europe 2005, (entered into force in June 2011). It is closely associated to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, see also RICHES Deliverable D2.2 - *Digital copyrights framework*.

²⁹ Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community (2007/c 306/01), 17/12/2007, p. 11 (Treaty on European Union (TEU) Article 3), accessed April 20, 2015. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:FULL&from=EN>.

³⁰ European expert network on Culture (EENC) 2013, 5-6.

³¹ Gerhards and Lengfeld 2013.

4. ROLE OF DIGITAL CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR ENHANCING A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

4.1 VIEWS ON EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

As highlighted in the previous chapter, identity has different aspects and is variable since people can adapt their identities to the different situations of their lives. Do the people who live in Europe consider themselves as Europeans and what makes them feel or not feel European? What is the role of Cultural Heritage in shaping a European cultural identity? These questions were asked to the respondents of a small-scale survey, to people who are also the users of the five European Cultural Heritage websites selected to test digital practices enhancing a European identity. Their answers were related to relevant data from the *Standard Eurobarometer survey* conducted in November 2014 in 35 European countries and territories: the 28 member States of the European Union, the six candidate countries (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania) and the Turkish Cypriot Community in the part of the country not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. The *Standard Eurobarometer* was established in 1973 and each of its surveys consists of approximately 1000 face-to-face interviews per country.³² The results of the Eurobarometer survey partly confirmed and partly complemented the results of our small-scale survey on European identity among European citizens.

The increasing importance of local communities was underlined, showing that almost nine out of ten Europeans feel attached to their city/ town/ village (89 %).³³

*'What I feel is being a Catalan. I am not a European'.*³⁴

Thereby, both the feeling of belonging to city/ town/ village and country seem to increase with age.³⁵ Besides this, the national identity of European citizens remains the strongest form of identification, with 91 % of Europeans feeling attached to their countries.

*'I'm Spanish. I'm absolutely Spanish. I don't believe in the European identity. Not at the moment. I think we have to work first of all on other things in Europe.'*³⁶

In contrast to these high percentages of identification among European citizens, the feeling of belonging to Europe itself received considerably less agreement. 56 % of those questioned felt attached to Europe, while 42 % feel no such attachment.³⁷ Nevertheless, it is the majority of respondents in 22 European Member States that show a European identity. Most notably the people in Luxembourg with 79 % and Sweden with 75 %, in contrast to the people from Cyprus with only 35 % and Greece with 37 % agreement. Probably, as a result of the European financial and economic crisis of the last years the identification with Europe has decreased in several Member States since 2007 and in all Member States people are more likely to feel attached to Europe than to the European Union.³⁸

³² The Standard Eurobarometer 82. European citizenship – autumn 2014. The reports are published twice yearly.

³³ Eurobarometer 2014, 5.

³⁴ Male interviewee of SPK survey from Barcelona.

³⁵ Ibid. 8.

³⁶ Young female interviewee of SPK survey.

³⁷ Ibid. 10.

³⁸ Ibid. 12.

Both the findings of *The Eurobarometer Standard survey* and our small-scale survey revealed that almost equally both men and women of all age groups share a European identity. This is very characteristic for people with a high educational background and higher standard of living who feel themselves to be Europeans, or people that have lived and worked in several European countries and speak several European languages, such as the participants of our survey.³⁹

*‘Yes, I do feel like a European, because I can work and live everywhere in Europe’.*⁴⁰

*‘Yes, I think I feel European. There is something that connects Rome, London and Berlin. I don’t know what it is, but I feel more relaxed in Europe. When I’m in America I feel strange and very European. But in the end I am European since I’m originally from Spain, work currently in Germany and Greece, studied in Italy and have a British girlfriend. Extremely European. If it is good or bad I don’t know, but I feel European.’*⁴¹

Both surveys show the very personal character of the concept of identity. In our small-scale survey people mentioned one or several identities – regional identity, Mediterranean identity, national identity in their countries but European outside of them, or feeling European with no relation to a personal or national identity. Similarly, *The Eurobarometer Standard study* compared the sense of being European with feelings of national citizenship. Thereby an absolute majority of respondents define themselves first by their nationality and then as Europeans (51 %), whereas respondents who define themselves first as European citizens and then by their nationality remain in minority (6 %), but exist:

*‘In any case I feel more like a European than being Spanish, although I know a lot more about the Spanish culture, because I have lived there for 30 years. But I read literature from America, China and Spain, but maybe I am more a European. I cannot define myself.’*⁴²

*‘I grew up in the GDR and have seen the German reunification and was suddenly part of a totally different system. I’ve never felt very much German, so Europe closes this gap.’*⁴³

Consequently, only 2 % define themselves as ‘European only’, while 39 % claim to have only a national identity.⁴⁴ The most ‘international’ of all participants of our survey, an English teacher who has lived in several European countries and also outside Europe, has put forward a broad minded conception of culture and belonging – an intellectual approach based on personal values, which denies any geographically-based identity and every kind of categorization - racial, social, national or transnational.

*“I have an issue with the premise of “belonging to Europe”. I don’t belong to any entity; I belong to a set of values that should be shared beyond Europe.”*⁴⁵

³⁹ Eurobarometer 2014, 14. On the contrary, people of low educational background, unemployed, house persons and members of the working class feel comparatively unattached to Europe.

⁴⁰ Young, female interviewee of SPK survey.

⁴¹ Male interviewee of SPK survey.

⁴² Male interviewee of SPK survey.

⁴³ Male interviewee of SPK survey.

⁴⁴ Eurobarometer 2014, 32.

⁴⁵ Male interviewee of SPK survey.

When asked to identify the means best suited to creating a feeling of community within the European Union, 30 % of the respondents of *The Eurobarometer survey* mentioned culture as the most effective mean of creating a European identity, followed by economy (25 %), sports (24 %) and history (23 %). Considering both categories ‘culture’ and ‘history’ as parts of Cultural Heritage, a large group of people in Europe, but especially people with a high educational background and those for whom the EU conjures up a positive image, value Cultural Heritage as a significant force in strengthening a European identity.⁴⁶ The results of our small-scale study are similar, since a common history and culture from the Greek antiquity to the Berlin Wall, today still visible in stories was considered as a strong unifying force. Furthermore, the importance of cultural diversity within Europe and the openness to other European cultures was underlined frequently:

‘I am interested to know about other cultures near me, not for the sake of travelling and collecting pictures in my computer, but to raise my children in a more international and diversity aware environment than the one my parents grew in.’⁴⁷

‘Being European to me means being diverse; respecting and embracing this cultural diversity of Europe and being myself a tiny part of it. Feeling European implies being open-minded, curious and interested in other cultures, languages and stories.’⁴⁸

Consequently, many of our interviewees mentioned that being able to ‘live’ their own regional or national identity and culture everywhere in Europe is an important achievement that characterizes Europe. In this sense, *The Standard Eurobarometer survey* revealed that Europeans are now more open to other countries, and the majority of the respondents (51 %) have socialized with people from another European country during the 12 months preceding the survey. Additionally, more than a third of the respondents have watched a TV programme in a language other than their mother tongue (37 %) and more than a quarter have read a book, magazine or newspaper in a language other than their mother tongue. Besides, more Europeans have visited another European country (43 %).⁴⁹ Similarly, the interviewees of our small-scale study stressed the importance of communication and community as a value of European identity. Getting to know, meet and interact with people from other European countries together with social interactions was considered as an important aspect of European identity. In addition, learning personal stories coming from other European countries bears the potential to bring people closer and more open to a different thinking.

‘Learning personal stories coming from other European countries helps you to understand another point of view.’⁵⁰

Therefore, a common currency and common space for being able to travel within Europe without borders was considered an important European achievement.

Being able to travel and explore other cultures certainly adds to my personality and thus to my personal identity.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid. 37, 40.

⁴⁷ Male interviewee of SPK survey.

⁴⁸ Young female interviewee of SPK from Germany.

⁴⁹ Eurobarometer 2014, 54-58. Nevertheless, the openness index of the study claims that a majority of Europeans continue to have a ‘low’ openness index.

⁵⁰ Male interviewee of SPK survey from France.

⁵¹ Female interviewee of SPK survey from Germany.

Furthermore for the interviewees being European means caring about politics and the current situation in Europe, about how people in Europe live today, as well as understanding information on today's political, social and cultural events.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CULTURAL HERITAGE WEBSITES AS TO THEIR POTENTIAL OF CONSTRUCTING A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

According to the RICHES taxonomy, 'Digital heritage' or 'digital Cultural Heritage' refers to digital content and materials that represent, reflect or describe human knowledge and cultural manifestations, are invested with cultural value, and considered a legacy that ought to be transmitted to future generations. Digital heritage content can be produced by converting materials originally in analogue format, or can be 'born digital' – objects such as documents, artworks, software or websites that originate in digital format."⁵²

In the recent years, the European Union has encouraged and supported the digitisation of cultural materials and promoted with several actions the development of a European digital Cultural Heritage. These policies aim to highlight the diversity of cultures in Europe in digital spaces, to identify their common aspects, to improve public access to different forms of cultural and linguistic expressions and to encourage ways in which cultural organizations can develop cultural actions through the structural funds and European projects towards the year 2020⁵³. The role of Cultural Heritage in the information society was also a topic of the Faro convention, where it is formulated that the use of digital technology should enhance access to Cultural Heritage by encouraging initiatives, which promote the quality of contents and endeavour to secure diversity of languages and cultures in information society.⁵⁴

Our aim was to explore the opportunities that are offered by the availability of large amounts of digital cultural content, and if and how these can contribute to the development of a European identity or enhance a feeling of belonging to Europe among their users. Furthermore, we wanted to identify digital practices that could strengthen the cultural identity of Europeans, the methods that are tangentially less suitable for this purpose, as well as the challenges, and limits of the interaction with digital technologies for this purpose.

Five prominent European project websites have been selected in order to evaluate their potential to develop or enhance a European identity among their users.

The criteria for their selection are the following:

- Large volumes of digital cultural content with relevance to European Cultural Heritage, that allows to discover European history and culture and shows the diversity of European Cultural Heritage
- Content curated by Cultural Heritage institutions as well as user-generated content
- Free access to information or open data, i.e. data that anyone can freely access, use, modify, and share for any purpose.

⁵² RICHES Taxonomy, "Digital heritage (digital repository, online catalogue)", 24-25.

⁵³ European Commission, *Implementation of Commission Recommendation on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation, Progress report 2011-2013*, September 2014, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/european-commissions-report-digitisation-online-accessibility-and-digital-preservation-cultural>

⁵⁴ Faro Convention, Article 14a.

- Different types of access proposed, allowing to explore the content – thematic, search, geographic information / maps and timeline
- Each website is intended for different uses and target audiences

These criteria have led to the selection of the following five projects, for which a presentation is provided here. Tables summarizing information on each website are provided in the appendix.

- *Europeana* – www.europeana.eu
- *Europeana 1914-1918* – www.europeana1914-1918.eu
- *Europeana 1989* – www.europeana1989.eu
- *Euromuse* – www.euromuse.net
- *Inventing Europe* – www.inventingeurope.eu/

Europeana, www.europeana.eu

Europeana, Europe’s digital library, archive and museum, is by far the most ambitious project in the field of European Cultural Heritage. With more than 36 Million records in the Europeana database, it is the largest collection of object records from museums, libraries and archives not only in Europe, but worldwide.⁵⁵ Via regional and national aggregators in many European countries any museum, library and archive can contribute to the large collection of data. Sophisticated search tools, digital themed exhibitions, API⁵⁶ for use and re-use of data and a large number of projects related to Europeana content and Europeana’s technologies make this source an influential digital project in Cultural Heritage today.

The Europeana Foundation, based in The Hague, Netherlands is the driving force behind Europeana and has made great progress in setting a Cultural Heritage agenda for Europe.

‘We believe that culture can transform lives. We are a network, representing more than 2,500 Cultural Heritage organisations and a thousand individuals from these and other walks of life, passionate about bringing Europe’s vast wealth of Cultural Heritage to the world. We believe that doing so will unlock untold economic and societal benefits, transforming lives in the process. Culture unites Europe, and making it more accessible promotes understanding and new economies.’

⁵⁵ According to statistics.europeana.eu (accessed April 29, 2015).

⁵⁶ Application programming interface (API) is a set of routines, protocols, and tools for building software applications.

The following extracts are from the Europeana Strategic Plan 2015-20, published in late 2014:

‘Europeana started 5 years ago as a big political idea to unite Europe through culture by making our heritage available to all for work, learning or pleasure. A deeply felt belief that our shared Cultural Heritage fundamentally belongs to all of us, and is therefore too important to leave to market forces alone to digitise and make available. We still believe in this big idea. We are Europeana, the network for the Cultural Heritage sector in Europe, and we think we are in a unique position to make these ideals come true. We are expanding our network with thousands of cultural institutions, politicians, tech entrepreneurs, open data activists, developers and researchers all with one thing in common: a shared dream of a world where every citizen will have access to all Cultural Heritage. We transform the world with culture.’

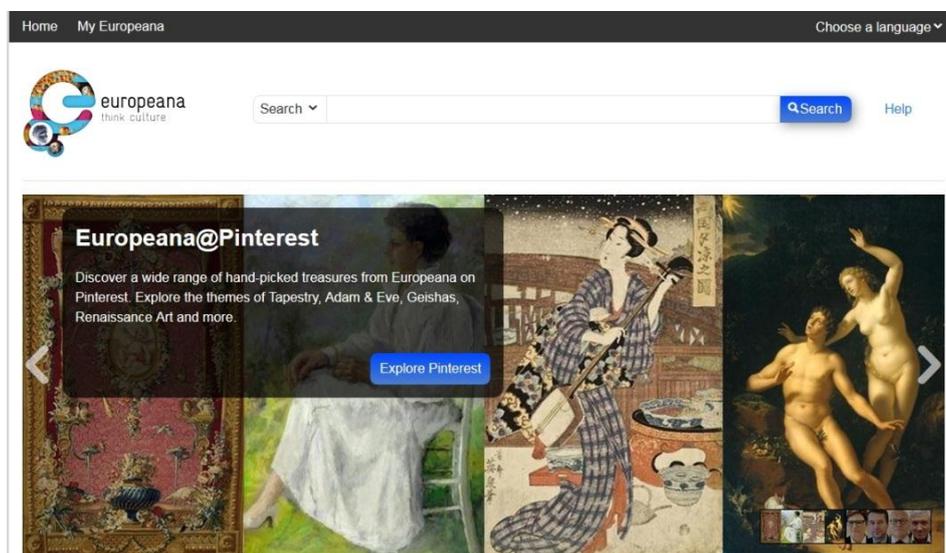


Figure 1. Europeana, homepage

Over a five year period, an infrastructure has been built that has connected over 30 million objects from over 2,500 institutions. However, in that time, the digital world has also changed and continues to offer challenges of how to bring culture to a population that demands instant access to high quality images.

‘Our vision is an infrastructure that connects Europe’s culture digitally in the same way that roads and railways do physically. A laboratory that innovates for our new world using the richness of our past. We need a backbone that allows us to store, to access, to improve and to share. A place where copyright is respected, but ease of use is the mantra. We need to become the cultural innovators servicing the holders of Cultural Heritage and the users in equal measure.’

Clearly, the vision for Europeana is ambitious and ties in with the stated intention of the RICHES project, to unlock cultural wealth and recalibrate relationships between cultural institutions and the citizens of Europe. This, of course, is easier said than done and it is true that Europeana, still in its infancy, has faced many challenges, including convincing cultural institutions to digitise and open their collections and provide rights for use and re-use of their high resolution material.⁵⁷ A healthy debate continues about traditional intellectual property rights and the advantages of opening up collections to generate public engagement and new income streams. This was a theme considered in detail within the RICHES project's research on *Digital Copyright Frameworks*.

Moving forward from 2015, the target for Europeana is to extent from a portal to a platform by 2020 to bring together cultural institutions, creative industries, the education sector and members of the public. A multi-use platform targets End Users (micro sites such as 1914-1918 and 1989), Professionals (archives, libraries, museums and audio visual) and Creatives (including entrepreneurs, the tourism industry and education sector) to meet the demands of a European society that interacts and creates online.

Although there is a strong vision in place, the challenges for Europeana include gathering of more content that is both digitised and available in the public domain.

'We are a long way from harnessing everything - in fact 90% of our heritage has not yet been digitised. This digitally available 10% represents an astonishing 300 million objects, reflecting the many facets of European culture captured in books, paintings, letters, photographs, sound and moving image. Only one third of that (34%) is currently available online, and barely 3% of that works for real creative re-use (for example in social media, via APIs, for mash-ups⁵⁸, etc.).'

There is the requirement for quality of content and clear metadata (descriptive information) to ensure that the Cultural Heritage content that is available to users, creates value for them and generates interest in using it as source of material to engender European identity. Improving the Europeana repository by ingesting and enriching metadata for Europeana as well as improving data quality to provide high quality digital records including meaningful titles, rich descriptions and more links is a clearly formulated target in the Europeana Business Plan 2015.⁵⁹

Given that Europeana is relatively young and has a significant task to create a unique access point European digitised cultural content, it is perhaps no surprise that the user group, that tested the website as part of this research, flagged up a number of issues and these reflect the overarching concerns that members of the public have had. The micro-sites for Europeana 1914-18 and Europeana 1989 were developed to engage the public on a wider scale.

The Europeana Foundation's 2014 Annual Report entitled *New Frontiers* described the microsites:

'2014 was the centenary of the start of the First World War, commemorated by Europeana 1914-1918 and it was the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain, marked by Europeana 1989. Both projects ask members of the public to contribute family stories, photographs and documents to their online archives.'

⁵⁷ Kroes 2011, 5-7 (uncommonculture.org/ojs/index.php/UC/issue/view/327/showToc)

⁵⁸ A mashup is a web page or web application that uses content from more than one source to create a single new service, displayed in a single graphical interface.

⁵⁹ *Europeana Business Plan 2015*, 10-12 with examples of records before and after enrichment.

These historic events bookended the 20th century and shaped Europe as we know it. Our projects aim to document, preserve and share the stories of the people who lived through these times, respecting and demonstrating as many perspectives as possible. By doing this, we build bridges between people, between countries and between generations.'

Europeana 1914-1918, www.europeana1914-1918.eu

100 years after World War I Europeana created a portal for personal and official materials from and about this war. Besides project partners, users are invited to contribute their stories accompanied by letters or photographs – and more than 13.000 contributions have been submitted so far. On this occasion partner libraries, national collections and film archives have digitized materials specifically for this online project. Additionally, teacher resources have been created. All the content is available for re-use.

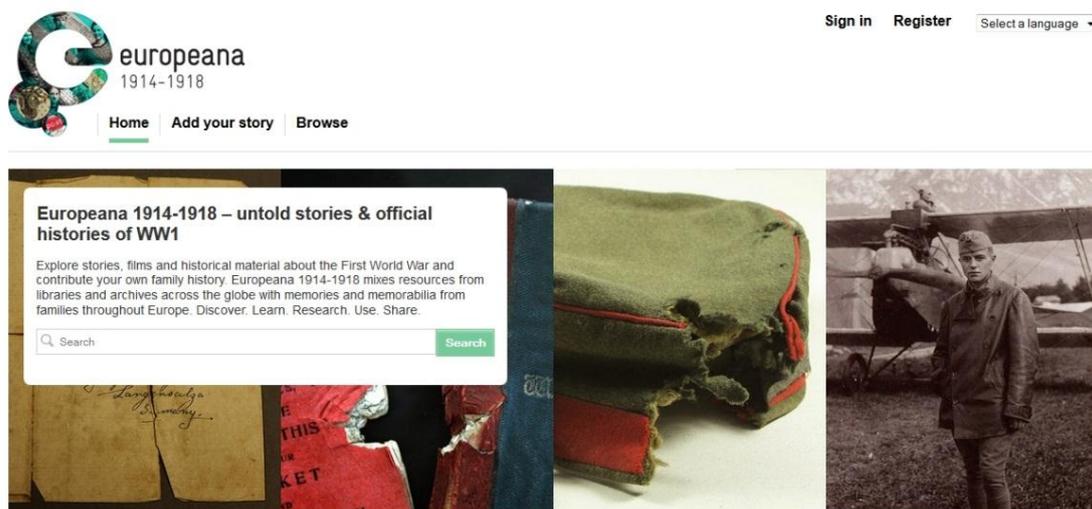


Figure 2. Europeana 1914-1918, homepage

In 2014, contributions were received from 20 countries with 400,000 items digitised by national libraries, 660 hours of film digitised and 90,000 images of First World War family papers and memorabilia, mostly collected through family history road shows over a three year period. This collection was brought together as part of the multi-lingual europeana1914-1918.eu website, which was then launched during an international conference at the Berlin State Library.

'Europeana 1914-1918 is now the world's largest online repository of First World War material. This has proved a valuable resource for Europe's media with many newspapers using content from Europeana for their features on the centenary. In May, Europeana 1914-1918 caught the attention of German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. In her weekly podcast, she spoke to Fact & File's Frank Drauschke about the importance of projects that encourage the public to take part in Europe's history. She said that they serve as a reminder that it would be 'better to negotiate 20 hours longer and talk' than ever return to a situation of war in Europe.'

The connection with people in the development of the 1914-1918 site is:

- 49 road shows in 2014
- 750 media mentions
- 234,000 items collected in total
- 28,000 followers on Facebook and Twitter
- 717,000 website visitors in 2014

Europeana 1989, www.europeana1989.eu

Europeana 1989 is a similar site that collects memories and items that relate to the fall of the Iron Curtain from seven Central and Eastern European countries. The website offers Europeana content enriched with personal stories, photos, videos or sound recordings from individuals all over Europe. The aim is to (re-)create a personal experience and offer a complete picture of social and political changes during the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. The project is implemented on the social media platform “History pin” and has run since January 2012. It is based on community contributions as well as on visualization of contributed data based on maps (GIS).



Figure 3. Europeana 1989, homepage

By the end of 2014, it had collected 1,500 stories. In total, this represents:

- 5 road shows in 2014
- 11,100 objects collected in total
- 89 oral histories recorded
- 270 media mentions
- 4,400 followers on Twitter and Facebook

The German road shows unearthed interesting and unique historical material including several self-made demonstration banners and the original founding charter of the Social Democratic Party in East Germany.

In Hungary, the project visited Szeged, Sopron and Budapest and attracted about 150 visitors. The town of Sopron was home to the Pan-European Picnic - a peace demonstration on the Austrian-Hungarian border crossing - that took place on 19-20 August 1989. Many of the contributors witnessed the demonstration first-hand, like the commanding border guard officer who refrained from using force when hundreds of East Germans stormed the border gate. Their contributions included pieces of barbed wire, a damaged lock and a piece of the Berlin wall.'

By taking road shows to venues across Europe, people have been able to share community and family histories; the advent of the digital technologies has enabled treasured family mementos, letters and photographs to be scanned and shared at a European level through the website. Even after the completion of the road show programme, it is still possible for people to independently upload digital items to the collection to contribute to the shared European identity.

Other Europeana related projects

To support the development of the online Cultural Heritage repository, the European Commission has provided much of the funding, not just to the Foundation, but also to a series of related ICT-CIP-PSP funded Best Practice Networks, examples being:

- EuropeanaPhotography (www.europeana-photography.eu) which examined 100 years of photography and collected 453,828 images (considering rights labelling and detailed metadata) that were subsequently uploaded into Europeana for further use. Even though the project has ended, the All Our Yesterdays exhibition still travels to museums across Europe, encouraging local people and organisations to add images to the collection.
- Europeana Newspapers (www.europeana-newspapers.eu) that aggregated 18 million historic newspaper pages for Europeana and The European Library, converting 10 million newspaper pages to full text to help users quickly search for specific articles, people and locations mentioned within the newspaper, as well as creating a special content viewer to improve online newspaper browsing.

These are further examples of contributions to Europeana and the building of a European identity which is both available and accessible online and demonstrates shared Cultural Heritage.

Europeana Creative (pro.europeana.eu/get-involved/projects/project-list/europeana-creative) and Europeana Space (www.europeana-space.eu) have the remit to explore the creative use and re-use of Europeana's (and other sources of) content through apps, platforms, games, online books and toolkits that build upon the content available and bring them to the people in different, innovative, educational and entrepreneurial ways. Through these approaches, people can become aware of the online repository and can explore further, finding content that is of interest that relates to them and their place in society.

Euromuse, www.euromuse.net

Euromuse.net aims to serve as a European portal providing up-to-date and accurate information about European museums and their major exhibitions (with an average of 70,600 monthly visits in 2014). Set up in 2001 as the first exhibition portal, it is currently being re-launched (during 2015). Among the portal's new features will be the link to the contents of Europeana, allowing it to relate thematically to the on-going exhibitions with object records and their images accessible via Europeana.

In the current version of Euromuse.net, a comfortable and quick search provides information about ongoing or past exhibitions, for example in a specific region or about specific topics. The content is updated regularly by the participating museums and presented in text with images and geographical information based on maps. Furthermore, the website provides additional links to learning resources, online exhibitions and online collections.

Today, Euromuse represents more than 550 museums in 29 European countries – with a constantly growing number of participating museums, which is boosted by the creators of the portal in order to present museums and their exhibitions from all over Europe. Among the members of Euromuse are prestigious museums such as the Louvre in Paris, the Tate in London, the Uffizi in Florence, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the State Museums of Berlin, the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna, the Jewish Museum in Prague, the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens and the National Museum in Gdansk.



Figure 4. Euromuse.net, homepage

The exhibitions cover not only the arts from every period (ranging from Prehistory, classical Antiquity, and Middle Ages to Old Masters, European art, 19th century and contemporary art) but also objects from science and natural science as well as ethnological collections from all over the world.

In addition of the current exhibitions on the portal, euromuse.net contains an exhibition archive with more than 2,000 past exhibitions. All information published in euromuse.net – information about the exhibition and related images, about the museum, admission fees, opening hours and relevant web-links – is supplied directly by each institution, making euromuse.net a high quality and accurate website.

The information published on euromuse.net is available in the language of the exhibiting country and in English. At present, this multilingual website offers information both in English and in one of the following 23 European languages: Albanian, Bosnian, Czech, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, French, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Spanish and Swedish.

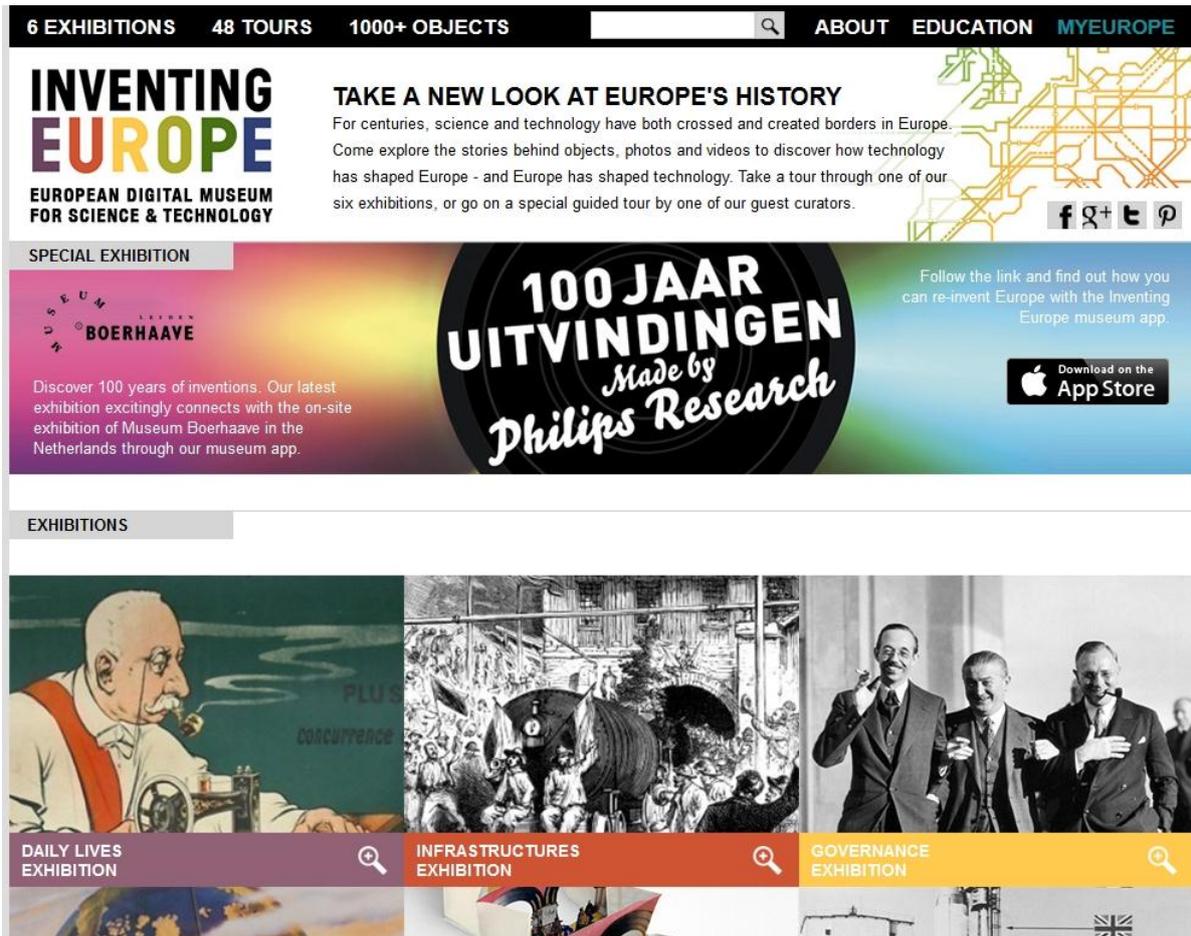
The portal was developed by the National Gallery in London, the Musée du Louvre and the Réunion des musées nationaux in Paris, the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Euromuse.net is administered by the Institute for Museum Research in Berlin and the National Gallery in London.

Euromuse.net offers the following services:

- Museums – offering introductory background information on the museums’ history and their collections
- Exhibitions – providing in-depth information on current and upcoming exhibitions throughout Europe, as well as opening period, opening time, admission fee and online-ticketing
- News – linking to up-to-date information on the museums’ activities
- Resources – presenting special online services and projects from and for museums, such as virtual exhibitions, digital catalogues, educational material, and museum directories
- Shops – inviting to browse and order online the merchandise assortment of the museums’ online shops.

Inventing Europe, www.inventingeurope.eu

The History of Science and Technology in Europe is the main theme of this “digital Museum” site. This ongoing project is a collaboration between Europeana and eleven science and technology museums and research institutions. The website features around 1,000 objects and their history in online exhibitions and tours. The aim is to present ‘curated only’ content. Partners enrich each object record with stories and context information as well as links to other sources for further exploration. Education and teacher resources and downloadable material is part of the sites concept as well.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Inventing Europe' website. At the top, a navigation bar includes '6 EXHIBITIONS', '48 TOURS', '1000+ OBJECTS', a search bar, and links for 'ABOUT', 'EDUCATION', and 'MYEUROPE'. The main header features the title 'INVENTING EUROPE' and the subtitle 'EUROPEAN DIGITAL MUSEUM FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY'. A central banner reads 'TAKE A NEW LOOK AT EUROPE'S HISTORY' and describes the site's focus on science and technology. Below this, a 'SPECIAL EXHIBITION' section highlights '100 JAAR UITVINDINGEN Made by Philips Research' with a call to action to download the museum app. The bottom section, titled 'EXHIBITIONS', displays three featured exhibition cards: 'DAILY LIVES EXHIBITION' (with an image of a man at a sewing machine), 'INFRASTRUCTURES EXHIBITION' (with an image of a busy street scene), and 'GOVERNANCE EXHIBITION' (with an image of three men in suits).

Figure 5. Inventing Europe, homepage

The Inventing Europe website is a collaboration between historians and Cultural Heritage institutions throughout Europe. Together, these national collections shape a transnational collective memory of Europe's Cultural Heritage. The goal of the website is to cross borders and explore the history, culture and formation of Europe through the lens of technological objects and images.

Inventing Europe has invited guest curators from throughout Europe to create guided tours through history based on their research and expertise (you can check out who they are in the curators section). In the first set guest tours, curators among the partners of the website have chosen objects from their own collections that tell unexpected stories from European history.

The website currently offers six exhibitions - collections of tours that have been grouped together around and explore one theme throughout the history of technology in Europe. The exhibition themes are: Daily Lives, Media, Knowledge Societies, Infrastructure, Globalisation and Governance. The tours within these exhibitions allow users to make connections with and between the rich and growing online collections of museums, archives and libraries throughout Europe and beyond.

Each tour is a collection of 4 to 6 stories, based on the objects and images in the collections of the partners and other Cultural Heritage institutions. Each tour outlines and reveals an aspect of the history of technology in Europe.

MyEurope is the personalized area on Inventing Europe, where registered users can engage with the history of science and create their own collections or tours by selecting objects from the contents of the website and share them with others in the Inventing Europe community. Furthermore, users can interact and communicate with the curators: they can ask questions, start a discussion, and join in ongoing discussions around the tours created by guest curators and students from across Europe.

4.3 USER RESPONSE TO THE SELECTED WEBSITES: DIGITAL CULTURAL HERITAGE PRACTICES WITH THE POTENTIAL TO PROMOTE A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Previous knowledge of the websites

The digital resource that was best known to the users was, as expected, Europeana: 13 people out of 20 knew its existence. This concerns people from all types of professional activity –museum, documentation and cultural institution, education and research. The adventurous launch of the Europeana website, advertising as the European digital Library and the concurrence with Google put forward in the media have possibly contributed to the spread of the information, together with the novelty and the ambition of the project. Europeana, Europeana 1989 and Europeana 1914-1918, remain less known. Sixteen out of twenty participants had never heard of Europeana 1989, whereas Europeana 1914-1918 was better known – 10 people were aware of this project. The portal Inventing Europe was also unknown among most of the users: only three persons were aware of its existence. One reason for this can be that the respondents come from the humanities and not from the sciences, which is the background of the audiences that the portal is aiming at. People from museums and cultural institutions knew the portal Euromuse (6 in total).

Age or digital literacy are not decisive for this kind of knowledge but rather the field of activity of the users. Better aware of the existence of the selected resources are definitely museum, documentation and cultural institution professionals. One of them stated that she often visits the websites Europeana 1989 and 1914-1918, showing professional and maybe personal interest. Astonishing is the fact that among the least informed appear the participants from the fields of education, research and academic. It indicates that these portals are still not so widely used in such professional environments and that the information campaigns of the European Union should aim at this very important target group to spread awareness of the resources.⁶⁰

Relevance of the content for a European identity

As much as it was possible to conclude from the answers provided, several users searched for contents from their home countries (Germany, Greece, France, and Turkey). This may be a spontaneous way to access content by looking for something already familiar, as well as a testimony for their national identity related to Cultural Heritage and their desire to see if their countries are represented among the contents of the websites. The diversity of regional culture is thought to be equally important for European Cultural Heritage websites. National or regional Cultural Heritage is not considered independently but it is seen as part of the European Cultural Heritage. Large aggregations of Cultural Heritage objects in this case should offer the possibility to compare one's Cultural Heritage with cultural expressions from other European countries, as a young woman from Greece (35) expresses:

⁶⁰ Referred to in Council conclusions on Europeana, 2; Europeana Business Plan 2015, 7.

'To pinpoint how key artistic and cultural phenomena were expressed throughout Europe and including Greece'

Equal representation of all European countries within the contents of the websites was also felt as necessary, as well as multilingual access. It can reflect an identification with Europe based on values that recognize equal rights among European citizens, and have the potential to create a socially integrated Europe. Users expected to find information gathered from most European countries and put forward this criterion in their evaluation of the search results. According to this, the search results provided by the portal *Inventing Europe* were evaluated as less satisfactory. A young woman from Spain (31) asks:

'it maybe due to the origin of the contributors, but I got stories mainly from Hungary, Germany and Britain, other countries might have relevant stories, objects and authors, but they are not represented?'

Other respondents tried to explain 'missing' content by mentioning ongoing development or lack of systematic update of the websites. They considered that the contents would be further enriched as to include more information on the historical events presented (for example, in *Europeana 1914-1918*, topic *Fronts*). There is clearly a need for exhaustiveness that is expected from such big data repositories.

The views of the respondents about European belonging that were highlighted in the previous chapter were most frequently in relation to an interest for culture and Cultural Heritage. This idea was considered equally relevant for the content of European digital Cultural Heritage websites. Neighbouring countries or southern European or Mediterranean countries, as well as interactions with cultures that played a role in European history, as the Arabs on the Iberian Peninsula, were among the wishes for content relevant to European cultural identity. Interest for other cultures is not limited to Europe but embraces cultural diversity in a world dimension and shows an awareness of Europe within a global digital information space. As to the way that European Cultural Heritage websites should mediate cultural identities, there was a wish to understand their distinctive characteristics and commonalities and focus on uniting elements, as the following quotes attest:

'Show and emphasize the things that we have in common. [Such websites] could attempt to show what distinguishes Europe from other cultural communities.'
'Such websites should build a bridge and an understanding of similarities and differences. It is a permanent work. We can use digital Cultural Heritage to make the history tangible and comprehensive.'

However, the wish to learn about European cultures and their interactions over the time that the respondents expressed is not limited to the past, but it concerns also the present. As a young participant argued, highlighting the daily life of European citizens in different countries and learn how they live and work, has the potential to mediate a sense of European belonging in a very different way than the European Cultural Heritage websites that were tested. The *Young Europeans* website of Eurostat⁶¹ that was referred to as example, offers an interactive comparison of the life of young people (age 16 to 29) from thirty-one European countries, based on statistics about their family, work, free time and the use of the Internet. Young users interactively establish a personal connection and identify with real life situations that are very close to their experiences.

⁶¹ Young Europeans, ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/youth/index_en.html, accessed May 30, 2015.

Such identification is more difficult to establish with the content provided by Cultural Heritage websites that focus on the past and the preservation of digital Cultural Heritage for future generations.⁶² Yet, for younger audiences this view of Cultural Heritage is not enough to develop a sense of belonging to Europe. Used to the networked individualism of social media, they long for a more direct, personal and lively contact to European Cultural Heritage, close to their everyday lives and identities.⁶³

Access to the content and overall appreciation of the selected websites

Celebrating European cultural diversity by providing access to digital cultural content for all is a central theme for the EU and it has been the aim of several digital cultural projects and initiatives. This was also the point of view of the users and it is among their expectations from the portals that were presented to them. As a young woman wrote:

'I would like to learn about other cultures, other cultures represented in the contents; thematic portals like Europeana 1989, Europeana 1914-18, and Inventing Europe help compare and share cultural expressions and experiences beyond one's borders on one topic are a good idea'.

Do the selected websites provide efficient access to their cultural content? This table gives an overview of the ratings (from 1-worst rating, to 10-best rating) that the users gave to the five cultural websites of our survey according to three criteria – Search results, content, and ease of use:

	Search results	Content quality	Ease of use
Europeana	6,7	4,6	7
Europeana 1989	5,5	3,9	6,5
Inventing Europe	6,4	7,3	6,7
Euromuse	5,8	6,4	6,2
Europeana 1914-1918	7,3	7,8	8,1

Europeana

The potential of the European digital library is recognized and the content is considered interesting; but it is overshadowed by the difficulties related to the search functionality and the lack of an overview of its contents.

Users with very good experience in using digital resources and, accordingly, deeper knowledge and higher expectations commented on the need to improve the search and the relevance of the results. A researcher (37 years old) reported *'far too many results that did not correspond to the information needed.'* Further, a documentation expert (53 years old), wrote:

'Search results are random and seem meaningless: a search for '2000' gives an iron object, which has no meaning at all and is not related to '2000'.

⁶² On this aspect of digital Cultural Heritage, see Cameron 2007.

⁶³ See also the RICHES report on International Conference proceedings - Rome, the views of young museum professionals on identity and new ways of letting the museum and its objects tell stories and reflect on the relation between past and present during the co-creation sessions of the RICHES research on Co-creation and living heritage for social cohesion, 108-115.

Simple keyword search is hopeless with 20 Mio objects. Filters used to narrow the search results were considered inappropriate, 'not intuitive and quite slow' (documentation expert, 35 years old).

According to the same expert, specific filters such '*as the most current updated/uploaded records are rather hidden on the website*'. It concerns the 'new content' that is not proposed as filter, but it figures in the section 'About us' of the website, with a list of the providers. Thus, frequent users do not have the possibility to browse the new additions. It is clear that one needs to spend time in order to learn how the search best works and use the different filters to narrow the search results.

However, an experienced user of Europeana has a different opinion concerning information retrieval and the quality of the search results for the same website. The following account shows that search functionality of this website is not intuitive and that a personal search strategy and experience from systematic use are necessary to get satisfactory results.

For the best rating, I am really satisfied with Europeana : I know well its contents which are very interesting for my topics of interest (history and archaeology) and the website as a database is easy of use for my information retrieval.

Europeana 1914-1918

The content of this resource was the most appealing to the participants (7,8 / 10). Same as with Europeana 1989, the users found the concept of personal stories highlighting the history of the period here too very interesting. The developers succeeded in providing high quality and fascinating content together with the appropriate tools to discover it. Two comments of the users give some insights as to their reactions:

*'It is good because it allows to draw your own conclusions'
'You feel like a treasure hunter'.*

Easy access to information and user-friendly interface were positively rated. Search results were considered satisfactory. Users had the feeling that they could apprehend and manage the content. The good rating of the information was also related to the media available and the good quality and the size of the photos provided. The layout of Europeana 1914-1918 was also very appealing.

Europeana 1989

The most positive feature of Europeana 1989 are the personal stories that allow discovering the recent European history through eyewitness testimonies, through user-generated content. Personal approach to contemporary European history was also said to help 'learning the truth about events and facts, with interesting examples.' However, other users were disappointed by the lack of systematic coverage, which would take into consideration all European countries. In this way the main feature of the site becomes a disadvantage: the content is too random, depending on what people post. Further, the site is not appropriate for someone with limited knowledge of the subject. An introduction to this period and complementary documents that would offer an overview of the historical facts are missing. As a user expressed it:

'I have been surprised to visit Europeana 1989, my knowledge of the period and the area is limited, but I appreciate the European cultural diversity and this initiative. I think it is better for me to be informed by some virtual exhibits or videos, before accessing the map, the documents and testimonies connected.'

Euromuse.net

The usefulness of the portal Euromuse.net was recognized by the users who knew already the website as well as by those who were using it for the first time. The ratings show that the main difficulty of the portal *Euromuse* lies in the complexity of its search, as the majority of the participants have pointed out. Users looked for museums in specific cities and were surprised to get very few answers or no results at all. As someone noted in a comment:

'Interesting idea but difficult to search by the proposed keywords. For example: if you indicate history, exhibitions, France, you don't get any answers.'

Other criteria apparently have led to a satisfactory number of search results. As for the quality of the information, here too the opinions of the users differ. To some this resource has been useful when planning a trip and they could find information on current exhibitions. Others considered that the data available on this portal were often 'either incomplete or outdated' and therefore of no use when planning a museum visit.

Inventing Europe

The different content strategy is what users appreciated most in this website. Compared to Europeana, where almost 'everything' is included as this is the official content development policy, *Inventing Europe* presents a selection of objects complemented with stories and contextual information provided by curators. Some comments are revealing:

'Limited to 1000+ objects with stories, context information, 'digital curation', because the person who tells about the object is known.'

'The Inventing Europe website was the most informational one, as the objects are already curated and put into a certain context of information, some of the other websites lacked detailed information.'

The originality of the content was also greatly appreciated and the information was rated as 'unique and interesting'. However, the main access – the overview of the themes on the start page, organized in exhibitions and guided tours, seemed overwhelming to users with no science background. Thus, although a positive rating (8,0) was given to the quality of content, the overview was considered complicated and not appropriate. The topics proposed seem equally important without the possibility to gradually discover the information, since everything appears at the same level, as a young woman pointed out:

'Too much material, quite overwhelming. Didn't know where to start to get an overview, themes a little bit too diverse, I'd rather prefer one theme of interest'

Another, more experienced user was able to explore the content and learn new things following a personal strategy:

'To my input 'computer', I got 20 stories (curated tours) ranging from the first weather prediction systems, to cold war leak history; 12 objects (some computer models made in Europe, mostly Hungarian and British) and one relevant author.'

The search for a particular object was successful in this case, whereas another user reported that his search of topics brought no results.

The following table shows the users views on the contents in relation to their relevance with European Cultural Heritage:

	Yes	More or less	Not at all	No answer
Europeana	13	5	2	
Europeana 1989	10	8	1	1
Inventing Europe	14	2	3	1
Euromuse	13	3	3	1
Europeana 1914-1918	16	2	2	

The website with the best rating – search results, interesting content and ease of use – Europeana 1914-1918, appears here to be the most representative in relation to European Cultural Heritage. The results of this user analysis have of course an exploratory character, but they may indicate an advantage of a good website, with contents, functions and layout appealing to the users, in comparison to the others. Therefore, a website that mediated information successfully may have also been considered as the most representative of European Cultural Heritage. Quality initiatives for cultural websites have long ago set criteria in order to improve access to digital Cultural Heritage, but unfortunately, not all cultural websites are developed according to such guidelines.⁶⁴

Digital maps related to European Cultural Heritage

The wide use of Google maps, the geo-referencing of the photos taken with a smartphone are only two examples highlighting how much geographic information has penetrated our lives⁶⁵. The participants to the survey were asked to comment three maps, each one implemented on a selected website: Europeana 1989, Euromuse.net and Carare with geo-referenced data from a project related to Europeana (access to monuments, objects and sites). After exploring these maps, they were asked if the relation to a place was meaningful, whether it improved their understanding of the content and what were their expectations from a map related to European Cultural Heritage.

The use of the map to access the content in Europeana 1989 was found successful, even from users who otherwise had not appreciated the contents of this website. Especially, the connection between crowd-sourcing and maps was considered an excellent idea. The map was characterized as easy to use and interesting as a starting point for the discovery of the content.

⁶⁴ Minerva WG5 2005; Minerva WG 2008.

⁶⁵ 'GIS mapping and GIS applications', RICHES Taxonomy, p. 27; Hagedorn-Saupe, Zakrajšek, 2011; Athena Plus Project, accessed June 30, 2015. eculturemap.eculturelab.eu/eCulture14m/map.html.

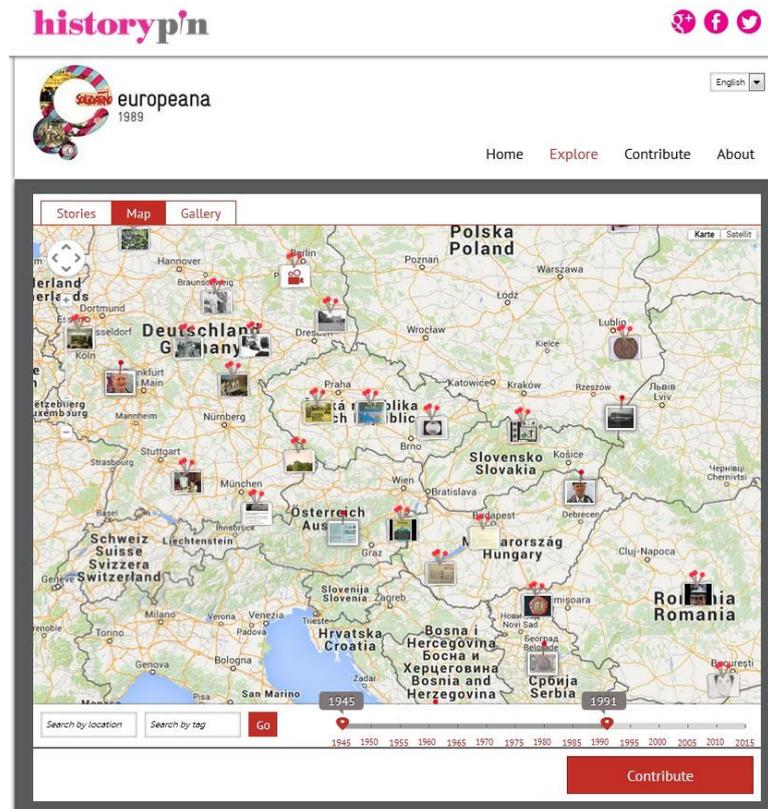


Figure 6. Europeana 1989: Web-based mapping of the different documents related to places and events in Europe during the period of the Cold War, 1945-1991.

In some cases, it gave the opportunity to explore the area and see the neighbouring places.⁶⁶ However, the association of the stories and documents to the places was found limited in scope by users that explored the map more in detail. It only gave access to the photos that people had posted and did not necessarily enhance their understanding of the content – not enough stories or objects described in foreign languages without translation. The association of the map to a timeline although interesting did not work properly.

⁶⁶ Hein 1995, 193-194 reports on the different interpretations and uses of a map by the visitors of an exhibition.

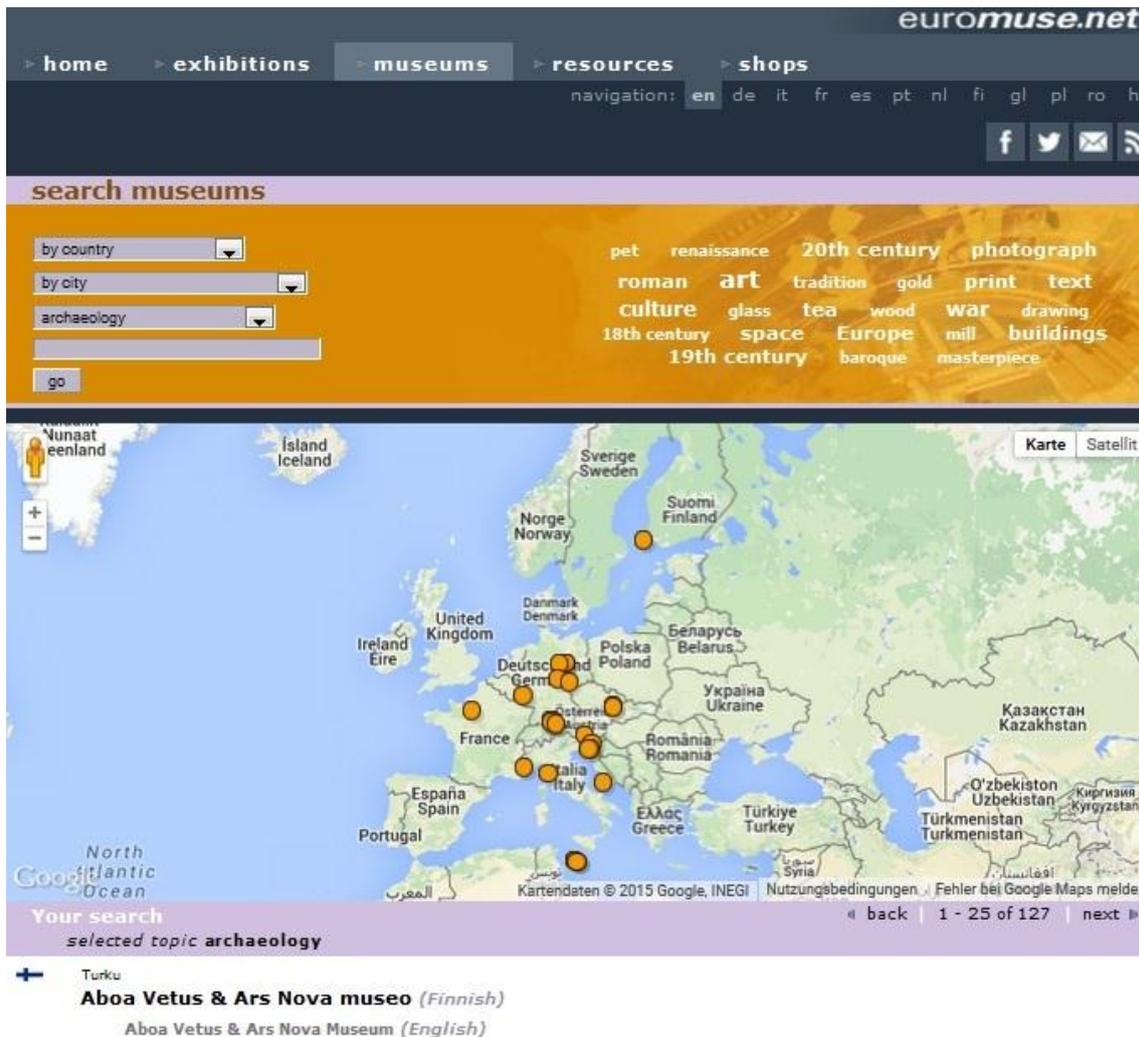


Figure 7. Euromuse: results of a query by topic (archaeology) mapping the locations of European cities where archaeological exhibitions are taking place

The map of the portal Euromuse.net was found relatively easy to use. Some users clearly understood its function and dynamic implementation, since it was related to the database and would show the results of the queries. As they noted, the map was not designed to give direct access to the museums but to display the contents – the museums on their locations – and filter accordingly with other criteria (thematic filters) as a query. Although the map in Euromuse.net was helpful in visualizing the content by showing the location of the museums, its added value was found very limited because of the small number of museums shown after a query:

'Using Google maps with keywords will probably be more accurate and complete and will take me to the museum website directly.'

The implementation of a map in Europeana is experimental and covers only a small part of the objects and monuments – those that were introduced to the portal through the project Carare⁶⁷. Users found the map interesting since it gave access to objects and archaeological sites in Europe.

⁶⁷ On the map-based search interface, see Zakrajšek et al. 2013.

However, it was not obvious whether the place on the map referred to the present location or the historic location of the object or the location of the content provider. Furthermore, the search associated to the map was not functioning.

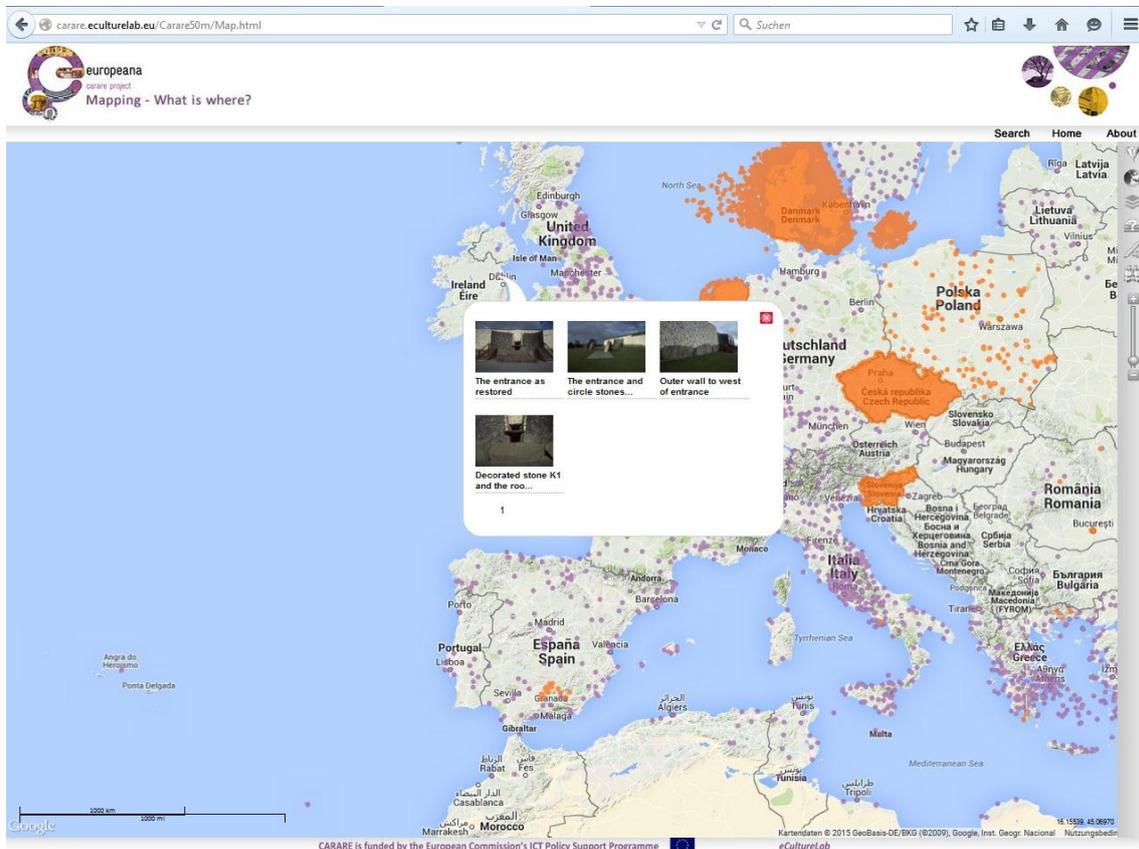


Figure 8. Web-based mapping showing the locations of archaeological monuments and objects (i.e. of the institutions where they are kept) introduced to Europeana in the framework of the EU-project Carare.

As to the expectations of the users from a map related to European Cultural Heritage, the answers can be organized in two categories:

1. Those who expect to see on the map places relevant for Cultural Heritage, such as museums, galleries, palaces and open stately homes, monuments of architectural, historical and religious significance etc.
2. Those who expect a map used as a tool to provide additional meaning to the places. Combined with a timeline, it would allow them to place Cultural Heritage in its historical dimension.

If the first category was more or less successfully implemented in the websites, the second one is still missing. Very few information is visualized on the existing maps. The expectations of the users in relation to European Cultural Heritage are more sophisticated, as some selected quotes show:

'I would like to see all European monuments from all chronological periods.'
'I would like to see everything about this place I had clicked on, that is connected with European relationship.'

'Just dots on a map create no meaning or context for learning. Sophisticated search tools are necessary, and then a map could deliver additional meaning (like migrations, movements, areas etc.). A single museum object placed on a map, rarely makes sense. None of these maps shows the borders of Europe. Where was Europe 400 years ago? Which Europe is meant?'

Multilingual content and access

Language is related to identity, it is a vehicle for cultural expression. Therefore, multilingual access and content is indispensable for cultural diversity in European Cultural Heritage websites. For some people who speak different languages, exploring multilingual content has an intrinsic quality and fosters a better understanding of the commonalities and differences among European cultures, as a young woman from Spain who speaks four languages points out⁶⁸:

'Different languages might at times also give you the feeling of familiarity, for example common expressions in colloquial languages (earwarm, Ohrwurm, and korvamato in English, German, and Finnish)'

Language has also the potential to bring closer European people as it reflects historical processes and cultural contacts over a long period of time. Thus, it can raise awareness of unexpected commonalities among European citizens, as a young woman from Greece suggests:

'Everyone is interested in Ancient Greek History and it is nice to check words derived from Greek ones in many languages.'

Being able to read the contents in their language is what the participants of the survey wished. Although they speak different languages, they privilege digital cultural content in their mother tongue. This aspect is important to them and it has an impact on their feeling of belonging to Europe. According to the answers provided, for all participants, European Cultural Heritage is closely associated with language diversity.⁶⁹

Not all selected websites provide their content in different languages. Those that are multilingual, like Europeana, face considerable challenges since they have to include at least the 23 official languages recognized by the EU. On the multilingual websites, like Europeana, such technologies are not yet fully implemented and they are not automatic. Problems that the users faced when dealing with so-called multi-lingual websites concern access and understanding of the contents.

Users searching in the multilingual digital library Europeana, are expecting to be able to search for words in their own language. Search for the same term in different languages brings very different results. As reported several times, the search results were not satisfactory because the search did not extend to other languages than the one of the input. The possibility to extend the search for a word in several languages is offered by Europeana but it does not work automatically. One has to choose this parameter and thus refine the search.

⁶⁸ The television series *Karambolage* (ARTE) in order to explore the differences and similarities between French and German culture compares often the meaning of words and concepts in the two languages.

⁶⁹ Only one participant did not answer this question, probably an omission. On multilingualism, Unesco, Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, portal.unesco.org/ci/ev.php?URL_ID=13475&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201&reload=1071070423; S. Dessaux et al. 2006; Michael Project, accessed April 28, 2014. Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe, www.michael-culture.org

Once the languages have been selected, the search is performed on all predefined languages and the results are more relevant. Nevertheless, none of our users, even the most experienced, could find out how this works during the test. It is clear that more time is needed to get used and learn how multilingual search operates in Europeana, or a better user interface. As for the languages of the results, Europeana provides automatic translations of the contents of each record in several languages.⁷⁰ However, it was not obvious to users who were not familiar with Europeana that such option was available. Furthermore, automatic translations did not work for all records.

Europeana 1989 has a double strategy. It does not provide translations of the descriptions of all its content. Therefore, users were surprised to find in one section (Gallery) documents posted from institutions of former Eastern European countries without any translation, not even a summary in English. The website does provide automatic translations for the stories, another section of the same website. Although it is a major facility to be able to read the content in the language of one's choice, the quality of automatic translations is not yet satisfactory; it depends a lot on the nature of the text submitted and the languages of the input and output. Users were not satisfied by the quality of the output translations, but were still able to understand the content up to a point. However, it would have been useful to add a sort of warning as to the limits of the automatic translation, especially for younger audiences. It is interesting to read the following quote:

'With Europeana 1989, it was the first time that I read articles in the languages of the former Eastern Europe, or of Scandinavia, thanks to the translations. The limits of automatic translators must be very clearly specified and delimited. For ex., French students quote in full these texts with the errors they have and they forget to check and revise them.'

The examples given above highlight the challenges that European multilingual portals face. There is a lot still to do for multilingual access and real multilingual content that would promote cultural diversity with digital Cultural Heritage. As a minimum, European Cultural Heritage portals should provide clear information about the languages in which content is available and their goals related to multilingual content.

Digital practices in relation to a feeling of belonging to Europe

A vivid interest in curated cultural content provided by museums and cultural institutions was expressed by all twenty respondents. User-generated content in form of personal stories⁷¹ and private documents were almost equally appealing: eighteen participants stated that they were interested to a personal account of historical events. The following quotes give an idea of the positive comments about this feature of the content:

'Sounds like a good idea; through the media of persons a visitor of the page gets a personal, and realistic connection to events.'

'I like the way that contemporary witnesses make the personal story public and not only historians report and document the foretime and background'.

⁷⁰ Europeana uses the Microsoft translator, Europeana 1989 the Google translator.

⁷¹ Two examples were given in the questionnaire: 1. Europeana 1914-1918, www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?qf%5Bindex%5D=c and 2. Europeana 1989, http://www.europeana1989.eu/en/baltic-way/#!photos/index/baltic-way/1/hide_tabs/1/#!/geo:50.762829,13.759035/zoom:6/

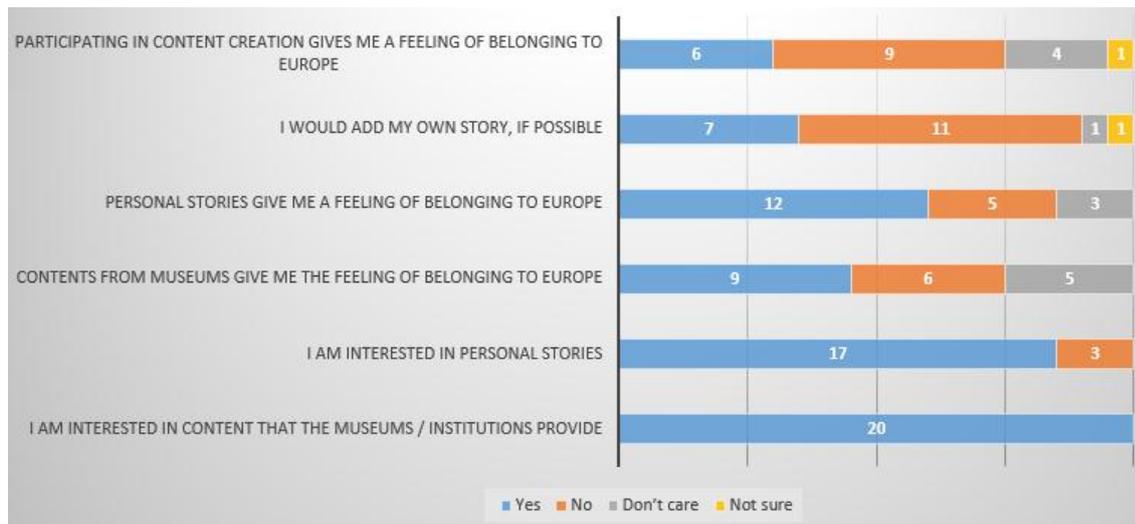


Figure 9. Features of the content of the websites in relation to a feeling of belonging to Europe.

Can digital practices relating to contents that the users considered characteristic for European Cultural Heritage mediate a feeling of belonging to Europe and promote a European identity? The answers to these questions were quite clear: although all participants were interested in Cultural Heritage objects and collections of cultural institutions, only eight out of twenty considered that such content fosters a feeling of European belonging. Moreover, this view was expressed by participants over forty years old and not by the younger ones. If digital content provided by cultural institutions is not so important for enhancing a European identity among the users, then it is interesting to see if user-generated content and user participation have indeed an advantage. Among the selected websites an example for this are the personal stories of *Europeana 1989* and *Europeana 1914-1918*.

Not only do they represent content contributed by the users, but they are also personal testimonies of history written from the perspective of the citizens.⁷² Twelve participants shared the view that personal accounts of historical events can nurture a sense of belonging to Europe, more important than Cultural Heritage objects provided by cultural institutions. This opinion was shared by older as well as younger participants. On the contrary, participation within content creation was not considered as a factor related to a sense of European belonging among the respondents. Only six out of twenty users think that contributing content to the selected websites can foster a European belonging and were willing to add their own story to a website.

This research has also highlighted the different motivations of the people that participated to this research as to the use of the proposed websites. They depend on the type of the website and on the users' individual information needs. Digital practices related to access and exploration of the content of the selected websites and choices for searching and browsing content were focused on learning, personal development, interest, pleasure, or professional use in teaching or research, as the following quotes among respondents show:

⁷² A recent exhibition in the Brussels-based Museum of Europe entitled "It's our history" focused on European integration from 1945 to 2007 presented as a history of Europe's citizens, de Jong 2012, 296-308; a similar project, "Gedächtnis der Nation" [Memory of the Nation] in Germany, has been initiated by cultural institutions and sponsored by private companies – among them Google, accessed April 28, 2015. www.gedaechtnis-der-nation.de/erleben (only in German).

These platforms for me are first and foremost research tools and not tools to shape or build identity of any kind (Cultural Heritage institution professional, 28)

I expect educational materials, I use them for teaching. Personally, I was not aware of them, except Europeana (researcher and academic, 43)

I use it [Euromuse.net] for planning activities on my city trips and for the general information about exhibitions (documentation expert, 50)

I like the sites as they satisfy my curiosity. I start by looking for specific information and invariably drift off into other "distractions" on the site itself (teacher, 47)

4.4 ON THE POTENTIAL OF SEMANTIC TECHNOLOGIES AND LINKED OPEN DATA FOR EUROPEAN IDENTITY/IES

Europe's cultural unity is, paradoxically, based on its extraordinarily rich cultural diversity that is reflected in the richness and the variety of European cultural heritage. This heritage is multilingual and multicultural as are the different communities associated to it in an iterative, continuous process. Are digital technologies a useful tool to facilitate access and interpretation of Europe's rich cultural diversity and Cultural Heritage in digital form, encourage the construction of a European identity and strengthen a feeling of belonging to a Europe of cultural pluralism? This section will explore the potential of emerging advanced technologies, such as semantic technologies and Linked (Open) Data, to satisfy the expectations of the different audiences, enhancing access to and understanding of European digital Cultural Heritage. Which uses of these technologies can make this 'polysemic' digital cultural content 'interoperable' - that means capable of being linked to, searched for, and presented across boundaries? Can semantic representation of knowledge combined to Linked (Open) Data help overcoming language barriers, facilitate mediation, provide context to digital collections and allow for the creation of new knowledge on European cultural heritage?

Semantic technologies and Linked (Open) Data

The word 'semantic' relates to 'meaning' in language; 'semantics' refers to the branch of linguistics concerned with studying the meanings of words and sentences. In ICT, semantic technology is a software technology that allows meaning of and associations between information bits to be expressed, understood and processed by computers.⁷³ Such specifications, called ontologies, are part of the set of standards on which semantic technologies are based. Ontologies very much work like language: they require detailed descriptions of information units, e.g. that 'Edgar Degas' is the name of a person or that 'Paris' is the name of a city, supplied with additional background knowledge that relates these two information units: e.g. that Edgar Degas lived in Paris. Thus, for a computer, knowledge is the result of connectivity and such related information units become elements (concepts or entities) of a meaningful expression.⁷⁴ For the Cultural Heritage sector, and in particular for museums, CIDOC's (Context in Documentation of Cultural Heritage) Conceptual Reference Model (CRM) is a key ontology.

⁷³ Polikoff, Allemang 2003, 4; Weller 2010, 53-67; Gödert, Hubrich, Nagelschmidt 2014, 1-32; and especially Hyvönen 2012 for the use of these technologies in the Cultural Heritage sector.

⁷⁴ Weller 2010.

The CIDOC CRM aims to cover every possible kind of information about Cultural Heritage and expresses it in a standardized and structured format (in terms of concepts, classes and properties).⁷⁵

To support interoperability, on top of ontologies, the use of controlled vocabularies is necessary and recommended to increase the discoverability of any information. Authority files, taxonomies, and thesauri improve the data quality, support unified data entry processes and are an important base for data exchange, harvesting and research.

Linked Open Data (LOD) refers to a way of publishing, connecting and sharing structured data or metadata on the World Wide Web, according to a set of recommended standards.⁷⁶ Although the idea of linking data on the World Wide Web is not new, the concept of LOD emerged only in 2006. Data in records or metadata about digital resources are described in a standard machine-readable format or language (Resource Description Framework, RDF) that is used for the description of objects or concepts, such as a museum object, a place, or a person, and of the relationships between them.⁷⁷ Each object or concept must be represented by a name in the form of a persistent identifier (Uniform Resource Identifier, URI). Such typed links associate data from heterogeneous systems and sources, like databases maintained by different institutions in different geographic locations that could previously not easily interoperate at a data level.

The combination of semantic technologies and Linked Data creates a 'semantic web'. It enables the implementation of a global information space, based on open standards by providing the links to explore the Web and discover other, related data.⁷⁸ Shared resources on the semantic web should be open data, i.e. data or metadata made freely available to the public with an open license in order to allow their use, reuse and redistribution.⁷⁹ Open data originates in open access movements in the Sciences and the Humanities, such as the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002) or the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003), aiming to make the Web 'a functional instrument for a global scientific knowledge'.⁸⁰ Giving access to European Cultural Heritage and allowing its use for the benefit of the society means that Cultural Heritage institutions must open up their data and make digital copies of public domain works and metadata publicly available.⁸¹ With clear licenses (e.g. CC licenses)⁸² the representation of Europe's cultural diversity on the semantic web is made easier.

⁷⁵ Official ISO Standard, ISO 21127:2006, and its latest edition of December 2014, ISO 21127:2014. On CIDOC CRM, see www.cidoc-crm.org/index.html (Accessed May 25, 2015).

⁷⁶ Linked Data Community, <http://linkeddata.org/>; s.v. 'Linked Open Data', Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linked_open_data; Berners-Lee 2006; Berners-Lee 2009; Bizer, Heath, Berners-Lee 2009; Heath, Bizer 2011; Europeana, "Linked Open Data", labs.europeana.eu/api/linked-open-data/introduction, accessed May 25, 2015.

⁷⁷ Known as 'triples', comparable to the language syntax concept of Subject-Predicate-Object.

⁷⁸ Berners-Lee 2006.

⁷⁹ Among the licenses most often applied to Cultural Heritage information are Open Data Commons and Creative Commons licenses.

⁸⁰ Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and the Humanities, openaccess.mpg.de/Berlin-Declaration (accessed June 30, 2015).

⁸¹ On Open Data for European Cultural Heritage, see Kroes 2011; Verwayen, Arnoldus 2012; Oomen, Baltussen, van Erp 2012; Pekel 2014; Bates, Wild 2015; Gore, Keller 2015.

⁸² On Creative Commons licenses see: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/?lang=en>, accessed July 15, 2015.

Need for vocabularies and thesauri for multilingual access

Accessibility and discoverability of European Cultural Heritage online depends highly on the use of common vocabularies and thesauri. Those reference tools for making comparisons and links in the context of aggregated data in digital libraries and more widely in the semantic web play a major role in improving the quality of online Cultural Heritage resources. Communities play an important role in developing standards to be deployed on the semantic web for sharing meaning.

Institutions develop vocabularies and thesauri (research institutes like The Getty Research Institute or National Libraries), but also communities (DBpedia Maintainers) create useful keywords and knowledge representation systems, which are indispensable for the semantic web. These vocabularies, for concepts like time, place, style, forms, use, objects, names and general terms, enhance the data and information quality and save time and effort already at the data entry and data creation level. Later they have a key role in enabling the 'linking' in Linked Data.

Maintenance is one of the most important requirements for larger, widely used vocabularies and thesauri. They need to be maintained, updated and they have to be reliable. They need to be online without downtime, their URIs have to remain stable and of course, for Linked Data and semantic web, they need to be expressed in a machine-readable format specialized for the cultural heritage sector. Constant change and development is a challenge for the developers, since they might need to adjust their data entry strategies according to updates. A major concern for such tools in the framework of European Cultural Heritage, its language and cultural diversity, is multilingualism of vocabularies. Important contributions to multilingual access to European Cultural Heritage were made through European projects such as Minerva, MICHAEL, AthenaPlus, Europeana Fashion and Partage Plus.⁸³ Multilingual access to European Cultural Heritage is a major concern of Europeana (and explored in previous sections for strengthening a European identity for users. Several Europeana-related projects and a special Task Force have conducted research and elaborated guidelines for mapping multilingual vocabularies with the aim to enrich the metadata of Cultural Heritage objects in Europeana and to facilitate retrieval of the content in different languages.⁸⁴

Names:	
Regensburg (preferred,C,V)	
Regensburg-Prüfening (H,V) Prüfening was subsumed under Regensburg in 1938
Ratisbona (H,V) medieval name
Ratisbon (H,V) obsolete English name
Ratisbonne (H,O)	
Reginum (H,V)	
Castra Regina (H,V) Roman name for legionary camp, founded AD 179
Casra Regina (H,O)	
Radasbona (H,V) Celtic name

Figure 10 shows the accumulation and the complexity of information about a place name characteristic for Cultural Heritage information, expressing different identities over a long period of time (Source: Petras 2010).

⁸³ Conrad *et al.* 2006; www.michael-culture.eu; www.athenaplus.eu; www.europeanafashion.eu; www.partage-plus.eu

⁸⁴ Petras 2010; TELplus project, <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/confluence/display/wiki/TELplus+project>; EuropeanaConnect, www.europeanaconnect.eu.

Vocabularies such as Agrovoc⁸⁵, GEMET⁸⁶ or GND⁸⁷ have been developed outside of the museum community itself although, there are more and more targeted towards the documentation of Cultural Heritage. Structured vocabularies such as those from Getty (Getty Research Institute) have been originally prepared for the documentation of collections in museums and libraries, for history of art, architecture and archaeology. Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN), Union List of Artists' Names (ULAN) are available as LOD, initially in English.⁸⁸ AAT has been translated into Spanish and Dutch, its German translation is partly ready.⁸⁹ Europeana plans to integrate the AAT⁹⁰ in the future. The Getty Vocabularies as LOD allow linking and discovery of artworks, architecture, people, places, styles, techniques, materials, and other information related to Cultural Heritage. The Getty vocabulary LOD project is committed to maintaining an open community and collaboration. A public discussion forum has been established to involve the LOD community and benefit from sharing usage examples. As it has been already emphasized, knowledge organization systems and vocabularies for the semantic web and LOD must be 'developed, managed and endorsed by committed practice communities' in each knowledge domain.⁹¹

While the above-mentioned examples stem from specific institutions, the community of Cultural Heritage professionals takes more and more responsibility with respect to high quality access to European Cultural Heritage data. A method to create useful tools, vocabularies and thesauri for European Cultural Heritage is presented by the TMP² tool (Thesaurus Management Platform), a web portal for thesaurus management developed in the framework of the AthenaPlus Project.⁹² Hence, in addition to the aforementioned principle of reusing existing vocabularies or terminologies and saving efforts, Cultural Heritage institutions have guidelines and methods to develop their own thesauri and knowledge organization systems with e. g. the TMP² tool.

Finally, user-generated vocabularies developed for applications of the social Web are widely used in a Linked (Open) Data and semantic environment. The spectrum of user generated terminologies range from social tagging (e.g. the British Library on Flickr, Europeana on Pinterest, the Steve Project)⁹³ to community initiatives, like DBpedia. The 'semantic web version' of Wikipedia, DBpedia, delivers semantic enhancements for Wikipedia and transforms Wikipedia to an open semantic knowledge base, with more accurate and specific ways of searching and browsing, to which everyone can link Cultural Heritage objects.⁹⁴ A most significant community effort in the terminologies is GeoNames.⁹⁵ This geographical database covers all countries and contains over eight million place names that are available for download free of charge.

⁸⁵ Multilingual agricultural thesaurus published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, aims.fao.org/vest-registry/vocabularies/agrovoc-multilingual-agricultural-thesaurus

⁸⁶ General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus, developed by the European Environment Information and Observation Network, www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet; used by Europeana for "time" concepts.

⁸⁷ Integrated Authority File for Persons, Corporate bodies, Conferences and Events, Geographic Information, Topics and Works, in German, published by the German National Library, www.dnb.de/EN/gnd. It replaced in 2012 several previous authority files. The GND is used in museum-digital (www.museum-digital.de), Portrait-Index (www.portraitindex.de/), the German Digital Library (DDB, www.ddb.de).

⁸⁸ REF, Getty vocabularies as LOD

⁸⁹ Ongoing project of the Institute for Museum Research – SPK; from 2012 until 2014, 17,000 entries concerning material objects have been translated in German.

⁹⁰ Europeana Annual Report 2014, 39.

⁹¹ Shadbolt, Hall, Berners-Lee 2006, 99.

⁹² www.athenaplus.eu

⁹³ Weller 2010; Hagedorn-Saupe, Schweibenz 2015.

⁹⁴ Völkel et al. 2006.

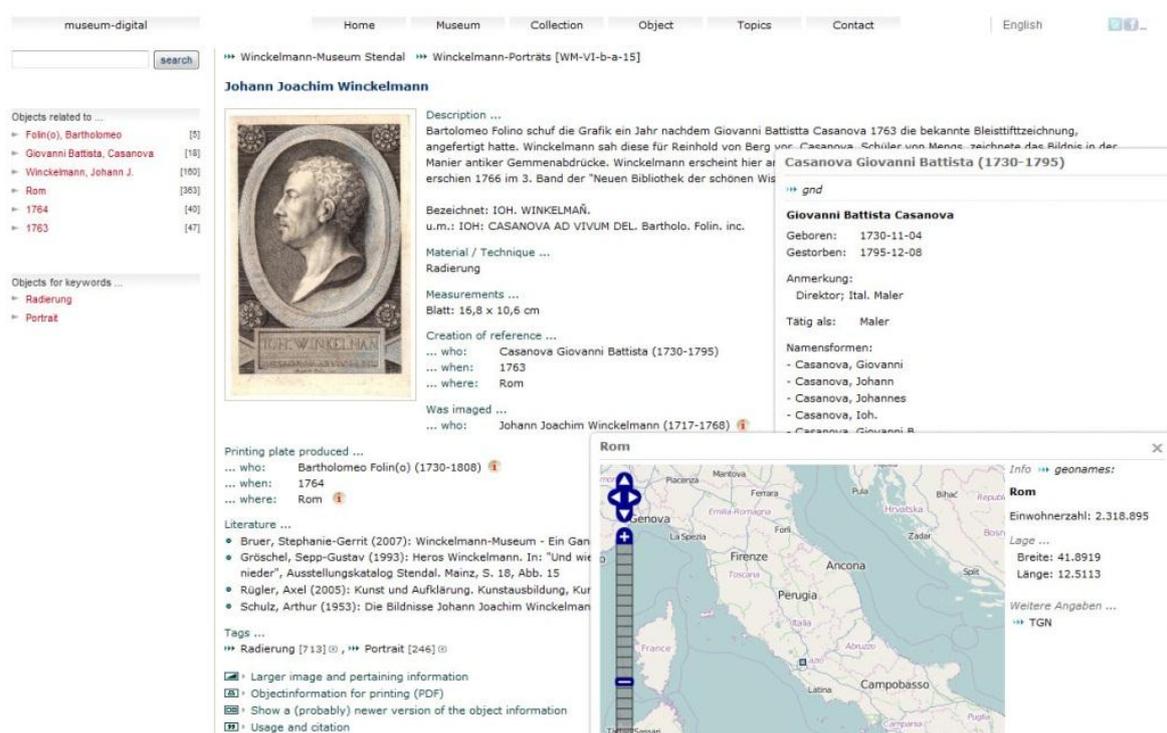
⁹⁵ www.geonames.org.

GeoNames is integrating geographical data such as names of places in various languages, elevation, population and other information from various sources, together with geographic coordinates. Users may manually edit, correct and add new names – thus GeoNames grew fast and today has more entries than another authority tool, Getty’s TGN. As it has been recently argued, the decision of Cultural Heritage institutions to align with vocabularies that are developed by communities, ‘delegates authorship and legitimates organisations that are not museums’.⁹⁶ It implies a desire to share resources that have the power to promote networks of cultural clusters, and it is largely a consequence of technological innovations such as LOD and the semantic web.

Two examples of Linked (Open) Data in action

Semantic technologies and LOD can contribute to a better understanding and facilitate access to European Cultural Heritage. Tim Sherratt expresses the expectations from their use:

‘As historians, as Cultural Heritage professionals, as people — we make connections, we make meanings. That’s just what we do. What really excites me about Linked Open Data is not the promise of smarter searches, but the possibilities for making connections and meanings in ways that are easier to traverse — to explore, to wander, to linger, or even to stumble.’⁹⁷



The screenshot shows a web interface for 'museum-digital'. The main content area displays a record for a print titled 'Johann Joachim Winckelmann'. On the left, there is a sidebar with 'Objects related to ...' and 'Objects for keywords ...'. The main record includes a portrait of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, a description of the print, and a map of Rome. The map shows the location of the print in Rome, with a red dot indicating the specific location. The record also includes related objects, keywords, and a list of literature.

Figure 11. Record of a print showing Johann Joachim Winckelmann with its rich connections that are implemented in museum-digital.

⁹⁶ Dupuy, Juanals, Minel 2015; Alexiev, Charles, Isaac, Manguinhas 2015.

⁹⁷ Tim Sherratt, “Small stories in a big data world”, Blog *Discontents*, published 20 November 2012, discontents.com.au/small-stories-in-a-big-data-world/

One example of LOD in German museums took place in the framework of the Athena project with *Museum-digital*, one example of a collaborative platform for documenting and providing access to collections of German museums that started in January 2009.⁹⁸ The aim was to collect and publish information on museum objects available in regional German museums and to deliver it to Europeana. This task was not so easy since, at the beginning of the project, the majority of the museums of the region Saxony-Anhalt could not provide the appropriate information: some museums only had ‘scientific names’ for their objects, difficult to understand, others no digital documentation at all. With a low budget and a lot of enthusiasm, the active community steering the project succeeded in attracting more museums from other German regions, and all together they have contributed to the development of an efficient and convivial tool. Linked Data technology has allowed mandated fields with person names and geographic entities to connect with controlled vocabularies and authority files internally and also to additional resources available on the Web, like Wikipedia. As the project manager and website developer states,

‘If, for example, a museum wants to publish a painting showing Johann Joachim Winckelmann, all it has to do is to note that the painting is showing him. In the background, this is connected to the authority files of the German National Library and to DBpedia. As a result, the painting is shown with automatically enriched information about the person in many languages. This makes it possible to get maximum output with minimum input: a technical solution which makes publishing easier for the museums.’

Thus, linked data unfold their potential by enhancing the content of the website through external resources, providing rich documentation and contextual information about the objects collected in “museum-digital” in an innovative as much as cost-effective way.

Another example of implementation of these technologies is Europeana, providing access to millions of European Cultural Heritage objects from the collections of libraries, archives and museums. A major challenge is to make this rich, curated cultural content in form of descriptive metadata from heterogeneous collections appear in a meaningful way in the multicultural and multilingual context of Europeana. Use of semantic linking of data is evaluated in a strategic perspective of global cultural resources, as it ‘creates new knowledge, opens up previously unrecognized research opportunities and gives new relevance on culture on the web’.⁹⁹

These theoretical principles have guided the implementation of the current data model, EDM (Europeana Data Model), which is a ‘framework for collecting, connecting and enriching metadata’.¹⁰⁰ Its ‘semantic data layer’ allows describing the complex semantic relations that characterise Cultural Heritage objects from different domains aggregated in Europeana. It makes it possible to define, for example, the hierarchical relationships that exist between the different parts that constitute an object (a whole), such as the pages of a book that correspond to different metadata records, or the different adaptations or representations of the same work. Furthermore, the use of knowledge organisation systems (KOS) to define relationships among concepts – knowledge about different types of information, such as people, places, dates, topics – and vocabularies, allows for structuring semantically the digital information space of Europeana by linking

⁹⁸ www.museum-digital.de, Rohde-Enslin 2011.

⁹⁹ V. Charles, in *Europeana annual report and accounts 2011*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Gradmann 2010, 4; Isaac 2013; Europeana Data Model documentation, <http://pro.europeana.eu/share-your-data/data-guidelines/edm-documentation>, accessed May 25, 2015.

these concepts to the metadata of Cultural Heritage objects. Full implementation of conceptual semantic mapping will facilitate search by discarding ambiguities, as those created by homonyms, i.e. words with the same form but different meanings.¹⁰¹



Korbmachermeister Eduard Liessel

Description: Korbmachermeister Eduard Liessel
Contributor: Liessel, Eduard
Coverage: [Lippoldiswalder, Dresden](http://sws.geonames.org/2935022/) (1)
Date: 1902, <http://semium.org/time/1902>
Type: image
Format: image/jpeg
Subject: Photographien, Print, Fotos, Ortskatalog zur Kunst und Architektur <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/concept/1312> (1)
Identifier: <http://www.deutsche Fotothek.de/obj32015551.html>
Language: de-DE
Rights: Deutsche Fotothek
Source: SLUB/Deutsche Fotothek
Provider: Saxon State and University Library, Dresden / Deutsche Fotothek
Providing country: Germany
Auto-generated tags: (2)

View item at Saxon State and University Library, Dresden / Deutsche Fotothek [Share](#)
[Cite on Wikipedia](#)
[Translate details](#)
Select language
Powered by Microsoft® Translator

Figure 12. Europeana record (photograph of the Master basket maker Eduard Liessel) displaying enrichments as links in the fields ‘View item at’, ‘Coverage’, ‘Subject’ and ‘Auto-generated tags’ – What, When (Source: Europeana annual report 2014, p. 39).

Another major field of research within Europeana is the automatic enrichment of the metadata records. In a linked data environment, enrichments represent information added to the original content by linking fields to external data resources such as authority files and controlled vocabularies. Hence, it is possible by linking Europeana metadata to vocabularies available as LOD to add multilingual terms (i.e. synonyms in different languages) to a field and use it for search, or to link to a phrase in a Wikipedia article highlighting a related topic. This method, also called ‘contextualisation’, improves the quality of information, and allows for more efficient, multilingual search. Furthermore, research in the framework of a Europeana Task Force has developed a method in order to avoid pitfalls caused by cross-lingual ambiguities in semantic and multilingual enrichments.¹⁰²

New opportunities for content curation in thematic collections

Semantic modelling and LOD gave new impulses to the development of portals aggregating collections on a particular topic and of thematic channels in digital libraries. Strategic use of these technologies in the examples highlighted here allows for interesting presentations and offers a better understanding of common European history and Cultural Heritage to the audiences.

¹⁰¹ Europeana Pro, *Linked Open Data - What is it?*, player.vimeo.com/video/36752317, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹⁰² Olensky, Stiller, Dröge 2012; Stiller, Isaac, Petras 2014; Stiller, Petras, Gäde, Isaac 2014, 238-239.

As described previously, Europeana has created thematic channels such as Europeana 1914-1918, and Europeana 1989, the latter, which is implemented on the platform *Historypin*. There is the intention to continue along this line to reach the European public through areas that appeal to their identities. In 2015, *Europeana Fashion* has been published. An Art History channel is also in preparation and will be launched in autumn 2015: ‘a country based campaign (...) will bring in the best art pieces for each country (...) with full participation for citizens of all member states.’¹⁰³

A further example of this trend is the portal Digital Portrait-Index (www.portraitindex.de), an ongoing project funded by the German Research Council and coordinated by the Deutsches Dokumentationszentrum für Kunstgeschichte, with the participation of university and state libraries, museums and archives from Germany and Austria. To date, the portal has published around 257,000 portraits in prints and drawings of the Modern period in Europe from nine important collections and libraries, with their images and scientific documentation (in German). Internal links and connections to external resources such as the Persons authority list from GND, the German Biography website, the Virtual Collection of Prints and Drawings (Virtuelles Kupferstichkabinett, VKK), or to articles in Wikipedia provide rich contextual information and create an information network on the people portrayed to be discovered – personal stories and social profiles, professional activities, family and social relations – allowing users to capture bits of history of Europe.

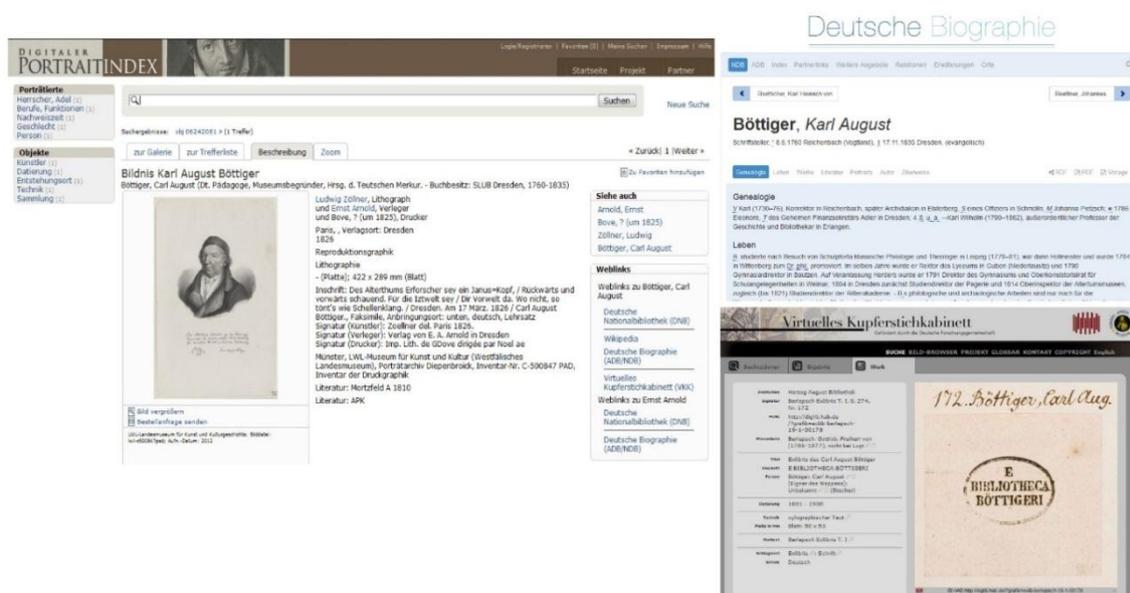


Figure 13. The portrait of Karl August Böttiger and examples showing some connections around the portrait of this scholar, implemented with LOD.

Collection development in Europeana includes also thematic aggregators. There have been several projects curating and ingesting metadata on a specific subject to Europeana, and one of them is Partage Plus.¹⁰⁴ In this two-year project, twenty-five partner institutions – museums, libraries, archives, and universities – from seventeen European countries, coordinated by Collections Trust (UK), systematically digitized objects from European Art Nouveau collections and provided more than

¹⁰³ Europeana Business Plan 2015, 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Partage Plus, Digitizing and enabling Art Nouveau for Europeana*, March 2012 to February 2014, www.partage-plus.eu; Pagel 2013; Smith, McKenna, Śliwińska 2013.

75,000 digital items - including 2,000 3D models – ingested and accessible through Europeana, for the first time available online. This way, cultural heritage objects not widely known from European Cultural Heritage of the 20th century could be added to the collection. The digital collection of Art Nouveau, a movement inspired by natural forms that swept through the decorative arts and architecture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ingested into Europeana includes a great variety of objects, styles and materials, characteristic of the rich artistic expression of the Art Nouveau movement: paintings, tapestries, tissues, glass, sculptures, drawings, prints, posters, jewelry, ceramics, metal objects, furniture, buildings, photographs. An important issue was to achieve interoperability and harmonization of metadata about objects provided by different collections and enable multilingual access. The project developed standards for linking of objects and terms based on the AAT thesaurus, independent of the language in which they were recorded.

Topics with relevance to European Cultural Heritage such as art history and fine arts as well as those related to rituals, customs, traditions, which are strongly related to life of communities, will be further developed in Europeana. These topics have the power to connect people as they appeal to personal feelings, taste and preferences and consequently to identities. Europeana Food and Drink (foodanddrinkeurope.eu) focuses on the subject of Europe's food and drink culture and aims to 'provide a strong thematic identity which will connect the public, Creative Industries and the culture sector'.¹⁰⁵ The project aims to make Europe's food and drink digital Cultural Heritage available to citizens all over the world. As it is stated,

'Europeana Food and Drink wants to provide the basis for innovative and commercially viable applications and services developed in partnership with the creative industries, with a strong thematic focus on celebrating Europe's diverse food and drink culture, which will demonstrate the potential of high-value digital content discovered through Europeana'.¹⁰⁶

The RICHES project itself is also researching how (slow) food socially impacts upon communities and defines identity within the work *Structures for community and territorial cohesion*.

Semantic environments for research in Cultural Heritage collections and their impact on mediation

Several projects show that the use of semantic technologies and Linked (Open) Data will result in a number of breakthroughs in humanities research. Mediation and communication of European Cultural Heritage and consequently European identity construction can greatly benefit from this.

More and more digital materials from Cultural Heritage collections are available online, allowing for the compilation of large data sets for further analysis. Already the online publication of Cultural Heritage objects that were previously locked and inaccessible to the public has had a positive effect on research, as it was expected.¹⁰⁷ The *EuropeanaPro* blog reports the historic discovery of a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago who could find lost footage of the aftermath of the deadliest disaster in the history of Chicago by browsing audio-visual content in Europeana 1914-1918.¹⁰⁸ Research and innovation can result from reuse of available open materials as in the case of open GLAM Hackathons promoting the reuse of open Cultural Heritage data.

¹⁰⁵ pro.europeana.eu/web/food-and-drink, accessed April 10, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ www.fep-fee.eu/New-article,483, accessed April 10, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Verwayen, Arnoldus 2012; see also research conducted within RICHES D5.3

¹⁰⁸ Imogen Greenhalgh, *Making an historic discovery on Europeana 1914-1918*, published February 27, 2015, pro.europeana.eu/blogpost/making-an-historic-discovery-on-europeana-1914-1918#sthash.UFuXNdGD.dpuf

A team of young researchers in the US worked with the British Museum's LOD datasets, trying to trace trends in the museum's acquisitions that would be easy to hypothesize. One of the main questions was to find out how many objects in the collections came to the museum from colonies of the British Empire vs. non-colonies over the history of the museum and then present the objects on a map.¹⁰⁹

The long list of bibliographic references and projects shows that there is a major interest in using semantic knowledge structures and Linked (Open) Data for scientific research in different domains of Cultural Heritage, such as art history and archaeology. It also shows that there is not yet enough expertise in the use of such advanced technologies and that it is necessary to understand how to implement and query these large aggregations of Cultural Heritage metadata empowered by semantic technologies and Linked Data in order to formulate new knowledge and interpretations: information interrelations may be based on implicit knowledge of general facts and can be combined to derive new assumptions. In an earlier phase of development of Europeana, a prototype search interface, *Thought Lab*, was implemented in order to test the possibilities of semantic modelling for retrieval of information from different collections. This research prototype of Europeana's semantic search engine, gathering metadata from three museum collections, of the Rijksmuseum, the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD) / Netherlands Institute for Art History (Rembrandt database), and the Louvre (Atlas database), allowed 'clustering' of results with broader and narrower terms (i.e. place names: Egypt / Gizeh), by using semantic links in specialized vocabularies, such as the Rijksmuseum's thesaurus of places. The vocabularies for indexing the objects in the three different museum collections had been previously mapped and the existing metadata were enriched.¹¹⁰

Research Space, a collaborative research project between three museums, The British Museum, The Yale Center for British Art and the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD) / Netherlands Institute for Art History funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, aims to develop an understanding of how the semantic framework and LOD technologies can overcome issues of information integration and provide a meaningful context for works of art in Cultural Heritage collections for wider reuse (www.researchspace.org). In search for a semantic context for digital museum collections, Dominik Oldman, Acting Head of Information Systems at The British Museum and Head of Research Space, turns to the roots of knowledge systems such as those that museums have developed in order to collect, organize, present and store their collections. Research Space aims to provide a network of resemblance and meaning to the objects of different collections and link past and present of museum collections. Furthermore, interdisciplinary research and collaboration between museum curators and computer experts in designing the platform enables to answer how to discover knowledge from integrated information resources by using an ontology such as CIDOC CRM supporting rich computer-based reasoning.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Brey 2014.

¹¹⁰ Isaac 2010; Gradmann 2010, 14-16 ; Hildebrand *et al.* 2010, 17-18.

¹¹¹ Hooper-Greenhill 1992, Shaer 1993; Oldman, Norton, Haase 2014; Oldman, Mahmud, Alexiev 2012; Tzompanaki, Doerr 2012.

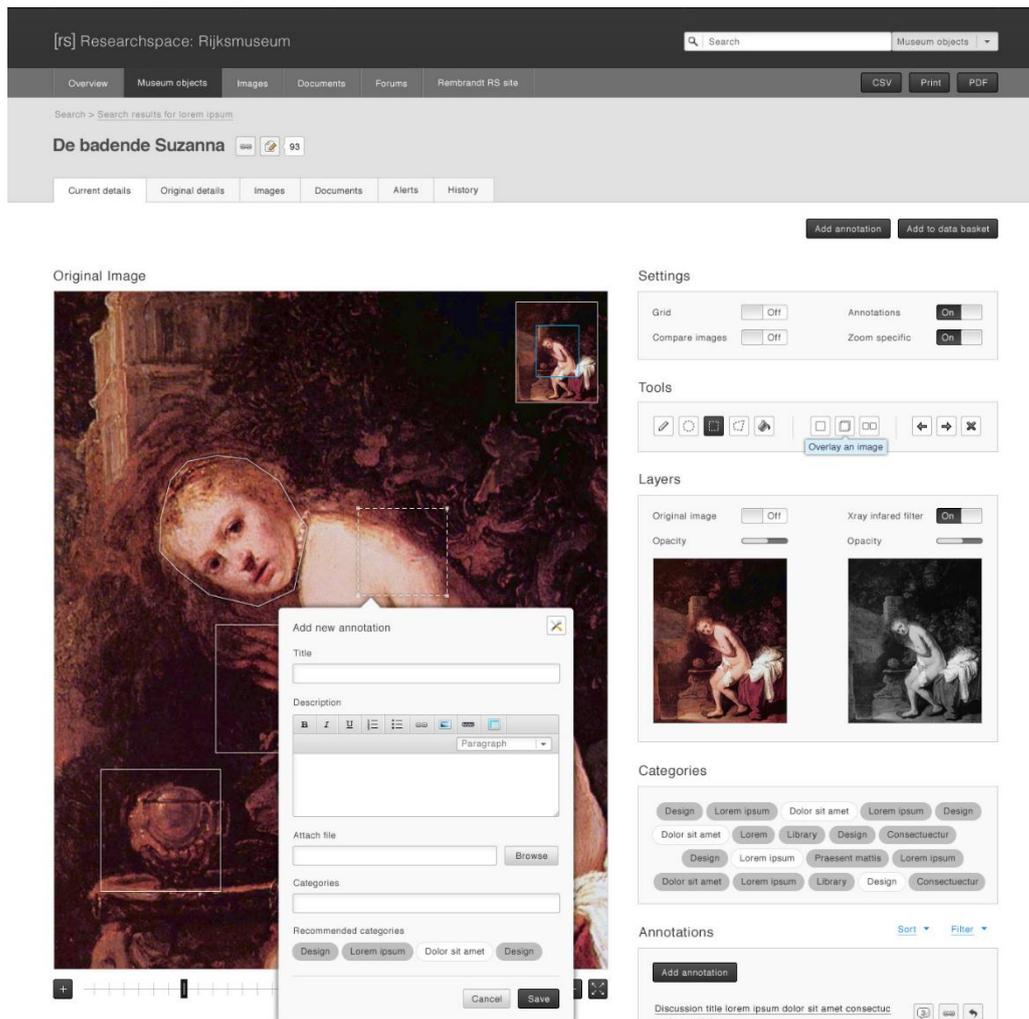


Figure 14. Screenshot from the semantic web platform Research Space, in preparation (Source: www.researchspace.org/home)

For a wider audience, semantic representation of knowledge becomes also a way to provide context for digital collections online. Several museums have developed websites where a semantic network serves the representation and discovery of complex Cultural Heritage information: For example the Rijksmuseum (www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/explore-the-collection) and the Stedelijkmuseum (www.stedelijk.nl/en/collection/collection-online) in Amsterdam in the Netherlands and the Städelmuseum (digitalesammlung.staedelmuseum.de) in Frankfurt am Main in Germany.

In the last example, works of art are, as expected, related to their creators, artistic periods and styles, materials and techniques, but also to their ‘atmosphere’, their impact and the ‘spirit of time’ of the period they were created (Zeitgeist), and to a network of people connected with them over time, that act as ‘contextual clues that humans pick up’¹¹², decipher and find meaning, and finally project their own personal feelings and identities to works of art. Interaction with users triggered by semantic elements, such as a place, are experimented in the Tate ArtMaps (artmaps.tate.org.uk) – a project initiated in 2013 aiming to explore the relation between ‘users and place and between them

¹¹² Sherratt 2010.

and the gallery itself' by relating art and place in order to enhance user engagement and by inviting users to contribute their own experiences of a place to paintings on the Tate gallery's online collection. These examples show ways for innovative technologies to contribute to the creation and mediation of new knowledge, to a better understanding and sharing of European Cultural Heritage among different audiences.

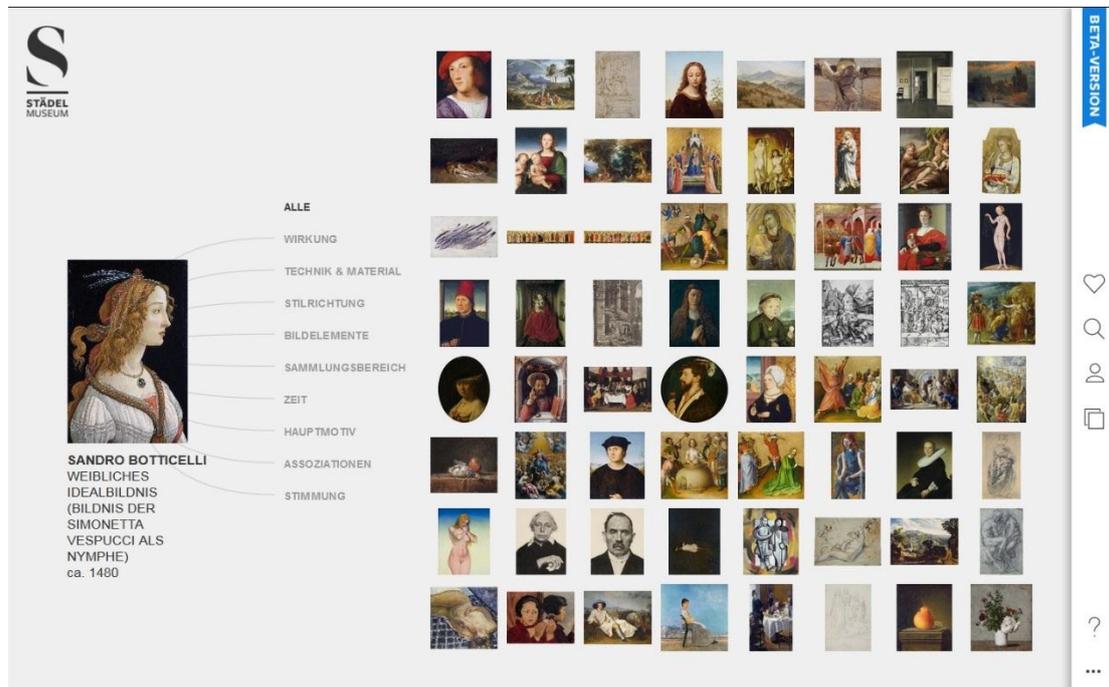


Figure 15. Screenshot showing the network of semantic relations around the portrait of Simonetta Vespucci as Nympe by Boticelli in the digital collection of the Staedel Museum.

Tools for engaging with communities

Smaller, more easily manageable tools with user-friendly interfaces can create added value for cultural content empowered by semantic and Linked (Open) Data technologies and reach wider audiences, different than the academic audiences of memory institutions.

The social media platform *Historypin* is a project created by the non-profit agency Shift in collaboration with Google and many cultural institutions. Its aim is to 'help bridge the gap between cultures and generations and help rebuild and strengthen ties within communities'¹¹³. Simple enough to be easily used by everyone – general public, researchers, and communities, cultural and educational institutions – the platform has developed to become a 'global community collaborating around history' and promotes a shared view of the layers of history that make up a community. Officially launched in 2011, *Historypin* has grown since, with the participation of hundreds of Cultural Heritage institutions adding content and creating thematic channels, and thousands of users contributing content to the platform.

¹¹³ Voss 2012.

One of the first, exploratory uses of *Historypin* took place in the framework of the JISC Step change project aimed to explore a Linked (Open) Data environment for archives in the UK, with as a pilot the archival collection of AIM25 – Archives in London and the M25, i.e. the greater London Area (www.aim25.ac.uk). The tools developed aimed at mapping AIM25 collection holdings such as historical photos and audio and video recordings into the geographic landscape and to assist researchers, scholars, and the general public in the discovery and contextualization of the materials. For this, the tools should support alignment of geographical terms between Google maps, archival catalogues and communities of interest, and provide access to collection descriptions of the archives of over one hundred higher education institutions, learned societies, cultural organisations and livery companies (ancient and modern trade associations and guilds of the City of London) within the greater London area.¹¹⁴

Further ongoing projects on the *Historypin* platform focus on community and personal stories related to local history – the past and the present of a neighbourhood. Ongoing experiments concern two places in New York – Manhattan and Queens.¹¹⁵ Local history can be visualized by creating mashups of historical images with contemporary views by overlaying photographs on top of Google street view images. In addition, the communities of these neighbourhoods can post photographs and share their experiences, traditions, customs and everyday lives, as part of living heritage related to these places.

4.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The aim of this chapter was to explore the ways in which large volumes of digital cultural content can facilitate the construction of a European identity and strengthen a feeling of belonging to a Europe of cultural pluralism.

An analysis of prominent Cultural Heritage websites offering (curated) European Cultural Heritage content has been undertaken, paying special attention to the creative use of innovative technologies for access and mediation of the content:

- *Europeana*, www.europeana.eu
- *Europeana 1914-1918*, www.europeana1914-1918.eu
- *Europeana 1989*, www.europeana1989.eu
- *Euromuse*, www.euromuse.net
- *Inventing Europe*, www.inventingeurope.eu

To build upon a deeper understanding which content features and digital practices have the potential to strengthen a European identity and which are less suitable for this purpose, exploratory research among twenty European citizens of different nationalities, age and gender was undertaken.

The answers that they provided on European identity and European Cultural Heritage confirmed the very personal character of the concept of identity. The respondents mentioned one or several identities – a regional or a Mediterranean identity, or a national identity when they are in their own countries, but a European one when they were elsewhere in the world or, at least, a feeling of being

¹¹⁴ AIM25: Geoff Browell, *Historypin mapping tool*, published 17/6/2013, openmetadatapathway.blogspot.de/2013/06/historypin-mapping-tool.html

¹¹⁵ www.historypin.org/project/40-queens# and www.historypin.org/tours/take/id/3884/title/The%20Manhattan%20Project/#1

European. Cultural Heritage and a common history were considered as a strong unifying force in Europe. Moreover, the importance of cultural pluralism within Europe and the openness to other European cultures were underlined frequently. Communication with people from other European countries together with social interactions and community values were considered as important components of European identity, together with values as the freedom to 'live' one's own regional or national identity and culture everywhere in Europe. Next to Cultural Heritage, being European means also caring about politics and the current situation in Europe, about how people in Europe live today, as well as understanding information on today's political, social and cultural events. The answers of the respondents have been compared with and complemented by the results of recent studies on European citizenship and European cultural values.¹¹⁶

The group was asked to explore the five websites mentioned above and answer specific questions in order to understand if and how digital Cultural Heritage can contribute to forging a sense of European belonging among people of diverse origins and which digital practices are more suitable for this. Their answers gave important insights as to the expectations related to European Cultural Heritage websites and their potential to improve inter-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding among people in Europe.

Of utmost significance for the European citizens that took part in this research was the representation of all European people and cultures on the websites that have been presented to them: European digital Cultural Heritage content should be inclusive and reflect cultural pluralism through a network of interrelated identities and their interactions. More than a trend originating in our multi-cultural and global society, this strong desire for cultural diversity should be interpreted in the framework of European values and human rights. It is a testimony of the coexistence of geographical and territorial conceptions of heritage and identities, together with the social value of Cultural Heritage and its relations to the people – the citizens of Europe. The wish for inclusive digital Cultural Heritage content reflects an identification with Europe and a sense of belonging based on values that teach people to live together, to respect their differences whilst searching for elements of unity.

Accessing the content in one's own language characterizes a personal perception of belonging to Europe. For all respondents, European Cultural Heritage is intrinsically related to language diversity. The users pointed out the limits of automatic translation and of multilingual access as is currently implemented on the websites that have been tested. There is a lot still to do for multilingual access and multilingual content that would reflect European cultural diversity with digital Cultural Heritage and foster a better understanding of the commonalities and differences among European cultures. Moreover, the findings reveal a trend towards a more personal and lively connection with Cultural Heritage. This can be conveyed through personal experiences and narrations. Although the majority of the respondents were interested in Cultural Heritage objects from the collections of museums, fewer than half of them, and mostly among the older users, considered that this was giving a sense of belonging to Europe. On the contrary, individual testimonies on historical events, such as the personal stories published on Europeana 1989 and Europeana 1914-1918 were more likely to awaken a feeling of European belonging among all age groups. Motivation of the users for accessing the selected websites depends on the type of the website and individual information needs. Individuality of digital Cultural Heritage practices is also associated with personal search strategies. As it was pointed out by the majority of the respondents, the use of the websites is not associated with a feeling of European belonging but rather with specific information needs.

¹¹⁶ The Standard Eurobarometer 82.

European Cultural Heritage websites that provide access to large volumes of digital content are more focused on storing, providing online access and ensuring the preservation of digital Cultural Heritage that relates to the past for future generations. Yet, for younger users this view of Cultural Heritage is not enough to provide a sense of belonging to Europe. Used in the networked individualism of social media, they long for a more direct, personal and lively contact to European Cultural Heritage, close to their daily lives. Thus, digital practices associated with living heritage become equally relevant as the mainstream European Cultural Heritage content and participatory culture changes the way in which we experience and think of heritage.¹¹⁷

This research has revealed that there is a need for better mediation and contextualisation of the content as well as further participative offers. More effort in digital curation is required to highlight the diversity of European Cultural Heritage in the digital spaces, to identify the common aspects and the differences of European cultures and to improve public access to various forms of cultural expressions. Quality of information, transparency in content selection and development raise acceptance and impact of digital cultural content. Contextualizing the content by providing rich information facilitates comparisons and interpretations. There is a need to explore new ways to mediate content by making best use of novel ideas and innovative technologies, such as the connection of crowd-sourced content, map and timeline to present stories and images contributed by institutions and individuals (Europeana 1989 on Historypin). Working on these aspects means working on the preconditions of fostering a European identity in a digital world.

Finally, the last part of the chapter has explored to what extent innovative technologies, such as semantic and linked (open) data, applied to large amounts of digital cultural content can contribute to a better understanding of European Cultural Heritage in digital information spaces.

According to experts, these technologies have not yet reached a state of maturity. A lot remains to be done to raise awareness and strengthen the use of semantic technologies and linked (open) data in the cultural sector. A major requirement for the implementation of shared resources on the semantic web are open data, metadata freely available to the public with an explicit open license in order to allow their use and reuse and data available as open as possible.

Accessibility and discoverability of European Cultural Heritage online depends highly on the use of common multilingual vocabularies and thesauri. Those reference tools facilitate comparisons and links in the context of aggregated data in digital libraries and more widely in the semantic web. They play a major role in improving the quality of online Cultural Heritage resources and their understanding. Communities play an active role in developing, maintaining and updating standards to be deployed on the semantic web for sharing meaning.

Strategic use of semantic and linked data technologies can facilitate access to European Cultural Heritage and can enhance digital practices that could foster identity-forming processes and a sense of European belonging among people of diverse origins. In the framework of European Cultural Heritage digital applications, these technologies enhance access and discoverability of content and support language and cultural diversity. By linking to external resources, they provide rich documentation and contextual information or background information about Cultural Heritage objects in an innovative as much as cost-effective way.

¹¹⁷ The wide use of selfie-sticks in museums relates also to living heritage practices, “Should museums ban selfie-sticks”, *BBC News*, published March 13, 2015, accessed May 30, 2015. www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-31874122.

Moreover, they contribute to multilingual access by linking concepts to multilingual vocabularies available on the web as linked (open) data and help to maintain and promote Europe's linguistic diversity. Application of semantic technologies to improve search quality by discarding ambiguities, as those created by homonyms, i.e. words with the same form but different meanings, is also a very promising perspective.

Semantic representation of knowledge and linked (open) data have the potential to increase innovation. Their use can result in a number of breakthroughs in Humanities research and European Cultural Heritage can greatly benefit from this. Ongoing projects, such as Research Space (www.researchspace.org), a collaborative research platform initiated by the British Museum, the Yale Center for British Art and the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie/Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), explores such advanced technologies for querying large aggregations of Cultural Heritage metadata in order to create new knowledge and interpretations. The aim is to develop an understanding of how the semantic framework and Linked Data technologies can overcome issues of information integration and provide a meaningful context for works of art in Cultural Heritage collections for wider reuse.

Benefits for the wider audience by the use of semantic representation of knowledge and linked (open) data include a better understanding of information through contextualization, easy access and re-usability. Thematic channels in digital libraries or new museum websites can make use of a semantic network, which serves the meaningful representation and exploration of complex Cultural Heritage information via a network of connections. Smaller, more easily manageable tools with user-friendly interfaces can create additional value for cultural content empowered by semantic and linked (open) data technologies. A semantic information space for culture where interlinking of resources, content sharing, mediation and creative re-use erase the limits of "data silos", and gives new relevance to European Cultural Heritage in a global digital society.

5. ROLE OF DIGITAL CULTURAL HERITAGE PRACTICES FOR EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

[A] major outcome of conserving and interpreting heritage, whether intended or not, is to provide identity ... There may be other purposes as well, such as legitimation, cultural capital and sheer monetary value, but the common purpose is to make some people feel better, more rooted and more secure'.¹¹⁸

According to Buciek and Juul, 'displacement, movement and separation of people seem to be among the most prominent features of human existence. The dispersal of populations and cultures across many regions and societies requires that previously solid and grounded notions be reconsidered from an angle of transnationalism and globalisation. This is not less true for questions of heritage [...] that are important elements in the present-day struggles over identity and belonging.'¹¹⁹ On the other side, for the European Commission, 'Cultural Heritage has traditionally been identified, protected and maintained by heritage specialists and/or professional heritage institutions. Although this has brought many benefits it has resulted in a heritage management system in which local communities often bear little responsibility for their own cultural landscapes, monuments, collections and intangible heritage.'¹²⁰ Only recently the potential to work with active and confident local communities has been discovered. In this sense digital technologies offer great possibilities to enable diverse communities to deal with their own Cultural Heritage, both within their communities as well as in co-operation with heritage institutions.

5.1 CASE STUDIES WITH SELECTED EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

The following chapter sheds light on the role of digital Cultural Heritage for identity and belonging of communities, paying tribute to the increasing role of local communities and the necessity to co-design Cultural Heritage services and actions. It focuses on the vivid and innovative new ways in which communities themselves use their heritage either to strengthen their particular identities and to foster a sense of belonging to their home countries. The communities, analysed in our six case studies, could not be more diverse: with the first generation immigrants of Romanian nationality in Coventry this case study considers a community of particular traditional cultural identity, handed down through generations, a group of people that do not have claim to a nation and experience again and again strong ethnic-discrimination. With the community of the Waldensian Church in Italy, as well as the Jews of Rostock, two local religious minorities have been chosen that shed new light on the perspectives digital technologies offer in the field of religious cultural practices and identity, the former maximising its potential, the latter only using it peripherally. Furthermore the chapter on the communities of Dutch-Surinamese origin in the Netherlands brings into discussions not only the background of colonisation, but also the notions of belonging around ethno-nationalist bases, mirrored in the communities' digital Cultural Heritage practices on a series of web portals. In this sense having a closer look at the digitally-shaped community of users of the *Marokko.nl* forum provides deeper insights in how an ethnic website function as gate to the source of the Moroccan culture. Finally, the community of young Spanish-speaking labour migrants in Berlin shows, in an impressive way, how a community with high technical and educational level deals with their cultural heritage in a series of lively digital services.

¹¹⁸ Graham and Howard 2008, 147.

¹¹⁹ Buciek and Juul 2008, 106.

¹²⁰ European Commission 2015, 8.

5.1.1 The Romani community in Coventry

This chapter maps and analyses the digital cultural practices of the Romani minority in Coventry, UK, between actuality and potentiality. The Romani minority is heterogeneous, which results in different cultural practices, ways of expressing cultural identity, and engagement with digital media for furthering cultural expression and communication. Considering this diversity, the study opted for depth over breadth, and focused on the experiences of a Coventry-based Romani community made of first generation immigrants of Romanian nationality. This community presents a particularly insightful case for understanding the potential of digital technology (DT) for minority communication, as they are in a moment of change, in which their cultural identity and cultural practices are being reconfigured in a new socio-cultural space. Moreover, the community is located in a multicultural and multi-ethnic environment, built through many subsequent waves of migration. Coventry is a city of multiple cultures, multiple religions and lifestyles. In this context, the distinction between a guest and a host culture, or the idea of a mainstream culture become obsolete. How a minority can find ways to express their own identity, the challenges met while maintaining it while being active in a crowded space of many minority cultures, is therefore one of the most interesting aspects of this study.

To understand the potential of digital cultural practices and online activities for expressing identity and belonging, the study took a ladder approach. Firstly, it examined the Romani community's understanding of their own culture, heritage, and identity and how these are affected by their move to a new country and members' interaction with other cultures. Second, it looked at Roma's attitudes towards digital technology and their current digital practices, in conjunction with their awareness of the possibility to use DT for cultural expression. The scope of the inquiry was thereafter widened to understand what is the potential of DT for expressing Romani identity, strengthening a sense of belonging, and advancing a truthful representation of the Romani community. To this aim, the research examined the online and digitally-mediated practices which engage *purposefully* with Romani culture, located in Coventry, as well as broadly in the UK. These activities are still very scarce, and highly mediated (either by educated Roma, or by support groups and organisations). Finally, the study investigated the role that Romani cultural and art forms can play in promoting intercultural understanding and communication, thus bridging differences between the Romani people and the other groups in Coventry and in the UK. The role that digital technology has in representing and promoting these cultural and art forms was examined.

Methodologically, the study blends empirical research, literature reviews, and online content analysis. Empirical data have been collected through interviews, focus groups and participant observation focusing on the Romani community in Coventry of Romanian nationality and the organisation of events for promoting Romani culture (such as a Flamenco festival).

Based on this analysis the chapter puts forward an outline of the role that digital technology and online activities can play for enabling Romani people to express their cultural identity, take agency over cultural representation, manifest their sense of belonging, and strengthen relationships within their community and with other groups. In sketching this outline, the study acknowledges the highly heterogeneous nature of the Romani community, and indication of the breadth and scale of descriptions, assessments, and recommendations is provided all throughout.

Case study methodology

This is an exploratory case study designed to understand if and how digital technologies can enable a minority group to reflect on their cultural identities and to engage critically and productively with mainstream Cultural Heritage. The Romani minority has been selected as prime focus of this study for several reasons. Firstly, they stand out at European level as the largest trans-national minority¹²¹ and a remarkable example of cultural continuity and resilience (Stewart 1997; Chiriac 2013), manifesting a strong cultural ethos and maintaining their cultural identity under pressure towards assimilation exerted by different national regimes and policies throughout many centuries. Second, the Roma are also Europe's most stigmatised and discriminated against minority, facing as well high levels of poverty, social exclusion, and unequal access to work, education and health services¹²². A better understanding of how digital technologies can be used to engage with Romani culture is therefore of utmost importance both for maintaining and encouraging cultural diversity, and also as a step towards societal inclusion.

In this study, the term Roma is used to indicate minority groups speakers of the Sanskrit-origin language termed variously *Romani*, *Romany*, *Gypsy language*, *řomani čhib* (Romani language), *řomanes* or *romanes* (in a Romani way). It therefore focuses on the Roma population as an ethnic and cultural minority, without denying that this term is nonetheless elusive and may conceal the great diversity of people, traditions, dialects, customs and lifestyles that may go by the name *Roma* in different European countries or the UK. More inclusive approaches to using the term Roma are acknowledged, for instance the term 'Roma' is used by the European Commission "(..) as an umbrella term including also other groups of people who share more or less similar characteristics and a history of persistent marginalisation in European societies, such as the Sinti, Travellers, Kalé etc."¹²³ Where such an inclusive approach is taken in this chapter, this is indicated by employing the term 'Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers' (GRTs), which is used especially in the UK to point to very different populations distinguished by their ethnicity and/or their nomadic lifestyle, some with a long history of living in the UK, and some arrived with the latest migration waves.

The empirical research conducted as part of this study is, moreover, focused on a segment of the Romani population, the first generation of Coventry-based Romani migrants of Romanian nationality. First generation Romani migrants are situated at a crucial point in their development, under constant pressure to change and adapt in response to various factors and stimuli in the local socio-cultural environment. How the Roma respond to change, to what extent they are eager or manage to maintain their cultural ethos while enjoying societal inclusion, and how digital technologies can help in this process - are key aspects of interest in this study, and likely to shed light and inspire deeper understandings of similar issues playing out in the cultural continuity of communities made of first generation Romani migrants in other European countries.

- The data collection and analysis strategy was crafted with the aim of giving prominence to people's own voices and understandings, while getting a full picture of the potential of digital technology for cultural expression. The study has been designed as well in a broader framework of social inclusion, by which the focus was not placed only on the Roma, but also on non-Roma, to understand the dynamics of interaction among the two groups. Overall, data have been gathered to cover four main areas of investigation:

¹²¹ Gheorghe and Acton 2001.

¹²² Halász 2007.

¹²³ European Commission 2010, 3.

- Endogenous understandings and perceptions of Romani Cultural Heritage in relation to the expression of identity and sense of belonging. This provided a basis for the analysis, and served to examine critically the potential of digital technology for cultural expression, depending on how the Roma choose to define and express their identity and their heritage for themselves or for the world at large;
- Digital practices undertaken by the Roma in Coventry, examining to what extent these cover their goals for cultural expression, and the unrealised potential;
- Purposeful engagement with online and digital media in relation to expression of identity, cultural representation, preservation and promotion of Romani Cultural Heritage, undertaken by Coventry-based Roma, but also by the broader GRT minority and initiatives driven by mixed groups of Roma and non-Roma.
- The local society's attitudes towards and reactions to the Roma and their heritage.

Further aspects of interest that are central to this study come from the examination of the above, and are singled out in the chapter. In particular, it is important to understand:

- How Romani identity, culture and its expressions are *changing* in a multicultural space, and under the influence of other forms of heritage, along with the implications for using digital technology; and
- The role of cultural expressions supported by DT for furthering *intercultural communication and understanding*, and viable forms of social inclusion that are embraced both by minorities and majority populations.

The main data collection instruments used were desk research, interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and analysis of digital artefacts and online content. Part of the primary data collection has been conducted through the mediation and with the support of the Roma Project, a Coventry-based non-profit organisation, whose role in supporting the culturally-aware social inclusion of the Roma is outlined further in the report.

Desk research has been conducted covering the following areas: socio-demographic data about the Roma as ethnic minority, with a focus on the UK, data about the Romani community in Coventry, and reports that examine Romani Cultural Heritage in relation to expression of identity and belonging, and Roma's digital practices. Reliable empirical studies on the Coventry-based Roma are lacking, therefore with the exception of a few quantitative studies and a qualitative study on the livelihoods of Romanian Roma¹²⁴, most of the information on the Roma in Coventry is sourced through primary data, as described below.

¹²⁴ Chirac 2013.

Interviews. The study included semi-structured and open-ended interviews of two kinds. First, a series of *expert interviews* have been carried out to tap into the several areas of interest for the project: One interview focused on understanding the situation of the Roma in Coventry and the local approach to their social inclusion, and was carried out with the Chairman of the Roma Project. This interview was a valuable source for understanding the overall situation of the Romani people in Coventry, including socio-demographic and economic data, as well as first-hand data about the level of social inclusion.

Two other expert interviews have been conducted with the organisers of a Coventry-based one-week event that celebrated Flamenco and Romani culture - *Flamenko Coventry Festival*. One of them was Rosamaria Cisneros, a Roma woman and freelance artist with an interdisciplinary expertise covering dance practice, dance history, education and social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Rosamaria Cisneros provided insights into the role of culture in fostering intercultural understanding and communication, the role of Flamenco as a vehicle for intercultural communication, and her own experience being a highly educated and accomplished Roma woman with a multicultural background that initiated and endorsed several local projects for Romani cultural promotion, education, and social inclusion. The second organiser interviewed was Marcos, a British broadcaster, writer, lecturer and Flamenco artist with a wide-ranging experience covering media studies and practical media production drawing on his role as a BBC reporter and producer, the art and history of Flamenco, and an in-depth knowledge of the Roma culture from his position as a Flamenco artist.

Second, interviews have been carried out with non-Roma people that engaged in various roles with understanding, representing or interpreting Roma culture and interacting with Romani people:

- Hannah Greyson-Gaito, a British interdisciplinary visual and dance artist who created a multimodal art installation inspired by Romani culture, which was displayed during the *Flamenko Coventry Festival*.
- One member of the students media crew that provided video coverage for all events of the *Flamenko Coventry Festival*, and consequently published short video documentaries online.
- A West Midlands police officer who had a key role in developing a dialogue with the Romani migrants in Coventry in a socially inclusive way.

Data about the livelihoods of the Roma living in Coventry were gathered, moreover, through discussions with the Project Manager of the Roma Project, who had an extensive experience working with the Roma; and with a City Council interpreter and MSc researcher who has written the only available qualitative research on the Romanian Roma living in Coventry¹²⁵.

Focus groups. One focus group involved a group of Romanian Roma, and was organised at the Roma Project headquarters. The focus group included eight participants, out of which five women and three men, overall covering several generations: aged 16 (one girl), aged in their 20s (a couple), 30s (a couple), and in their 40s (a couple and a woman). Participants were all Romani people of Romanian nationality, from the Kalderash or Coppersmiths ethnic sub-group, traditionally characterised by their metal work profession. They had been living in the UK for periods ranging from one year and a half to four years, with the majority living there for around two years. The focus group guide was designed to probe into participants' expression of cultural identity, their understanding of Cultural Heritage, cultural traditions, their engagement with digital media for cultural expression and communicating with peers, and their interest in online digital content that engages with issues of Romani culture.

¹²⁵ Chiriac 2013.

A second focus group was conducted with five non-Roma dancers studying at the University of Coventry, who have taken Flamenco classes and performed during the Flamenko Coventry Festival. Three of the dancers involved in the focus group had also created original choreographic pieces inspired by Flamenco, performed during the *Flamenko Coventry Festival*. The discussion sought to unpack how non-Roma dancers appropriate Flamenco as an art form, and if and how their engagement with Flamenco as dancers and artists entices an interest in understanding Romani culture, and influence attitudes towards Romani people

Participant observation was conducted by the field researcher on occasion of the Flamenko Coventry Festival (3-7 November 2014), and for several events organised with or for the Romani community in Coventry. During the Festival, several events were attended, including Flamenco performances, talks by experts on Romani culture and Flamenco, and discussions around issues of Romani culture and identity. The field researcher was present as well and engaged in discussions with Romani people at the Roma Project headquarters.

Analysis of online content and digital artefacts. Online content and digitally-mediated practices have been mapped more widely at UK-level, made by or addressing UK Roma, Gypsy and Travellers groups, and including websites, rich media web content, as well as digitally-mediated real-life practices (e.g. digital storytelling). These have therefore been analysed in conjunction with the empirical data set, to shed light on how the Romani community in Coventry gets involved in these activities, and where there is unrealised potential for engagement.

The Romani Community in Coventry: Historical Insights and Present Developments

The Romani community in Coventry is highly heterogeneous, including Romani people settled here for generations, nomadic groups setting camp around Coventry, in Warwickshire, and newly arrived migrant groups coming from different European countries, including Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia. This study takes a special interest in the settled Romani population, speakers of dialects of *Romanes*, and among these in particular in first generation migrants of Romanian nationality. Though no official records exist, it is believed that at present (2015) there are around 7,000 Roma living in Coventry¹²⁶, for an estimated total population of 329,800 in 2013.¹²⁷ This figure is on the rise from an estimated 4,000 Romani people living in Coventry in 2011-2012¹²⁸. This indicates a rise in migration in recent years, especially from Eastern Europe, particularly after opening the borders and lifting employment bans for Eastern Europeans coming from Romania and Bulgaria, after January 1st, 2014. Some of the Roma coming to the UK are believed to be on their second migration. They have firstly gone to work in other European countries such as Spain and Italy, and when the economic situation became challenging they changed their route and attempted to start a new life in the UK. In Coventry, there is a predominant Romani population of Romanian nationality, estimated at around 2,500 people, most of whom settled here in recent years, especially starting with 2011¹²⁹. This differs from other West Midlands localities, for instance in Wolverhampton the Roma are predominantly Czech-Slovak and fewer Romanians.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Roma Project.

¹²⁷ Coventry City Council, 2015.

¹²⁸ Roma Project.

¹²⁹ Chiriac 2013.

¹³⁰ Chairman, Roma Project.

Roma people of a certain nationality tend to stay close to and nurture relations with Roma of the same nationality, friends, or extended families. In Coventry, the Romani population is concentrated in two neighbourhoods, Foleshill and Hillfields, the first with a majority of Romanian Roma, and the second of Czech Roma.¹³¹ Many of the settled Roma often face dire living conditions, with large numbers of people inhabiting two or three bedroom houses, some in very bad condition.

With respect to employment and economic standing, though no official records and statistics are available, the sources consulted for drafting this report concur in confirming that the economic situation of the Roma is currently unsatisfactory, with many Romani people living below the poverty line. Many Roma initially coming to the UK take scrap metal dealing or other forms of self-employment. For Roma of Romanian and Bulgarian nationality, before 2014 being self-employed was their only possibility to stay in the UK, unless covering sought after work expertise. More recently, the job market opened for the Romanian and Bulgarian as well. At present, Roma people of Romanian origin employ a variety of very different means for generating revenues. At the high end, the Roma are in part time or full time employment, some continue to be self-employed, while others have opened businesses, even hiring other people. Other Roma, however, have very uncertain revenue flows, coming from street performance such as accordion playing, selling magazines on the street, continuing to practice scrap metal dealing, or even begging, despite this being a prohibited practice in the UK.¹³² In general, the beginning years are problematic for the Roma, and finding a job is difficult. Low or no knowledge of English is one of the most important barriers to job seeking, especially for those Roma who come to the UK without a proper command of the language.

Social and economic inclusion of the Roma are intertwined, so that the level of social inclusion is closely related to their freedom and capacity to access jobs, but also the other way around – they may be refused jobs because they are not known or trusted. According to the Chairman of the Roma Project in recent years steps have been taken towards the social and economic inclusion of the Roma, with some promising cases of people enjoying a good standing and good jobs:

‘Two-three years ago very few Roma were employed, mostly they were self-employed. Now many of them are employed in full time employment, and that is a huge step forward for the Roma who historically have been tangent not necessarily in the city, but tangent in the type of work they have done. They might go out to do a bit of gardening, a bit of painting. But now they are actually fitting into the society, fitting into the culture, and they have taken full-time employment. And that’s one of the most important things for the future of the Roma.’
(Chairman, Roma Project)

Low educational attainments for Roma children are a matter of concern. According to the official records, 407 Roma/Gypsy and 13 Irish Travellers were registered in Coventry schools in 2014, out of a total of 51,733 pupils¹³³. However, the real number of students of Romani and Traveller origin is considered to be much higher, as typically the Roma are reluctant to disclose their identity when it comes to official records. Educational attainment for Roma/Gypsy children, assessed by Level 4+ completion in English and Maths, was 53% in 2013, on the rise from 38% in 2009, however much lower than the city average of 71% in 2013 and 68% in 2009.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Roma Project.

¹³² Chiriac 2013.

¹³³ Coventry City Council 2015.

¹³⁴ Coventry City Council 2015.

As this study will show further, low educational attainment is however not generalised, and a rising interest in good education for children is starting to be noticed among Romani migrants.

The economic, housing and educational attainment issues reported above, as well as others related to access to health, security and discrimination are overall problems that afflicted and continue to afflict the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller populations in the UK as well as the rest of Europe. While some of these are stringent in Coventry as well, the position of the Coventry-based Roma is also highly distinctive within the UK and Europe. Coventry is a multicultural city with a long history of migration. An estimated total of 140 languages are currently spoken in Coventry (Coventry City Council, 2015). Multiculturalism and the open policy to migration has a historical explanation. In the 1940s, Coventry had a booming automotive industry. After being bombed during WWII, there was a need for a skilled labour force to reconstruct the city, and establish new bases for its industries. Following this demand, several waves of migration succeeded one another, with migrants coming from Ireland, Scotland, the Caribbean, India and Pakistan, Poland and most recently Eastern European countries and Somalia. Given this openness to migration, migrants have been able to more easily become socially included, and feel so. After the war, Coventry has also been declared a City of Peace and Reconciliation, twinned with 27 other cities that have undergone war and violence damage.

In this social climate, Coventry-based Roma are in a better position to be and feel socially included than in the rest of the UK. If discrimination still persists, this is due to a large extent to the negative stereotypes associated with the word 'Gypsy', or even 'Roma':

'I think it was a case that they did not understand the culture, the traditions, the needs of the Roma, and because they didn't understand it, they just found it too difficult to deal with them. (...) The Roma tend to come in large groups, and people can find them intimidating. But it's not that they wish to be intimidating and it's not that they wish to do anything wrong. And the misuse of the word 'Gypsy' has a lot to do with it. People's preconceived ideas about what Gypsies are and what they do. And that's obviously very unfair.' (Chairman, Roma Project)

A few local and regional support groups, organisations and associations provide social, economic, and legal advice and support. One of these is the Roma Project. Founded in 2010 and with an experience working with the Roma within the UK and Eastern Europe that goes back to the 1990s, the Roma Project has a crucial role in helping Romani people, especially first generation migrants, to accommodate in and adapt to the local environment.

Community understanding of Cultural Heritage

As well as featuring a multiplicity of cultural forms, expressions, customs and languages, the Roma culture is characterised by a remarkable cultural continuity. Scholars have attempted to explain the resilience of the Romani minority and the continuity of its culture in several ways. Spicer (1971) puts together a theory of persistent cultural systems, by which groups with a history of marginalisation and exclusion develop tighter intra-group bonds which enable them to thrive as a closely knit community with a strong cultural ethos. The Roma, the Jews, the Basques and the Maya are examples of groups with persistent cultural systems. In his seminal work on the livelihoods of Hungarian Roma, British anthropologist Michael Stewart (1997) proposes that the mechanisms for Roma's enduring culture and lifestyle have been developed partly as internal devices for coping with exclusion, and therefore appropriated in their own cultural system. *Romanes* indicates the Roma's language, but also a culturally sanctioned way of acting, behaving, assigning value and being in the world that is fundamentally distinct, even opposed to mainstream values and norms.

This includes *Romani butji*, or *Romani Gypsy activity/Gypsy work*, which is a way to get by without entering the mainstream economic system, opting for such revenue generating activities as horse trading or scrap metal dealing. Typical of the Romani way of life is the determination to celebrate the present, not thinking of the past, nor worrying about the future. British scholar Angus Fraser (2003) speaks about a Gypsy “culture of survival”, featuring coping mechanisms that have been interpreted and appropriated as cultural values (Chiriac 2013). These theories share a base agreement that the Romani Gypsy exceptional cultural persistence and resilience thrive, rather than being menaced, by marginalisation and exclusion. The more majority populations marginalise and exclude the Roma, and the more they perceive them as social outcasts, the stronger the cultural ethos of the Roma, who find comfort in their own community, their values, their kin, and the Romani way of being and acting in the world. Cultural continuity, identity, and a strong sense of community and belonging are therefore intricately connected and strengthened in processes that distinguish the Roma from the non-Roma or outsiders to the community (what the Roma call *gadje/o*, or *gorgias*).

Of recent, however, more and more Roma are growing distant from their ancestral culture and lifestyle. **Cultural change** is a complex and multifaceted process that affects differently Romani communities around Europe. This process is not new. The Roma have always allowed their cultures to be shaped by the groups and the cultures with which they were interacting, in more or less fundamental ways. An example is the appropriation of religious systems and religious traditions from settled populations. Yet this influence was incorporated while retaining a strong core of cultural identity and traditions. Animated by a resilient cultural ethos, the Roma have proved for centuries that no outside pressures towards assimilation, even when coupled with violent repression and genocide, can annihilate their culture. At present, cultural change can take effect not under force, but rather driven by the desirability of other ways of life different from the traditional ones. Moreover, cultural change may also be determined by integration policies and laws that do not pay sufficient attention to cultural diversity, as well as by mainstream education systems.

The Roma who participated in the research were part of a first generation of Romani/Gypsy people from the Kalderash sub-group who were breaking with traditions and choosing a lifestyle driven by their own understandings of their culture, in ways that enabled them to fit seamlessly in the social environment where they chose to live. The Kalderash or Coppersmiths, characterised by their traditional metal work profession, are among the Romani sub-groups with the strongest cultural ethos and tradition. A typical Kalderash community, especially in rural areas, is closely knit, nurtures strong intra-group relations, and is guided by ancestral values, norms and customs that regulate interaction and behaviour of members by gender and age.¹³⁵ Focus group participants had only been in Coventry for periods ranging between one and a half and four years, but they had started to re-interpret and challenge the traditional ways while they were still in Romania. Breaking with tradition was not a process of denial, nor done in a careless and brusque manner, but rather a conscious choice to give up or interpret differently certain forms of tradition, while continuing to cherish others. A couple in their forties told the story of how they took steps to distance themselves from the strict rules of the Kalderash:

M: ‘I used to live in the community. And when I met my wife and brought her home, my mother used to say ‘I don’t want to see her with her hair loose, I will be the laughing stock of the entire street, all our relatives’. And we used to stay in our courtyard with my parents, and she held a scarf on her head. But then when we went out on the street, she placed the scarf in her pocket. (...) She was raised differently.’

¹³⁵ Sabiescu 2013.

F: "I grew up in a block of flats, and for me the change from how I was raised to when I went to his family was huge, this was a major change. (...) It was difficult until I got used to it, it took several years. But then we started to change, step by step, we changed things and now we are fine, it is not like this anymore."
(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma)

Some of the most powerful influences on the culture of Romani migrants are channelled through the mainstream education system. These impacts are unequally distributed across generations, with Roma children and young adults who attend schools being more immersed in the local culture than more elderly generations.

'The children go into this English school, they have English views, English ideas and English friends, they have a different viewpoint perhaps than the parents. But because mom and dad still want to do things traditionally, that in itself causes problems, which is why it is very important that we address the issues about their culture, about their tradition. So children understand it, and the parents also understand that things are slightly different here. It's about getting a balance I suppose between tradition and their new view on life.'
(Chairman, Roma Project)

While they were aware of the way British school attendance impacted on their children, the Roma interviewed were unequivocal about their determination to support their children's education. All the Roma interviewed who had children remarked that they have only come to the UK to improve the life opportunities of their children, in which process education was considered of crucial importance. A good future for their children equated with access to good education.

'If my grandfather took at most two classes, my father took six, I took 12, and my daughter is a college graduate. So we went on like this from one generation to the next. I firmly believe that school, education, is the primordial thing for us, and for all Gypsies, to be able to change their lives. Otherwise they will never be integrated.'
(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma, middle-aged man)

When questioned if they do not perceive education to be a threat to the continuation of their tradition, most respondents placed education and the well being of their children above, while indicating that they would like their core traditions to be kept vibrant. The provision of information on Roma culture was considered of vital importance.

F: 'Yes, there should be [information about their culture and traditions], so that they don't forget they traditions, their origins. These are special things that shouldn't be forgotten. Even if they go on to college, even if they will come to know lots of things, the origins and their traditions should not be forgotten.'
M: 'Even if our children will be British, we want Christmas to be ours, Easter to be ours.'
(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma)

Another major factor of impact is the British law. As argued by Chiriac (2013), the Roma guide their lives according to their own norms and internal rules, which are different from and in many instances conflicting with societal norms and laws. In some traditional Romani groups, the Roma had and some still have their own justice and law enforcement system (termed in some parts *Kris* or *Romani Kris*), which settles all matters internally, without reporting local deviations or crimes further to the legal system of the societies they inhabit. More generally, the Roma guide themselves according to internal laws and customs, unwritten, however not less binding.

Some of the customs in the Romani way oppose the British and international laws, and one widely mentioned case is that of child marriage. In some traditional Romani families, marriages are arranged by parents, at times when the bride and groom are still children, or even since they are born. Marriages are then celebrated within communities when the spouses are in their early teens. This opposes international and British laws on the right to free choice of the spouse, and the minimum age for marriage.¹³⁶ Apart from the written laws, there are also clashes between the social customs of the Roma and the codes of conduct prevalent in the UK. For instance, and especially in Romanian villages, it is customary for large groups of people to gather in front of one's house and tell stories, or talk about current news, at times in loud voice and listening to music. In the UK, this kind of behaviour is considered anti-social, and when faced with it, it is not unusual for people in UK neighbourhoods to call the police to quiet down the groups.

The tension between ancestral customs and the laws and customs of the mainstream society, was evident in the discussion carried out with the Romanian Roma, who were pondering their position between the two. When explaining their gradual distancing from traditions, a Romani woman remarked:

'Somehow we gave up part of what we had, part of our traditions. I came to the conclusion that there was something about them which we could only accept as normal within our community.'

(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma)

For some Romani groups undertaking traditional professions such as metal work, a further challenge leading to cultural change resides in the unviability of the business models on which they used to thrive. Traditional coppersmiths and carpenters, for instance, no longer find markets for their products. Some traditional professions are still practiced, albeit struggling, in countries such as Romania, where one can still find Kalderash communities who earn their living selling metal objects (Sabiescu 2013). In some European countries, programmes for the validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning practices enable the Roma to acquire a professional certification for their competences. This can enable them to further upgrade and update their skills, enhancing their chances to access jobs that bear some form of continuity with practices they had engaged with traditionally. Validation programmes are considered not only an economic tool, but also a social inclusion tool (ROM-ACT Consortium 2014). For the majority of the Roma, however, and especially in the UK, traditional professions are no longer economically viable. Roma migrants with traditional professions coming to the UK have no choice but to perform other jobs, often without formal training and therefore with a low skill set which can only afford them low-paying jobs (Chiriac 2013). Giving up traditional professions also impacts on their lifestyle and culture, particularly for professions such as music or metal work, which are distinctive for certain Romani sub-groups.

One of the questions asked by this study was: *How does cultural change impact on cultural identity, the expression of a sense of belonging, and endogenous understandings of Cultural Heritage?* A series of considerations are outlined below.

¹³⁶ Chiriac 2013.

Romani cultural identity is marked by hybridity and fluidity, yet made vibrant by a core cultural ethos nurtured through community interaction and adhesion to a Romani spirit and way of being. When asked whether they felt more Roma or more Romanian, focus group participants agreed that they were both Roma/Gypsy and Romanian, yet at their heart they were Roma. Even when embracing change, Romani/Gypsy identity was maintained as a way to mark their distinction from other socio-cultural groups and their belonging to a closely knit community.

F: *'In my discussions with children, at home, I insist on this: We are Gypsies. When I talk to them and among other things that shapes their education, I always say, we are Gypsies, it is this way that we are meant to be, what can we be, another nation? We are Gypsies.'*

Q: *'And in Romania, when you suffered discrimination, didn't that affect you?'*

F: *'We were affected, yes, but we have to maintain our identity, and if we have any value, we have it the way we are, we cannot change and be somebody else. Who loves us, loves us for who we are.'*

(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma)

The centrality of the Romani Gypsy identity is sanctioned by speaking *Romanes*: all Roma interviewed, just like many European Kalderash Roma, were speaking a dialect of *Romanes* with their children, at home, and with their peers. Speaking *Romanes* is an important cultural element, which helps the community to cultivate strong intra-group relations and ensure cultural continuity. When asked to reflect on the possibility that their children may lose either Romanian or *Romanes* language, all participants agreed that they had no worry for their offspring losing *Romanes*, as this was the language they were using in their daily conversations. However, the possibility of losing Romanian as a language was much greater, as this was no longer spoken nor in their houses, nor in school. Some focus group participants expressed concern over the loss of Romanian language, however *Romanes* appeared to be the most important as a link of continuity.

These remarks come, however, from first generation migrants that are distancing themselves from traditions. It is difficult to say how cultural identity will be further shaped and changed over long periods of time. When asked what will their children's identity be when they grow up - Roma, Romanian, or British - a middle-aged father of five answered: *"It will be their choice."*

Romani notions of belonging are centred on people, rather than places. Belonging means belonging to a community of peers, all united by the same cultural identity and the Romani way of life. This placeless sense of belonging can be manifested even by Romani populations that are now settled. When inquired whether they felt any apprehension for moving into a new country, a middle-aged Romani man answered: *"We are Gypsies, we are used to being on the roads."* Feelings of belonging to a place start developing out of affection and relatedness with people living there, rather than the place itself. This may explain why the Roma interviewed spoke warmly about Romania and their friends there, yet also spoke about Coventry as their home.

A people-centred rather than place-centred notion of belonging has been reinforced historically not only by the nomadic lifestyle, but also through exclusionary practices. When made to feel like strangers in all European countries, irrespective of whether they are born there or just travelling, the Roma seek solace in their community, an act which is instrumental as well to strengthening cultural identity. A British Romany interviewed for the project *Roads to your past*¹³⁷ remarks:

¹³⁷ Bowers, 2007

*'You go from one county to another and they don't want you there. So you go back to your own county and they still don't recognise you as a local. So where do you belong? It's time to make a stand. Its time to come out and be proud of who you are and be proud of what you are. We are a separate cultural people to the rest of the people in this country. I think the gorgias could benefit from it. If they understood us, they would know how to live with us.'*¹³⁸

The Roma's **understanding of Cultural Heritage** is crystallised around a strong sense of community and the celebration of togetherness, which were found to be the central, unifying cultural elements even for those Roma that embraced change and distanced themselves from some Romani traditions. Being attuned to shared values and being able to celebrate togetherness through shared rites enabled the Romani minority in Coventry to continue to thrive as a community. This same ethos characterised their position in dealing with novelty, different cultures, and eventually mark their distinction amongst this diversity. Aside from a strong sense of community, deep respect for the others and particularly the elderly was regarded as one central cultural value. The *customs and norms* that regulate Romani community life, once very strict for the Kalderash, were now selectively embraced, depending on the choice of each family. For instance, a middle-aged man remarked about the traditions they were still keeping:

'It depends on the family, I don't think there is any obligation. It is for each family to decide. For example, in Romani tradition, women and girls have to wear long skirts. In my family, I have a 17 year old girl and she no longer wears skirts, she always wears pants. So the tradition was lost, in a way. This is something that personally does not disturb me. But other families cannot conceive for their girls to wear pants.'
(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma)

Community-sanctioned values and norms have wide-ranging implications and repercussions on lifestyle choices, and the establishment of standards for what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate to pursue or express in one's attitudes and behaviour. For example, cultural norms regulate social roles in relation to gender and age, and they dictate as well the role of the woman in the Romani household, community, and within non-Roma circles. Indirectly, cultural norms also dictate how much women should study and what level of education is appropriate to pursue. In some traditional Romani communities, especially Kalderash, women may be held to complete education only to enable them to read and write, if at all. This way they can be fully dedicated to what is their first duty, towards their house and family. The changing role of the woman in the Romani family is reflected as well by an increased acceptance of an educated Romani woman, so that high school and higher education become more accessible for her. Another element that the Roma appeared to hold on strongly to regards the rites and rituals, especially for holidays celebrations (e.g. Christmas) and rites of passage such as baptism and weddings. All respondents agreed that knowing about and celebrating their traditions was a way to maintain their identity, and these aspects would continue to be cherished even if themselves or their offspring pursued education and could change their mentality or their lifestyle.

Online and digital practices

The digital practices of the first generation Roma migrants living in Coventry are focused on information consumption and communication, using digital technologies (mobile phones, Internet-connected computers), along with traditional broadcast devices (e.g. television).

¹³⁸ Frank Brazil, British Romany (quoted in Bowers 2007).

A chief reason motivating people to use the Internet is the need to **communicate** with community members in their home countries. The Roma interviewed communicated with their relatives and friends using mobile phones, video conferencing and instant messaging systems such as Yahoo Messenger and Skype, and social media, especially Facebook. All interviewees accessed Internet from their homes. Some had not used Internet or did not access it from their homes in Romania, where it was less affordable and not perceived as a necessity.

With respect to **information consumption**, no significant trend has been found which links information consumption patterns to their minority status and Romani identity. Most people looked up practical information to help them settle in Coventry (e.g. local laws, regulations, finding a house, tax payment), or accessed news, documentary and entertainment sites. On the other hand, there was a definite interest in keeping themselves up to date with the happenings in their home country, using particularly Internet-based TV channels and online news. One Romanian Roma interviewed preferred to install in his house Romanian cable TV, with Romanian national channels, rather than local cable services. An inquiry into the reasons for not accessing content related to the Roma revealed that many people were not aware of the existence of this content on the Internet, even more so of content done by people of Romani origin that spoke about their identity, culture, and traditions. However, there were a few exceptions, and overall the interest in accessing Roma-related content was very high even for those people who did not purposefully look for Roma-related information before. The children of one of the families, for example, followed leads from their grandfather to look up short video-based digital stories published on YouTube, narrating the experiences of their ancestors throughout their deportation to Transnistria, in the former Soviet Union. The deportation happened during WWII, by orders of the Romanian Nazi-friendly right wing regime in power, and is still a somewhat obscured and hidden episode of Romanian history. Spreading awareness of the deportation beyond the immediate circles of the Romani people deported was done only in recent years, and the role of oral histories published online had an important contribution. Some of the children were amazed to find online the story of their own grandmother, who had been deported and survived the ordeal. The stories had a definite effect on children, who were unaware of these happenings, or had only very vague ideas about the Romani Gypsy deportations during WWII.

One of the factors found to drive the Roma back from searching information about their culture on the web was the overwhelming quantity of negative accounts they came across. Non-purposeful information consumption of Roma-related content is bound to include news and stories that depict the Roma in very negative, discriminatory terms. Negative accounts of petty crime, illegal settlements, and other offences brought by Roma and Travellers often make the headlines in newspapers. This is a major drawback for the Roma to look up other information on their own culture or history, especially when this is offered by non-Roma people and organisations. The expectation to find non-biased content on an objective or positive note about their people and their culture is practically null for the Roma used to being discriminated and depicted as low class citizens. Overcoming this barrier and revealing the existence of non-discriminatory, informative content are the first steps to be made to enable Roma to access digital content that can help them better understand their culture and their history, and strengthen their identity.

Engagement in **information sharing and content production** for the web or other media was found to be very low on community initiative, or restricted to community circles. People used social media, Facebook in particular, to share news and visuals, such as photographs, within their circles of friends and the community based in their home country. Some of the Roma interviewed participated in projects initiated by other parties for producing digital content related to Romani culture.

One of the middle-aged Kalderash Romani men interviewed was involved in a project documenting the experiences of the Romanian Roma deported to Transnistria during WWII. Another woman collaborated in her teen years with an American journalist who documented Romani rites of passage, including weddings, baptisms and funerals. Her wedding was documented and filmed, and information was posted online, which can be publicly accessed. These initiatives demonstrate that the interest is high, however to unpack the potential there is a need for initiatives that target and engage Roma directly in narrating their stories, speaking about or performing their rites, or offering information about their lifestyle.

The next section examines a series of Coventry- and UK-based initiatives that take steps to unlock the potential of digital technologies as tools for cultural expression, documentation, preservation and communication of Romani Cultural Heritage.

Expressing Romani cultural identity through online and digital media

The history, identity, arts and culture of the Roma in Coventry and more broadly in the UK are represented and promoted via the Internet and digital media in several ways, through informative portals, online exhibitions, audio-visual representations of traditional Romani cultural expressions, digital storytelling, digital photography, documentary and film-making. One distinctive movement, visible all throughout Europe and also in the UK is the shift from non-Roma led representation to Roma led representation. This movement does not imply that only Roma can speak for the Roma, rather it marks a point in Romani cultural representation that is mindful of including the voice of the Roma themselves. This may be visible in initiatives that are Romani-led, but also in joint projects led by teams of Roma and non-Roma people, non-profits and memory and academic institutions working in partnership. Often times media projects are launched through the initiative or with the support of non-profits and associations, such as the UK-based *Roma Project*, *The Traveller Movement*, *Friends, Families and Travellers*, *The Rural Media Company*, and *Romani Cultural and Arts Company*, among others. When inquiring who is entitled to speak on behalf of the Roma, dance and Roma historian Rosamaria Cisneros remarked:

'If you have done your history, and you've done your research, you are entitled to not speak for them but speak with them. Having a horizontal approach I think is the way forward. Not a top down, not 'I am'. Even some Roma academics do this for the 'poor miserable Roma'. I don't speak for the Roma community, I speak for myself, my experiences, but I am very clear about that. If you have really engaged with the Roma community, then you have a voice in this conversation. (...) I don't think you have to be Roma, or have to live with them in order to speak about them.'

Various online and digitally-mediated practices are outlined in this section promoted by, with or for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the UK. These initiatives engage with GRT culture and people by supporting:

- Provision of news and information on current events and Romani history and culture
- Cultural representation, oral history and digital preservation
- Networking and communication
- Documentation and promotion of place-based initiatives

Provision of news and information on current events and Romani history and culture.

Several portals offer information on Romani lifestyles, current news, and resources on Romani culture. Most of these are linked to or launched by organisations promoting Romani Gypsy culture and history. Their main aim is to provide information that is truthful and accurate, often times sourced directly from the communities, as well as tools for engaging, posting, commenting and sharing content. One of the most popular is *Travellers' Times Online*, the most comprehensive online portal for sharing news, posting information about events, offering information about Romany/Gypsy and Traveller culture and history and other resources. The portal is a project of the *Rural Media Company*, a media charity that campaigns the use of digital technologies to empower and give voice to underserved and rural communities. The unique characteristic of *Travellers' Times* is that it positions itself as a window onto the Romani, Gypsy and Travellers' community. The participation of Roma and Travellers is encouraged, and several possibilities for content contributions are offered (upload of audio-visual imagery, blog posting, news stories), as well as the possibility to share and comment. Content is intended for both Roma and non-Roma audiences, and the higher goal is to promote a truthful view of Romani Gypsy lifestyle and culture.



Figure 16. Travellers' Time Online

Travellers' Times Online is one of the most comprehensive resource sites for Romani Gypsy news, history and culture. travellerstimes.org.uk

Cultural representation, oral history and digital preservation. The history and culture of the Roma, Gypsies and Travellers have been hidden from view for long in the UK, absent from mainstream museums, libraries and archives (Bowers, 2007). The wave for the recovery of Romani history was on its rise at the same time when digital technologies started to become cheaper and more widely affordable. Several digital initiatives have followed this interest in Romani culture and history, some with institutional support, and some grassroots-led.

Digital storytelling, digital photography, documentary and film-making initiatives have been used to document contemporary Romani lifestyles, and collect oral histories. Their distinctive feature is the focus on the people and the centrality given to capturing their voices. *Life through a lens* is a project initiated by documentary photographer and film maker Julia Johnson, which aims to encourage Romani and Travellers youths to document their lives through photography to combat, though real-life depictions, the often stereotyped and negative portrayal of their communities in the media.

The online exhibition *Tales from the trailer. The story of Gypsies and Travellers in Cardiff* showcases the stories of two Gypsy and Traveller communities in Cardiff. The project has been led by Roma and Travellers, with the support of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in Cardiff. Its aim was to offer a genuine account of the lifestyles, values and customs of local Gypsies and Travellers. The digital stories are sourced from YouTube, and narrate life stories through the voices of community members.



Figure 17. *Tales from the Trailer. The story of Gypsies and Travellers in Cardiff, a digital storytelling initiative and online exhibition*

The exhibition *Heritage* tells the stories of Gypsies and Travellers in Sussex, providing information about the Gypsy way of life, language, customs, and current issues and problems faced by the communities. The exhibition has toured cultural institutions in Sussex, and is available as well online. Stories are told through audio, pictures, and meaningful quotes.

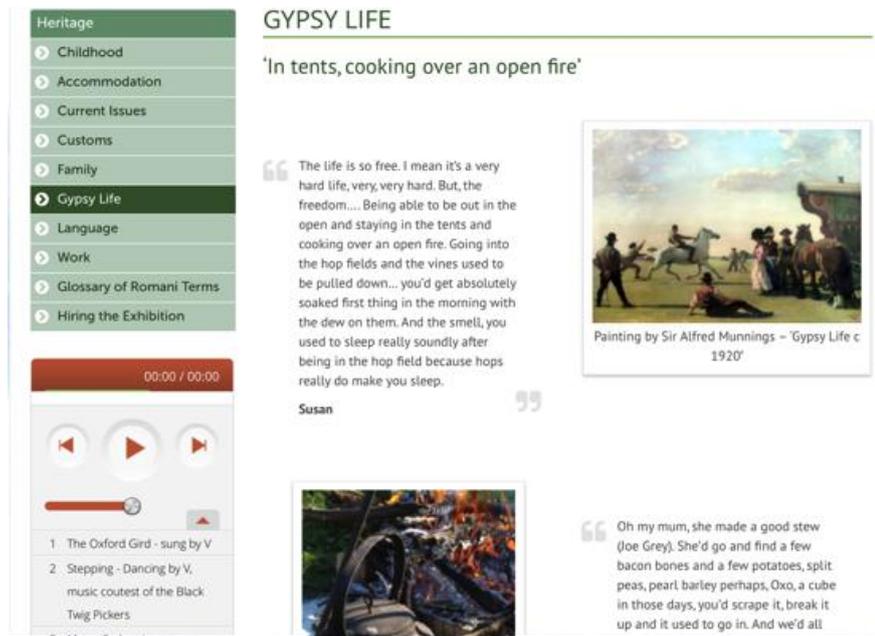


Figure 18. Web page featuring stories on the Gypsy Life, from the online and touring exhibition Heritage, which gathered the stories of Gypsies and Travellers from Sussex, UK.

These initiatives, many led by or otherwise engaging the Roma, can prove to be very powerful experiences for those directly involved.

'The act of doing, the act of creating, the act of publishing something with a global audience is empowering, because it's transforming you. You've gone through some process of questioning yourself, of making something to put that out there, and you've made certain decisions and made choices. So if you're looking at a community that is vulnerable and is excluded, that have limited or no say or choices in their life, to then be given an opportunity to say something, or to make a choice and to follow through with it is incredibly empowering from the inside out.'
(Rosamaria Cisneros, freelance artist, dance and Roma historian)

Testimonials of Romani people involved in content production demonstrate that it can empower people, encourage them to take agency over the representation of their lives for other audiences, combat the effects of negative stereotyping, and pave the ground for building cordial, nurturing relations with non-Roma (see for instance the testimonials provided by young Roma and Travellers involved in the project *Life through a lens*).

Family history and genealogy websites and web archives have been created to trace Romani community and family histories. They include materials sourced from City Hall and Census registries, newspapers and family archives, as well as oral histories. Some of these websites started through grassroots initiative, and meeting popular interest, grew into larger databases. For example, the website *Romany and Traveller Family History Society* was founded by a team of family historians with British Gypsy ancestry as a resource tool for the Roma interested in Romani Gypsy family history. The website provides advice on tracing one's history and genealogy, a growing index on baptisms, marriages and funerals, publishes several specialist publications, and organizes events for members. *Romany Genes*, created by a British man with Romani Gypsy ancestry, is a collection of websites that provide textual and visual data sourced from parish and census registries and family archives.



Figure 19. Romany & Traveller Family History Society is a resource site for people interested in Romani family history, and used by the Roma to trace their own family history and genealogy.

Some other projects engaging with cultural representation and preservation are driven by joint partnerships between memory and education institutions and Roma researchers or Roma communities. The project *Roads to your past*, led by the Surrey History Centre, traced the existence of Romani history in regional museums, libraries and archives, and therefore gathered opinions on the best ways to preserve and promote Romani culture from specialists in the field (Romani archivists, family historians, and activists) and from the local travelling communities (Romani Gypsies, but also Irish Travellers, Showmen and Circus People).¹³⁹

Networking and communication. Social media services are the most widely accessible online tools for producing, sharing and accessing Roma-related content. Each type of social media service offers their own affordances and have been used in diverse ways for engaging with and promoting Romani culture. Social networking sites such as Facebook offer possibilities for community building and community engagement around topics of interest, for instance interest in Romani history and family genealogy. YouTube is often used as source portal for uploading videos that are then displayed on other online portals. YouTube content includes at present various instances of video content produced with or for the Roma – digital stories, testimonials, events, recordings of rites and rituals, and historical accounts, among others. Apart from wide and free accessibility, social media offer other advantages such as fast circulation of information, the possibility to reach multiple audiences at the same times, multiple posting of content on several portals, etc.

Documentation and promotion of on-site initiatives. Digital technologies can augment, support, and promote both tangible Cultural Heritage (such as content and artefacts displayed in local Romani culture museums and archives) and intangible cultural expressions (e.g. on-site events and festivals engaging with the promotion of Romani culture).

¹³⁹ Burrows, 2007.

While Romani artefacts tended to be invisible in mainstream museums and archives, at present several small museums and collections have been set up throughout the UK, by private or public initiative, or through partnerships (see Bowers, 2007). Digital technology can be used to promote the online presence of these museums and collections, increase access to content and artefacts for wider audiences and enable audience engagement with digitised collections in online spaces. Moreover, digital technology can be employed to record cultural events, festivals and social gatherings, to augment on-site exhibitions of Romani arts and culture, or to provide the technical infrastructure for seminars, talks and roundtables dealing with issues related to the Roma and Romani culture. To offer insight into the potential of DT for enhancing the impact and outreach of place-based cultural initiatives, the following part describes a recent Coventry-based initiative for promoting Romani arts and culture, and the spirit of Flamenco.

Focus case: The Flamenco Coventry Festival

One large-scale initiative organised in Coventry was the Flamenco Coventry Festival (3-7 November 2014), initiated by a team based at the University of Coventry led by Rosamaria Cisneros (a Roma woman, freelance artist, educator, dance and Roma historian) and Marcos (broadcaster, Flamenco artist and senior lecturer). The Festival was organised with two key goals which tied Flamenco as art form and cultural form with Romani-Gypsy culture. *Firstly*, the festival aimed to educate the audience and offer a true image of what Flamenco is. The image of Flamenco crystallised in the public opinion has been shaped by the promotional activities carried out during Franco's regime in Spain, which represented Flamenco as an art form concerned with aesthetic body movements, beautifully adorned dresses, and having the dancers, especially the Flamenco woman dancer, in the centre. This is very different from what Flamenco is in native *Gitano* communities where the art form has been growing and shaped through many generations of *Gitano* artists, as Marcos explains:

'If I say Flamenco, people would think of .. well, movements. If they go to a typical Flamenco festival (..), there is no single dancer there at all. This is a gathering of maybe 10,000 in a football stadium, and there is no dancer there at all. In this type of festival you don't have dancers, because Flamenco is one thing only, and that is singing. The cante is the most important thing. Anything else is very secondary (..) These people went there to see the singers. If they've got good guitarists, it's good, but it's not important to them. (..) Because Flamenco is a music, it's always been a music. The fact that people have later on danced it, that's a historic development.'

Second, the Festival aimed to promote a positive image of the Romani-Gypsy people, by showing remarkable Gypsy cultural and art forms such as Flamenco, and providing in-depth information on the history of the Roma, their struggles, and the extraordinary cultural vitality and continuity they demonstrated and still demonstrate in the face of adverse conditions.

The Festival was spread over one week, and included a wide variety of events among which Flamenco concerts and performances, conversations with artists and scholars, lectures and seminars, screenings of historical movies about Flamenco and Roma culture and history, workshops on Flamenco dance and Flamenco guitar, and a Flamenco Poster Exhibition.



Figure 20. Still from the photo shooting session organised by Coventry University Media students to document and promote the Festival. Students conducted in parallel a research on the history of Flamenco and reviewed historical designs for promotional materials.



Figure 21 and 22. The promotional poster of the Flamenko Coventry Festival (right) was designed by a Coventry University student following the canons of Flamenco iconography. One of the pictures from the shooting session organised by students (left) inspired the poster.

Several dance performances and an art installation were created specifically for the Festival. The art installation *Conversations* by dance and visual artist Hannah Greyson-Gaito provided a reflection on the historical and contemporary dialogues between society and the Romani culture and people in the UK. The installation interprets these dialogues as a spiralling dance, with sporadic interactions, but different trajectories. This dance was represented through pieces of fabric hanging loosely from above, *“hanging with the possibility of interaction. One thread for each community”* (Installation informative sheet). Hannah’s invitation, through this installation, is to re-examine closely the fundamentals from which preconceived ideas about the Roma have been concocted, and reflect on how, for having real conversations, we need to see ourselves reflected in the others. This attitude would open a new chapter in the relations between Roma and non-Roma:

‘What if we could encourage more moments where the fabric of the two communities hang more closely and dance together? As children, in school, we are encouraged to appreciate cultures from other countries, but why not Romani Gypsy history and culture when it is so close and has contributed to Britain’s development? What if we were to replace ‘the other’ with a recognition of our shifting place on the continuum that is the human experience?’
(Hannah Greyson-Gaito, dance and visual artist)

Original choreographic pieces were created by non-Roma Dance students who were taking classes in Flamenco. Natasha Adomako’s solo dance piece, *African dancing meeting Flamenco and Contemporary dance*, was inspired by the common elements between Flamenco and West African dance, where her ancestors originally come from. For creating the piece, she researched the history of Flamenco and of the Roma, and found inspiring instances which influenced her creative process:

‘During my research of Roma history, I came across a woman called Papusza (Bronisława Wajs) who was a Romani poet and singer. She was banished from the Roma community because of her expression through poetry and songs. I feel that during my piece I want to express myself, how I was created to be, as a young woman that is strong. Women were made to be strong, physically and mentally and I feel that both styles accentuate this strength.’

Ella Tighe’s dance piece, *WHO I AM*, sought to *“explore underlying issues faced by Roma women, exploring how one can be confined by identity, stereotype and struggle. It portrays images of society when one attempts to break free of an imposed sense of conformity that restricts individuality. Is it possible to overcome things we are constantly bound by or will they always pull us back? Can we be free from the opinion of others or will they always tell us who we are supposed to be?”* (Ella Tighe, dance student and choreographer)

Trish Martin’s Contemporary Flamenco Dance piece was inspired by the Romani Gypsy proverb *“You cannot walk straight when the road bends.”* For doing the piece, Trish looked at how Romani communities shape their lives, their lifestyles and their culture under the constant pressure to adapt to *“the ‘straight way’ of conventional life around them”* (Trish Martin). The piece follows the movements of a dancer embodying, step by step, the slow coming into birth of identity, moving at first under a heavy burden, almost crawling, and little by little gaining strength, vitality and the will to stand against outside pressure and reclaim cultural distinction and individuality.

Her piece is proposed “as a reflection of the emotional, physical and psychological state of the Romani people as they appreciate and thrive on the bending road”.



Figure 23. Coventry University Dance students perform during the Festival. Performances included original choreographic pieces by Dance students, inspired by Flamenco, contemporary and ethnic dance.



Figure 24. Left: Flamenco guitar workshop. Figure 25. Right: Flamenco dance workshop. All the Flamenco Festival activities were video and photo-documented by the Coventry University students media crew, and videos were used to produce short documentaries published on social media sites (<http://vimeo.com/groups/72hour/page:1/sort:date/format:thumbnail>).

Credit for all photographs documenting the Coventry Flamenko Festival | Ko Ko Zin Photography

One of the most remarkable achievements of the Festival was pursued behind the scenes, with the contribution of a team that included, apart from the lead organisers, the Dance and Media students at Coventry University. The performance and choreographic work undertaken by Dance students implied long hours of practice and research into a domain with which they had been previously little familiar with, exploring the history of Flamenco, as well as the history and culture of the Roma. Coventry University students were engaged as well in the organisation, documentation and promotion of the festival through photography and video.

Before the Festival, a group of students were involved in organising and running photography shooting sessions and designing promotional materials. To this purpose, they had to do their own research to understand how their work could be aligned to the canons used in Flamenco iconography. Moreover, Media students could choose the Festival as a case study and content source for their coursework, in order to produce video documentaries. A good number of Media students followed the Festival throughout the week, video-taped events, and after its closing entered a 72 Hour Challenge for creating short video documentaries, which were therefore published on social media sites such as Vimeo¹⁴⁰ and Facebook. Finally, each team of students involved in the 72 Hour Challenge wrote scholarly essays about their documentaries and the process of developing them.

The video documentaries approached a wide variety of themes inspired by the Festival: Flamenco as art form, Flamenco dance, women in Flamenco, the relation between Flamenco and Romani Gypsy culture, Flamenco music, portraits of Flamenco artists, positive role-models of Roma women, as well as stereotypes in the media and misrepresentations. Some students demonstrated commitment not only to documenting the Festival, but also to exploring the links between Flamenco and Romani Gypsy culture. One team set out to explore how Coventry University students view the Romani/Gypsy people and “the fascinating Romani Gypsy culture, a culture that is famously misunderstood and misrepresented” (documentary ‘Flamenco and Gypsy culture’). Asking simple questions such as “When I say *Gypsy* what is the first thing that comes to mind?”, this short reportage provided a glimpse into how the Roma are perceived by international students at Coventry University. When most responses revealed negative stereotyping, the group of students carried their work further to ask how these negative perceptions can be changed. Testing the assumption that Flamenco could be used as an entry point for more positive engagements with the Roma, they asked some non-Roma people who took Flamenco dance workshops whether their positive experience with the Festival and Flamenco dance inspired them to look into the Gypsy culture. Without attempting to come up with definitive answers, this team brought its own contribution to an on-going debate about Romani representation in the media. Some other groups took their work outside the University, and probed perceptions and attitudes to the Roma and their culture. A group went out into the public and asked people on the street about the GRT community. They also gathered their own set of data, and then made specific artistic decisions on how to represent that information.

After the Festival, students wrote scholarly essays in which they positioned their work in professional and scholarly literatures on media representation, film making and narrative studies. This exercise further compelled students to reflect on the way they had represented Flamenco and Romani culture in their work. The texts indicate that students were fully aware of the power of representation, and the meaningfulness of the choices they were making during the process of filming and editing the documentaries, from choosing camera angles to selecting usable shots and frames. Some pieces of writing suggest that students also pondered the larger implications of their work. Rather than merely documenting an arts and culture Festival, their work meant taking position in a complex and disputed set of relationships and representations centred on the Roma. For instance, a student writes:

‘The documentary is not simply a data collecting tool but a technique that participates in the negotiation of social relationships between Roma people and mass audiences who reject them.’

(Excerpt, essay assignment, used with permission)

¹⁴⁰ The 72 Hour Challenge Documentaries, including the ones focused on the Flamenco Coventry Festival can be viewed on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/groups/72hour/page:1/sort:date/format:thumbnail>. Page accessed 30 March 2015.

Another student comments on the narrative structure of the documentary done by her team, attempting to use Vladimir Propp's seven character functions. It is interesting to note the larger frame of reference, which includes not only the direct participants in the Festival, but also an imagined larger public who holds negative perceptions about the Roma:

'I can identify in the documentary that the princess is the dance, the villain is the deranged audience, the hero – the performers, the helper – the costumes, the false hero – the public who does not like Gypsy minorities, the donor – the music and last, but not least, the dispatcher that is the body movements.'

(Excerpt, essay assignment, used with permission)

Students reflected as well on their own perceptions of the Roma and what they learnt by making the documentary. One of the essays reads:

'By this documentary, I, for one, learned that Roma community has humour, joyfulness and they repudiate the sadness. This is what means wellness.'

(Excerpt, essay assignment, used with permission)

Overall, the Flamenko Coventry Festival offers a series of important insights into how engagement with Romani Cultural Heritage can be sustained, and how digital technology can be used effectively to document and promote these initiatives for larger audiences, in particular:

- Using art as an entry point and a vehicle for intercultural communication
- Working in joint teams, involving experts on Romani culture, Romani communities, and university academics and students
- Including Romani arts and culture in pedagogical strategies and coursework, to stimulate in-depth engagements and purposeful research and documentation by students
- Using contemporary frameworks and venues to provide new ways of access to history.

The Roma and (Digital) Mainstream Cultural Heritage

The attitudes of Coventry-based migrant Roma towards the British culture, values, and norms are difficult to pinpoint, given the blurry lines of distinction between the British and the other cultures sharing the city space. Rather than engaging with a definite, *one* local culture and local population, the Roma perceived Coventry as a multicultural space.

M: 'Personally, on my street, I have neighbours of all nationalities, Indians, Pakistanis, English, Africans. And I get along very well with all.'

M: 'We get along very well, we visit each other.' (...)

F: 'Where we are settled we are well respected by our neighbours. Polish, Indian, English, Pakistani...'

(Focus group with Coventry-based Romanian Roma)

The Coventry-based Kalderash Roma interviewed for this study expressed a quiet acceptance of the British way of life, without criticizing any aspects of it but also without manifesting an adhesion to typically British values and norms. The tendency was for the Roma to appropriate the regulatory aspects of British culture (social norms, rules of conduct), while keeping to their own traditional values, which continued to be at the core of their identity. This is aligned also with their reasons for coming to the UK. In their desire to ensure a good education and a promising future for their children, the Kalderash migrants manifested a positive and open attitude towards what Britain had to offer. This attitude cannot be however generalised to all migrant Roma groups.

By way of example, the study of Chiriac (2013) reveals that members of the Romani sub-group of the *Bear Tamers (Ursari)* can express a more critical stance, deeming that some of the British moors and customs deviate from morality and can have negative effects on Romani children and young adults; likewise, the Bear Tamers did not accept the local opposition to their own customs such as early child marriage.¹⁴¹

The Kalderash Roma who participated in this study reported that they had already started to see Coventry as their home. Being in a place of multiple languages and multiple cultures contributed to this process. While they reported missing friends and relatives in Romania, the presence of their close relatives, good social relations with their neighbours, all contributed to developing a sense of belonging to the city and the social environment. This feeling of 'being home' did not imply permanence, but rather the creation of a space of comfort and security. Nor did it deny their relationships with peers in the home country, which continued to be maintained. This experience was greatly facilitated by the *Roma Project* support centre, which acted as mediator and helped them settle, understand the local laws and customs, and adapt seamlessly to a new lifestyle. The support approach adopted by the *Roma Project* places Roma's cultural identity and traditions at the centre of any social inclusion efforts.

'We do have a responsibility as a host country for these people to try and help them become socially included but retain, where they can, and understand the traditions that they've come from. And it's really sad that these children may grow up without knowing who and what they are.'

(Chairman, Roma Project)

This approach paid off in the long run, as the Romani community in Coventry stands for one of the few examples of Romani minority groups in the UK where positive reports of good intercultural relations, understanding and peaceful co-location outnumber negative reports. A local police officer pioneered an approach to dealing with neighbourhood issues based on communication and personal relationships, which contributed to making the Roma feel safe and protected, and ensured peaceful intercultural relations in the neighbourhood.

'I would start getting across the same families day after day, because once you build a relationship with someone, then I'd see the same families day after day, and they would introduce me to their friends and families. And it got to the point that when I'd walk around Foleshill, there would be a Roma from the other side of the street shout at me, and I could pop into their house for a cup of tea. So in the old days, policemen used to pop into people's houses for a cup of tea, you can speak, you get some intelligence about what is going on, where the criminals are, what's going on in the world, and from there you can do your job as a police officer, and that's easy to do with the indigenous population, they still like to see policemen walking around, and they'd still welcome them into their houses. But now I could dip into one of the Roma's houses and have a cup of tea. It's fantastic.'

(West Midlands police officer)

Key to this successful practice is working towards a fair balance between acknowledging and respecting the customs and lifestyle of the Roma, and the customs and unspoken rules of the local population. At times it was evident that tension was merely a matter of clash between different traditions, which could be solved though peaceful communication, as the local police officer remarked:

¹⁴¹ Chiriac 2013.

'One of the biggest complaints from the Foleshill population was about Roma standing out around their houses in the evening chatting really loudly, making a noise, disturbing people, etc. (...) So what did we do? We went and spoke to them, explained that in Romania that's part of their day to day life, here it's not the way we do it. Now, they go over to the park in the evening, they stay late, chat as loud as they want as there're no houses around there. It was resolved, as easy as that. Just because we spoke with them, and engaged with them.'
(West Midlands police officer)

The research examined, moreover, the role that digital technologies played or could play in enhancing Roma's engagement with local heritage, and fostering a better understanding of local cultures and customs. It was found that digital technologies were not used purposefully to understand or explore the local culture. Television, rather than the Internet, was preferred for watching news on popular TV channels such as the BBC. Ultimately, understandings of the local culture were afforded by local people, rather than through the mediation of digital technology. This indicates there is an untapped potential for using digital technology to promote higher engagement with local heritage, but also that the value of human relations, and the mediation of support groups and local organisations should not be overlooked when seeking to unlock this potential.

Perceptions of Romani people and Romani heritage

Despite positive experiences, as reported in this chapter, the European public opinion on the Roma continues to be infused with negative stereotyping and discriminatory portrayals.

*'Roma are arguably the most impoverished and marginalised ethnic minority group on the European continent. (...) Racial discrimination is only one of the reasons underlying this spiral of decline, but it is indisputably a major factor. Though poverty, social exclusion, and unequal opportunities affect other population groups in Europe, including segments of each country's respective ethnic majority, the scale, gravity, and uniformity with which those injustices afflict Roma are unparalleled.'*¹⁴²

Stigma and discrimination can affect virtually all aspects of Romani social and economic life, from access to health and education to housing and access to the job market¹⁴³. While these issues, called globally 'the Roma problem'¹⁴⁴ have been existing for centuries in Europe, and acknowledged publicly and institutionally by the European Commission (see for instance European Commission 2010a,b), the general current of opinion on the Roma does not seem to have changed in a positive direction. Of recent, anti-Gypsyism started to be doubled by rising anti-immigration feelings across Europe. In the UK particularly, anti-immigration movements are gaining momentum, after the UK registered rising immigration quotas in recent years. Some of the most affected are people of Romanian nationality, for whom the UK job market only opened in 2014. The Romanian Roma are therefore doubly affected, as anti-immigration feelings against Romanian people are strengthened by the stigma assigned to being Roma.

Stigmatisation and discrimination practices can take effect at individual and institutional level, and tend to be unequally spread. The primary research conducted as part of this study revealed that discrimination in Coventry is less strong than in other parts of the UK.

¹⁴² Goldston 2010, 314-315.

¹⁴³ Halász 2007, 5-6.

¹⁴⁴ Imre 2006; Vermeersch 2002.

When inquired whether they felt discriminated against, all the Roma interviewed agreed that they never felt consistently discriminated, and apart from minor episodes, they felt better integrated and more accepted in the UK than they had felt in their home country. This is confirmed by an earlier qualitative study on Coventry-based Roma of the *Ursari (Bear Tamers)* group¹⁴⁵, which goes on to argue, moreover, that despite feeling less discrimination expressed by people, the Roma were confronted with institutional discrimination, embedded in the British system which indirectly undermined their possibilities to earn their livelihoods and access public services on virtue of their being Romanian or Roma.

This study investigated how the media and digital technology can be used to change this negative image, and enable a more accurate and truthful portrayal of the Roma. The research concludes that one of the fundamentals of negative stereotyping resides in *ignorance* around the values, customs, and lifestyle of the Roma, and the tendency to *generalise* the features of an allegedly Romani way of being and acting, focusing on negative aspects. Despite having lived near the Roma for centuries – the Roma have been documented in the UK since early 16th century – non-Roma British still know very little about Roma's history and culture. This is exacerbated by the tendency to look upon all Roma, or upon all Gypsy, Roma and Travellers as a unique entity. The media, which has a crucial role in influencing public opinion, often opts for giving front page coverage to sensationalised stories of petty crime, illegal settlement, and theft committed by Roma and Travellers. It is by this type of articles, rather than by truthful accounts, that the public opinion on the Roma is shaped. Lack of awareness and knowledge about the Roma and their culture is a serious impediment to cultivating intercultural understanding and peaceful co-location.

'To be able to work with the Roma, it is necessary to first recognize them as cultural entities, understand their culture, their traditions, their distinctive cultural identity. At the moment, they are not. England is like an umbrella society, where many different cultures live together, yet each maintains as well a cultural identity. Yes, the boundaries between these cultures are increasingly blurred, but cultural distinction needs to be acknowledged. They can be British, but this does not mean they cease to be Chinese, or Caribbean, or Somali.'

(Georgiana Chiriac, Coventry City Council interpreter and MSc researcher)

At a first level, digital technologies can be used to change negative perceptions and attitudes by supporting wider availability of reliable information on the Roma and their culture. Several initiatives, some of which have been documented earlier in this report, have already encountered success with information provision. The internet contains at present a sizable corpus of information on the Roma in different kinds of media, including more accessible and illustrative audio-visual productions. The issue remains, however, with information access. It is likely that these sites are accessed by people who already have an interest in the Roma. Engaging a larger mass of people with no current interest to find out more about the Roma is just as important as producing and making informative content available.

Apart from information provision, the study found that Romani arts and culture can constitute a viable and successful entry point for triggering interest in the Roma, fostering understandings and changing perceptions. Flamenco is an illustrative example of a highly appreciated art form and cultural form that embodies the Romani way of life and its values, but is at the same time appreciated and appropriated in trans-cultural contexts, in which position it can act like a bridge between cultures.

¹⁴⁵ Chiriac 2013.

Mere exposure to arts and culture is not however sufficient for fostering a better understanding of the Roma. It is not uncommon for people to hold negative opinions about the Roma, and still listen to Gypsy music, or enjoy a Flamenco performance. In Spain, for instance, the appreciation of Flamenco and the adoration of Flamenco legends such as Camarón de la Isla does not deny strong prejudice, persecution and discrimination against Gypsies (Marcos 2007). Appreciation of the culture and the art form needs to be complemented by in-depth information, for a more profound understanding of the people and social environment where the art form came into existence. It is at this level that media can play an important part, by offering an overlay of non-intrusive contextual information that can inform arts audiences.

'[Flamenco] can be a very powerful tool that allows other conversations to happen. And those other conversations may be looking at the current situation of the Romani community, looking at historical situations of the Romani community, and just even seeing a member of the Roma community for who they are. Because when you are on stage or you are performing or sharing an art form, you are reflecting something very internal, and that comes out. So, I think it is an entry point. Arts are an entry point, and Flamenco is a bridge.'
(Rosamaria Cisneros, freelance artist, dance and Roma historian)

Changing perceptions about Romani culture and people can also be enhanced by a deeper engagement of non-Roma populations with the culture and the people. *Doing or creating*, as different from merely receiving information, is a powerful means for triggering interest, fostering an even higher engagement, and creating new premises for thinking about and interacting with the Roma. A change of attitude with respect to the Roma was noticed in non-Roma people who had a direct creative engagement within the Flamenco Coventry Festival as dancer, choreographer, media producer, or artist. A dancer recollects her changing perception of the Romani Gypsies:

'Before working on this project my idea of Gypsies was confused. (...) Ultimately they were different to us. This difference created a barrier, as much as you wouldn't want to admit it, it would be there. It wasn't exclusion and we wouldn't leave an individual out, but there was definitely an underlying sense of segregation. We couldn't understand why they hadn't had the same upbringing as us and why they hadn't had the same education as us. Currently embarking on this project I have become more intrigued about how we perceive these communities and why we perceive them in these ways. I have begun to recognize the traditions and history that is behind the Gypsy identity, the reasoning for why they are traveling. I have also recognized that Gypsies are individuals, within this wider community and that no one stereotype or label can apply to every Gypsy - everyone has their own unique story and journey.'

This change of attitude was the result of a long process, in which the dancer's engagement with Flamenco was complemented by an active research into the history of Flamenco and the Roma, to inform her own uptake of Flamenco and eventually to provide an uplift to her dance practice.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the actual and potential role of digital technologies in supporting cultural practices that can strengthen cultural identity and nurture a sense of belonging, focusing on the Roma, Europe's largest, one of the most culturally vibrant, but also least understood minorities. Recognizing the large diversity of the Romani-Gypsy and Traveller minority, this study focused on the case of a more definite community, made of first generation Roma migrants of Romanian nationality, living in Coventry.

At the same time, the study has widened the scope to the larger Romani-Gypsy minority in the UK to map digital practices for promoting Romani culture and expressing cultural identity. To showcase the potential of Romani arts and cultural art forms as vehicles for intercultural understanding and communication, it examined as well Romani-Gypsy art forms originating in Romani cultures outside of the UK, such as Flamenco. The most important findings of this study are summarised below.

Notions of identity and belonging in a time of cultural change

This study focused on a Romani community that has already embarked on a process of change, manifested as a more liberal interpretation of strict cultural norms, an openness to interact with other cultures co-located in Coventry, and a keen interest to provide good education to their children. Cultural identity is still vibrant, focused on a strong sense of community, the use of *Romanes* language, and adherence to shared values. The Roma expressed an equal interest in offering good education to their children, and in maintaining their cultural identity and their core traditions, especially values, customs and rites. Yet, intergenerational differences are being noticed between adults educated inside the Romani community, and the children and young adults educated in the British system. Given the role of these children in cultural transmission towards future generations, the gap with tradition is bound to grow larger in future years.

Digital cultural practices for identity expression, communication, and cultural representation

The digital activities of Coventry-based migrant Roma tend to be focused on communication with peers and information consumption. Purposeful search for Roma-related information is rare. For information consumption, the most pressing issue is not that of content availability, but rather that of access to content and awareness of its availability. Already existing digital content could be used to respond to some of the concerns expressed by the Roma involved in the research, and particularly for transmitting information about Romani history and traditions to their children. The challenge is to inform the community about the availability of this content (often free), and set up systematic pathways for information provision and deeper learning. Moreover, there is a high and still untapped potential for engaging Romani people in direct production of digital content, which is in itself an empowering practice that can encourage the Roma to take agency over their self-representation and contribute to a growing body of truthful and reliable information about themselves and their culture. With respect to practical means to bring about these changes, this report proposes that there is value in practices that blend traditional and digital media, online and offline. Digitally mediated practices which are supported and contextualised in direct interactions carry considerably more power than exclusively online digital practices.

Roma's engagement with mainstream heritage

The notion of 'mainstream heritage' is difficult to examine in Coventry, which is a multicultural and multi-ethnic city. The tendency is for the Roma to adhere to the regulatory aspects of the socio-cultural environment (laws, rules of conduct), while continuing to cherish their own values and customs for intra-community interaction and activities. The most important role in bridging encounters between the Roma and the local population is played by local support groups, organisations and - for school-attending children and adults - by educational institutions. Digital technologies are not used purposefully to engage with aspects of the local cultures, and access to local content tends to be limited to news and entertainment.

Outsiders' perceptions of the Romani people and heritage are still dominated by a negative current of opinion, dwelling on a lack of awareness and understanding of the Romani culture, values and lifestyles. Changing the negative image of the Roma in public opinion can be facilitated by exposure to reliable information, and especially by direct engagement with the Roma and their heritage. Romani arts and culture can provide an entry point, and used as occasions to stimulate deeper dialogues and conversations that can provide glimpses into the Romani way of life. Digital technologies can be used successfully to provide an overlay of information, support exchanges, and promote Romani arts and culture to wider audiences.

Ultimately, the insights listed above culminate in a better understanding of how digital technologies can be used not only unilaterally by the Roma, or by the non-Roma to cultivate each their own traditions and transmit their own histories, but rather in how they can be used to pave the ground towards culturally-aware social inclusion, intercultural understanding, and intercultural communication. Culturally-aware social inclusion indicates a process by which minorities and majority populations can share and interact in the same space, abiding by their culturally sanctioned values and norms, while conscious and respectful of the others'. This is a process that resides in individual and community attitudes and behaviour, yet digital technologies can become important tools for shaping these attitudes, by providing cultural information, mediating exchanges and offering occasions to become engaged with cultural manifestations for members of both minority and majority cultures.

5.1.2 The protestant community in Italy and the case of the Waldensian Church

Introduction

This research has been carried out within the broader aim of the whole study that is exploring the potential of digital technologies to enable ‘minority’ communities both to empower a process of identity-building and also to engage and integrate with mainstream society. As Italy is considered to be a Catholic country, the religious minorities are particularly noteworthy for the Italian mainstream culture. However, not all of these minorities are new or deriving from the recent immigration processes that are currently deeply modifying Italian society: there are cases, like the Waldensian community, an protestant municipality that has been established in Italy for centuries. As such, there are Italians who have not been Catholic for generations and who differ from the mainstream society in terms of belief. Selecting this particular community enabled research to focus on the specific aspect of minority in a group that, for any other aspect (language, appearance, habits, knowledge, and background) is perfectly in line with the rest of the Italian society. Next to them, of course, there are also immigrants who join the Waldensian community, thus representing a (new) minority inside the (established) minority, and thus creating new phenomena of integration.

The Waldensian Church has embraced digital technologies to support members’ engagement and facilitate communication. Particular attention is paid to platforms such as Facebook, adopted as a day-to-day tool that impacts on the sense of belonging. At the same time, the community is using digital tools to face the lack of awareness about Waldensian Church in the mainstream society. In times where most of people are used to checking all the information on the Internet, it is important to be present and active on digital platforms.

Methodology of the case study

The methodology used to analyse the relationship of this minority religious group with digital technologies was based on a mix of desk research, interaction with Waldensian people and an insightful interview with a Waldensian Ministry that is an expert of new media and social networks. To complete the study, a discussion was organized within a focus group of non-Protestant people, including both genders, of age comprised between 35 and 63 years old, all of them with medium/high cultural level and a noteworthy “digital literacy”, representing diverse religious sensibilities/practices as well as atheists. These interviews and discussions allowed investigation of how mainstream society see the Waldensian community and the digital tools they use with regard to their tangible and intangible CH.

Particularly relevant for this case study has been the interview conducted by Promoter Srl with Minister Peter Ciaccio to discover how the Waldensian community lives and interacts in the digital world and the role of Digital Cultural Heritage for identity and belonging. Peter was born in Belfast in 1975, his father was Italian and his mother British. He studied in Rome and is currently Minister of the Waldensian-Methodist Church of Palermo (Sicily). Peter is interested in the relationships between religion and cinema, and he is extremely active on social networks, particularly Facebook and Twitter. He also writes an interesting column about new media in the Waldensian magazine *Riforma.it*.

The Protestant Community in Italy and the case of the Waldensian Church

Christianity has numerous branches, the three most important of which are the Catholic-Roman Church, the Protestant or Protestant Churches, and the Oriental-Orthodox Churches. For Italian citizens, the most represented confession is of course Catholicism, although other confessions are also present in the country. According to estimates in 2012 by the CESNUR (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni, an independent research center focused on the religion practices in Italy), among Italian citizens the Protestantism is the most numerous of the minorities, representing the 30,7% of the religious minorities.

Religious Minorities among Italian citizens (estimation CESNUR 2012)¹⁴⁶

Hebrews	36.000	2,5%
Other catholics	25.000	1,8%
Orthodoxies	110.000	7,8%
Protestants	435.000	30,7%
Jehovah's Witnesses (and similar)	415.000	29,3%
Latter-day saint (and similar)	25.000	1,8%
Other Christian groups	5.000	0,4%
Muslims	115.000	8,1%
Bahá'í and other Islamic groups	4.000	0,3%
Hindu	26.000	1,8%
Buddhists	135.000	9,5%
Osho and derived groups	4.000	0,3%
Sikh, radhasoams and derived groups	6.000	0,4%
Other groups of oriental origin	2.000	0,1%
New Japanese religions	3.000	0,2%
Esoteric area	15.000	1,1%
Human Potential Movements	30.000	2,1%

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.cesnur.com/il-pluralismo-religioso-italiano-nel-contesto-postmoderno-2/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

New Age and Next Age	20.000	1,4%
Others	6.000	0,4%
Total	1.417.000	100,0%

Although interesting, the CESNUR evaluation does not include the immigrants who live in Italy, both regularly (the official estimation of regular immigrants, dated 2014, counts 5.3 million people¹⁴⁷) and illegally. It is estimated that immigrants include at least 212.000 protestants, and probably the overall estimated amount of members of the Protestant Community is around 700-750.000 people, a small amount compared to the estimated 2 million Orthodoxies and the 1.3-1.5 million Muslims (according to the data declared by the Muslim World League¹⁴⁸).

The Protestant communities, i.e. churches, centers, social structures, in Italy are over 4.000 and are present in every region; in the South of Italy they are more numerous than in the northern regions. About 800 communities are ethnic Churches, i.e. composed exclusively of immigrants. There are several federations that try to aggregate and collect this rather varied scenario of micro-communities; one of the most relevant is the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI), which is a fellowship of churches formed by the main historic Protestant traditions in Italy, together with some churches and congregations from the Pentecostal-Charismatic area; altogether the FCEI member churches represent about 65.000 people, of which 35.000 members belong to the Waldensian Church.¹⁴⁹

Historical insights and present developments

Among the Protestant Churches, the Waldensian Church is one of the oldest, as its origin dates back to the end of XII century, when the movement, inspired by the example of Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant who gave away his property to preach poverty, started in Lyon. The Waldensian Church was persecuted as heretical during the XII century, and later embraced the Protestant Reformation: in fact this religious group is acknowledged as a forerunner of the Reformation against Catholic oppression. Today, the Waldensian movement is centred on Piedmont in northern Italy, while small communities can also be found in southern Italy, Argentina, Germany, the United States and Uruguay.

The Waldensian church has in common with all Christian confessions the confessions of faith of the ecumenical councils of the early centuries of the Church: the Creed. Following the division resulted after the Reformation, protestant churches have signed their understanding of Christianity. For the Waldensian church it took place during a tragic moment in its history, in 1655, during the crusade of French and Savoy troops in the valleys of Piedmont¹⁵⁰. It can be assumed that the Waldensian community in Italy reflects the status of Italian citizens: suffering the trend of progressively aging population, in some ways balanced by the flux of relatively younger immigrants with a higher birth rate than the Italian citizens.

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/images/sintesidossier29ott2014.pdf> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁴⁸ <http://en.themwl.org/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.fedprotestanta.it/old/en/fcei/fcei01.php> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵⁰ http://www.chiesavaldeese.org/aria_archives.php?archive=11 (accessed March 15, 2015).

Italy, a Catholic country (?)

There is always an issue about figures of Catholicism in Italy, because the statistics normally take into account the number of those baptized according to the dioceses, but this method disregards those who decide later to abandon Catholicism to become atheist or to convert to other confessions or religions. It is nevertheless acknowledged that, despite hosting the Vatican and being therefore the “seat” of Catholicism, Italy is becoming less and less a catholic country. An assessment undertaken by the research center Eurispes¹⁵¹ in 2006 indicated that 87.8% of Italians declared to be a catholic and 30,6% to be practicing, but more recent studies indicate this percentage to be decreasing: a similar study undertaken by another research centre (CENSIS Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali)¹⁵² in 2012 calculates a different percentages: 63.8% of Italians declares to be a Catholic but 36% to be practicing. According to some estimates, moreover, nearly 20% of Italians were declared to be agnostic or atheist.

Such different figures, while not being able to provide concordant data or consistent comparisons, definitely show an evolving scenario. Nevertheless, the mainstream of society is certainly considering Catholicism as “the” Italian religion while other religions are not very much known or recognized. The relationship between the Italian State and the Holy See was conciliated since 1929 (Patti Lateranensi, Lateran Pacts) and it is also included in the Italian Constitution written in 1946, art. 7 and 8¹⁵³.

ART. 7

The State and the Catholic Church are independent and sovereign, each within its own sphere. Their relations are governed by the Lateran Pacts. Changes to the Pacts that are accepted by both parties shall not require a constitutional amendment.

ART. 8

*All religious confessions enjoy equal freedom before the law. Religious confessions other than Catholicism have the right to organise themselves in accordance with their own statutes, to the extent that these are not in conflict with the Italian legal system. Their relations with the State shall be regulated by law on the basis of agreements with their respective representatives.*¹⁵⁴

Although other religions are acknowledged by the Italian law, the Catholicism is still in a priority position, for example, it is the only religion that is taught in the public schools (university excluded), 1 hour course each school-week. The course is named IRC – Insegnamento Religione Cattolica: attendance is not mandatory for the students, who at the beginning of the school year can choose if participating or not. Normally, alternative activities are provided by the school for those students who do not attend the IRC course. Yet, students who do not attend the IRC are a true minority. According to statistics that are yearly compiled by the Italian dioceses, in the school year 2013/2014 attendants to the IRC are on average about 88.5% of the students, 90.8% at the primary school (age 3 – 5), 92.3% at the elementary school (age 6-11), 90.2% at the secondary school (age 12 – 14) and 82% high school (age 14-19).¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ <http://www.eurispes.eu/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵² <http://www.censis.it/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵³ <http://www.governo.it/Governo/Costituzione/principi.html> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵⁴ http://en.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/camera_eng/file/costituzione_EN_dicembre2014.pdf (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵⁵ http://www.chiesacattolica.it/cc_i_new_v3/s2magazine/vedidocAreaRiservata.jsp?id_allegato=74312 (accessed March 15, 2015).

The Waldensian community in Italy and its peculiarities

Minister Peter Ciaccio identifies some differences of the Waldensian community in Italy compared to the Protestant community at large. For example, and differently from the other Protestant Churches, the Waldensian community is more present in the north of Italy, Piedmont in particular, principally for historical reasons, but also for a cultural and theoretical approach towards religion and theology that characterizes the Waldensian movement.

No statistics were ever made on the members to investigate the structure of the community and particularly the professional and education background, however, the Waldensian movement is traditionally embraced by the middle-class, rather than others. It is therefore a confession that seem to attract members of high cultural level; also the *iter* for becoming a Minister is rather complex and long-lasting, thus providing the Ministers a deep preparation and high cultural level. This is another reason that explains why the Waldensian community in Italy is more concentrated in the North of the country, reflecting the statistical evidence of higher education and cultural level of the northern Italians compared to the citizens living in the South of the country.

Nevertheless, Peter Ciaccio is Minister in the historically and culturally important city of Palermo (the regional capital of Sicily). Originally the church was located in a poor district, having the city grown, now the church is situated in the historical center of Palermo. A characteristic of the Waldensian Church is that its communities are normally multi-ethnic, with members belonging to different nationalities. In Peter's church, for example, a high percentage (about 30%) of members comes from Ghana. The phenomenon of ethnic churches, that is more present in other Christian communities (including Catholic), doesn't seem to be evident for the Waldensian community, and Peter explains this again with a cultural motivation, in the sense that Waldensian community is composed of people with a middle/high cultural level who are certainly open to cultural and ethnic integration.

The Waldensian's understanding of Cultural Heritage

Waldensian's consider Cultural Heritage as an important expression of the community that needs to be preserved and disseminated, safeguarding the religious and cultural beliefs of the Waldensian community. Achieving that aim, plays an important role the Waldensian Cultural Centre Foundation¹⁵⁶. The Foundation (*Centro Culturale Valdese*) is a private non-profit institution founded in 1989 by the Tavola Valdese (the management board of the Waldensian Church) and the Waldensian Studies Society. The Foundation it is intended to be a meeting place for dialogue and exchange in a spirit of cultural pluralism. Situated in Torre Pellice, in the heart of the Waldensian Valleys, the Foundation carries out its duties with strong links to the surrounding area, the general Italian society and to Protestant churches in Italy and abroad.

The foundation mission and aims are¹⁵⁷:

- *to preserve and enhance the value of the Waldensian library, the library stock and funds, the Waldensian historical museum and other museums of the Waldensian valleys; also to preserve and manage the records of several other archives, library funds, exhibitions and museums that both private and public establishments and people have entrusted to the centre.*

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/fondazione-valdese.php> (accessed March 15, 2015).

- *to cooperate with Italian and foreign institutions for the development and diffusion of theological, cultural and historical study and reflection in Protestant churches and in particular in the Waldensian Church, through conferences, debates, lectures, exhibitions, publications and other appropriate means.*
- *In a European perspective of appreciation and preservation of minorities, the Centre contributes to the safeguard of the religious and cultural peculiarities of the Waldensian community*

Promote public access to and the utilization of historical records

Multiple Cultural Heritage sites constitute the Waldensian Valleys Eco-historical Museum System¹⁵⁸, led by Torre Pellice Museum. The museum is organised around 2 main sections. The historical section¹⁵⁹ shows a reconstruction of the events relating to Waldensian history from the Middle Ages to the present time. It contains a number of exhibits, including a collection of weapons from the 17th century, Bibles, liturgical objects, historical documents, 18th and 19th century furniture and material originating from the protestant missions in Africa. The second section has an ethnographical character and displays daily life activities and settings in the 1800s and 1900s: the home, school and work environments are reconstructed, and the life cycle in the Waldensian Valleys at the end of the 19th century is portrayed¹⁶⁰. Especially in these valleys, education has always been a prominent feature in the life of the Waldensian communities, as each believer's freedom to read and interpret the Bible required widespread literacy at grassroots level. The school and the church were then the two aspects of a cultural life where the minister and the school mistress or master were the key figures.

Historical landscapes are particularly relevant for the community. As an example, the website dedicated to Waldensian Historical Places (Luoghi Storici Valdesi¹⁶¹) highlights historical tours linking spirituality, historical landscapes and Cultural Heritage sites. The website includes an interactive map¹⁶² where the user can browse the main sites linked to Waldensian Memory all over the world.

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/museo-fondazione-valdese.php> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/sezione-storica-museo-fondazione-valdese.php> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁶⁰ http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/documenti/cdl_museo.pdf (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁶¹ <http://www.valdesi.org/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁶² <http://www.valdesi.org/page.asp?Page=luoghiMemoria> (accessed March 15, 2015).



Figure 26. Interactive map of the Waldensian Church websites *Luoghi Storici Valdesi* - <http://www.valdesi.org/>

Relation to digital Cultural Heritage

Aware of the importance of preserving and transmitting its Cultural Heritage to future generations, as well as promoting it among the mainstream society, the Waldensian community is exploiting the potential of digital technologies. On the one hand, digitization is crucial to ensure preservation and access of Cultural Heritage materials. On that sense particularly relevant is the work carried out with the **Waldensian Photographic Archives**¹⁶³, which hold round 35,000 phototypes. Part of this material belongs to the Waldensian Cultural Centre and part of it to the Waldensian Study Society that administered it from 2000 to 2006, conducting a challenging work of cataloguing, image digitalization and restoration, with the financial support of the Cultural Council Office of the Regional Council of Piedmont and the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities. After the conservation and filing process, a CD-ROM has been produced by the Waldensian Study Society. The images show pastors, teachers, celebrations, temples, schools, charity work, church activities, the evolution of the urban and rural landscape, changes in social settings and transformations in transport and economic activities in the Waldensian Valleys.

At the same time, libraries, archives and the availability of materials for the study of the Italian protestant and protestantal history and theology is a key point for the community. An example of this is the **Waldensian Library**, which holds 85,000 volumes, 900 reviews, several books printed in the 16th and 17th centuries and over 1,500 Bibles. Connected with the national library service, is part of the Waldensian bibliography online¹⁶⁴ project: an **interactive bibliography**. Besides bibliographical

¹⁶³ <http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/archivio-fotografico-fondazione-valdese.php> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁶⁴ <http://www.bibliografia-valdese.com/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

data, the user also has the opportunity to insert additional items and to improve or supplement an existing item.



Figure 27. Waldensian library - reviews

Another best practice example of how to use Internet for Cultural Heritage is the **Online Biographical Dictionary of the Protestants in Italy** (Dizionario Biografico dei Protestanti in Italia¹⁶⁵). Targeting both researchers and the wide society (community members and citizens from the mainstream society, etc.), the online tool allows to discover personal stories that have particularly impacted on the building of the collective story.

Cult and culture, community identity, digital technologies and new media

As a phenomenon that would be worth analysing from the sociological point of view, Minister Peter Ciaccio underlines how the participation in the Sunday service is very intense in the Waldensian community. Differently from the Catholic churches that are typically rather empty, on Sundays Peter's church sees a presence around 50-60% of the community members, a very high rate that can be explained with the strong motivation and religious feeling of the members. This aspect is perhaps the most important in the process of community-building and in the proud sense of identity of the community and its members. Participation to the function is considered extremely important, and for this reason the Waldensian community is looking at the new technologies, particularly the video streaming tools, as an opportunity to guarantee participation also to those who cannot attend in person, because they are ill or very elderly or because living in isolated areas. The community has not yet implemented these tools, but will probably do so in a near future considering their approach on using digital technologies.

Internet is more and more becoming a virtual place where people can meet, either belonging to the same confession and to different religions, and the new media can help going beyond the barriers and disseminating information and knowledge.

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.stuivaldesi.org/dizionario/> (accessed March 15, 2015).

Of course, the challenge is as usual the digital divide: it is extremely important for Peter as a Minister not to disregard those who do not access new media.

The most important digital trend is certainly constituted by the massive use of social networks. WhatsApp is normally used to keep in touch with delimited groups of interest (e.g. catechumens), and for example is the main contact medium used by the Ghanaian community of Peter's Church. Peter is also very active on Twitter, but the majority is certainly done by Facebook. Peter has his own profile and also the Church has one with nearly 1.900 followers.



Figure

28. Facebook page of the Waldensian Church in Palermo

The profile is used to share news, videos and events, and has the potential to become a virtual meeting point for the community. The section of the notes is used to post the most interesting sermons of Sunday services: it's particularly relevant that the followers have the possibility to comment, ask questions and share their reflections, which would not be possible during the service. Interaction isn't actually very lively, but giving that this is possible is already a starting point. As expressed by Minister Peter, one important reflection has to be considered when using social networks: "The use of social networks in particular would need a shared netiquette: while trying to be communicative and open, it is in fact extremely easy to make gaffes, or to post in absolute good faith confidential information, or to break basic rules of privacy."

What Minister Peter finds most interesting - and crucial for his role and his pastoral care – is noticing how people feel easier to express their mood on Facebook than in person. The Minister cannot be unaware of the feelings of his people, so great attention is given to the "weak signals" that people launch in the cyberspace. Facebook is also discretely used to announce funerals. In fact, when someone dies, it is a matter of maximum 48 hours and the whole thing is over; this means that some people, who are not relatives or directly in touch with the family, may not be timely aware of the loss. Facebook is instead an immediate medium of communication that allows the whole community to know about the event and to possibly participate the family's grief.

Minister Peter highlighted the benefits of digital technologies for community building, belonging and social cohesion. Digital technologies are nowadays so much accessible that even the lowest classes and the poor can afford to get them, and this is certainly a witness on how digital technologies can positively impact on integration and community building process, considering that communication is the key driver for these major societal objectives.

Online presence of the Waldensian Community in Italy

In this section, some examples of websites in use by the Waldensian Community in Italy are provided.

1. Chiesa Protestanta Valdese - <http://www.chiesavaldese.org/>

The website of Waldensian and Methodist Churches in Italy, with a full list of churches in each Italian region ("Dove Siamo"). It is a very large dissemination website with a lot of content, and it is evidently created to address potential new followers who seek for information about Protestantism. Of particular interest is the section "Cosa Crediamo" (What we believe in) that describes in simple language the main concepts of Protestantism regarding the Bible, Jesus Christ and faith. It also includes a section "Audio" where it is possible to read and listen to the most important hymns.



Figure 29. Website, Chiesa Protestanta Valdese'

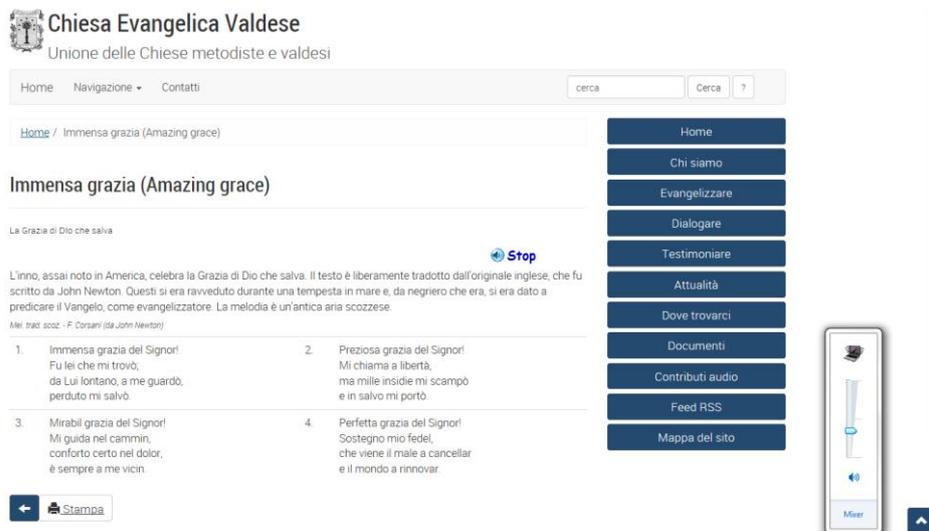


Figure 30. A page with one hymn. The hymn plays in background and the lyrics are provided, together with short information

2. Luoghi Storici Valdesi - <http://www.valdesi.org/>

The dissemination website of Waldensian community in Italy that is particularly focused on providing historical and territorial information about the places where the Waldensian community established first (the area of Cottian Alps), and other information on Waldensian community history. The website is in both Italian and English because it intends to address also the non-Italian Waldensian communities in the world. Interesting sections such as: Along the trails of History, The sites of the Waldensian memory, The Artistic Expressions (including drawings, paintings and songs/hymns inspired by the Waldensian history), The Characters intend to provide an historical overview of the Waldensian movement from different points of view. A section "Visits and Accommodations" allows to get information on guesthouses, centres and guided tours in the area of Cottian Alps.



Figure 31. Website 'Luoghi Storici Valdesi'

3. Riforma.it web portal - <http://www.riforma.it>

The magazine where Minister Peter Ciaccio holds his column about New Media. Riforma was originally a paper-only magazine of the Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian churches in Italy that derived from few different smaller magazines which were published locally. Since 2014 Riforma is composed of 4 different features: an online portal www.riforma.it, a daily newsletter, a PDF and paper publication *Riforma – L'eco delle Valli Valdesi* and a monthly paper supplement distributed for free in the area of the Waldensian valleys in Piedmont.

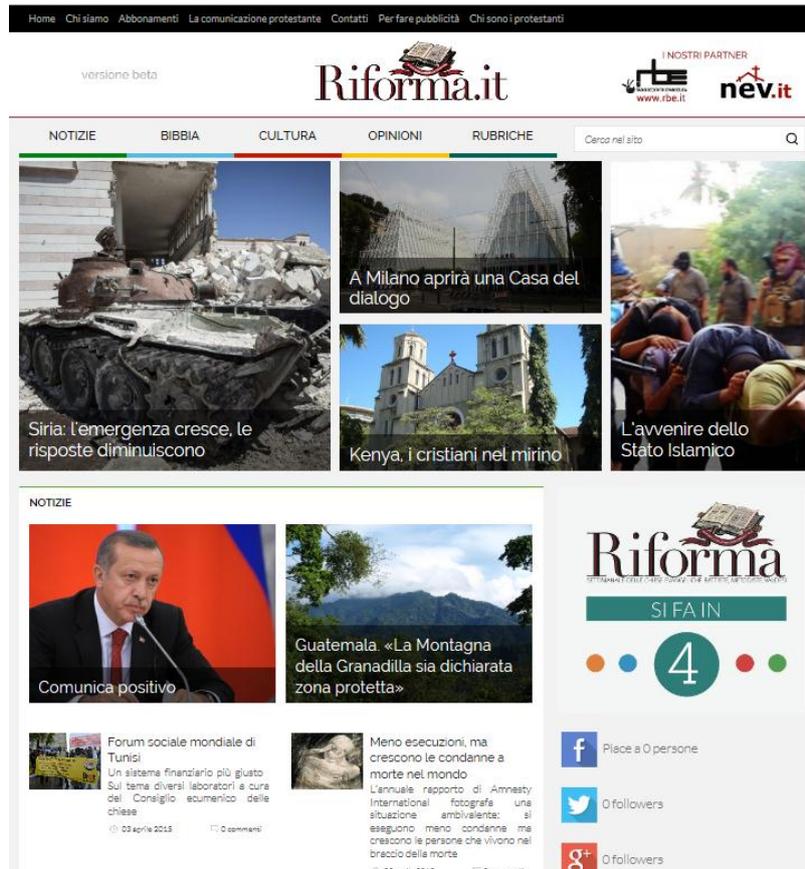


Figure 32. Riforma.it web portal

4. Società di Studi Valdesi - <http://www.studivaldesi.org/>

The website of the society which aims to promote studies and research on the history and spread of Waldensian movement and the Waldensian Churches, on the movement of religious reform in Piedmont and in Italy and the environment of the Waldensian Valleys. It includes references to the Waldensian Heritage held by the society and the activities organised with the members.

5. Fondazione Centro Culturale Valdese - <http://www.fondazionevaldese.org/>

The website of the private non-profit institution founded in 1989 by the Tavola Valdese (the management board of the Waldensian Church) and the Waldensian Studies Society. The centre was established as a foundation in 1991 and the Regional Council of Piedmont acknowledged its legal status in 1992. Includes detailed information about the Foundation, the Library, Museum, guided tours, collections, publications and projects.

6. Facoltà valdese di teologia - <http://facoltavaldese.org/>

The website of the Waldensian faculty of Theology. The Waldensian Faculty of Theology is the oldest institution in Italy for academic study of protestant theology. Founded in 1855 in Torre Pellice, moved to Florence at Palazzo Salviati 1860-1921, then to the present location in Rome, next to the Waldensian Church of Piazza Cavour. The need for what today is called "training" was crucial in the Waldensian community from its very beginning in the Middle Ages.

7. Websites realized by local communities

Most of these are more community-oriented than dissemination-oriented, although basic information (who we are and what we believe) is provided. These websites are all in all rather similar, with the essential aim of providing contacts and calendar of the events and services, enlarged with other kinds of information related to the activities of the community and more general information on the Waldensian movement.

<http://www.firenzevaldese.chiesavaldese.org/> - Waldensian community in Florence; despite a rather "artisanal" look, the website is very rich in information and dissemination of the various activities.

<http://www.chiesavaldese.pisa.it> - Waldensian community in Pisa, including information on the Leghorn church. The website also embeds information from the official website chiesavaldese.org. It is extremely interesting to notice that the Waldensian Church in Pisa also conducts Sunday cults in Chinese language, witnessing a presence of Chinese immigrants in the community.

<http://www.milanovaldese.it> - Waldensian community in Milan. It includes a section with audio/video material.

The 'mainstream society' and the Waldensian community

The first output of the research linked to the relationship with the mainstream society and is the lack of awareness about the Waldensian community, its differences, Cultural Heritage and digital presence. The focus group held with members of the mainstream society discussed religious minorities in Italy, and this confirmed that poor information is normally circulating. The fact of having religious minorities is acknowledged, however this phenomenon is normally attributed to the immigration: it is not common knowledge that there are Italian communities with a non-Catholic religion, except for the case of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In facts, due to the capillary preaching action of this community - whose members, still today, do an actual door-to-door dissemination including home visiting and leafleting - the Jehovah's Witnesses are widely known. However, the common feelings towards Jehovah's Witnesses are affected by a certain prejudice and suspect: they are often considered members of a sect rather than a religious minority, and normally their preaching action is not very appreciated; it is instead considered as a nuisance. In the past decades, when the door-to-door action by Jehovah's Witnesses was particularly intense, it was sometimes possible to see on the doorbells rather explicit stickers inviting Jehovah's Witnesses not to call.



Figure 33. Sticker inviting Jehovah's Witnesses not to call

Nevertheless, it is important to underline that such signals, although being unpleasant and possibly discriminatory, are not a witness of a conservatory approach towards religion, or of strict Catholic practicing, or even worse of a rejection of the minorities: the fact is that the average Italian normally doesn't appreciate being bothered at home for questions that he/she is not interested in. In fact the same reaction is currently happening for Halloween night, given the wider and wider diffusion of celebrating the Anglo-Saxon tradition of "trick-or-treat", which does not belong to the Italian traditions and may not be appreciated by everybody in Italy: so it is possible, on the 31st October, to see doorbell warnings inviting young people not to call.

As mentioned above, the other Italian religious minorities, including the Waldensian community, are not very much known and cared for by the mainstream society, and (when the matter comes into light) they are sometimes felt as something "exotic" or "uncommon". The easier access to information provided by Internet is however a key to unlock a societal progress towards bigger openness and wider knowledge; particularly, the role of social networks is considered extremely important because it allows the individual to enlarge his/her possibility to get in touch with other realities and ways of thinking.

The online presence of the Waldensian Community and its Cultural Heritage (Facebook and the various websites, some of which are described in the previous sections) is considered higher than expected, providing a rich heritage and digital tools to acknowledge and even research about the community and its heritage. This presence is considered undoubtedly necessary if the Waldensian community intends to become better known to the others and engage with the mainstream Cultural Heritage. Particularly interesting is the reaction of the discussion group when the matter of posting sermons online is raised: it is considered definitely "cool", and very much modern and up-to-date.

This topic opened the way to debate on the need, for the Catholic Church, to be more progressive on some key topics like divorce, birth control and homosexuality. Furthermore, religion is generally considered more and more a private issue of each single person, on the basis of which it is important that everybody respects the individual choices and opinions, and therefore it makes no sense to divide the society in majority and minorities, giving value to the richness of religious practices, heritage, cults and traditions. This needs however to be combined with the societal traditions that in a country like Italy are very much linked to the Catholic traditions. Some of the focus group participants considered that certainly all the communities have all the rights to exist and be acknowledged but it is necessary to find a balance between the need of guaranteeing to the minorities the right of expressing themselves and the risk of an over-protection that may create a backward discrimination towards those who do not belong to the minority. An example of this was the case, recently arisen in some primary schools, where the traditional Christmas play was not performed because of the presence of some Muslim pupils.

What potential solutions are available? It seems that the keyword is integration, which in practice means finding the common points between different cultures, to build a “super culture” that integrates and respects everybody. For the case of the Christmas play, if it is not focused on the birth of Jesus Christ but on the Christmas spirit of brotherhood and friendship, it can be played by both Christian and Muslim pupils with no harm and benefit for all. In this light, the very fast multi-cultural evolution of the Italian society due to the current massive immigration - despite creating in the mainstream culture group a certain turbulence and concerns about the impact of this significant change on the identity of Italy and Italians - is an opportunity to foster a societal progress where integration and social inclusion are key factors for the development of the country.

Perception, integration and discrimination

The most notable aspect that Minister Peter Ciaccio highlights talking about this theme is that the mainstream of Italian society isn't prepared at all about the other Christian religions and cultural minorities: Catholics seem to have very confused ideas on the non-Catholic confessions, the different confessions are often mixed up and stereotypes like the “gloomy Protestant” are still on vogue. Also the major and substantial differences that characterize Protestantism from Catholicism are not generally known by the mainstream of the society. However, it is normal that people belonging to a minority understand better the majority's culture than vice versa, and the general attitude towards the ‘other Christians’ is normally of indifference and toleration, when not of curiosity and interest.

Of course, when it comes to everyday life, the non-Catholic citizens experiment some kinds of discrimination; this is particularly evident in regards to the teaching of Catholic Religion (IRC, cfr. above) in the schools. It is noteworthy to mention that the Italian school is organized in classrooms, where children stay all together in the same room for the whole time, while the teachers, during the day, move from one classroom to another. This means that during the hour of IRC those students who do not participate to the course necessarily leave the room (and the group of schoolfellows) and move to other rooms where alternative activities are organized, according to the law. This is in itself a moment of discrimination, although the immigration and the consequent increasing phenomenon of multi ethnic classrooms (for which in every classroom there are several foreign, possibly non-Catholic students) have weakened the psychological impact of this situation both on the Catholic and non-Catholic students. Today, not participating to IRC is still considered “uncommon”, but all in all “understandable” and in a certain sense “normal”. 50 years ago the scenario was rather different and it happened that over a classroom of 20, 25 students, one of them was possibly “forced” to leave the room during IRC because of not being a Catholic.

The psychological pressure of such a gesture was certainly heavy, especially for pre-adolescents who feel a very strong need of conformation to the group of peers. However, a true discriminatory process was actually put in place in the period 2007/2008 when a Ministerial Decree by the former Ministry of Education Fioroni included the IRC course in the calculations for the school credits of the students approaching the exam for the high school diploma. Peter remembers clearly that period and that issue, which was very hard to accept from his point of view. Following an immediate reaction of the non-Catholic community (including the protestant community), an appeal was then accepted by the Court and the decree was annulled (judgment by TAR Lazio n. 7076 dtd 17 July 2009).

Minister Peter also notices a lack of preparation and information in the Municipality officers, when the religion gets in touch with the bureaucracy of Italian State, for example in the case of procedures for non-Catholic wedding celebrations; while the relationships between Waldensian Ministries and the Catholic curia and representatives are normally plain and cooperative.

What seems truly lacking in Italy, according to Minister Peter, is a true intercultural approach between the different religions (and the different cultural groups at large), that is instead the point of strength of the US society. Peter's perception regarding the Catholicism is that in Italy the Roman Church still considers itself "the majority" in respect to the other confessions, while it would probably be wiser to consider Catholicism as "the strongest of the minorities", and be therefore more open to cooperation and peer dialogue. However the new Pope Francesco seems to have a more open approach on many topics and this also allows inter-religious exchange and joint actions on the territory.

Conclusions

This research intended to shed light on the role of digital technologies to support a minority culture. A case of a religious minority in Italy, the Waldensian Church, was tackled. The use of digital technologies, and particularly of Internet, is focused within this community on two main objectives:

- **providing services and communication tools** to the community members and to foster the process of **community-building**, rather than to replace traditional ways of living the Waldensian religion or culture.
- **increase awareness** about the Waldensian Church and its heritage, facilitating its **dissemination and study**.

Intangible Cultural Heritage, such as the religious hymns and songs, can easily be found on the Internet as tools for dissemination and enjoyment (in fact many websites of the Waldensian community offer audio files of the hymns for listening and possibly downloading). Multiple websites and platforms linked to the community and its institutions present its heritage and history, giving access not only to the community members but also to citizens all over the world to discover the Waldensian community and its Cultural Heritage. The multilingual functionalities of the most relevant websites positively impact on this dissemination. Other digital tools, such as e-magazines, newsletters and especially social networks, are used to exchange information and events within the community; furthermore, they may also act like a barometer of the mood of community members, thus possibly supporting the pastoral action of the Minister.

From the point of view of the mainstream society, no real discrimination is put in place towards this religious minority but a general lack of information and possibly old-fashioned prejudices exist. The digital tools, social networks and blogs in particular, can help integration by fostering the circulation of knowledge and information within the society at large. This allows for a more open, inter-cultural approach which is certainly needed in Italy in the contemporary times.

Future challenges and opportunities exist for exploiting all the potential of digital technologies within the Waldensian Church. As an example, some communities are considering the use of video streaming tools to ensure the participation in functions for all its members, even those that, for relevant reasons, cannot attend them physically. The initiated digitization processes of the Waldensian Cultural Heritage collections opens the door to innovative developments, such as mobile apps or interactive tools to support tourism and educational activities.

5.1.3 The Jewish Community in Rostock

Introduction

The following case study focuses on the community of Jews in Rostock and concentrates once more on a religious group to provide in comparison with the previous case study deeper insights into the different use and understanding of digital technologies in a religious context.

Jews had been officially allowed to settle in Rostock from 1868. In 1867, the Grand duchy Mecklenburg-Schwerin joined the North German Union. With effect from 1 January 1868, the Freedom of Movement Law entered into force in the North German Union and, thus, enabled Jewish people to move to Rostock which had a total population of 30,000 inhabitants at that time.¹⁶⁶ The Jewish Community was founded in 1870 and by 1930 it had 300 members, only few of them survived the Holocaust and the community was not re-established after the war.

Rostock's Jewish Community was newly established after the German reunification, Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union had the opportunity to migrate to Germany. Until new legal regulations that made immigrations to Germany more difficult came into effect into 2005, more than 200,000 people moved into the area. They came to a country where almost no Jews lived anymore. Two Jewish communities were newly established in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the 1990s, one in Schwerin and one in Rostock. Nowadays, Rostock's Jewish community has 600 members within a population of 203,000 people living in Rostock in 2013. Of this population 8,500 were foreigners.

In the context of the case study, five female and five male community members were interviewed. Two of them are younger than twenty years, two are employed, six are retired and do not work. This corresponds with the high average age of the community.

Furthermore, two female and males each between 30 and 55 years were interviewed to get a feedback on the website of Jewish community.

The Jewish community in Rostock

Rostock's Jewish Community was founded on 24.04.1994. It developed out of the state community of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern founded in 1992. The Jewish community of Rostock is a body governed by public law. It is a member of the State Union of Jewish Communities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, its national umbrella organisation is the Central Council of Jews.

The community had 27 members when it was founded. These members were immigrants from the former Soviet Union. A joint declaration on cooperation was signed by the Hanseatic City of Rostock and the Jewish Community in 1998. The Hanseatic City of Rostock gave the Jewish Community the building Augustenstraße 20, which was inaugurated after renovation in September 2004.

¹⁶⁶ Diekmann 1998.



Figure 34. Celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Jewish Community, 24.04.2014. Speaker: Uta-Maria Kuder, justice minister Mecklenburg-Western Pommerania



Figure 35. Public concert with Karsten Troyke, song-writer, ‘ambassador of Yiddish song art’, 26.10.2014

The integration into the German society is largely dependent on age and language skills: young adults and employed adults feel well and even very well integrated. Older community members who receive welfare benefits feel less well integrated. A well-functioning network for migrants where different stakeholders cooperate (administrations and authorities, migrant self-help organisations, religious communities and migrant council etc.) exists in the Hanseatic City. Juri Rosov, Head of the Jewish Community, is also the Head of the Migrants’ Council.

The main problems of the community members are language and integration into the labour market. Furthermore, there is a currently growing fear of violent attacks due to the war in Ukraine. The number of people who come from the Ukraine or Crimea and seek asylum in Rostock has increased. Juri Rosovs states here: “We try to support the people who come to us, but it is a lot of work.”¹⁶⁷

The understanding of Cultural Heritage

Important for the community members is the observance of the Shabbat and of the holidays as well as the existence of a synagogue. At the time of re-establishment, the Hanseatic City of Rostock provided the community with a new burial place. Thus, the community members were given the opportunity to preserve and cultivate their religious traditions and rites. These aspects are important to the members, even if to a different extent, and taught to the children accordingly. Restrictions must be accepted regarding the meals. “We lack shopping opportunities for preparing Kosher food. There are no restaurants which offer Kosher food.”¹⁶⁸

Relation to digital Cultural Heritage

A majority of the community members has access to digital technologies and uses them in everyday life. Various online portals exist that inform them about Jewish religion, tradition and culture etc., offer interpretations of the scripture, sell Kosher food and send newsletters. This is used by the community itself, but also by individual members. Furthermore, the communication with other Jewish organisations takes place via email. Digital technologies are not used for practicing religion in the narrower sense, i.e. for services and praying.

Online presence and digital Cultural Heritage activities

The Jewish community’s official website is www.synagoge-rostock.de It is bilingual: German and Russian.



Figure 36. Homepage in German language

¹⁶⁷ Interview Juri Rosov, Head of the Jewish Community, on 17.02.2015.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Ilona Jerjomin, community member, on 17.02.2015.



Figure 37. Homepage in Russian language

The website does not contain any entertainment elements, such as apps and games. It serves for informing the community and the public only. The content is updated once a month, particularly regarding planned events and reports on events.



Figure 38. Short report on the meeting of the veteran club on 25.02.2015

The calendar not only displays occurring religious events but also information on general offers of the community in the coming month, such as monthly circles and clubs related to different fields of interest (e.g. women’s club, senior citizen club, club of knowledge, dancing club, drawing circle for children) as well as stand-alone events such as concerts, readings and puppet shows etc. Furthermore, there is information on history, structure and community offers available. Older press releases can be accessed via the press archive. Information on the association Construction of the synagogue Rostock *Arnold Bernhard e.V.*, the community’s support association, are provided. Here, the Jewish Community which existed in Rostock before the National Socialism era is described in more detail.

Links to other Jewish organisations exist.



Figure 39. Homepage, link to partners of the Jewish community on the right bottom

No plans exist for expanding the internet offer or other semi-official websites of Jewish Community.

The website was not known to the interrogated citizens of Rostock before these interviews. The respondents gave a positive feedback regarding the informative and structured style of the website as well as its easy handling. “I quickly got accustomed with it, it is very clearly arranged”.¹⁶⁹ Regarding the contents itself, the press archive got a significantly positive assessment.

A clearly negative aspect was the fact that this online presence does not make clear whether the Jewish Community and its offers are open to public or not. The fact that many event announcements are hardly explained in detail made the respondents assume that the website addresses only members and that the events are not open to public. Furthermore, those interviewed would have preferred to get more information e.g. on the religion, religious festivals or on a dress code to be observed when visiting the synagogue.

¹⁶⁹ Interrogation S. Napp, 11.03.2015.

Further digital practices

The user behaviour of the members of the Jewish community fits in with the mainstream. They communicate via web offers and apps, such as Facebook, whatsapp and odnoklasniki (<http://ok.ru>). It is assumed by those interviewed that the younger community members' globally network in groups related to Jewish topics, but this could not be effectively ascertained. Odnoklasniki is hosted in Russia, no English or German language version exists here. Despite of, ok.ru ranks number 125 of the most-visited websites in Germany.¹⁷⁰

The non-Jewish citizens of Rostock stressed that the website's visual impression suggest adults, particularly older adults as main target group.

A comparison with websites of other Jewish communities in Germany shows some differences: The website of the Jewish Community Münster <http://www.jgms.de>, for instance, is in German only. Every publication on the page can be commented with a Facebook-like. The second Jewish Community in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in Schwerin, has no online presence at all. Other communities, such as, for instance, those of Bremen and Paderborn do not have an online presentation, too. The five communities of the neighbouring state Schleswig-Holstein have a joint website that offers some content element in four languages, but does not provide information about current events.¹⁷¹

Conclusion

Rostock's Jewish Community is a part of Rostock's civil society. Even the design of the community's homepage shows clearly that the community members came almost exclusively from the former Soviet Union. There are a few sentences about the community that existed in Rostock before the National Socialism in Rostock, but the responsibility for dealing with the topic is primarily considered as a German issue. Particularly in comparison with other Jewish communities in Germany and compared to the websites of other minorities in Rostock, this online presence must be positively evaluated regarding content and timeliness. However there is still the potential to make further information available for member so of the society by providing more detailed information on community offers or on basic questions, such as, for example, the general accessibility of the community building. Rostock's Jewish community recognized the opportunities provided by the digital world and consequently uses it for information and documentation purposes.

¹⁷⁰ http://urlm.de/www.odnoklassniki.ru#content_t.

¹⁷¹ <http://lvjgsh.de/index.html>.

5.1.4 Surinamese communities in The Netherlands

Introduction

This report presents an understanding of how Surinamese-Dutch identities are framed, contested and negotiated within broader negotiations of citizenship and belonging within the Netherlands. At the outset it is important to acknowledge the rising anxieties that have emerged in recent years over what it means to be Dutch, whether people of migrant heritage can be regarded as ‘really Dutch’ or about what might constitute Dutch Cultural Heritage. In these debates, questions around migrant and post-migrant belonging play a central role and are fought around a racialised and xenophobic battlefield. The study addresses the role that digital/new media technology play in these negotiations with specific reference to the fashioning of Surinamese-Dutch identities. The report focuses on a series of web portals, examining how they function as a locus for digital identity fashioning, digital connectivity and the dissemination of information of what it means to be Surinamese and Dutch within the Netherlands. Findings are based on detailed web research as well as three brief interviews with stakeholders.

This report opens with a history of Dutch Suriname relations, historically and in the present and follows on with a few case studies, before providing conclusions.

Surinamese communities in the Netherlands. Historical insights and present developments (Dutch) Surinamese Cultural Heritage

In 1975 renowned Surinamese author Albert Helman published the book, ‘Surinam, a Cultural Mosaic,’ in which he framed Surinam as a celebrated mix of distinct cultures. While such a framing based on ethnic identification has come under significant criticism in recent years (see for example Dekoning, 2013), this logic of the cultural mosaic has united much scholarly and popular imagination of Suriname. Within this logic, to be Surinamese is to exemplify a happy multiculturalism, comprising distinct communities with distinct characteristics, including language, clothing, music and religion etc.

While mindful of the reductionism included in such claims, it is arguably not surprising that Suriname gained such a reputation for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural conviviality, contingent on the modern history of the country. Suriname gained its independence from the Netherlands on November 25th 1975, becoming a democratic republic. For centuries prior to its independence, the country had been colonized by different European nations, eventually becoming the primary colony of the Netherlands in the West Indies. Prior to European occupation indigenous peoples occupied the island. European colonization saw the development of a plantation slavery economy serviced by an enslaved labour force resulting from the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans forcibly transported work on new world plantations. In 1863, under both internal and international pressure, the enslaved of Suriname gained their freedom, with the declaration of Emancipation. Suriname, however, remained a Dutch colony until 1975. Emancipation of the enslaved resulted in labour shortage, which was filled with different streams of labour migrants coming from mainly India and Indonesian (Java). Other streams of migrants including the Chinese and Lebanese, and in a much earlier stage a Jewish community also populate the county.

It is out of this history of forced and indentured labour; of free and forced migration that contemporary Suriname emerged, and it is with the different groups of migrants that a narrative of Suriname as a multicultural society was created. Migratory flows of people from Suriname to the Netherlands also have a long history, starting under colonialism but increased after Emancipation, and growing towards the mid-twentieth century.

Indeed, in the wake of Surinam Independence in 1975, owing to various political, social, economical and cultural reasons, large groups of people migrated from Suriname to the Netherlands. This followed on a slower movement of people who came to the Netherlands in the early years of the 20th century as labour or knowledge migrants (to study, for example). In 1975 approximately 40,000 Surinamese migrated to the Netherlands. In 1980, the year that Dutch citizenship for Surinamese residents expired, another 20,000 Surinamese migrated.¹⁷²

Today Dutch citizens of Suriname heritage represent one of the largest people with migrant belonging in the Netherlands. Similar to the distinctions that developed within Suriname, these Dutch Surinamese citizens are ordered or order their own notions of belonging around ethno-nationalists or ethno-cultural bases. Accordingly, over the course of the last several decades, migrants from Suriname to the Netherlands include¹⁷³:

- Surinamese Creoles - descendants of enslaved Africans Surinamese Creoles form the second largest group of Dutch people with a Surinamese background. A large part of this group live in Amsterdam and surroundings (Amsterdam Zuidoost, Almere, Purmerend en Zaanstad), and in Rotterdam.¹⁷⁴
- Surinamese Indians ('Hindoestanen') - descendants of migrant Indian indentured labourers that moved to Suriname after emancipation to fill the labour gap caused by the freedom of the enslaved. In 2007 the National Bureau of Statistics estimated half of all Dutch people with a Surinamese background have a Surinamese Indian background.¹⁷⁵ Many Hindoestanen live in The Hague.
- Surinamese Maroons - descendants of escaped enslaved African who re-shaped their cultural identity derived from their African background and contacts within European and native Indian groups. After escaping enslavement the maroon populations lived in the interior of the island, in relative seclusion. In the 1980s, large numbers of Maroons migrated to the Netherlands due to a war between maroon Ronnie Brunswijk and the then president Desi Bouterse.
- Surinamese Javanese - descendants of migrant Javanese indentured labourers. In 2004 the Dutch Bureau of Statistics estimated that around 40,000 Dutch citizens had a Surinamese Javanese background.¹⁷⁶
- Surinamese Chinese, descendants of indentured labourers and traders. Chine migrated to Suriname from both Indonesia and China and then moved on to the Netherlands.
- Surinamese Native Indians (Indigenous people). Together with Surinamese Chinese this group is estimated to be 10% of all migrant Surinamese.¹⁷⁷

Today, Suriname has a population of approximately 550,000 habitants, possibly less than the number of Dutch with a Surinamese background living in the Netherlands. The number of Surinamese Dutch citizens varies according to the definition of what constitutes this group. However, according to the Government statistic bureau in 2014 there were 348,291 Dutch persons of Surinamese descent living in the Netherlands.

¹⁷² <http://www.vijfeeuwenmigratie.nl/> (accessed April 7, 2015) A Dutch collective archive website on migration.

¹⁷³ CBS, National bureau of statistics. In 2007 researchers estimated population numbers of the different Dutch Surinamese groups using various sources: Chan Choenni en Carel Harmsen, Birthplace and ethnic background of Surinamese in the Netherlands (Geboorteplaats en etnische samenstelling van Surinamers in Nederland), 2007.

<http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/B423BB56-A099-4272-86B0-2BB2021E7468/0/2007k1b15p74art.pdf>.

¹⁷⁴ see previous note.

¹⁷⁵ See previous note.

¹⁷⁶ See previous note.

¹⁷⁷ See previous note.

180,863 of those citizens were born in Suriname while the remaining 167,428 were 2nd generation.¹⁷⁸ Other Dutch citizens who consider themselves Dutch Surinamese, for instance 3rd or 4th generation migrants, are not taken into account.

Due to the strong family, economic and cultural connections, relations between Surinamese people in Suriname and those living in the Netherlands are close. Another element that binds Suriname and the Netherlands is language. Although each Suriname cultural community has its own language, Suriname's common language is both Sranantongo and Dutch.

Surinamese Dutch Cultural Heritage in relation to Digital Cultural Heritage

Waterkant.net (together with <http://suriname.startpagina.nl/>) is one of the main websites dedicated to the Surinamese Dutch community. This website, which has existed since 1999, is managed by an editorial team comprising one person living in Suriname and one living in the Netherlands. Waterkant.net features news from Suriname, as well as Dutch news related to Surinamese Dutch people living in the Netherlands. It reports on tourism, business and cultural topics, providing information on cultural activities in both the Netherlands and in Suriname. The website includes an online forum, chat room, and a TV channel; it hosts an image bank and a space for business (similar to Craigslist) called suritrade.nl. Advertisement is directed at Dutch Surinamese in the Netherlands. A prominent advertisement banner refers to <http://www.baaswaterval.nl>, a healer who offers Winti (a Afro Surinamese religious group) health consultancy and treatments. Other banners promote Dutch internet providers (Ziggo), Bloomingdale, a high end Dutch beach resort.

Waterkant.net is managed by marketing company Etnomedia, owned by Surinamese Dutch entrepreneur Faisal Nabibaks. Interestingly, Etnomedia also manages [Magreb.nl](http://magreb.nl) (a Moroccan community website), suriname.nl, hindustani.nl and bollywood.nl. According to Faisal Nabibaks Waterkant.net, including hindustani.nl and bollywood.nl, is "visited by 100,000 visitors each month", with an average of '25,000 page views per day'. Faisal Nabibaks identifies himself as Surinamese living in the Netherlands. He estimates that Waterkant.net has "75,000 visitors per month and hindustani.nl and bollywood.nl receives around 25,000 visitors per month." Although it was not possible to undertake a great deal of research into this, it is notable that all these web portals for Dutch minority group are managed under the same umbrella firm that addresses ethnic marketing.

Other general Dutch Surinamese websites are <http://www.suriname.nl/> and www.suriname.nu: These websites focus on providing information about Suriname, rather than acting as interactive platforms. All the websites mentioned are in Dutch, but reinforce connections to Suriname and functions as a binding factor for Surinamese people in Suriname and for all individuals with a Surinamese background in the Netherlands.

Dutch Surinamese Indians ('Hindoestanen')

The most active Dutch Surinamese user of online media in relation to the cultivation of specific heritage are Dutch Surinamese Hindustani community – original migrant from India to Suriname in the 19th century. They use the web as a way to connect with each other and to explore and connect with Hindustani heritage, in particular their Indian heritage. Focusing on 'recovering' India, online activities such as chat sites and other interactive web platforms seem more focused on strengthening Hindustani, Indian identity and less focused on their Surinamese roots.

¹⁷⁸ Data from: CBS, National Bureau of Statistics.

Several portals exist focused on Hindustani heritage. The portal hindoestanen.startkabel.nl, for example, offers information on Hinduism, Bollywood music and dance, Dutch Bollywood dance schools, travel sites about India. It shows the lists of temples in the Netherlands and host web-radios focused on Indian and Surinamese Indian music as well as NGO sites focusing on India and Suriname, etc.

There are also several Facebook pages on the Dutch Surinamese Indian community, for instance <https://www.facebook.com/hindoestanenzijn?fref=ts> called 'Hindoestani be like'. This FB page (which is in Dutch and has 12,483 likes) seems to focus on Dutch Surinamese Indians and offers news about India and Indian culture, such as Bollywood and marriage customs. Posts evidences debates and tensions about intercultural marriages (for instance, Dutch natives with Dutch Surinamese Hindustani), food (where to buy the best roti in the Netherlands), first Indian Lesbian wedding in the US and Surinam holiday photo series.



Figure 40. Facebook page of the Dutch Surinamese Indian community

Other Dutch Surinam Indian Facebook communities include:

- 'Hindoestaanse community', 3572 members
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1377804189097922/?fref=ts>,
- 'Single Dutch Surinam Indian Club' <https://www.facebook.com/groups/645514408826863/>

The website <http://www.hindustani.nl/> is a news portal (in Dutch, hosted by the same owner of Waterkant.net) specifically by and for Dutch Surinamese Indians. Their stated aim is 'to gather and show news interesting for Dutch Surinamese Indians.' The website incorporates a forum and is categorized by seven themes: Bollywood, Religion, Video, Culture, Society, Entertainment and Economy (in this order). The website is currently under construction.

Most topics of Hindustani.nl are connected to specific activities in the Netherlands. One of the prominent topics (under the theme 'religion') for instance is the current construction of a large temple complex in The Hague, a cooperation project of three international Hindu and Sikh movements: ASAN (Hindu movement Arya Samadj), Shri Guru Singh Sabha (Sikh) and the (international) Hare Krishna movement Isckon: The ASAN movement is a Dutch Suriname Indian branch of an India based movement.

All the members have a Suriname background, but are strongly focused on India. The Hare Krishna branch consists of half Dutch Suriname Indian and half Indian migrants. The Sikh who participate in this temple project are Indian migrants.

Below is a selection/overview of prominent posts on Hindustani.nl, which evidences some of the interests of the community visiting the site:

- an upcoming Divali celebration
- the announcement of an Indian dance and music performances
- news of the Dutch Surinamese Indian victims in a Dutch plane crash (2014, the Dutch plane that was shot down in the Ukraine)
- A post by Dutch political party D'66, stating *'D'66 stands for freedom of identity'*. (2014)
- The announcement of Gandhi memorial day (2013), celebrated in connection to 140 year migration history of Dutch Surinam Hindu's
- The announcement of Baithak Gana Badsah Awards, an award that takes place in The Hague celebrating the best Baithak Gana Badsah musician. The post (2014) notes: *'Because we regard Baithak Gana as an important part of our culture, contributing to the preservation of our culture, we value honoring young and old musicians of their efforts. Baithak Gana does not divide, but harmonizes and fraternizes, it bring us all together. It is therefore very important that Baithak Gana is recognized as our heritage and is played at our gatherings and official functions.'*
- Miss India Beauty Contest
- 'Ethnic business woman of the year award' won by a Dutch Surinam Indian woman
- An announcement of a cooperation of Dutch Surinamese and Indian TV networks, sponsored by the Dutch ministry of Economics (2008)

Another website and forum managed and used by mainly Dutch Surinam Indians is www.bollywood.nl. The website presents the latest news of Bollywood movies and stars, reviews and lists Bollywood events in the Netherlands. Hindustani.nl and Bollywood.nl are both in Dutch and managed by the same owners as Waterkant.net and is estimated to have 25.000 visitors every month.

Until 2013, the Dutch Surinam Indian Society had its own museum, the Sarnami House (in The Hague). Due to Government subsidy cuts the organization has transferred presenting and mediating Dutch Surinam Indian heritage related information (for instance personal stories with regard to migration history, columns about marriage, working as an expat, etc) and activities to their website: <http://www.sarnamihuis.nl/>. All information is in Dutch.

One of the latest post of the Sarnamihuis website announces a new initiative called 'Hum Log', which they states is intended to strengthen heritage and identity for the empowerment of Dutch Surinam Indians. Another post announces the presentation of a book about Dutch Surinamese Indian culture. The author, Mr Choenni, states that he hopes his book contributes to the visibility of Dutch Surinam Indians in Dutch society. He refers to the Dutch Suriname Creole community, who he considers to be more visible than the Dutch Suriname Indians.

Finally, it is interesting to mention, there is a specific Dutch Suriname Indian dating site, <http://www.jaanam.nl/>, allowing Dutch Surinam Indians to date within the Dutch Surinam Indian community.

This web presence discussed demonstrates an active Dutch Hindustani community that is negotiating their heritage and identity online. Online platforms provide a kind of spatial location where they can be simultaneously Dutch and Surinamese Indian.

While it may be expected that Dutch Surinamese Hindustani would be in a struggle to maintain their Surinamese identity with a broader Dutch culture, the narrative of their earlier migration to Suriname from India is an important aspect of how they structure their identities. Indeed there is a strong focus on being Indian, which is actively recovered and negotiated online. The web provides the network of connectivity where such belonging practices can take place.

Dutch Surinamese Javanese

This particular Dutch Surinamese group are less present online in comparison to the Hindustani community. Most of the websites are in Dutch and aimed at creating networks of connections between the Dutch Surinamese Javanese community as well as offering information about the Javanese Diaspora worldwide.

There is no clear web portal, but there are different (modestly active and inactive) community websites and a number of small personal websites presenting personal migration history. For instance: <http://home.online.nl/javas/> provides information about Dutch Javanese culture and (migration) history. Posts convey personal migration stories and offer information about Javanese culture. The homepage shows three clocks temporally connecting Paramaribo, The Hague and Jakarta.



Figure 41. Homepage of Javas.nl

Other examples of website dedicated to the Dutch Javanese community include:

- <http://home.online.nl/javas/Immigratie/KomstJavanen/Mangoenkarso.htm>
- <http://www.javanenindiaspora.nl/> (set up with professional Dutch research institution KITLV, the website is bi-lingual, Dutch and Indonesian)

There is also 'Javanen' (<http://home.deds.nl/~javanen/wiezijnwij.html>, set up in 2007) where it is noted:

'Although we aim to be an Internet meeting place for young and old Surinam-Javanese, we welcome everybody to our website, Dutch native ('autochtoon') or non-Dutch native ('allochtoon'). We don't mean to compete with other Surinam Javanese websites, but want to add to existing digital presence and would like to cooperate with other websites. Our main goal is to reach as many Surinam Javanese as possible, provide interactivity and information relevant to our visitors. In future we would like to offer offline events as well, but time will tell if that is possible.'

The website has not been updated since 2008, but is still online and working as a portal providing connection to other websites, including small Dutch Suriname Javanese websites on food (restaurants), history and culture (focus on music, DJ's, music shows, Javanese rock).

The focus is on providing information on Dutch Suriname Javanese culture and its communities in the Netherlands, Surinam and Indonesia, as well as providing information about the Javanese diaspora world wide. It lists all Javanese societies in the Netherlands and personal website of Surinamese Javanese in the Netherlands.

In addition there are several Dutch Suriname Javanese Facebook communities, for instance 'Dutch Javanese in Diaspora' (921 members):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/javanenindiaspora/?fref=ts>

One of the three managers of the community Dutch Javanese in Diaspora, Johan Raksowidjojo posted photos of an event of Dutch Javanese in Diaspora, on his personal Facebook page stating:

'The goal of our event is achieved. We want to show the Dutch Javanese Diaspora community in a positive light, through presenting role models, in order to be more visible as a community in the Dutch society, as well as to empower motivate and stimulate the community.'

He continued that the event was attended by 200 members and by a representative of the Indonesian embassy. The Surinam ambassador was also invited, but didn't attend.

Rukun Budi Utama, a Suriname Javanese welfare organization, based in The Hague, is currently in the process of building a new website (<http://game.hen3.com/>). The organization focuses on connecting different generations of Dutch Suriname Javanese. The website also engages in crowd funding for cultural activities. The website is in Dutch. The organization has a twitter account and a TV channel.

Dutch Surinamese Maroons

Apart from one portal <http://marronsnet.nl/> Dutch maroon communities are largely absent online. There are however some efforts to try to mediate Maroon Cultural Heritage in a tourism context: For instance, <http://www.totomboti.nl/>, a Suriname based website about Maroon culture and heritage present information on specific villages and is directed at Dutch tourists interested to visit Suriname.

Digital Surinamese heritage manifestations and mainstream Cultural Heritage

In this final section we want to address more generalized presence of discourses of Surinamese Dutch identity and belonging discourses within the digital domain. Here we will engage with the group of Surinamese Dutch people who will fall under the umbrella category of Creole but this section is not exclusive to this group. This group comprises the Afro-Surinamese Dutch community in the Netherlands, strongly identified as the descendants of enslaved Africans.

Importantly, we should note that this group has had a contested history of belonging struggles in the Netherlands, marked by struggles against racialised exclusion. Indeed, in the immediate post independence moment in the Netherlands, the Afro-Surinamese community was regarded as one of the ‘problem migrants’ within popular and political imagination. This came on a longer history of racialised exclusion in the earlier part of the twentieth century. We address in this section the ways in which slavery’s history has been central to the discussion of identity and belonging for this group of Dutch citizens and the way that this is mediated on the Internet.

History, Slavery and Surinamese Dutch Heritage

The history of slavery and its heritage is one of the contested terrains around which Surinamese Dutch identity and belonging is negotiated in the Netherlands today. Indeed, over the recent years there have been ongoing discussions about who own slavery’s history and heritage and what place should it have within the Dutch history. Such discussions surround commemoration practices, institutional memory for this past, as well as more contested ideas around what constitute Dutch heritage, seen in for example the rising disquiet about the figure Zwarte Piet (Black Piet).

Over the years descendants of the enslaved have found both off and online spaces to preserve and commemorate their heritage and to commemorate and honour their ancestors. These are done in festivals, in theatre or music as well as more established forums such as the recently closed Netherlands Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacies (NINSEE). Festivals such as Kwakoe and Keti Koti are examples of festivals (these festivals are not restricted to Surinamese Dutch, but a broader Caribbean Dutch group of people even though Surinamese Dutch dominate these celebrations). The Kwaku festival- [Http://kwakufestival.nl](http://kwakufestival.nl) - (in Dutch, and also present on Facebook), which has an associated website, is a grassroots festival that since 1975 celebrates Surinam culture. The name Kwaku, which means born on a Wednesday, refers to the day name of one of Afro-Surinamese heroes, and focusing attention on the day of abolition of slavery in Suriname. According to the website, the festival started as a soccer competition but late emerged as a cultural festival.

2003 marked an important date for the Afro Surinamese community living in the Netherlands. This marked the 140 anniversary of the abolition of slavery and saw the establishment of several key initiatives for slavery memory in within the public domain. Among these included the establishment of the National Slavery Monument in the Oosterpark, the establishment of Ninsee as well as the establishment of a coordinated platform for discussions and strategic planning for mainstream Dutch cultural institutions and Antillean and Surinamese organizations to establish pathways to commemorate and research the history of slavery. One of the main aims of this national platform was to incorporate the history of slavery in mainstream Dutch historical narrative and thereby raised awareness of its effects in contemporary Dutch society.

The Ninsee was the most visible of such institutions having its own website where research and educational programme about slavery’s legacy in Dutch society could be accessed (See website www.ninsee.nl.) It had become an important platform where both Afro-Dutch as well as other Dutch citizens could learn about the slavery past. Unfortunately the Ninsee was cut in 2013 due to drastic cuts in the Government funding and now operates as a part of the Amsterdam Archive. Its website is still an important site for exploring Slavery’s history and legacy in Dutch society. It was the Ninsee who was also responsible for the annual commemoration of emancipation, which took place on in the Oosterpark at the National Slavery Monument.

A related website is: <http://www.ketikotiamsterdam.nl>. Keti koti Amsterdam is also present on Facebook, and connected to members of the Dutch Surinam society. The Surinam society was initiated in the 1980s by Surinam migrants. They do not have a website and their online activity consists of a Facebook page; generally involvement by young Dutch Surinamese, is not strong.

In a response to the grassroots calls for greater awareness of the slavery past as part of Dutch heritage, several Dutch cultural institutions have made information on slavery available digitally. For instance, the National Archives created website-pages that allowed access to documents related to Surinam slavery, including a database of 'manumissions' (documents, stating a slave was bought his freedom) <http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00340>.

Consequently, private Dutch Suriname initiatives were set up, using digital means to crowd source and strengthen identity and celebrate (shared) heritage. An example includes the Pinas family researching their roots: <http://www.pinasroots.nl/>

While not wanting to reduce Dutch Afro-Surinamese history and heritage to the history of slavery, there is an overlap between these histories, how they are commemorated and narrated as part of larger struggles for belonging in and to the Netherlands. Indeed, one could say that the rise in interest in commemorating the slavery past coincides with the search for Cultural Heritage and identity thought to be silenced within a majority narrative of what constitutes Dutchness. This is seen as the history that the Rijksmuseum narrates – the Golden Age Narrative – that does not account for the slavery past. Much of this archaeology of Afro-Surinamese/Dutch identity and heritage has found place online, in private and public institutional websites such as that by the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (www.tropenmuseum.nl) or the Ninsee.

The final section of this chapter is dedicated to discussion on one aspect of Dutch heritage that has become heavily contested in recent years. Zwarte Piet has become one of the most cogent location for contested belonging in recent years, with struggles over whether this is a simple Dutch Cultural Heritage or a racist practice that hurt the Afro-Dutch community reaching its height in 2013. As this was discussed in greater depth in the report on D3.1 – *Transformation, Change and Best practice for CH processes*, there is no need to consider the complexities here, other than to mark it out as important because it has become a significant sight for contested belonging in the Netherlands, much of the debate about which has an online presence.

Zwarte Piet

Questions around Black Dutch identity have become a contested terrain in recent years. While this has a long history, recent discussions around Black Piet, race and racism in the Netherlands has brought into question earlier narratives of the Netherlands as a tolerant society with a happy multiculturalism. The recent tensions are not new, but also could be seen to coincide with similar questions around being Muslim and Dutch that emerged since the beginnings of the 2000s. The racialised battlefield over citizenship and belonging in recent years, surrounds, it could be said, who can be Dutch, what constitutes Dutchness and what is Dutch Heritage and for whom (i.e. is Black Piet Dutch heritage, and for whom is it Dutch heritage). Importantly these discussions raise the question whether one can be Dutch and Black or Muslim, for example. Much of these discussions have focused on Zwarte Piet. Between 2013 and 2014 Dutch society polarized around the custom of Sinterklaas (what was regarded children's festival). Occurring at the end of each year, Sinterklass' arrives with helpers, known as Black Pete, who are dressed as 'black face'. Several activists, many of them with Afro Surinamese background, but not restricted to them, have spoke out against this tradition as racist, derogatory and demeaning to people of African heritage.

For many non-black Dutch people (also not restrictive) the tradition is innocent and a children's festival. They maintain that this is one of the last Dutch traditions that should remain. These discussions have also found their way online – and has been sites for some of the most contested debates about who belongs, what heritage belong and who has the right to speak about with should or should not be Dutch heritage. We will not explore this in any more details. For more information we offer the following websites:

- <http://www.roetinheten.info/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/zwartepietisblackface>

Although black Surinam individuals and groups are strongly present in the Black Peet discussions, the debate transcends a specific (Dutch) Suriname identity. The activism is part of broader global anti-racism struggle, which brings attention on the specifics of the question about Blackness and Dutchness.

Conclusions

It is hard to bracket what constitutes Dutch Surinamese identity or Cultural Heritage in any single frame in the Netherlands, as this is both extremely variegated, mindful of the influences of Suriname's ethnically variegated national polity, both digitally imagined and real. Discursively however, Suriname has been imagined is a multi-ethnic, multicultural mosaic. This narrative works similarly in the Netherlands where we encounter different groups organized both ethnically and spatially (include in web space). We have presented in this brief report an overview of the online activities help to constitute different groups of Dutch Surinamese citizens in the Netherlands, examining voices of individuals and communities in relation to their Dutch Surinam identity, and against the backdrop of the complex history of the Dutch Suriname history.

In conclusion

- There are a few well-visited portals that provide information about and to a (Dutch) Surinamese community. Other online presence with regard to Dutch Surinamese heritage, manifest in connection to specific topics and specific (cultural) Suriname communities.
- The digital presentations and platforms examined are focused on both providing information with the aim of self-presentation and strengthening community relations of/within the particular Dutch Suriname cultural groups in the Netherlands.
- Digital media is used to connect to Diaspora cultures, to each other or to a broader network of diaspora. Also digital media is used to make present that aspect of diaspora Cultural Heritage within the Netherlands.
- Online activities of the largest community, the Dutch Surinam Indian ('Hindoestaanse') community is focused on researching and providing information about Dutch Suriname Indian heritage - for all interested parties, but mostly within the Dutch Surinam Indian community. Reconnection to India (focusing on religion, Bollywood, food and dance) is very important. Other prominent posts/topics are related to activities that are aimed at community heritage activities in the Netherlands, such as the building of a large temple complex.
- The same applies to some of the other mentioned communities, such as the Dutch Surinam Javanese. Member of this community use digital media for research their specific heritage, strengthening self-presentation in the Netherlands. Digital media are predominantly used to mediate Cultural Heritage in order to strengthen identity, to strengthen relations within the community and to connect to an international Javanese Diaspora.

- Digital media are used for bottom up activism. Digital media provide means for individual and community voices left out in mainstream media, for instance to voice a stance in national and international on debates in relation to issues overarching specific Surinam identities, such as colonial history, racism and slavery.

Finally, this overview suggests that in the context of a political and societal climate of anxiety with regard to migration and integration, a climate that urged politicians to proclaim ‘the failure of the multicultural society’, cutting funding of projects that stimulates diversity, digital media provides means for cultural groups to create and fashion their specific identity.

5.1.5 Marokko.nl

Introduction

This case study is predominantly about a digitally-shaped “community.” It was inspired by views like those of Jaswina Elahi (2014), who states, ‘[...] ethnic sites can be seen as part of the ethnic community, even though they are accessible for members from outside the community. [...] these websites are more than just a platform where people can meet. Young people are not just “downloading” information, music, and pictures; they are downloading their culture. Internet is the gate to the source of their culture.’¹⁷⁹

In this small scale research, it is clear that members are not only downloading, but also *uploading* content (such as wedding pictures and recordings of their singing along with their favourite songs). On the discussion board, *Marokko.nl*, heritage is mainly discussed through the medium of text; but through relating to music and sharing pictures, an image is formed as well. Therefore, a forum can be seen as a space where identifications are being articulated. Lenie Brouwer (2006) considers websites, in general, as sources of information and *imagination* when studying the ways in which the second generation Moroccan-Dutch youth use discussion boards to express their ties with the parental ‘country of origin.’ Therefore, she views websites *themselves* as ‘...examples of cultural artefacts that can be seen as a virtual way of keeping alive the image of Morocco.’¹⁸⁰

The previous case study on Dutch-Surinamese communities revealed that sites can be seen accordingly as digital communities¹⁸¹ and cultural artefacts¹⁸² that deserve attention in terms of Cultural Heritage. Searching for an appropriate site for a digital case study in The Netherlands led to the selection of *Marokko.nl*, as it is the most popular of its kind in terms of numbers and valuation. Nearly 11 % of Dutch citizens have some migrant background¹⁸³. Of these, the Moroccan-Dutch spend the most time online¹⁸⁴, comparatively, with a quarter of the population visiting *Marokko.nl* on a daily basis. Aside from their digital activities, it also makes sense to look closely at Moroccan immigrants and their offspring in the Netherlands because they, even more than the largest minority of Turkish-Dutch, are given a central position in national debates on integration.

Methodology

An expert-interview was held with the main administrator of *Marokko.nl*, who has been involved with this discussion board since its very beginning in 2003. She is still an active participant, attracting on average 5,000 comments on her daily postings. As supervisor of all thirty moderators she has a superb overview. With the help of the administrator, an online questionnaire was sent out, and resulted in a predictably low response (n=10). According to the administrator, this low response was due to a general distrust of researchers. The findings from the questionnaire are supplemented by information from earlier conversations with four Moroccan-Dutch individuals.

¹⁷⁹ Elahi 2014, 200.

¹⁸⁰ Brouwer 2006, 1153.

¹⁸¹ Elahi 2014.

¹⁸² Brouwer 2006

¹⁸³ Over one million of the 16.4 million inhabitants belong to first- or second-generation migrants from the former colonies and another 750.000 people are so-called ‘Western’ migrants. Nearly one million citizens feel connected to Muslim countries, mainly in North Arfrica and Turkey (Oostindie et al. 2012, 95).

¹⁸⁴ Figures from 2010, equally detailed research has not been carried out since. (Sleijpen, G, Internetgebruik onder niet westerse allochtonen, sociaaleconomische trends, CBS 2010)

Together, they provide a fair variety of opinions and practices. Another expert-interview took place with one of the news editors of *Marokko.nl*, which deepened the understanding of frequent debates, if not frustrations, surrounding the coverage of current affairs in the Netherlands. The site itself was looked into for an overall impression of structure, functionalities, topics, and the most-visited discussion threads. The findings from interviews and online research are further contextualised with various, recent dissertations providing some of the latest information. Most of these scholars base their views upon in-depth qualitative research *inside* the communities, which is sustained by quantitative methods and embedded in social theory. For this case study, findings are mainly highlighted from the field, leaving theoretical debates out of the equation.

Culture is always in the making, and in a context of diaspora, this process can be very explicit. To quote Baumann, 'To say or do the same thing in a new context is to say or do a new thing'¹⁸⁵. Identity, or rather identification (see taxonomy), is equally considered as a dynamic process and a temporal, situational social 'construction'. Why human activity is described in terms that suit *technical* vocabulary better remains debatable, too. Of course, another limitation to be kept in mind is that studying just one site means running the risk of providing a very narrow point of view. As Koen Leurs (2012) convincingly notes: individuals combine *many* digital networks for dynamic multi-layered ongoing articulations of various aspects of belonging and identifications.¹⁸⁶ Ethnicity is merely one factor. A younger generation may relate to international urban youth culture, for instance, just as much as (or more so) than their ethnicity. One example: on *Marokko.nl* fashion seems to be a female-only domain. However, fashion is just as much a male issue, particularly in terms of identification, as Hester Dibbits (2007) demonstrates in her work on clothing styles among Moroccan-Dutch boys. Such discourses about style largely take place on the Internet, too, according to Dibbits¹⁸⁷. However, such male fashion discussions were not found on *Marokko.nl*.

Any generalisation in terms of ethnicity or culture by a majority about 'others' does not reflect reality and is far from helpful; all researchers stress diversity within perceived groups. Paradoxically enough, *self-ascribed* identification with one's own ethnic background turns out to be highly relevant for individuals during certain life stages or in specific contexts (Slootman 2014). And it is during these life stages and within these contexts where ethnic websites are thought to fulfil part of an important need.¹⁸⁸

Ethnic sites, events, and media usage may seem insular and meant for withdrawal from society at large. However, it has often been pointed out that this is not necessarily the case. Specific ethnic needs must be met in order to be oneself in a complex multicultural context where mainstream debates and media underrepresent minorities¹⁸⁹. Sites are used as binding factor for the creation of a shared identity in a Dutch social context.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Van Nieuwkerk 2012, 115.

¹⁸⁶ See also RICHES D3.1 – *Transformation, Change and Best practice for CH processes*, chapter 2.

¹⁸⁷ Dibbits (2007) demonstrates that three different styles are being appropriated through authentication processes with specific Moroccan-Dutch physicality and vernacular. The chosen dress styles articulate different identifications, emphasising either metropolitan multi-ethnic youth culture (baggy streetwear) or Mediterranean (Italian brand-name clothes) or Muslim culture (*jellaba*).

¹⁸⁸ Elahi 2014.

¹⁸⁹ See also RICHES D3.1 – *Transformation, Change and Best practice for CH processes*, chapter on Mediated and Unmediated Heritage (Verstappen a.o.)

¹⁹⁰ Brouwer 2006, 1167.

One of the main attractions of *Marokko.nl* for Moroccan-Dutch of all migrant generations is its anonymity. It is this feature that guarantees the ‘safe’ space sought. The site also caters to all other identified needs:¹⁹¹ immediate recognition of ethnic specific issues, dilemma’s, information, entertainment, and news. A site then potentially functions as a *portal* to the so-called source country due to its repository of information, as well as a *channel* for transmission and preservation, and a *stage* for articulation and remixing of living heritage. This case investigates to what extent Moroccan-Dutch make use of these options on *Marokko.nl* and provides a glimpse of the historic, socioeconomic, and political context in which these practices are embedded.

Moroccan-Dutch citizens in the Netherlands

History

The Netherlands has been a country of immigration since at least the sixteenth century.¹⁹² First Moroccan (and Turkish) immigrants arrived in the Netherlands around the 1970s to work in low-skilled jobs as temporary labourers. These temporary immigrants were mainly married men with very low levels of formal education who were recruited in rural areas, and often left their families behind. Within Morocco (as with the Surinamese) they were considered second-class citizens, belonging to various Amazigh rural minorities. In the end, many stayed in the Netherlands and had their families join them. Most of these first generation immigrants remained in the lower socioeconomic strata, whereas a considerable part of their offspring – especially the women – show strong upward mobility.¹⁹³

Levels of co-ethnicity cohesion between Moroccan-Dutch citizens in the Netherlands are comparatively low due to at least three different spoken languages (Van Amersfoort and Van Heelsum 2014) as well as varieties in religious practices related to region of origin, age, and education level.¹⁹⁴ Despite such diversity within the Moroccan-Dutch population, research on socialization practices does reveal shared dispositions and trends when it concerns family hierarchical structures, gender roles, and core values based on Islamic law. And the more traditionally inclined, the wider the gap experienced within dominant Dutch ‘permissiveness’ and ‘hedonist’ youth culture is¹⁹⁵.

At the moment of writing, 2.2% of the Dutch population is of Moroccan origin (evenly split between first and second generation), mainly settled in the Western part of the country that includes the cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht. Of all the immigrants in the Netherlands, 10.4% are Moroccan-Dutch.¹⁹⁶

Actual developments

The current social context is adequately described by Sloomman (2014, 98-99):

‘The Netherlands has experienced a turnaround in integration politics in the last two decennia. The Dutch landscape has become increasingly culturalist. This means that integration and citizenship – not in juridical terms but in defining who belongs and who does not – are framed in terms of the incompatibility of cultures and the defense of a ‘Dutch culture’.

¹⁹¹ Elahi 2014.

¹⁹² Lucassen & Lucassen 2011, in: Boog 2014, 188.

¹⁹³ Sloomman 2014.

¹⁹⁴ Van Nieuwkerk 2012.

¹⁹⁵ Sloomman 2014, 90-91.

¹⁹⁶ <http://statline.cbs.nl> (accessed March 17, 2015)

Increasingly, assimilative demands are placed on non-western immigrants and have become conditions for belonging. Immigrants (and their offspring) are not only required to internalize progressive cultural norms, but also to express an emotional and identificational attachment to Dutch society. The demand for moral and emotional assimilation coincides with an essentialized view that presents Islam as intrinsically incompatible with being a Dutch citizen and equates 'Moroccan' with being Muslim. (Although Turkish Dutch are also predominantly Muslim, they are less explicitly targeted in the political debates.) The culturalist demands have been accompanied by an increasingly exclusivist language and with a nativist conception of citizenship, which reduces immigrants and their (grand-)children to second-class citizens.¹⁹⁷

Boog (2014) found that immigrant integration in the Netherlands is not so much being hindered by cultural or religious distinctiveness as it is by socio-economic disadvantages and discrimination.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, various scholars¹⁹⁹ have demonstrated that multiple identities - or even multiple citizenships - do not undermine loyalty to the nation state, integration, or senses of belonging. However, this knowledge has not yet reached public awareness.

It is against this background of 'Othering' that various minorities feel the need to seek refuge online to fulfil specific ethnic needs as discussed elsewhere²⁰⁰. According to De Koster (2010), stigmatisation - not only on ethnic grounds - is the main reason for the popularity of *anonymous* participation on discussion boards. This is indeed the main feature of *Marokko.nl*.

***Marokko.nl* portrait of a discussion board**

Background

Quite a few Moroccan-Dutch sites have been established over time such as *Amazigh.nl*, *Bladna.nl* and *Maroc.nl* – the latter being the first, launched by a group of students at the end of 1989 'out of mere dissatisfaction with the coverage in Dutch media'.²⁰¹ All these sites still exist, but have been surpassed in popularity by *Marokko.nl*. (see appendix fig. 1). This Dutch language online community website was founded in 2003 by social media publisher *Marokko Media*. The site has 213,000 members (30% of which are Flemish speaking Moroccan-Belgians) and the organisation claims to attract 50,000 unique visitors on a daily basis, who post on average 1,500 new topics with 40,000 responses. The forum is said to reach between 70 – 75% of all Moroccan-Dutch youth under the age of 35.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Slooman 2014, 98-99.

¹⁹⁸ Boog 2014, 188.

¹⁹⁹ Leurs 2012, Boog 2014, Slooman 2014.

²⁰⁰ a.o. Leurs 2012, Elahi 2014. See also RICHES D3. 1 – *Transformation, Change and Best practice for CH processes*, chapter on Mediated and Unmediated Heritage.

²⁰¹ Van Summeren, 276.

²⁰² Motivaction 2014.

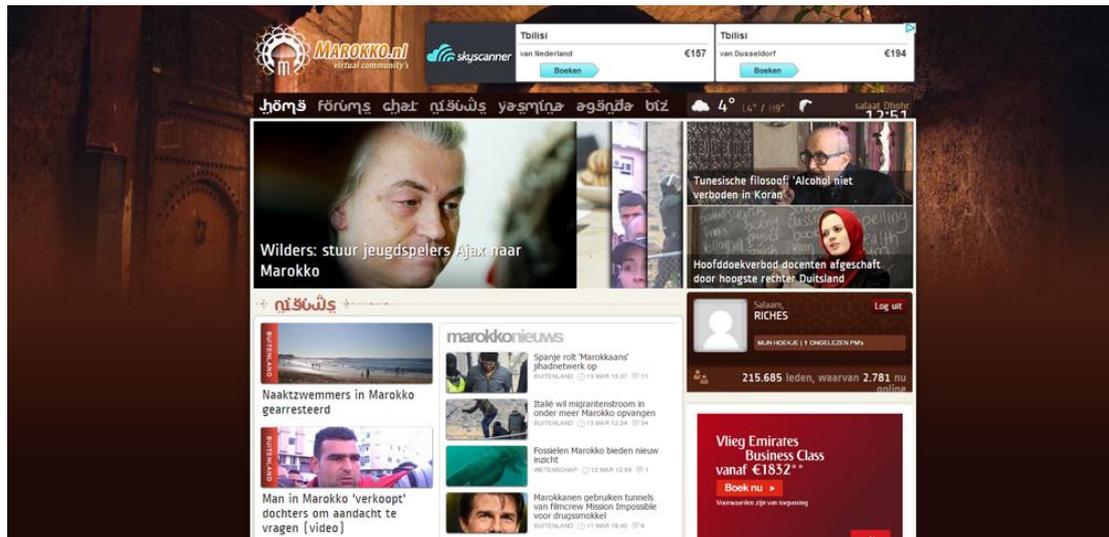


Figure 42. The Marokko.nl homepage

The target audience consists mainly of urban youth, meaning those who live in metropolitan areas of the Netherlands, for whom cultural diversity and multi-ethnic identities are taken for granted, and, as such, operate outside polarised public and political debates focusing on (not) belonging to the nation state (Marokko Media factsheet). In terms of content, the main aim is to offer information, entertainment and input for discussion. The organisation wants to provide a safe space for digital meeting, communication, and sharing for kindred spirits with recognizable discussions and experiences as well as relevant information, services and products catered to specific needs.²⁰³ Marokko Media also caters to other market segmentations: sports-minded, urban youth are reached through *Kickbox.nl*, and for Turkish youth they run *Hababam.nl*. Moroccan women have their own site: *Yasmina.nl* - currently part of *Marokko.nl*. The sites are run as non-profit organisations, and Marokko Media also initiates and supports welfare projects around topics with a social urgency among the target group (such as sexual and pedagogical education). Commercial activities and partnerships are placed under a separate entity that engages in travel, health, market research, banners, a webshop, an online Yellow Pages, etc.



Figure 43. The Yasmina.nl homepage

²⁰³ Ibid.

Catering to cultural identities is, apart from a societal issue, a good business opportunity.

Members of the site are, in principle, anonymous; but it is assumed, based on educated guesses, that all socioeconomic and educational levels are being reached, with some overrepresentation of women (60%). This overrepresentation is probably due to the incorporation of *Yasmina.nl*, an online lifestyle magazine for Moroccan women that includes traditional fashion, family issues, beauty, cooking, and showbiz (see appendix fig. 2). Most popular topics on this sub-forum are discussions about love and sexuality. The wedding guide is also quite popular with its plentiful information about how and where to organize a Moroccan-Dutch wedding.

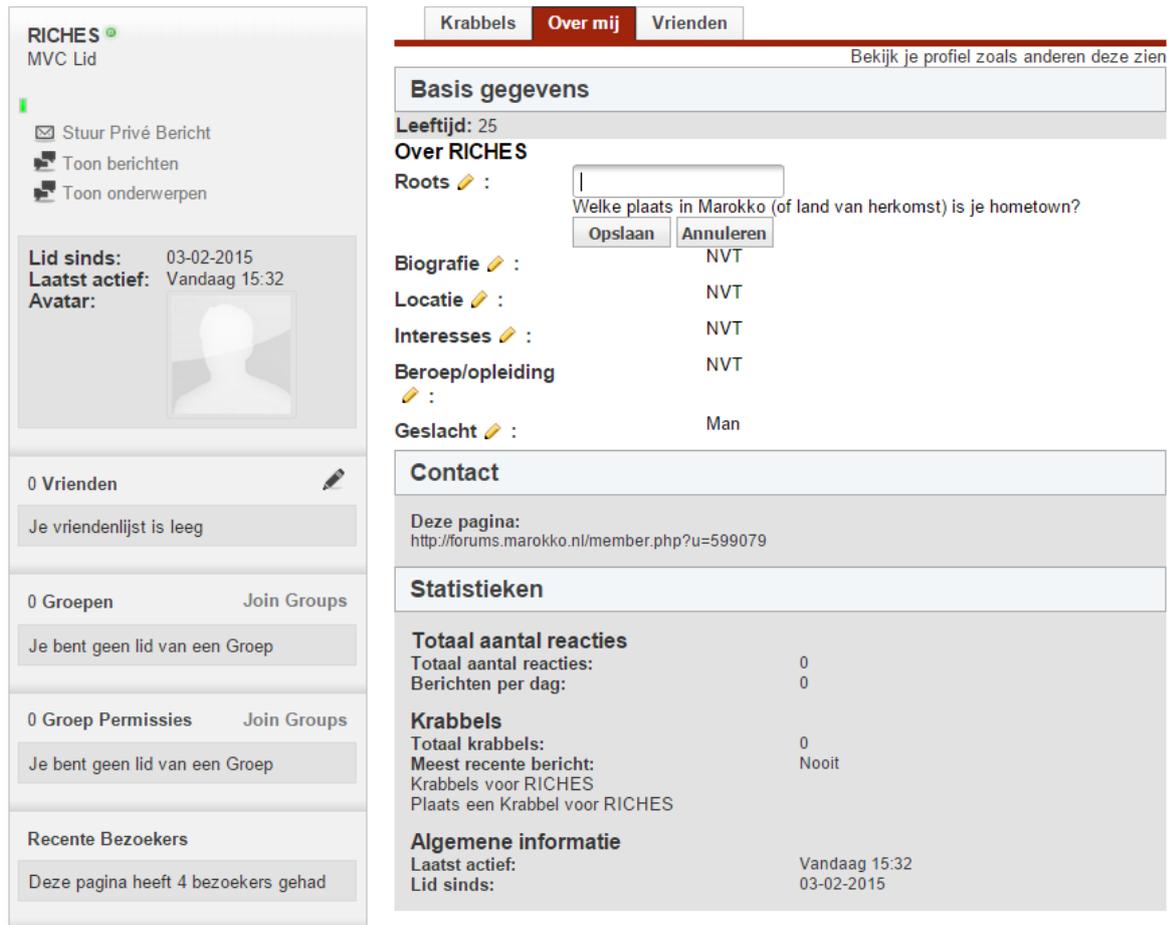
As the following table illustrates, visitors of *Marokko.nl* visit this ethnic website less than mainstream Dutch sites, but rank it highly:

Most visited websites by Moroccan Dutch ²⁰⁴		
	Weekly range	Appreciation (1-10)
Nu.nl	30%	7.5
Nos.nl	14%	7.4
Telegraaf.nl	14%	7.1
AD.nl	12%	7.1
Marokko.nl	9%	7.4

Profile

Anyone with an e-mail address can create a profile on *Marokko.nl*. In this profile, a person can reveal as much about themselves as they want. One of the most interesting features of the profile page is the first line labelled, 'ROOTS,' where you state "where in Morocco (or other country of origin) is your hometown." Other options are a biography, a profile picture, age, gender, interests, and education. Lastly, a line can be added (using words or images) which will be shown below every comment posted, acting like a kind of signature. The profile page can be seen by anyone and also shows activity on the forum. Through the profile page, people can leave messages (public or private), become friends, and join groups.

²⁰⁴ Social media and e-mail platforms are not included within these calculations.



RICHES MVC Lid

Stuur Privé Bericht
 Toon berichten
 Toon onderwerpen

Lid sinds: 03-02-2015
 Laatste actief: Vandaag 15:32
 Avatar: 

0 Vrienden
 Je vriendenlijst is leeg

0 Groepen [Join Groups](#)
 Je bent geen lid van een Groep

0 Groep Permissies [Join Groups](#)
 Je bent geen lid van een Groep

Recente Bezoekers
 Deze pagina heeft 4 bezoekers gehad

Krabbels Over mij Vrienden

Bekijk je profiel zoals anderen deze zien

Basis gegevens

Leeftijd: 25
 Over RICHES

Roots :
 Welke plaats in Marokko (of land van herkomst) is je hometown?
 Opslaan Annuleren

Biografie : NVT
 Locatie : NVT
 Interesses : NVT
 Beroep/opleiding : NVT
 Geslacht : Man

Contact

Deze pagina:
<http://forums.marokko.nl/member.php?u=599079>

Statistieken

Totaal aantal reacties
 Totaal aantal reacties: 0
 Berichten per dag: 0

Krabbels
 Totaal krabbels: 0
 Meest recente bericht: Nooit
 Krabbels voor RICHES
 Plaats een Krabbel voor RICHES

Algemene informatie
 Laatste actief: Vandaag 15:32
 Lid sinds: 03-02-2015

Figure 44. Profile on Marokko.nl

Comments

When logged in on the forum, comments can be left on current discussions. A 'star' can be given to comments liked when you like it, or report on comments to the moderator (when it is not in line with the rules of the forum). Links, images and videos can be left as part of the comment or a citation can be provided in response to another comment. Comments are always placed in chronological order; the last one shown first.

Rules - the forum etiquette

A lot of sections have their own set of rules, mainly stating what can and cannot be said in the section. In general, the line is drawn where comments become offensive or discriminatory. Several sections have their own set of rules to prevent proliferation of topics. Sticky topics (topics that are fixed by moderators) are used to explain these rules of the section. In the *Tea Lounge* for example, it is stated that this is a place where serious discussions are encouraged. For chit chat, people are redirected to the *Nonsense Corner*. Another example of a rule is that the forum cannot be used for offering products or services. For this purpose other sections have been established.

Anonymity

Due to the nature of the profile page, it is quite easy to remain anonymous on the forum. A participant is neither required to fill in much of the profile page, nor to tell the truth (if they don't want to). This is a very important feature of the forum, and, according to many, it is this specific feature that explains its popularity because, in Moroccan (Dutch) culture, a lot of topics are still taboo. The forum, however, provides a space where sensitive issues *can* be discussed, without restrictions of social control. The feature of anonymity also allows for disagreements without repercussions. For instance, members can freely discuss what is considered 'good' or 'bad' behaviour, or decent dress in photographs.

Favourite topics

According to our key informant, the chief administrator and moderator of *Marokko.nl*, many topics can lead one to this site. For herself, it was religion; when she wanted to find out more about Islam, she ended up following discussion threads on *Marokko.nl*. In her day, the general search went via *Yahoo*, but nowadays searches generally go through *Google*. Any search related to any Moroccan issue will eventually lead to *Marokko.nl*, she states.

Apart from the Moroccan-Dutch, the administrator also encounters numerous Iraqi, Syrian, and Afghan people on the forum, as they do not find their interests on other Dutch sites. According to her, religion remains a favourite topic (probably due to the current negative attention for Islam in the Netherlands). She has seen increasing radicalisation over the past five to six years, and occasionally has to hand over IP-addresses to the authorities. In that sense, being online is not at all that anonymous.

Anonymity, however, generally serves purposes other than covering for political sentiments. People find that they cannot discuss many issues anywhere else - either with friends, colleagues, nor relatives. Many subjects are perceived as too sensitive, shameful, and 'taboo.' This is a generally understood situation. Less well-known is the fact that even *public* information is accessed through the ethnic site instead of through the general Dutch information sites (for instance websites belonging to the city or any other governmental organisation). This has to do with general distrust of Dutch society and authorities, according to our key informant:

*There's a huge... I notice that Dutch authorities really are very mistaken about that. There is a huge distrust towards Dutch authorities. The most common questions, for instance how to get social welfare, are asked at our forum. Because they don't want to ask this at the relevant organisation itself. Because they don't trust them.*²⁰⁵

She specifically blames journalists, politicians, and media professionals for encouraging polarisation in society as she always sees them selecting the most extreme quotes from the site without doing justice to an overall more moderate tone of debates.

²⁰⁵ *En er is een heel groot... ik merk ook dat Nederlandse instanties zich daar heel erg in vergissen. Er is heel groot wantrouwen naar Nederlandse instanties. Met meest basale vragen bijvoorbeeld om een uitkering ofzo wordt bij ons gevraagd. Want ze willen het niet bij de betreffende instantie vragen, want die vertrouwen ze niet (chief moderator, Marokko.nl).*

In terms of Cultural Heritage, she means that nearly all discussion threads contain such elements because most deal with either religion or cultural issues. Visitors want to know how to deal with situations from a Muslim perspective and/or from regional Moroccan perspectives because festivities, recipes, upbringing, and religious interpretations all relate to specific regional backgrounds: Riffians in the north; Soussians in the south; and various Atlas mountain districts, each with different characteristics and traditions. Such differences are discussed and appreciated. There is also – at least on *Marokko.nl* - an apparent visible longing to pass these traditions on (with special emphasis on what is *not* allowed) while also highlighting positively perceived characteristics like hospitality and family.

When asked what would be missed if the site ceased to exist, the main informant wondered where all anger and frustration about negative stereotyping in society would then find relief, and where else requested information could be found. Some topics might find their way on *Facebook*²⁰⁶, but the more sensitive issues would not. For instance, (sexual) abuse, adultery, mental distress – for instance girls who feel torn between two worlds or men who wonder if they suffer from psychosis or are possessed, etc.—would likely not be found on Facebook. The section ‘Current Affairs’ is, with 4,202,507 comments and 127,038 topics, one of the most popular sections. Topics are often started by the editorial staff, but members can also start a topic themselves.

The editorial staff selects topics for this section related to current affairs both in and outside The Netherlands. The topics often reflect news items that are covered by mainstream media, but are also somehow related to Islam, Morocco, or Moroccan culture. Of the ten most read current affairs topics of last year, four are explicitly about Islam. Others are about (#2) the terrorists attack in Paris (January 2015), (#3 and #10) the homicide of two Moroccan-Dutch robbers in Deurne, (#4) the crash of MH17, (#5) scientists confirm creationism, and (#6) the armed man trying to take over the Dutch national television news bulletin. Certain new items cause an immediate increase of visitors online:

‘In the case of a terrorist attack somewhere, or a.. like in France.. Let’s put it like this: when it has to do with muslims in the news, then directly: BANG. Immediately. The amount of visitors rises immediately. And why is that? They don’t believe the Dutch media, because they are always condemned by the media. So, where can they go? They could post it on their Facebook, but they are often scared to do so because that is not anonymous. So, they come to us.’²⁰⁷

A lot of topics discuss distrust of mainstream media, and put forward issues mainstream media miss, according to some members. For instance, one topic started with a news item, written by the editorial staff, titled: ‘*Once more missed by the media: again muslim killed in US*’²⁰⁸ Members then immediately start to discuss how mainstream media deal (or don’t deal at all) with news, for example:

²⁰⁶ For instance groups and organisations interested in Berber (or more correctly *Imazighen*) identity politics, each with a rather limited amount of members, compared to *Marokko.nl*.

²⁰⁷ ‘Ja, als er een aanslag is ergens of een... zoals je zit met Frankrijk of... laat ik het zo zeggen: als het iets met moslims te maken heeft in het nieuws, dan gelijk: BOEM. Gelijk. Dan merk je dat gelijk aan het bezoekersaantal, pfft (gebaar omhoog). En waarom deden ze dat: de Nederlandse media geloven ze niet, want die zetten hun altijd te kijk. Dus waar moeten ze dan heen? Ze zetten het of op hun eigen Facebook, maar dat durven ze niet altijd, want dat is niet anoniem. Dus dan komen ze bij ons.’ (chief administrator *Marokko.nl*)

²⁰⁸ <http://forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=5226493> (accessed March 15, 2015)

Morrokito (member since 09-05-2009, 8510 comments):

'If it had been a Jew, it would be NOS, Een Vandaag, and Pauw Prime Time! You shouldn't take the selective media seriously anymore.'

Noor-El-Imaan (member since 06-09-2011, 140 comments):

'And this once again proves the subjectivity and selectivity of the media. May Allah rest his soul.'

There are however members that don't agree and try to nuance these views:

PieterBaan (member since 09-02-2015, 296 comments):

'If it had been a Jew, many members of this forum would react positively on it. Take a look at the comments on the attacks in Paris on the Jewish supermarket. So don't act so irritated!'

Och (member since 17-02-2015, 533 comments):

'Excuse me, but if we must listen carefully every time there has been a murder in America, we would not hear a thing anymore. That country is overflowing with weapons, and murders are being committed every minute. So yes, there will be muslim victims every now and then. But why would that be racism? There are muslims being killed regularly in Amsterdam, but that has nothing to do with racism! Liquidations are definitely not meant to be racist. Just business.'

The fact that people can say whatever they like can result in less than charming effects. Comments often directly address other members personally. If such 'off topic' behaviour becomes too persistent, the moderators delete the thread. The title of the topic and the reason for removal remain visible. Members can report each other if they think netiquete rules have been broken, which is in itself a feature that is occasionally misused. People remain people, both online and offline.

#	Section	Description	comments	Topics	Most popular sub-topic
1	Moroccan Youth, Love and Relationships	"About the heartaches of Moroccan Dutch Youth"	6,969 394	209 724	"My dates from hell" Views: 360.760
2	The world of the Moroccan Woman	"Both work and kitchen. Both household tips and cosy talks"	5 971 118	156 929	"What is on today's menu?" Views: 2.978.812
3	Moroccan Youth and Current Affairs	"Give your opinion on current affairs"	4 202 507	127 038	None stands out.
4	Tea Lounge	"Discussions on lifestyle, philosophy and daily life"	3 627 117	37 236	"Show something of yourself" Views: 6.608.747
5	Moroccan weddings in the Netherlands and Belgium	"Read the opinion of others and give your opinion on contemporary weddings."	2 366 541	172 416	"Caftans and Takshita's 2011? Show them here!" Views: 1.579.332" (no comments since 2013) Most topics are in the style of "looking for... (a band, a hair dresser etc.)"

Most popular sections (viewed on 16/3/2015)

Views on Moroccan Cultural Heritage

When asked in the questionnaire what they miss most from Moroccan life while living in the Netherlands, the relatively few answers already show a wide variety of opinions. Some demonstrate nostalgic feelings for Moroccan cuisine, oral history, language, Islamic values, traditional upbringing, traditional weddings, and music (especially anasheed singing and drumming). Many fear a loss of traditions and knowledge. Yet one respondent feels Moroccan culture ought to disappear completely from life in the Netherlands because:

... it only causes identity crises and favours double standards like 'men' who don't allow their sisters to date Gino, yet they themselves go out with both Karima and Jolanda.

When asked if they would visit a museum exhibiting Moroccan Cultural Heritage, the majority responded in the affirmative (with one exception). One respondent would only go provided there is a theatre (instead of 'dead' and 'boring' displays) to make the exhibition seem more alive. The relatively positive attitude towards a potential museum collection is somewhat surprising, as this does not reflect the general attitude of Dutch young adults.²⁰⁹ Another interviewee went to Marrakech to study part of his background in a private museum about Amazigh material culture.²¹⁰ He felt the need to do this because *"you need to know your past, in order to be able to shape your future,"* and he resents the fact that no Dutch Cultural Heritage institution has a consistent permanent, exhibition displaying his cultural 'roots.' He was pleasantly surprised about what he encountered in Marrakech: *"look, what refinement; how much more subtle than Dutch clogs or Delftware – I never realised this existed – we're not taught this at school and therefore unaware of the cultural wealth of our country of origin"*²¹¹.

The wide variety of Cultural Heritage between various Moroccan regions is mentioned both regularly on *Marokko.nl* and in the responses to our questionnaire. Wedding rituals, in particular, seem to be by far the most popular topic in relation to Cultural Heritage.

²⁰⁹ See RICHES D3. 1 – *Transformation, Change and Best practice for CH processes*, chapter 2.

²¹⁰ Museum *Tiskiwin* – private collection gathered and displayed by Bert Flint <http://www.tiskiwin.com>

²¹¹ personal communication, March 2010.



Figure 45. Wedding dress advertisement on Marokko.nl

One of our interviewees adds that, no matter how much you try to stick to wedding traditions, there will always be a Western influence. Out of three dresses, for instance, at least one will be white and, because Dutch housing is too small to celebrate at home, therefore an appropriate place needs to be arranged elsewhere, which influences the atmosphere.

Most popular topics in the ‘Moroccan Weddings in The Netherlands and Belgium’ section in the last year (as consulted on 17/3/2015)						
#	Topic	Description	Views	Comments	Last comment	Started in
1	Come and sing here Lala Bouya	Collection of ‘self-sung’ songs, recitations of typical and often traditional songs. Uploaded by members.	78 698	3 824	25-8-2014	2012
2	Brides 2015	Discussion of future brides how to organize the wedding	69 330	2 752	16-3-2015	2014
3	May Brides 2010	Discussion of future brides how to organize the wedding (older version)	62 547	5 795	22-8-2014	2009
4	Pictures of wedding topic	Sharing pictures of your wedding	60 316	548	28-4-2014	2012
5	Self-sung Izran section	Collection of ‘self-sung’ songs, uploaded by members. Comparable to #1	59 618	1 034	18-2-2015	2013
6	Meeting stories (L)	Stories about how people have met their fiancé or	57 732	654	18-2-2015	2011

		husband				
7	Put photos of the newest Takchita & Caftan collection here 2014	Photos of typical wedding dresses, the newest collections and trends.	56 763	459	4-12-2014	2014

Most wedding-related topics can be considered 'heritage' (such as the transmission of traditional songs). However, new music also is being produced, and existing music is being remixed into new versions. Therefore, the forum seems to serve as a platform for the production of new Cultural Heritage, too. A typical exchange goes like this:

Berberintje (132 comments): *I like to participate, but I can't sing, hahaha, but I will just post lyrics or something like that*²¹².

Kaatje_ (895 comments): *Wow, beautiful, beautiful voices! Is there someone who wants to sing a song for me, with my name Kaoutar in it! And Noutje22, maybe you would like to do it with your nice voice, hihihii. Thanks in advance*²¹³.

Thesnieft (12.599 comments): *Nice! I will also start with singing again. I sing 24/7 with my baby sister, only recording is sometimes too much of an effort*²¹⁴.

[After this she shares her link, where she sings along, improvises some own lyrics and in the end tells her baby sister so say 'bye' to *soundcloud*:]

<https://soundcloud.com/just-simaatje/adbe3degh-zi-remresh-lol>

²¹² *ik wil best mee doen alleen kan ik niet zingen ahahha maar plaats wel gwn teksten ofzo*

²¹³ *Wauuwww mmmooiii hoor, prachtige stemmen. Wil er iemand een nummer speciaal voor me zingen, met mijn naam Kaoutar En Noutje22 maybe wil jij dat doen met je leuke stem hihihii. alvast bedankt. Liefs, Kaatje.*

²¹⁴ *Mooi! Ik ga ook weer beginnen met zingen. Ik zing echt 24/7 samen met me babyzusje, alleen opnemen is soms teveel moeite <https://soundcloud.com/just-simaatje/adbe3degh-zi-remresh-lol> Beetje onzin weha..*

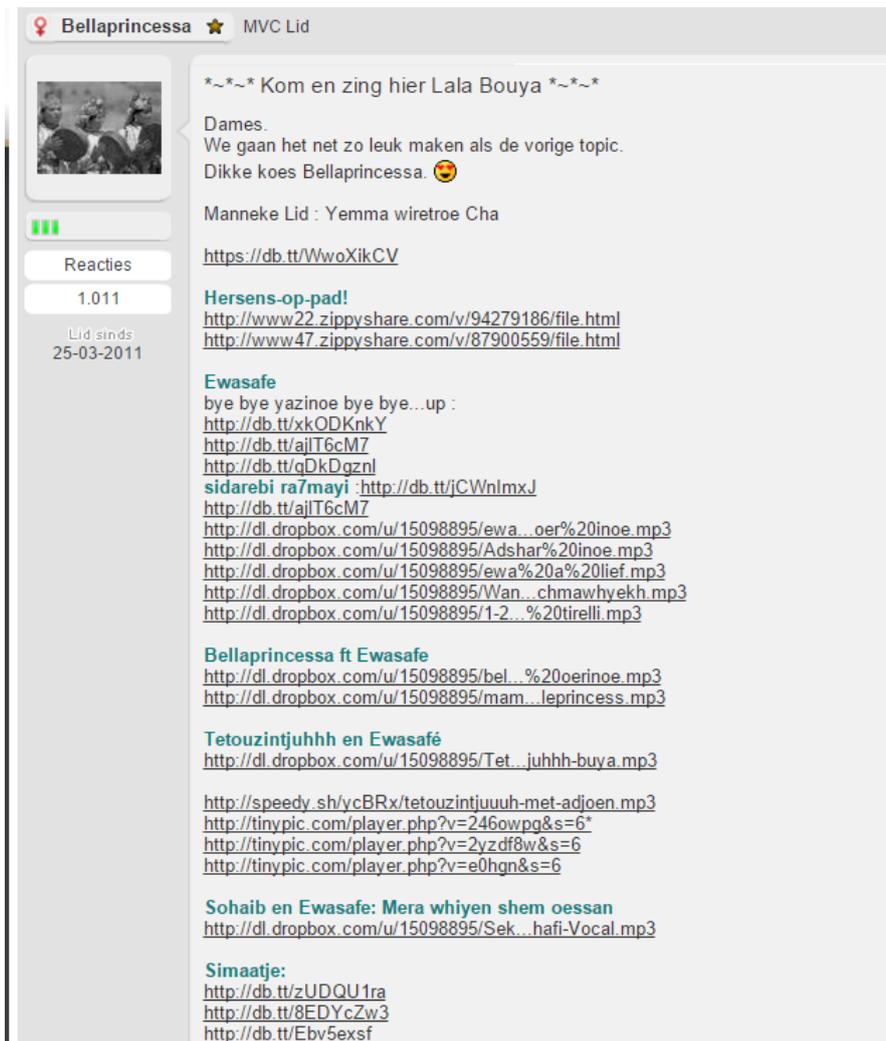


Figure 46. Wedding topic #1 – List with shared songs

A digital homeland

The most important benefits of *Marokko.nl* as digital realm seem to be that anything can be discussed freely and members can find necessary information. And, even when there are no Moroccans living nearby, it is still possible get together to spend some relaxing leisure time among ‘your own’ people. With an anonymous discussion board functioning as its main asset, *Marokko.nl* is not the type of media-rich, digital environment to upload recognizable self-representations of any kind. Those can be found more frequently on social networking sites like *Facebook* and *You Tube*²¹⁵. Only very rarely will members link their forum profiles to other online activities, as they value anonymity more. The links that do exist from the forum lead to *Soundcloud* or music clips on *You Tube* - usually without any moving image or recognizable people.

²¹⁵ In particular special interest groups and lifestyle performances can be found on *Facebook* in combination with *You Tube* (see appendix fig. 11, 12 for examples provided by Mohamed Saadouni, personal communication april 2015). This is a difficult realm to study though, due to its enormous proliferation.

Future developments on *Marokko.nl* will likely consist of technological updates (such as an app) in order for existing functionalities to remain quick and easy. Other types of changes would not be appreciated by members, according to the chief administrator. For instance, experiments with the look and feel met with negative responses:

*It doesn't make sense, even if it's only a colour! We can only make the Terracotta somewhat brighter or darker but not change the colour as such. Then people say they do not recognize it as their home anymore. It, apparently, is a kind of online home to them.*²¹⁶

In terms of content, the needs of younger generations are said to be changing, which will affect future topics, services, and information on offer. It is expected that *Marokko.nl* will continue to have a bonding effect for future users. Our own impression is that it mainly sustains a tradition-oriented stance that is focused more on preservation than on innovation. It also seems like a good breeding ground for increased distrust against what is perceived as 'Dutchness'.

Further research could follow in the footsteps of Lenie Brouwer (2006), who managed to distinguish different imaginings of homeland(s) on different sites. On some sites, feelings of belonging to the land of origin are more prevalent than on others; and there are differences in the amount of the idealisation of living conditions in either Morocco or the country of residence. Regardless of this variety, all digital sites shape a sort of virtual community in a Dutch context, which helps the youth especially 'to find out who they are and which aspects of their culture they consider important.'²¹⁷

Mixing heritages

Adjusting (to) Dutch society

Various scholars support the notion that the Internet plays a prominent role in contemporary identity building, especially in those instances where multiple worlds must be combined. While the first generation of immigrant workers remained 'rooted' in their villages and family backgrounds, their offspring do not have this frame of reference. 'Young Moroccans in The Netherlands are confronted with at least four worlds: a Dutch one, an official Arab-speaking Moroccan one, a Berber one and last but not least, an Islamic one. These worlds are not isolated from one another, and overlap to a large extent. But to some extent they are also in conflict, posing difficult dilemmas ...'²¹⁸ The aforementioned dilemmas are indeed widely and deeply discussed on *Marokko.nl*. However, the site itself claims to be of service to young people who identify with yet another 'world': that of the cosmopolitan, city-dweller already adapted to multicultural environments.

One of the most complicated issues for individuals is to define the religious part of their social identity—especially in a society with such negative attitudes towards Islam as the Netherlands. It is difficult enough to find a personal position in the discourses about 'the right' interpretation of the Prophet's teachings.

²¹⁶ *Het forum is nu terracotta-kleurig, zeg maar, als ik de kleur moet benoemen. Die zijn we al vanaf het begin. We hebben wel eens een tintje donkerder of lichter gemaakt, maar als we de kleur gaan veranderen worden ze helemaal gek. Slaat helemaal nergens op, het is maar een kleur, maar ze herkennen het dan niet meer als hun thuis ofzo. Het is een beetje een online thuis.*

²¹⁷ Brouwer 2006, 1167.

²¹⁸ Van Amersfoort and Van Heelsum, 247.

All young Muslims educated and living in 'the West' need to find ways of combining sometimes opposing value systems, not only in religion, but also relationships, gender, education, and upbringing. Dutch society is highly permissive, especially from the perspective of orthodox Islam. It's no wonder that on *Marokko.nl*, as well as other Moroccan-Dutch sites, religious topics remain particularly omnipresent, demonstrating 'a lot of disagreement and confusion about the exact concept of Islam in the Netherlands'²¹⁹. And 'Quite a number of messages deal with Islam and sexuality, for example the issues of premarital sex or homosexuality, and the question of relationships with partners from other cultures.'²²⁰. Van Summeren may describe findings from *Maroc.nl*, yet they fit our own impressions about *Marokko.nl* entirely. These include a large variety of divergent opinions and,

*'...the trend that youngsters use the Internet to find answers to their questions (instead of appealing to the Islamic community and/or social life) indicates a more individualistic Islam. ... In the process of self-categorizing and self-identification (answer to the question 'who am I?'), it is difficult to unify the different roles into one consistent identity. The youngsters obviously need reflection: they want to express their own opinions and compare their views with those of others. The reactions posted in the discussion forums give us a clue on the significance that Muslim youngsters attach to Islam.'*²²¹

In other words, this forum too is used as a much needed platform for reflection about their own place in contemporary society.

It remains painful, especially when religion appears to be such an important part of the Moroccan-Dutch identity, that the Netherlands still do not recognize Islam as religion equal to Christianity in its demographically-changed society.

First generation immigrants may not suffer from identity issues, but still face their own difficulties. For instance, they must adjust their religious celebrations to the Dutch calendar; national holidays do not coincide; ritual slaughter takes place far away from the home without women and children present; living spaces are too small for large gatherings; etc. However, while the time, place, and shape of the celebrations may change due to migration, the *essence* of religious faith still remains.²²² Younger generations also develop new ways of celebrating their religion, organising special parties with visiting artists and bands²²³.

Regardless of a diasporic context, ritual celebrations are always subject to change: their meaning gets renegotiated, contested, or put in new perspective²²⁴. Sunnier (2012) also states that developments in communication technology played an important role in shifting religious issues into the public domain. Traditional authority has come under pressure due to modernisation processes, including more individual knowledge production – made possible by the Internet – which leads to increased multivocality and more *agency* (or participation) from people in the development of ritual processes. Yet another example of the dynamic nature of culture and the role of modern technology in shifting authoritarian relations is that Islam has become more open source, and has moved into the public domain through the Internet.

²¹⁹ Van Summeren, 283.

²²⁰ *ibid.* 287

²²¹ *ibid.* 289.

²²² Van Nieuwkerk, 2012.

²²³ *ibid.* 129.

²²⁴ Sunnier 2012, 61. Sunnier explicitly mentions the Dutch Black Pete debates as example, which we discussed earlier in D3.2

From this dynamic perspective, Islam is more of an alternative lifestyle, than a traditional form of heritage to be transmitted from generation to generation, according to Sunnier²²⁵. Islam is simply one of many conscious and individually made choices in contemporary life.

‘The meaning of ethnic and regional ties for the construction of Islamic identities thus disappear into the background. More and more initiatives are developed by Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds. The socioeconomic position in the Netherlands, experiences that young Muslims acquire here, new networks and bonds gradually become the principle frame of reference for their identity building. For them there are no insurmountable objections to live as Muslims in the Netherlands, provided that the Dutch accept them as equals.’²²⁶

For this to succeed, the first step should be the recognition of Islamic holy days (next to the existing Christian ones) by Dutch society. So, who needs to adjust to who, really? Ideally, integration is a two-way process, but this is not yet the case in Dutch society. Hence Sunnier, too, comes to the conclusion that in cases of unequal access to the public domain and influence on current debates, alternative forums (online as well as offline) remain of vital importance. In that sense, *Marokko.nl* will (for the foreseeable future) remain highly necessary for people finding their place in society. However it seems less suitable for those who want to go through life without religion, or who do not want to stress their 'Moroccan-ness' as part of their social identity.

Transnational identities

Internet communication technology does not limit users to nation states. *Marokko.nl* has members originating from various countries, all sharing the Dutch language. For those wanting to communicate about the Amazigh (Berber) part of their heritage and identity, that is too limited because, worldwide, the Amazigh networks operate in French or English. The European Amazigh movement is centred in France²²⁷ where most originate from Algeria. Other Amazigh movements are mainly based in Africa, the U.S., and Canada, maintaining ties internationally and often driven by activism (particularly around the right to language, and resisting arabization²²⁸).

In the Netherlands, about 85% of the Moroccan-Dutch arrived from the Riffian mountain region in northern Morocco, and refer to themselves as 'Berber' or 'Amazigh,' which means 'free human being.' At present, knowledge and pride is increasing around this background that used to be associated with second-class citizenship, both in Morocco and in the Netherlands. This new self-consciousness is fed by national (as well as international) identity politics, and not easily swept away now that in Morocco the Amazigh language, Tamazight, is finally, officially being taught at school. Immigrants of the second and further generations can become 'trans nationalists,' or, those who have integrated into the society of settlement while at the same time remaining part of a wider community. The Internet allows for a broad and fast exchange of ideas, information, and expression of viewpoints; and can make educational language tools easily accessible since the development of standardised fonts in Tamazight language. Some claim that it is due to the internationalised, virtual community that the Amazigh identity and language issue has won ground both in their homelands and worldwide.

²²⁵ Sunnier 2012, 69

²²⁶ Ibid. 69, own translation

²²⁷ Van Amersfoort and Van Heelsum 2008

²²⁸ Amazigh cultures and languages existed long

Being Berber is gradually becoming a source of self-respect and inspiration²²⁹. The Mayor of Rotterdam, himself of Amazigh heritage, publicly stated during the Amazigh New Year in 2015 (or 2965 in Amazigh Yennayer)²³⁰: “*Knowledge about and transmission of your cultural identity is not merely some activity. It provides a foundation for youngsters that allows them to be proud of who they are, where they came from, and help in deciding where they want to go*” (own translation)²³¹. The Amazigh New Year celebration started in Rotterdam only, but is now offered in two more cities, with international artists being invited. There is a growing interest in ethnic events in general. Until recently, it was not publicly known that Moroccan-Dutch football players, Ibrahim Afellay and Khalid Boulahrouz, as well as some well known Dutch writers, actors, and politicians have Amazigh backgrounds; but, today, they serve as role models.

Nowadays, the younger generation actively seeks information about their backgrounds to develop an individual social identity and place in the world. This is not straightforward, however, as they need to find a balance between many factors. ‘The great interest of a substantial part of the young generation in the orally transmitted stories and characteristic music and dances of the Riff testify to their commitment to their Cultural Heritage. However, being western educated and having far more (formal) educational attainments than their parents, they are also critical with regard to local customs and traditions. It is therefore understandable that many youngsters are searching for ways to redefine themselves as Berbers, Moroccans, and certainly also as Muslims in the modern world, and make use of modern means of communication.’²³² The authors believe that international Amazigh developments will have an impact on the relationship between Dutch society and its Moroccan immigrants.²³³

Amazigh identity politics are only implicitly visible on *Marokko.nl* when people wonder about the regional differences in music or dress style to adhere to in the cases of wedding rituals, for instance. The main Dutch Amazigh organisations and groups communicate - at the time of writing - mainly through Facebook pages (see example in appendix fig. 11, 12). No matter which sites or platform is in use, they all support the events and affairs of real life.

Conclusion

The case of *Marokko.nl* supports all the findings of Elahi (2014) in that the forum fulfils ethnic specific needs, and provides a source of recognition and (in that sense) cohesion. And, ethnic sites as such can indeed be seen as digital heritage themselves, as Brouwer stated (2006). However, it may be useful to make some distinctions as not every platform, forum, or website offers the same functions; nor are all equally important in relation to Cultural Heritage.

On *Marokko.nl*, several heritage topics are being shared: mainly exchanges of recipes, stories, and the occasional photograph. However, the *need* for recognizable stories, images, and music seems much bigger, given the popularity of theatrical and musical events as well as films portraying first generation real life stories²³⁴. *Marokko.nl* does support interests in Cultural Heritage. But it is principally used as a source of information and exchange for issues dealt with offline: be they

²²⁹ Dutch interior decorator Mina Abouzahra combines Amazigh traditional craftsmanship with modern technique for instance: <http://www.abouzahra.nl>

²³⁰ Imazighen (plural for Amazigh) started their own era in the days of the Egyptian farao's

²³¹ www.bladna.nl posted 16 januari 2015, retrieved 4-04-2015.

²³² Van Amersfoort and Van Heelsum, 259.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ See RICHES D3. 1 – *Transformation, Change and Best practice for CH processes*, chapter 2.

wedding traditions; religious festivals and interpretations of the Koran; inter- and intra-cultural dilemmas; partner choice; or information about music, recipes, dance, festivals and other events. However, more elaborate, media-rich versions of most cultural topics can be found on dedicated pages elsewhere, but none attract the amount of members or visitors that *Marokko.nl* does.

Marokko.nl therefore serves very well as a *portal* to information, and clearly functions as a repository due to its extensive archived discussion threads. What information has been shared is still there. In that sense, it also serves as a *channel* for transmission and preservation, albeit mainly in text – it is a *discussion* board after all. Therefore, it is less suited to act as a *stage* for articulation and remixing of living heritage (with the exception of personal music experience and home recording). Such stages are plentiful, and available elsewhere on the web though.

The most important features of *Marokko.nl* (and discussion boards in general) are the anonymity and accessibility of social assistance. These functions remain of utmost importance in a political climate of ethnic stigmatisation and socioeconomic inequality.

In the highly proliferous digital landscape, it is quite an achievement to remain a highly valued discussion board over a relatively long period of time, attracting such high percentages as *Marokko.nl* does. Apparently, its management knows how to keep up with its members and their shifting needs. In other words, *Marokko.nl* fulfils its role as virtual community service very well, and acts as focal point for a rather dispersed and diverse population. In a global, digital age, discussion boards function pretty well as town squares.

5.1.6 The Spanish-speaking Community in Berlin

Introduction

In the complex world of the 21st century, a new Intra-European mobility, undoubtedly boosted by the advent of international financial crisis, can be observed. Simultaneously the development of new technology both in communication and transportation has influenced new migration processes. Questions of identity and belonging are at the heart of interest for more and more people. The following chapter relates to the Cultural Heritage of the community of Spanish speaking people in Berlin and their ways of mediating between where they live and where they belong.²³⁵ It specifically focuses on their digital Cultural Heritage activities and investigates how this group uses digital technologies both to reflect on their cultural identities and to keep alive a sense of belonging to their home countries.²³⁶ Given their multicultural background with people from Spain and countries from Latin-America, the Spanish-speaking community in Berlin cannot be defined as a homogenous group with a common past, shared traditions and values. Instead, they can be called a supra-national community with a common language and new residence. However, in consideration of their strong digital interaction, innovative use of digital media and intense feeling of group affiliation, they form a highly suitable example for our issue.

To go further into the question it is necessary to provide a short insight into the applied methodology followed by historical insights and present developments of immigration as well as their integration in what is to be considered as the German mainstream culture.

One of the main focuses of this case study is to analyse the community's digital interaction habits and strategies with special consideration of the so called 'diasporic media'²³⁷ - self-developed digital services, platforms, blogs and online-magazines that help the community members to orient themselves within the German mainstream culture, to establish a sense of community identity, Spanishness and otherness and help to maintain vivid aspects of their Cultural Heritage. These platforms resemble the previously introduced *Marrokko.nl* forum as well as the several websites that are used by the Dutch-Surinamese people. The second main focus is a detailed consideration of the community's understanding of Cultural Heritage itself. An analysis will show how they represent and preserve their heritage in digital format and how it enables the transmission of Cultural Heritage within the community. Finally, the last chapter of this case study is a reflection of the relation between the Spanish speaking community and the German mainstream culture.

²³⁵ On the role of Cultural Heritage for mediating between different places see: Buciek and Juul, 'We are here, yet we are not here': The Heritage of Excluded Groups', 105-124.

²³⁶ On the interconnection between heritage and identity on the one side with place and territoriality on the other see Graham and Howard 2008, 6-9.

²³⁷ Hepp 2009.

Methodology

To investigate the ‘impact’ of digital communication technologies upon the culture and cultural identities of the Spanish-speaking people in Berlin, an exploratory mixed-method study was adopted. Intensive efforts were put into desk research, detailed analysis of empirical data, websites and other digital services addressed to or developed by members of the community. In addition, six qualitative interviews were conducted with community members (guideline based), who have been carefully selected regarding age, gender and period of stay in Germany, in order to reflect the specific structure of the community: three men and three women, two in their twenties, three in their thirties and one interviewee in the late forties, reflecting the relative young composition of the community.²³⁸ Nevertheless, it must be indicated, that all of our interviewees have an academic background and can be considered as skilled labourers, which indeed reflects the high number of middle-class immigrants with a higher educational level (see below), but which ignores less higher educated community members.²³⁹

Moreover an expert interview was conducted with María Martínez, PhD candidate in Media and Communication Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin and expert on the role of media in the construction process of new diasporic communities in Europe. Besides this she is a member of the Spanish speaking community in Berlin and provided deeper insights into their daily digital communication routines.

The Spanish-speaking community in Berlin – historical insights and present developments

Much has been changing in Germany during the past 25 years since unification. Germany has officially recognised itself as a country of immigration with almost Seven million foreigners in 2013²⁴⁰, changed its citizenship law, implemented EU legislation on anti-discrimination and equality and has finally become one of the leading economic powers in the EU. Simultaneously, the youth unemployment rate in crisis-ridden EU-countries such as Greece, Italy, Portugal or Spain increased rapidly and trapped during the last five years thousands of young, highly qualified middle-class people into moving freely to Germany (see diagram).²⁴¹ With about 135,500 foreigners in 2013 the Spanish community forms the tenth largest population of foreign nationalities in Germany in contrast to the 46,000 Spanish-speaking immigrants from Latin America.

²³⁸ Annual report on ‘Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit’, German central register of foreigners - German federal bureau of statistics 2013, 46, 51-55.

²³⁹ To get access to this group is very difficult and needs additional preparation. Taking their point of view into consideration could be a next step.

²⁴⁰ The following numbers are published annually by the German central register of foreigners - German federal bureau of statistics:

https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/AuslaendBevoelkerung2010200137004.pdf;jsessionid=C175FBDE057E117BA351656444B789AE.cae3?__blob=publicationFile.

14 % of all marriages were contract with foreign involvement, while further 11.6 % are binational couples, see: <http://www.verband-binationaler.de/index.php?id=527> (accessed June 19, 2015).

²⁴¹ Hieronymus and Ugrina 2015.

During an official visit to Spain in 2011 the German Federal Angela Merkel presented a campaign to attract skilled workers to fight of the lack of qualified personnel in Germany.²⁴² Simultaneously, German companies began looking to expand into the growing Latin American market and need employees with language skills and knowledge of the region's culture.²⁴³ The following wave cannot be called 'European mobility' any more²⁴⁴ since in 2013 about 16,000 new immigrants from Spain have been recorded in Germany – 1,300 from Latin America, forming a new diaspora.²⁴⁵

To focus on Berlin as the place of this case study, the city is - for German standards - a comparatively multicultural city with a proportion of foreigners of 13.1 %. Due to its isolated location during the time of the German division and lack of any mineral resources, the city was never a goal of the so called *Gastarbeiter* - 'guest worker' - movement in the 1960s-70s, when thousands of immigrants from Southern Europe came to Germany to work in the industrial sector. That is why no long-standing network of Spanish-speaking migrants exists in Berlin. Instead the Spanish-speaking community in Berlin, with its 12,700 members in 2013, is a comparatively young group that has grown increasingly over the past five years:

When I came to Berlin in 2008 there were hardly any Spanish-speaking people here in Berlin. The city was nearly empty and we were somehow exotic. But today we are not alone.' (Rosa, 33)

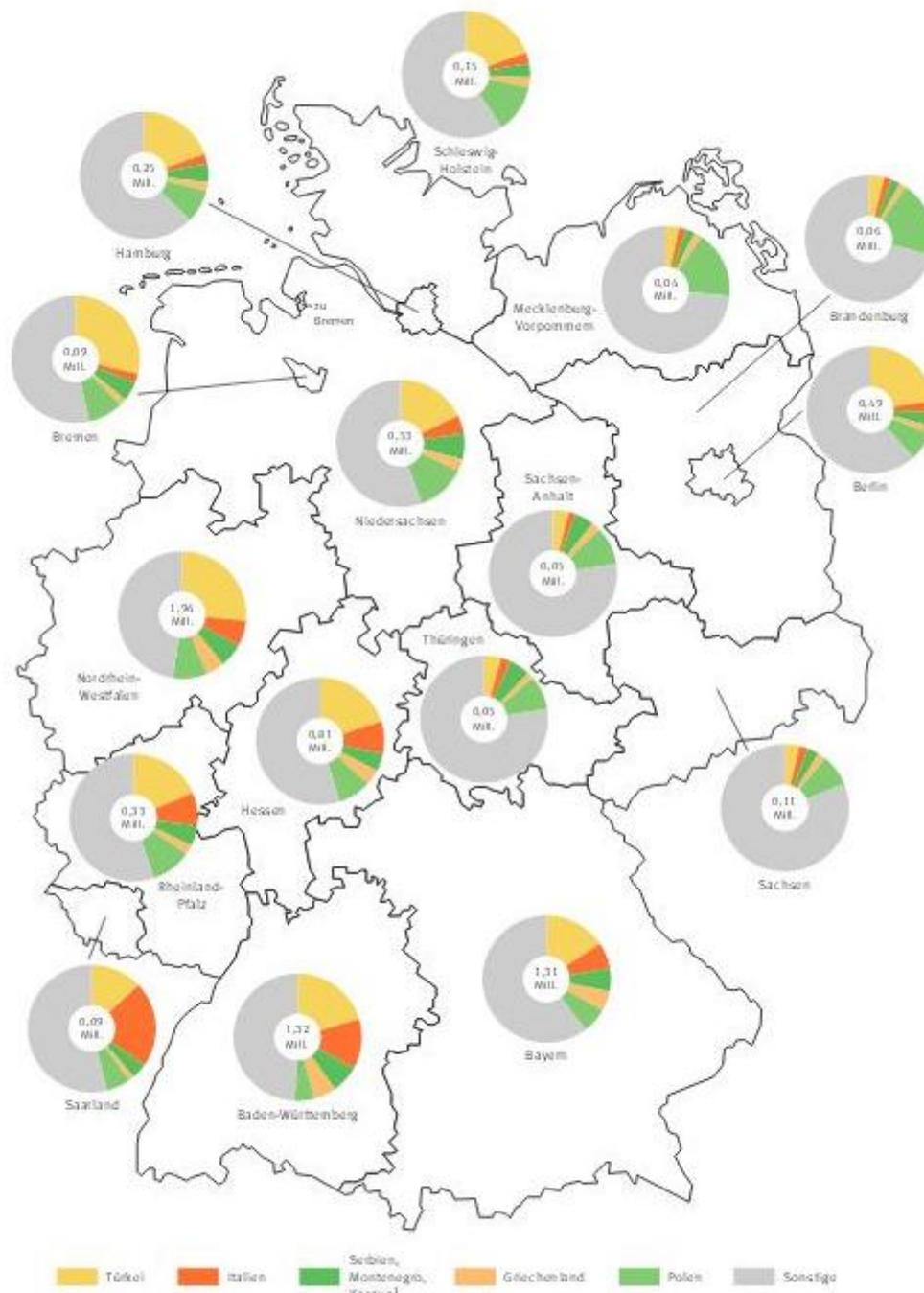
²⁴² Spanier in Berlin „Trotz allem will ich hier bleiben“, pravda.tv – online magazine, January 27, 2013, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.pravda-tv.com/2013/01/spanier-in-berlin-trotz-allem-will-ich-hier-bleiben/> and Spanier in Berlin „Hätte auch Kathmandu sein können“, TAZ, May 7, 2012, accessed February 15, <http://www.taz.de/!92815/>.

²⁴³ Out and about in Spanish-speaking Berlin, Deutsche Welle – Kultur, November 2, 2012, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.dw.de/out-and-about-in-spanish-speaking-berlin/a-16351421>.

²⁴⁴ Interview María Martínez; against her argument: Heribert Dieter, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in: Länderreport. Die neue Heimat. Warum so viele junge Südeuropäer ihre Zukunft in Deutschlands Hauptstadt suchen, Deutschlandradio Kultur February 6, 2013, accessed February 15, 2015, URL: http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/die-neue-heimat.1001.de.html?dram:article_id=236680.

²⁴⁵ In the field of sociology and cultural studies the term 'diaspora' for groups of transeuropean migrants has been much discussed. The term 'diaspora' describes communities that do not simply live the life of their country of origin abroad. Instead, 'diaspora' is taking in consideration heterogeneity and introduces new variables on creation/modification of identity as well as mediation of belonging. It enables the incorporation not necessarily forced or encouraged by violence or persecution, see: Myria Giorgiou: Diaspora, Identity and the Media.

Ausländische Bevölkerung am 31.12.2013 nach Bundesländern und ausgewählten Staatsangehörigkeiten



1. Ab August 2006 werden neben der Staatsangehörigkeit von Serbien und Montenegro auch die Staatsangehörigkeiten der beiden Nachfolgestaaten "Serbien" und "Montenegro" nachgewiesen. Ab 01.05.2008 wird Kosovo getrennt nachgewiesen. Serbien ist vor und nach Ausgliederung des Kosovo in drei Größen zusammen an ausgewiesen.
 Quelle: Ausländerzentralregister

Figure 47. Foreign nationalities in the German federal states on 31 December 2013

For immigrants the city is highly attractive because of its multifaceted cultural offers as well as the lively and relaxed atmosphere. At the moment Berlin is considered to be hip, affordable, modern and cosmopolitan with a relatively high standard of living, attracting especially young people from all over the world to live for a period of time in the German capital.

When asked about their reasons for moving to Berlin our interviewees answered either better job-prospects, love, party or thirst of adventure, whereas many of them were bothered by loneliness and the German bureaucracy due to language reasons. However, once living in Berlin expectations are often subverted:

'The image of Germany, the image of Berlin is to find a job and earn money easily. First you find a job, afterwards the friends, the social life will follow. Instead it was the other way round: First there was the social life, then the job follows.' (Yanique, 26)

The Spanish speaking community can be called highly interconnected, outgoing and open-minded. Getting to know other community members and finding friends is not hard, either because of the Spanish and Latin-American sociable mentality, but especially thanks to the opportunities digital technologies offer via online forums, digital interest groups and other communication channels such as email and Whatsapp. Most of the interviewed community members came to Berlin without knowing any other Spanish-speaking people but in no time were acquainted with a bunch of community members thanks to digital media.

Although a good working social life is part of their lifestyle, for most people their professional qualification does not correspond with their current occupation in Berlin. A constantly recurrent experience is that foreign educational achievements are not acknowledged in Germany and that therefore the community members have to work in areas of activity that are not adequate to their educational level.²⁴⁶ Besides, the job market situation for high-qualified people is much more difficult in Berlin than in other big German cities such as Munich, Stuttgart and Frankfurt in South-West Germany. Berlin's economic power is below the European average, the unemployment rate comparatively high and the payment low.²⁴⁷

Most of the Spanish-speaking people come to Germany with only a smattering of German. Being well aware of this deficit with regard to their career, German language schools are booming²⁴⁸, often establishing extra German classes for Spanish-speaking people. Nevertheless, recent studies showed that with longer duration of stay and improved knowledge of German, the community members are able to find well qualified jobs that finally are much better paid than in Spain or Latin America.²⁴⁹

As mentioned earlier, the Spanish-speaking community is a highly diverse group, comprising different cultures, languages and dialects, such as the Catalan or Basque culture in Spain as well as the high number of indigenous cultures and languages of the Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. However, living in Berlin, speaking the same language and sharing similar circumstances and emigration stories, is a unifying force.

When asked about their future plans almost all interviewees wanted to turn back to their home countries, but only if the economic situation in the crisis-ridden countries has improved significantly. Amongst reasons for turning back were either a better climate, strong family bindings or lack of specific cultural surroundings were named.

²⁴⁶ Our interviewees worked as storeman, shop assistant and cashier whereas their qualification were philologist, archeologist, psychologist, historian, scientist. Our outcomes confirm the results of: Faracao Blanco 2014.

²⁴⁷ Faracao Blanco 2014.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

However, as María Martínez pointed out, the proliferation of communication ways through the internet and the falling costs of intra-European flights, have shrunk considerably the drama of population displacement, at least for the Spanish migrants, who can return home relatively often and quickly and are able to communicate daily with their family and friends²⁵⁰, which was also confirmed by interviewees.

The integration of each community member into the mainstream society depends in most of the cases on their language skills. As mentioned above, getting to know other Spanish speaking people in Berlin is not difficult. But with hardly any knowledge of the German language, making friends with members of the German society is not easy. Nevertheless, as interviewees showed, once being able to master the language to a certain level, the relation to German and Spanish speaking friends increases, often becoming half/half. Moreover, the interviews revealed that the Spanish speaking community thinks and acts in a highly cosmopolitan manner, maintaining a lot of international relations and friendships. Simultaneously, the Berlin citizens are used to living in a city with a high percentage of national and international newcomers and claim themselves as liberal-minded and tolerant. According to Hieronymus and Ugrina especially younger residents do not see their districts' emerging ethnic diversity as a problem.²⁵¹ Community members report that they do not need to fear speaking their native language, because a good number of people passing by are themselves foreigners.²⁵² Nevertheless, over and over again xenophobic tensions towards foreigners, also towards South-European people from Italy, Spain or Greece can be noted that should not be left unmentioned.²⁵³

Online presence and digital practices

Migration is highly differentiated – migrants have different forms of identities and feelings of cultural belonging, that find its expression in 'traditional' mass media (TV, film, newspaper, radio etc.) and digital media (WWW, Social Media, Smartphones etc.). As Peter Groote and Tialda Haartsen formulated: 'in the arena where heritage and place meanings are contested, communication is a powerful weapon',²⁵⁴ regarding that communication strategies are important for either producing or 'consuming' heritage. Following this, this section focusses on the community's daily digital routines and the way they connect and communicate with each other. Special attention will be placed on the so called 'diasporic media' – websites, online magazines and virtual platforms that have been developed from group members to the community and their role for strengthening a sense of belonging to their native countries as well as fostering a specific group identity.

Digital ways of communication

As mentioned before, due to the relative young average age of the Spanish-speaking community, most of the group members can be called 'digital natives', being technically-skilled and familiar in dealing with digital technologies and well aware of the opportunities these services offer. Often, as María Martínez says, 'Social Media are involved in the construction of migration processes from the beginning, since individuals start gathering information about potential migration destinations,

²⁵⁰ Hepp et al 2010, 325.

²⁵¹ Hieronymus and Ugrina 2015.

²⁵² Out and about in Spanish-speaking Berlin, Deutsche Welle – Kultur, November 2, 2012.

²⁵³ The song '*Monte Cruz*' by the German music group '*Zugezogen Maskulin*' visualises anti-spanish-speaking moods within the Berlin citizenship: <http://genius.com/Zugezogen-maskulin-monte-cruz-lyrics> (accessed June 19, 2015).

²⁵⁴ Groote and Haartsen 2008 182.

developing and consolidating contacts and networks.²⁵⁵ Moreover, the Spanish-speaking community members maintain extensive relations of trans local communication, especially with the country of origin. A great number of interviewees answered that they communicate daily with family and friends back home via Whatsapp, e-mail or Skype, maintaining traditionally strong family bindings. Moreover, there are no big differences in how the Spanish-speaking people communicate with other group members in Berlin. Instant Messaging, SMS, E-mail and Facebook remain the characteristic ways of communication.

As a result, community members, especially those that are living in Berlin for a short time maintain close relationships to the ongoing politic, cultural, socio and economic processes of their home countries by reading Spanish or Latin American newspapers online, watching the news and other shows and programs via online streaming services of Spanish or Latin-American broadcasting channels, listening to digital radio channels from their specific regions of origin or informing themselves about the latest cultural events in their city of origin. Therefore María Martínez claims that 'digital technologies enable the community members to inhabit digitally their homelands'. In contrast many community members who have lived in Berlin for a long time claim that they do not understand all the current processes in their home countries; they read about what is happening in the online newspapers, but due to not being directly immersed in the society and culture for a period of time, they can become frustrated.²⁵⁶

'Diasporic media'

During the past years digital 'diasporic' media has been developed for members of many migrant groups in Germany, though they widely remain unnoticed by the public at large. In contrast to other media offered for migrants, e.g. foreign language radio broadcasting in German public programmes, newspapers and satellite television, 'diasporic' media are an independent cultural production by and for migrants.²⁵⁷ They combine information of or rather on the home countries with such on the social situation of migrant groups in Germany and what is more above offer the possibility of exchange and communitisation. The great advantage of 'diasporic' media is the combination of information and interaction.²⁵⁸

When looking at the ways in which the Spanish-speaking community maintains links to their homeland, domestic practices tend to remain the focus. Social Media channels offer an easy and low-barrier tool to spread information within the community, given the fact that most of the members have access to Facebook, Twitter and so on, which are used daily not only at home but also out and about via Smartphones. There is no surprise that Social Media was used as one of the first digital features to serve as a communication platform for community members. There are a wide range of closed interest groups on Facebook and Meetup²⁵⁹ that serve as forums of exchange, not only in Berlin but nationwide.²⁶⁰ To get access to most of the groups the community member has to send an inquiry to the administrators, before his/her profile is included.

²⁵⁵ See also: Dutra 2012.

²⁵⁶ Jaime, 48: 'I always read the Spanish newspaper online. But it's quiet boring and I don't even know why I read them. Today I don't understand what's written there, who the persons are and so on. Imagine you are out of the country for 15 years, you can't understand the debates anymore, because you don't know who the persons are.' or Yanique, 26: '[...] I felt totally ignorant and my friends in Spain talked week over week about that issue and I didn't know it and I felt really sorry'.

²⁵⁷ Terkessidis 2003, 173-186.

²⁵⁸ Androutsopoulos 2005, 1.

²⁵⁹ <http://www.meetup.com/cities/de/berlin/>

²⁶⁰ Facebook groups of other Spanish-speaking people exist in many bigger German cities, e.g. Munich.

One of the first established Facebook groups is named '*Sobrevivo en Berlin*', which means 'Survive in Berlin', founded in November 2010 by a woman from Spain who has lived in Berlin since 2006.²⁶¹



Figure 48. Facebook group: '*Sobrevivo en Berlin*'

As the name implies the group functions as a virtual meeting place to exchange ideas about how to manage the daily life, far away from home. Therefore the posts on the timeline are basically practical things, questions and services: members who are seeking a job, people who are looking for an apartment / next tenant / a good German language school as well as Spanish-German or Spanish-English tandem. Sale offers (bicycle and antiquities) can be found and offers of assistance with finding a health insurance company or how to master other bureaucratic obstacles. It is a place of mutual help with a vivid inquiry-response cycle, creating a strong sense of 'We-ness' and emphasizing mutual understanding.

²⁶¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/23453249212/?fref=ts>. The biggest group '*Españoles en Berlin*' has 4800 members. The eponymous Facebook page has even 36.000 likes, presumably because it is also for Spanish tourists coming for a visit: <https://www.facebook.com/espberlin?fref=ts>

'You can ask everything, there is no filter, which is very useful. (...) It doesn't matter how many friends you have, sometimes you have to fight, fight against the language, against the bureaucracy [in Germany], against the thousands of letters you receive. You have no idea what 'GEZ' is and you are overtaxed. That's why we help each other in our language, which is easier to describe and to understand.' (Rosa, 33)

In addition to this there are a high number of posts that deal with aspects of the Spanish or Latin-American culture: Announcements of cultural events such as Salsa and Bachata workshops, Tango evenings, Salsa evenings only for women, dancing with DJ and live music or a Colombian party and even tips where to order original Spanish food online. Moreover, there are offers such as 'Learn German with theater games' or invitations to religious meetings ('Let's talk about God'). Even the latest news of important topics such as the Germanwings crash in March 2014, which killed many German and Spanish people, are discussed and online articles shared. Due to the high number of group members (1,600 in April 2015 - over 200 new members within a month) new posts appear every minute, creating a vivid virtual platform, where everybody can be sure to get an answer or comment to his question.

Furthermore, administrator has created a list of Berlin-tips, presenting other Spanish-speaking groups in Berlin, Spanish blogs, citizen guide, Spanish markets, typical Spanish dining, medicals and hairdresser who speak Spanish and various tips which 'help to solve the mystery of bureaucracy in Berlin'²⁶². Since the Facebook group is addressed to Spanish-speaking people that are quite new in Berlin, with hardly any personal connections within the community, its content is predominantly in Spanish, only occasionally entries in German or English can be found. By doing this, a kind of familiar virtual atmosphere is created, signaling that everybody from Spanish-speaking countries is welcome and does not need to be frightened to ask any question he or she might have. This can be defined as a characteristic for all of the 'diasporic' media which is created and used by the Spanish-speaking community in Berlin.

'Berlunes.com'²⁶³ is a satirical online magazine about the relationship between the Germans and Spanish-speaking people in Berlin and a frequently visited website within the community. It is addressed to community members that have lived for longer than half a year in Berlin, people that have made their own experiences with the German society and culture. The slogans 'You go to Mallorca, we come to Berlin' and 'At first no one believed in us, not even ourselves'²⁶⁴ are humorous and clearly relating to the creation of group identity. The author and administrator of the website is a young Spanish man with the pseudonym 'Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rec. Nat. habil. Pol. Blog. Dem. Gas. Ilu. A. Shopenhaua', making fun of the German 'obsession' of collecting titles as a symbol of authority and supposed superiority. The magazine creates the idea of an online university, the 'Universität der Philosophie Berlunes' (University of Berlunes Philosophy) with Prof. Shopenhaua as president and his readers as students. Beside him other authors (the 'teachers') have the possibility to publish articles.

²⁶² Official aim of the group, written on Facebook.

²⁶³ <http://berlunes.com/>

²⁶⁴ 'Al principio nadie creía en nosotros, ni siquiera nosotros mismos'

Al principio nadie creía en nosotros, ni siquiera nosotros mismos

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Follow @berlunes 1,169 followers | Follow @profshopenhaua 1,220 followers | Entrar 8 172

En Alemania hay más paro del que dice Merkel

Enviado por A. Shopenhaua el Mar, 24/03/2015 - 12:21 Escuela Superior de Berlinología

En Alemania hay más paro del que dice Merkel

por

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rec. Nat. habil. Pol. Blog. Dem. Gas. Ilu. A. Shopenhaua

Hola buenos días, soy Shopenhaua, profesor de todo esto. La semana pasada estubo la alumna Ana Pastor por aquí visitándonos y arrancó su programa paseando por el East Side Gallery de Berlín diciendo:

"¿Se imaginan un país con menos del 5% de paro?"

Pues no, alumna Ana, no lo imagino, de hecho la tendría que haber suspendido directamente, pero claro, el entretenimiento es lo que tiene. Ya hice un análisis pormenorizado de su programa televisivo de entretenimiento #ObjetivoAlemania [aquí](#).

La cuestión es que me quedé impactado de cómo las autoridades alemanas intentan transmitir hacia el exterior que en Alemania casi no hay paro y esta idea cuaja en las mentes acostumbradas al rebuzno. Todos a repetir como loritos: eeeeeen Alemania casi no hay paaaaaaro.

Alemania dice que tiene una tasa paro del 6 o 7 %, y la galería se lo cree. Pero en realidad es el doble.

20 comentarios Leer más

Evaluación de #ObjetivoAlemania (y 2)

Enviado por A. Shopenhaua el Mar, 17/03/2015 - 12:15 Escuela Superior de Berlinología

Evaluación de #ObjetivoAlemania

por

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rec. Nat. habil. Pol. Blog. Dem. Gas. Ilu. A. Shopenhaua

(Nota final)

Hola buenos días a todos, soy Shopenhaua, profesor de todo esto. Hoy termino mi evaluación al examen entregado por la alumna Ana Pastor García. El trabajo entregado tiene formato audiovisual y pueden visionarlo [aquí](#).

Compre nuestro libro, es una orden



Berlunes
Elige su propia aventura en Berlín

COMPRAR

Busca empleos en Berlín
Busca!

Foro

BUSCO TRABAJO DE ALBAÑIL

Psicología en Berlín Neukölln. Terapia en español.

Pareja responsable y trabajadora busca habitación o apartamento

Encuentro Digital 17 Marzo con el Consejero Empleo Alemania Ángel de Goya

Busco habitación con o sin amueblar

Gestor español en Berlín

Figure 49. Homepage of Berlunes.com

The magazine is organized like a blog with articles published in the sections 'Working in Berlin', 'Projects for Freelancers', 'Interviews', 'Forums', 'Agora' and 'Newspaper'. Once registered to the website members have the option of receiving a personalized Newsletter with the latest articles. Due to the high number of migrants from Spain and the fact that 'Prof. Schopenhaua' is from Spain too, almost all articles are related to the needs, thoughts and questions that migrants from this 'crisis-ridden' country have. Having a look at the section 'Interviews' it is interesting to see that Spanish-speaking people with a relationship to Germany and / or Berlin have been interviewed, often people with a Spanish-German background. The interviews are mainly about the life in Germany and Berlin, about issues on migration and identity as well as ways of mediating between the German culture and the culture of origin. Videos and voice recordings document the conducted interviews for the users, who are given the possibility to comment, like and dislike the articles in the entire online magazine as long as they are registered.

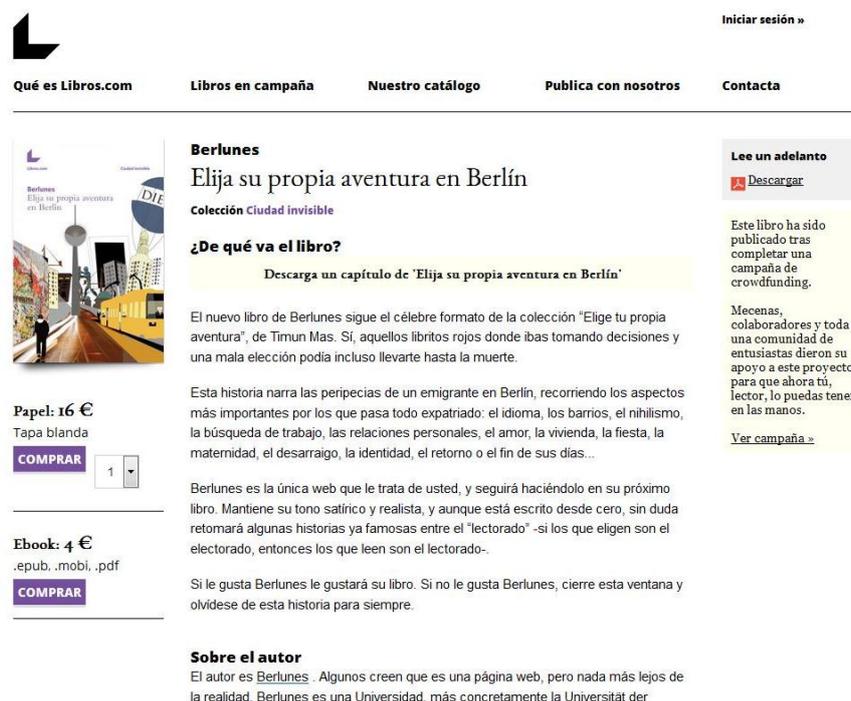
In the section 'Agora' everybody with an account has the option to become an editor themselves and publish articles or videos on themes that seem interesting, but that also have to get approved by the administrators first. Although the humoristic tone of the website is omnipresent, a rich variety of profound articles full of cultural aspects can be found: there are critics of Spanish or Latin American

music and films shown in Berlin or even more philosophical articles on issues of migration and living in a foreign country, making the 'Agora' a place of creative and essayist writing. Here the users have the option to build an audience and to create, comparatively independently from the editorial focus, their own subjects.

The tone of the articles is satirical with black humour, partly near the knuckle, partly offensive and playful with prejudices against the German society. *Berlunes.com* is provocative, splitting the Spanish-speaking community into those who like the online-magazine and those who do not like it.

'What I don't like about this website is the patronizing tone. Sometimes it's not ironic any more, but evil. I never ever read Berlunes. I know that it's a well-known and popular website, but I don't like this guy, this Schopenhauer, he is totally arrogant.' (Rosa, 33)

The success of the online magazine is also visible on Facebook and Twitter with 3,170 Followers in April 2015. The magazine must be very appealing to members of the Spanish-speaking community since the administrators published also the book 'Elija su propia Aventura en Berlín', which means 'Choose your own adventure in Berlin' (Image 3). The book chronicles the adventures of an immigrant in Berlin, covering the most important aspects of a life of an expatriate: Language, nihilism, job search, personal relationships, love, housing, rootlessness, identity and return etc.



The screenshot shows the website interface for Berlunes. At the top right, there is a link for 'Iniciar sesión'. Below the navigation bar, the main content area features the book 'Elija su propia aventura en Berlín' by Berlunes. The book is part of the 'Colección Ciudad invisible'. A '¿De qué va el libro?' section describes the book as a satirical and realistic story of an immigrant in Berlin, covering aspects like language, nihilism, job search, and relationships. There are 'COMPRAR' buttons for both the paper version (16 €) and the ebook version (4 €). A 'Ver campaña' link is also present. On the right side, there is a 'Lee un adelanto' section with a 'Descargar' button and a description of the book's crowdfunding campaign.

Figure 50. Screenshot of the book presentation 'Elija su propia aventura en Berlín' on Berlunes.com

A second independent online magazine is 'Berlinenespagnol'²⁶⁵, according to the magazine's own statement 'the best attended Spanish-speaking online magazine in Germany'. It was established in May 2010 by a mixed team originating from different Spanish-speaking countries that, 'love Berlin despite the inconvenience of language and climate'.

²⁶⁵ <http://berlinenespagnol.net/>

The dedicated goal of the website is to deliver practical data, daily notes and important information for residents and newcomers, promote activities of all kinds and aspire to become a central platform and meeting place for people, companies and organizations related to the Spanish-speaking community in Berlin. The magazine wants to publicize and promote the Spanish and Latin American culture, especially among the own community members. Potential advertising companies are tempted with the promise to reach a young, active community that grows daily and looks for information on the internet.



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Traductora Diplomada
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VIVIR EN BERLÍN SALUD Y BIENESTAR AGENDA EL IDIOMA CULTURA COCINA TURISMO BLOGS CLASIFICADOS

Agenda / Tradiciones y Costumbres ▶
Así se celebra la Pascua en Berlín y Brandemburgo
1 de abril, 2015 No Hay Comentarios



La Pascua es una de las celebraciones más importantes en Alemania. El Viernes y Lunes Santo son festivos en todo el país y es una buena oportunidad para viajar y descubrir las costumbres de esta región. Claudia Quevedo nos cuenta de qué se tratan y dónde ir.

Agenda / Tradiciones y Costumbres ▶
Fiestas religiosas de Semana Santa
1 de abril, 2015 No Hay Comentarios



Deporte y Recreación ▶



¿Por fin es primavera! Cómo cultivar plantas en casa
24 de marzo, 2015

¿Quieres tener tu propio Tiergarten en casa? Mónica Hernández Morcillo, Ingeniera en Montes, te enseña a planificar y a crear tu paraíso natural en casa. Sólo necesitas una ventana.

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Cómo conseguir el carnet de conducir alemán
12 de marzo, 2015

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Encuentra el vuelo más barato. Von L. 414,77 € [Flug buchen](#)

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ÚLTIMOS CLASIFICADOS

Psicoanálisis en castellano*

Convocatoria Artistas para Festival Fieber 2015

Figure 51. Home page of ,Berlin.es'.

The navigation of the website is available in Spanish and German, whereas the articles are in Spanish only. In comparison with 'Berlunes.com' the style is not humoristic, more open-minded and less critical. Thereby a large number of articles serve to inform the community how to manage the daily life abroad. All articles offer the opportunity to comment or start a discussion without registering beforehand. There is a huge number of articles that deal with Cultural Heritage or cultural events. As on 'Berlunes.com' the articles are sorted by the sections 'Living in Berlin', 'Welfare', 'Agenda', 'Language', 'Culture', 'Cuisine', 'Tourism' and 'Blogs' each with several subtopics. All articles are enriched by useful links which refer to related or more-in-depth websites.

The 'Culture' section of the online magazine offers an incredibly rich examination of the community's own Cultural Heritage. By doing so the authors of 'Berlin.es' try to take into account the multifaceted culture of all the Spanish-speaking countries and publish articles on the most diverse aspects of cultures.

The section 'Culture' is structured in four sub-themes 'History of Immigrants', recording stories of migration of Spanish-speaking community members, 'Education', 'Artists and Cultural Projects' with a list of Spanish-speaking theatres in Berlin (including implemented You Tube and Vimeo videos with theater plays), presentations of new Spanish books, a German-Spanish choir, as well as a portrait of a Chilean photographer and the cross-cultural theme 'Tradition and Costumes'. Here German traditions and rituals are explained and reports on German cultural events, including tips on how to participate can be found. Spanish and Latin American festivals and traditions are introduced to the community members with information on where they take place in Berlin and how to participate. Similarly, the section 'Cuisine' presents typical German, Spanish and Latin American recipes, provides information about Spanish supermarkets and Spanish or Latin American restaurants, bars and cafés.

As Meghan Ormond, in her study on 'Mapping Minorities & Their Media' in Belgium, has pointed out, those who create the 'diasporic' media are some of the most active and influential members of their own community who operate avocational, often without professional training. It is often these active and knowledgeable members who are most aware of their communities' internal and external relations.²⁶⁶ They clearly understood that the community of Spanish-speaking people in Berlin strongly embraces digital media, either to maintain the cultural contact, to keep the national-politic contact or because of pragmatic reasons, for example being unable to speak the German language. On top of that 'diasporic' media are a testimonial of the communities' intense communicative connectivity mostly with members of their own diaspora and can be seen as an informal interpersonal and informational network.

The 'diasporic' media created by the community members are highly specialized with offers for each age group and period of stay in Germany. Especially newcomers have the possibility to orient themselves not only within the new environment, but also within the community of Spanish-speaking people itself, while more experienced group members not only offer their help on these virtual platforms and online magazines but also find customized offers for themselves. 'Diasporic' media completes traditional communicational and cultural offers in Berlin, such as honorary working information centres for migrants²⁶⁷, Spanish and Latin-American culture café's and libraries. Throughout the use of multimedia technologies in combination with Linked open and crowd-sourced data, important information and cultural material are provided that are often not available through personal interaction in the real world. Moreover, these 'diasporic' media offer various forms of social and cultural discourse and enable to a certain degree democratic participation.²⁶⁸ By doing so they dynamically express relationships with the great variety of identities that exist.

All of the presented 'diasporic' media use multimedia channels, combining audio, video and text, creating a vivid virtual space.²⁶⁹ For future digital practices María Martínez imagines the use of 'diasporic' media applications for smartphones, which accompanying the user wherever he/she may go, providing the latest news and best tips. With its high-degree of social presence and media richness 'diasporic' media can be defined as living media,²⁷⁰ enabling a lively, immediate communication passage. 'Diasporic' media strongly enhance the unmediated heritage phenomenon, giving a great expressive power to the young community of Spanish-speaking people.

²⁶⁶ Meghann Ormond: Mapping Minorities & Their Media. The National Context Belgium, 2002, 120.

²⁶⁷ Many of the communities, diasporic' media anticipate the offers of info centres for Spanish-speaking migrants (such as 'Officina Precaria Berlin', 'La red' or '15M'), which have been found from 2011 onwards. Therefore 'diasporic' media are precursors of these official associations with fast access and low-barriers.

²⁶⁸ Androutsopoulos 2005, 2.

²⁶⁹ See D.2.1 CH Definitions and Taxonomy 'Multimedia Channels', 31.

²⁷⁰ See D.2.1 CH Definitions and Taxonomy 'Living Media', 30.

Moreover, they serve to counter loneliness, satisfy the need of contact with the culture of the homelands and map patterns of trust in the community.

Cultural Heritage

The desire of a community to understand and explore its heritage is of great significance to communities,²⁷¹ since it is essentially linked with the construction of group identity. This section provides an overview on how the community of Spanish-speaking people in Berlin defines Cultural Heritage and its different typologies and which cultural aspects are of vital importance for them. Moreover, their relationship with digital Cultural Heritage and their way of consuming (digital) heritage will be analysed together with an examination of the extent that community members use digital technologies for expressing their culture. Thereby the question of how digital Cultural Heritage has the potential to strengthen a feeling of belonging is of great significance.

Understanding of Cultural Heritage

All of the interviewees had a highly educated background and are well aware of the different forms of Cultural Heritage from their home countries, whether it is tangible or intangible. They go to the theatre, concerts, readings or visit museums, are to certain degree highly familiar with the Spanish or Latin American history, art history, architecture, literature or film industry and even partly active in the field of producing Cultural Heritage, e.g. writing small poems. However, the way they understand and deal with Cultural Heritage in their everyday lives is far away from being 'academic' and homogenous, but strongly shows the character of sociability. Almost all interviewees mentioned that the Spanish language is the most important aspect of Cultural Heritage, as symbolizing a door to the Spanish or Latin American culture:

'The history of Spain is the Spanish language. If you are curious enough, you can learn much about Spain, for example that we have a lot of Arabic words in contrast to Italian.' Jaime, 48
'What I'm interested in is the Spanish language. My culture is my language, my country.' Julio,
31

The language is followed by food and music, whether traditional or popular. Even the typical daily lunch meetings to get an appetizer with your friends or colleagues are understood as an expression of the Spanish or Latin American awareness of life and considered to be a form of Cultural Heritage that is strongly missed in Berlin. Thereby all interviewees mentioned that the multifaceted cultural diversity of the Spanish speaking countries is of great significance for creating cultural identity. For Jordi, 33 from Barcelona one of the most important aspects of the Catalan culture are its holidays and festivals such as 'La Castanyada' or 'Saint Jordi' with all its traditional songs and special rituals. When asked about the relation to his culture, he explained that he is enthusiastic about explaining the Catalan festivities to people from other nationalities,

'Especially because I feel I have this obligation, this need to explain my culture, because people do not know that we have different cultures in Spain. And we want to spread this to the world, we want that people know, respect it. And I have the feeling that I should help on that.'

²⁷¹ Arts and Humanities Research Council: Research for Community Heritage, 2013, 3.

On the other hand when asked if they miss participating on these festivals back in their homelands all interviewees answered that they do not have the need to miss it, because flights are so cheap that they easily can fly back whenever they have the strong feeling of having to get in touch with these kind of Cultural Heritage.

For María Martínez one of the most important cultural goods is the Spanish sense of humour:

'The people from Spain have a lot of humor and are always making jokes. It's a special sort of humor, which is only apparent in Spain [...] throughout digital media one can have direct contact to it.'

This becomes visible especially on the website of *'Berlunes.com'* where the specific humorous tone, which is rather unfamiliar to the German society, is one of the main reasons for its strong appeal. Moreover, social gathering are regarded as an important aspect of the cultural life within the Spanish speaking community. This explains the high number of frequently published posts or articles in 'diasporic' media, providing information on Salsa or Tango evenings, concerts or informal get-togethers of interest groups. It becomes obvious that the Spanish-speaking community reinterprets and recreates their culture in a more dynamic way, resembling the concept of 'living culture' in which cultural 'heritage is continuously transformed, interpreted, shaped and transmitted.'²⁷²

The centrality of everyday life practices for the articulation of culture is of great significance for the Spanish-speaking community, but simultaneously 'Cultural Heritage' should not be reduced to it as Andreas Hepp remarks.²⁷³

Relation to digital Cultural Heritage

The Spanish-speaking community in Berlin consists, to a high percentage of temporal members that maintain close relationships with their native culture, due to the opportunities digital Cultural Heritage offers. To which extent the members of the Spanish-speaking community are attracted by more traditional forms of Spanish or Latin American digital Cultural Heritage depends on personal preferences.

Beside 'diasporic' media, which incorporate different forms and aspects of digital Cultural Heritage, there are several more specialized cultural websites and digital services that the Spanish-speaking community uses and which deal with more 'traditional' forms of Cultural Heritage. The first example is the artblog *'Musas20'*²⁷⁴ created by the Spanish-speaking community member Nati Guil Grund.

²⁷² See D.2.1 Taxonomy, Living heritage', 29.

²⁷³ Hepp 2009.

²⁷⁴ <http://musas20.com/home-4/>.

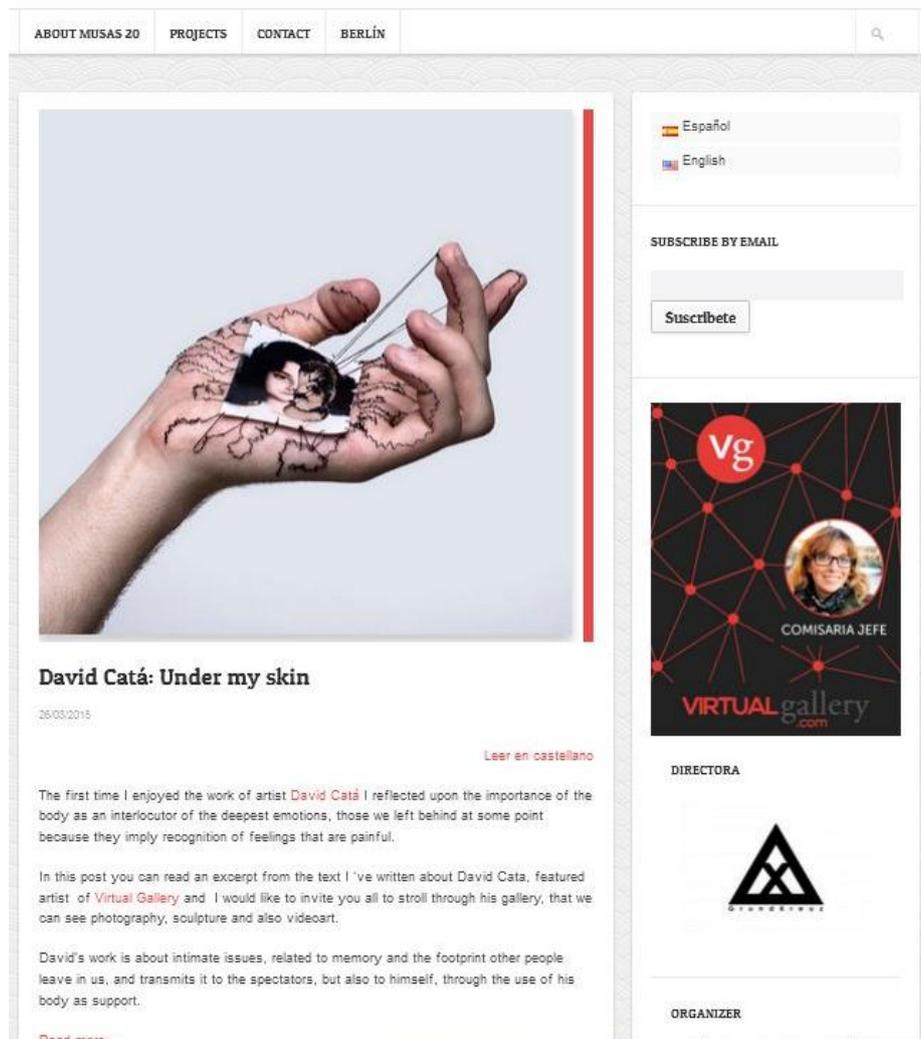


Figure 52. Homepage of the Artblog Musas20

Her blog thinks about new ways of doing and understanding culture and art, thereby paying special attention to innovation and new technologies in the art world. It is a space for sharing what is happening in culture and contemporary art nowadays, presenting many articles about Spanish-speaking artists and their exhibitions in Berlin. 'Musas20' is addressing people who are interested in contemporary art, but not only members of the Spanish speaking community in Berlin, since her articles appear both in Spanish and English. The idea of writing about exhibitions of Spanish artists in Berlin, the high quality of the interlinked virtual gallery, as well as the bilingualism of the website received a positive feedback among our interviewees, even though many of them did not felt involved.

A second example is the digital collection of the Ibero-American Institute of Berlin²⁷⁵, an interdisciplinary centre for academic and cultural exchange between Germany and Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal and home to the largest specialist library in Europe for the Ibero-American region. It is also a place of knowledge production, exchange and cultural translation.

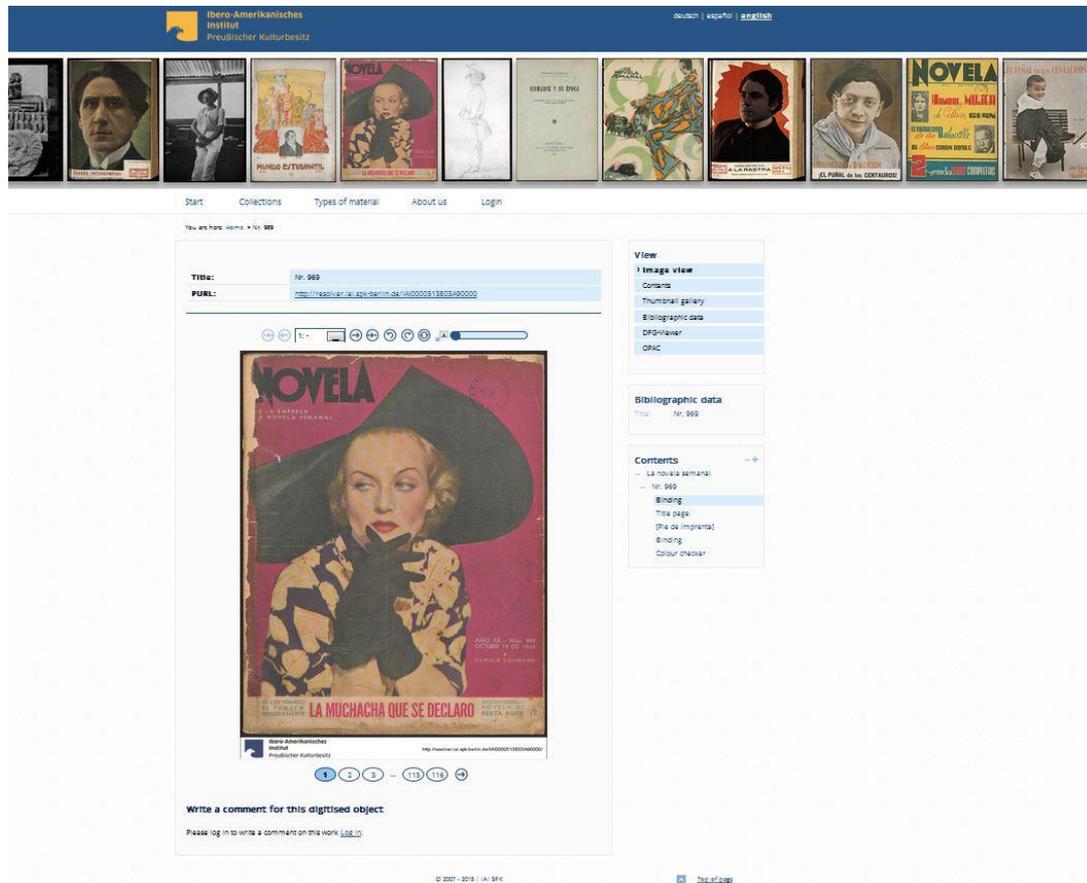


Figure 53. Digital Collection of Ibero-American Institute of Berlin

The Ibero-American Institute collects and preserves books, magazines, electronic documents, maps, audio media, photographs, videos, DVD's, papers and diverse additional material. Some of our interviewees loved the appealing presentation of the image gallery, spending a lot of time browsing through the collection. Others were not interested, because the organization of the page is sometimes highly complex and for people, who are not used to search through digital online catalogues or collections, quite difficult. This is especially the case for high resolution of the digitized objects, the linking with the institute's OPAC as well as the possibility of free download of Spanish and Latin American literary periodicals, cultural magazines, advertisement or comics in best quality and PDF-form received a very good feedback.

An interviewee mentions:

²⁷⁵ <http://digital.iai.spk-berlin.de/viewer/>.

*'If you have interest in these aspects of your culture, these online services can help to maintain your culture. Here, for example, you can download a book and receive a part of your home country. But there has to be the necessary willpower to spread your culture.'*²⁷⁶ Rosa, 33

Digital Cultural Heritage practices

More than the consumption of specialized digital Cultural Heritage services such as 'Musas20' or the digital collection of the Ibero-American Institute, one can notice that the aspect of sociability and 'living media' predominates in the field of digital Cultural Heritage practices. There is no introverted or nostalgic historicism and heritage fixation, which might be assumed, rather the Spanish-speaking community deals with digital Cultural Heritage more variable, appropriate to their own wishes, ideas, values and of course their own cultural identity. One of the most pursued digital Cultural Heritage activities is to listen to Spanish, Catalan, Basque or Latin American music via YouTube or Spotify.

'I hear Catalan radio and sometimes I use speakers when I'm cooking at home. [...] I hear Catalan music and I cook my Catalan food. [...] I don't know if I would do it there [in Barcelona], but here, when I do that I feel really close, I don't feel that far. I would say that the internet really helps in all this things, because I cannot imagine the situation 20 years ago. But being here, reading, hearing and watching to Catalan things, I mean it's not as hard as it has to be in the past' (Jordi, 33).

The sociable character of the community's digital Cultural Heritage practices is an ever returning constant, trying to bring the social aspects of the Spanish or Latin American culture to Berlin:

'What I often do is to connect via Skype with my friends while I'm cooking my Spanish meals or eating. Back in Spain we have always cooked or eaten together and chatting.' (Yanique, 26).

Besides this reading Spanish or Latin American literature is, in the digital age, comparatively easy to access, with many of the interviewees read via E-books. In addition, a regular practice is to watch old classical Spanish or Latin American films online together that are no longer available in the German or Spanish cinemas.

As mentioned before a good part of the so called 'diasporic' media is dealing with different kinds of Cultural Heritage and is used by the community members either to inform themselves about cultural events taking place in Berlin and explaining how to participate in them or more directly to comment on specific aspects of Cultural Heritage such as film reviews, literature and art etc.

Due to its strong sociable character digital technologies intensely strengthen a feeling of belonging to the community members home country when other means of cultural contact are not possible. Besides, digital Cultural Heritage practices have the potential to support the specific cultural identity of every single community member. Combined with the latest digital technologies the Spanish-speaking community will continue to keep contact with their culture in the future, particularly in the field of living heritage.

²⁷⁶ On the other hand there are more critic voices within the community, claiming that the Spanish and Latin American culture needs more actors, more exercise and less digital practices: *If people won't read that much in the internet, they would go more to the theater or to a reading or simply have more experiences.'* Julio, 31.

The Spanish-speaking community and the German mainstream culture

The relationship between the Spanish-speaking community and the German mainstream culture, e.g. their relationship with well-known German books, the German history or traditions and festivities differs not only with regard to their period of stay in Berlin but, of course, depends on personal interests as well as their knowledge of the German language.

'The more language skills I have, the stronger my relation to the German culture gets' (Rosa, 33).

'It depends on your German language skills. But there are many people in Berlin that don't speak only German. They speak English, French, there is pluralism and the people can decide what they are interested in. A Spanish-speaking migrant, who speaks perfect German and English, maybe is more interested in reading the New York Times' (María Martínez).

However, the interviews revealed that the Spanish-speaking community shows at least basic interest in the German mainstream culture, many of them not only visiting Berlin's museums and taking part in the rich cultural scene, but even participating in festivities such as the Saint Martin's procession in November. This is especially so for the newer community members that are often eager both to learn German and to get to know the German culture, some of them trying to read famous German literature or watch well-known German films. There is certainly an interest in getting to know the sociable character of the German culture and the German way of life, but most of interviewees confessed that dealing with mainstream Cultural Heritage is not easy:

'This kind of culture is very hard. A little bit Günter Grass is hard. But today one thinks that only the 'high culture' is culture'. (Jaime, 48)

The relationship to the digital German mainstream culture – online collections of museums, digital exhibitions or other cultural websites - is quite similar and, depends on personal interests. Most of the Spanish-speaking community members do frequently use specific German digital cultural services nor Spanish or Latin-American cultural website frequently. Instead the community members use search engines or online appointment calendars to get information about German Cultural Heritage or events.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the community's 'diasporic' media has shown that there is a wide examination of the German Cultural Heritage starting with travel advices in Germany on *Sobrevivo en Berlin*, video tutorials on how to colour German Easter eggs and how to participate in German traditional festivals in Berlin on *Berlinenespagnol*, to specific discussions about the community's ties to Germany and the German culture on *Berlunes.com*. The fact that these websites offer content in Spanish enables community members not only to understand the German mainstream culture better, but also to participate in more in-depth discussions about issues on identity and belonging. This is especially true with the 'diasporic' media that offers the possibility to express views on the life in the diaspora, the comparison of cultures or the experienced hybridity. The interaction between cultural identity and difference characterizes the discourse of the creators and participants. Thereby three main positions can be determined: The first one maximizes the gap between the 'us' and 'the Germans', the second underlines both the integration of the individual and ethnic similarities and the third one can be characterized as an opinion in between.²⁷⁷ Of course the Spanish-speaking

²⁷⁷ These three positions are also noticed in a more general context on virtual publics of migrants by Jannis Androutsopoulos 2005, 7.

community does not simply 'consume' diasporic, but also the German (digital) media which typically ignores ethnic minorities and immigrant issues and interests. Mostly it is not possible to find their opinions, interests and cultural way of life represented in detail enough.

When asked if they can determine a change in their relationship to their own Cultural Heritage, all of the interviewees denied it, stressing that even with that distance they appreciate and value the same cultural aspects as before their immigration to Germany. Instead, the community members recognized attitude changes, resulting from the attempt to accommodate themselves within the German society, for example respecting the expectation not to talk noisily in public. In this sense digital services such as *Berlunes.com* function as platforms of exchange by creating a space for discussion of fundamental questions. Moreover, this research has shown that this change of attitude does not result from the influence of the digital German mainstream Cultural Heritage, but rather from everyday life experiences of the Spanish-speaking community members. Consequently digital German Cultural Heritage has no significant influence on the community's Cultural Heritage.

On the other hand, precisely because digital technologies have the potential to strengthen individual cultural identities at distance and keep alive the Spanish or Latin American culture in the groups everyday life, digital technologies have the potential to enable the community members to engage critically with the German mainstream Cultural Heritage when one considers that the community has consolidated particular identities.

Having considered German mainstream culture itself and its relation to the communities' digital Cultural Heritage it can be noted that especially the 'diasporic' media remains relatively unknown within German society. Digital Cultural Heritage in the form of digital online collections such as the collection of the Ibero-American Institute or discussed on websites such as 'musas20', is highly appreciated by experts who consider the community's digital Cultural Heritage to be enriching, but considerably invisible to those who show no interest.

Conclusions

Digital media, including all forms of digital Cultural Heritage, are a tool to express relations to the great variety of identities that exist and can be called a 'mouthpiece of identities and communities'.²⁷⁸ With the help of digital technologies the Spanish-speaking migrants in Berlin are in the situation of living dual lives, participating actively and simultaneously in different geographies.²⁷⁹

'Every virtual contact to family and friends can be understood as a symbol – a symbol which signals you can count on me, even though I am physically far away.' (María Martínez)

Through digital communication and consumption of digital Cultural Heritage, the community members are virtually connected with their countries of origin, taking part in the everyday life of their friends and family members and having access to cultural goods which enables them to practice many aspects of their culture abroad. This has influence on people's reflected identity, as María Martínez points out, describing the phenomenon as 'identity transformations'. On the one hand digital technologies support the communication and networking within the community and strengthen the feeling of group identity, on the other hand this identity does not resemble the

²⁷⁸ Ormond 2002, 122.

²⁷⁹ This phenomenon has been described already in 2003 by Cairtíona Ní Laoire: Editorial introduction: locating geographies of diaspora, 277 and again by Buciek/Juul 2008, 117.

former cultural identity of the people back in their homelands, rather a new kind emerges, that of being part of the Spanish-speaking migrant group in Berlin. Hence, digital Cultural Heritage practices can be seen as acts of self-assurance mediating between the questions: ‘where do I belong and where am I now?’

Thereby ‘diasporic’ media with its high diversity of communicative functions and media richness are ‘powerful images of the community’s self-representation and empowerment symbols’ says María Martínez. ‘Diasporic’ media enable users to progressively extend their networks and map patterns of trust, while defending feelings of isolation and alienation. Similar kinds of ‘diasporic’ media that combine cultural and communicative aspects, can be found not only for the Moroccan community in the Netherlands or the Dutch-Surinamese communities but also for the Russian community in Berlin²⁸⁰ and the more national acting community of the Polish²⁸¹ migrants.²⁸²

Simultaneously, it has to be put into consideration that the Spanish-speaking community consists to a great part of highly educated, middle-class immigrants from Spain that came to Berlin on their own will, having the spending power to afford digital technologies and also the ability to return easily back to their homelands.

Digital Cultural Heritage does not replace any cultural aspect, atmosphere nor physical space, but can be considered to be a constitutive part of social reality and emerges from the interaction of human beings. Digital technologies can be seen as a tool to bridge distances in the people’s minds, strengthening considerably the feeling of belonging to the Spanish-speaking countries, catering for cultural consolidation and trans local communalization.²⁸³

‘If I’m looking for aspects of my culture, I’m always searching for it in the internet, for example a new novel. Only this vivid aspect is missing.’ (Julio, 31).

This ‘vivid’ aspect, the strong sociable character of the Spanish and Latin American Cultural Heritage, is considerably maintained and supported by ‘digital living media practices’, visible in the community’s digital ways of communication and ‘diasporic’ media. Specific forms of digital Cultural Heritage, for example online collections, remain attractive to community members who show a particular interest.²⁸⁴

The case study shows that especially young migrants with profound technical skills are able to develop new ways in which their heritage can be made to work for them and new ways to bring their culture alive. Digital Cultural Heritage practices provide the necessary strength to engage critically with the German mainstream culture, while ‘diasporic’ media offers important digital spaces where issues on identity, belonging and the relationship to the German culture in the field of appropriation versus maintaining a distinctive ethnic identity are discussed. Still digital services that serve as a platform of cultural exchange and empathy between other Berlin citizens and the Spanish-speaking community are missing, but could provide a future perspective.

²⁸⁰ www.007-berlin.de

²⁸¹ www.Polonia.de

²⁸² Fiete Stegers: Indernet & Co. Portale für Migranten, 16.07.2013 onlinejournalismus.de, (accessed February 15, 2015), <http://goa2003.onlinejournalismus.de/webwatch/migranten.php>.

²⁸³ Hepp 2009.

²⁸⁴ Digital Cultural Heritage services have to work flawless and need regular care, otherwise there is the risk to loose users. During our interviews unfortunately some of the websites did not work properly, resulting in unsatisfaction and loss of interest.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE CASE STUDIES' FINDINGS

We live in a 'globalizing locality, replete with migrants, fluid and multiple identities' Sharon MacDonald²⁸⁵

The previous six case studies focused on the digital Cultural Heritage practices of six different European minority communities and examined whether current digital technologies enable them to both reflect on their own particular cultural identities and to foster a feeling of belonging to their native culture. Thereby the selected communities could not be more diverse, not only regarding their community identity as part of a religious or language group, migration background, level of integration into the mainstream society as well as their local or nationwide connective ties. Another topic which was researched was whether and, if so, how communities differ in their understanding of Cultural Heritage and the ways of mediating it with the help of digital technologies.

All community groups used digital technologies to strengthen their community ties and identity, away from the mainstream, through various forms of communication depending on the user group. Whereas the relatively older-aged members of the Jewish community in Rostock and the more traditionally based Romani people in Coventry do not yet use digital technologies to maintain close ties to their (religious) culture, either because of the lack of technical skills or awareness of the potential of digital technologies, other communities, such as the highly-skilled Spanish-speaking community in Berlin, the community of the Waldensian Church in Italy or the various communities with a Dutch-Surinamese background use digital technologies for communication processes within the community and for maintaining close contacts with their homelands or a worldwide diaspora.

The digital Cultural Heritage practices of the Romani community can be seen as a counter-balance to those of the Spanish-speaking people in Berlin, since the Romani do use digital technologies to keep in touch with their culture, but do not have it as the core of their lives to maintain digital links and for the Spanish-speaking people the daily use of digital technologies is integral. Similarly the comparison of the two religious communities, the Jewish people in Rostock and the community of the Waldensian Church in Italy, reveals the different use, demands and expectations towards digital technologies in a religious environment. Whereas the Jewish community uses digital technologies basically for communication and information processes, the members of the Waldensian Church deliver sermons online to reach people and with the help of digital technologies seem to follow a greater vision of a religious community.

Often people, generally the younger generations with higher educational levels and good knowledge of the community's and the mainstream culture, develop innovative new ways of mediating their Cultural Heritage on virtual community platforms that go far beyond information and documentation purposes. As 'diasporic' media has a strong local character, the border between on- and offline is becoming blurred. Community members who can access and navigate it not only communicate virtually with one another, but arrange meetings for personal contact.²⁸⁶

Digital technologies nowadays are essentially domestic features, enabling both the connection with the native culture and offer the possibility of exchange and communisation. Their strong point and unique draw is a combination of information and interaction, with a high percentage of participatory

²⁸⁵ MacDonald 2003, 6.

²⁸⁶ In contrast to transnational digital networks with virtual communication only, see Androutsopoulos 2005, 2.

elements, leaving space for discussion and exchange. Thereby the role of content available in the native language creates an atmosphere of empathy, as well as a sense of 'We-ness', and offers the possibility of in-depth participation for migrants with linguistic deficit.

In the future, video streaming tools may ensure the participation in festivities celebrated both within the community, as well as in their countries of origin, especially for members that cannot attend them physically. Application and other interactive tools with community-relevant content are technological features that, until now, have not found their way into the community's digital practises, presumably because of difficult financing reasons in creation processes.

These case studies research has identified that although digital Cultural Heritage represented in online collections of official cultural institutions serve as extremely rich sources of information, they are not regarded as necessity for maintaining the community's culture in the everyday life. Instead, communities are maintained and developed using digital technologies in other ways. This generally results in the creation of digital Cultural Heritage, especially in the form of intangible heritage, which is mediated through living media practices and form an essential part of the community's everyday life. Younger community members especially understand culture as engaged experience, whereas digital technologies offer them the possibility of a flexible and individual engagement with their own culture.²⁸⁷

Moreover, this research highlights that mainstream Cultural Heritage alone, even if supported by the helpful digital technologies, has little influence on the community's heritage, whereas personal contact with members of the mainstream culture (either through local support groups or educational institutions), education systems, as well as laws and rules of conduct, are more influential, often leading into identity transformations. Simultaneously, digital technologies have the potential to increase awareness and understanding of multiple alternative and minority communities and their heritage, facilitating dissemination of information all over the world for a more open, inter-cultural approach.

²⁸⁷ This is also confirmed by the research carried out for Task 3.2. Mediated and unmediated heritage.

6. CONCLUSION

‘Though enormously rich, Europe’s Cultural Heritage is often locked away, or crumbling, or in a foreign language, or about a past which to many people - young, old, newcomers to Europe and settled inhabitants - seems of little relevance. But this is changing.’²⁸⁸

This report explores the impact of Cultural Heritage on issues of identity and belonging. It has focused on the role of Cultural Heritage for identity-forming processes to foster mutual understanding in an ever faster changing European social environment with, digital technologies reducing the relevance of natural borders.²⁸⁹ It started with the European Union’s official assumption that European culture builds upon a pluralism of identities and a rich cultural diversity. The chance of bringing the people of Europe together by engaging them with Cultural Heritage to create a ‘community of culture’ and a common feeling of belonging to Europe which can be seen as an important precondition in the social development of the European welfare, although the influencing of identity-forming processes is not an easy undertaking. This research illustrated on various levels that people have multiple identities, which they often weigh up against each other. Identities are more or less adjustable to the circumstances of one’s life and to personal decisions. Moreover, it highlighted the complex relationships between individual, national, regional or local identifications in Europe and their connections to a European identity. This identity that grows in a space where national identities already existed, should not be seen as a unifying factor or a way to transcend other identities, but, instead, as an opportunity to acquire a sense of belonging to a greater community on the continent: a Europe of cultural pluralism, a ‘community of culture united in diversity’.

With regard to this on-going transformation of identities and social networks, a dialogue between an overarching European identity and local or community allegiances can only benefit from engaging with the European citizens themselves, taking into consideration their wishes and needs influenced by individual identities. As individuals or groups, people have an important role in European society and the challenges it now faces.²⁹⁰ As digital technologies provide such highly individual ways of engaging in a common digital space they can be a useful tools to provide new opportunities to facilitate access and interpretation of Europe’s rich cultural diversity. If a meaningful implementation of new digital tools is ensured, these can contribute to develop a sense of European identity by mediating cultural diversity and European commonalities.

The main goal of this study was to find out how Cultural Heritage, with the help of digital technologies, might be applied to support identity-forming processes and which application examples exist. Thereby, the research undertaken has explored the potential for digital interaction with Cultural Heritage among European citizens to foster a sense of European identity and to strengthen the feelings of group identity among communities from minority cultures in Europe.

²⁸⁸ Description of the RICHES project on the project’s website: <http://www.riches-project.eu/> (accessed, July 8, 2015).

²⁸⁹ Additional information can be found in the Interview with Domenico Rossetti di Valdalbergo on regional identities and European federalism, published on the RICHES YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRjULpNFMjE>, accessed July 1, 2015.

²⁹⁰ Resilient Europe 2014, 9.

On the basis of case-by-case analyses of both existing European Cultural Heritage websites with information on large assets of Cultural Heritage, as well as some selected European minority communities and their ways of dealing with (digital) Cultural Heritage, the following general conclusions are made that may help to contribute to a better understanding of the role of digital Cultural Heritage for personal identity in relation to a common European identity:

The research showed that promoting understanding of the richness of Europe's Cultural Heritage to foster the sense of European identity does not preclude people from simply embracing digital technologies. It challenges us to better understand the way in which the increasing prevalence of digital media is changing the role, form and function of a shared European cultural space: In the past few years digital technologies have played an integral role to foster greater awareness of people's specific cultural expressions across Europe, not only thanks to new ways of digital communication and information, but also because of the tendency that the European citizens themselves are more and more aware of the possibilities that these technologies offer for satisfying their own wishes and interests. More and more European minority communities, such as the digital *Marokko.nl* community in The Netherlands, the members of the Waldensian Church in Italy or the Spanish-speaking community in Berlin, promote their specific culture with sole responsibility on a digital way and claim more and more digital space for representations of their culture. European communities do not only provide information about their culture in a digital way, but also develop different ways of discussing and promoting cultural aspects online and by doing so providing a lively and dynamic cultural space.

Moreover, the research conducted for this study illustrated that the basis for this social development is the fact that the European audiences of digital Cultural Heritage services have changed increasingly, becoming more skilled and conscious of the use of Cultural Heritage websites during the past few years. Today, people are more critical, they understand the possibilities of technologies and are more aware of their own information needs. Greater numbers of European citizens do not simply expect to receive information about their own or foreign cultures any more, but they want to actively engage and participate with it and want that their voices are being heard within the digital world.

Besides this, digital technologies support new ways of cultural storytelling: traditions and histories do not only have to be shared in a living room over a meal any more, thereby being discussed in a comparatively small circle. By communicating stories digitally, they can reach a much broader audience 24 hours a day, seven days a week and contribute to identity-forming processes within smaller or larger communities. Especially younger generations across different European communities can be mobilized by digital media as the case studies of the Spanish-speaking community and the digital community of *Marokko.nl* reveal. They communicate and share digital in a natural way that older people do not and are often fully aware of the possibilities that a transnational world without borders offers. Younger generations use new digital tools extremely self-evidently for sharing, co-creating, informing and communicating via blogs, Skype and Social Media channels, being in daily contact with European and World Cultures, shared in music, videos, dance and food, all transmitted and shared very quickly, thereby launching new trends. This spread of technology has also led to increases in social mobility, as this research has shown, young Spanish people are aware of the community growing in Berlin and can live their and also stay in touch with news and culture from home.

Nevertheless, the research also showed that at present time, there is still much more potential for engagement with relatively digitally inactive migrant groups, such as the community of Romani people from Coventry who continue to cherish their own values, costumes, interaction and activities that often lead into exclusion.

Moreover, especially communities with older members like the Jewish people in Rostock or communities with a low spending-power have no access to digital technologies and therefore to digitised cultural artefacts that might connect them, virtually, with aspects of their own culture that they had not experienced for some time. In the context of the digital literacy gap that divides Europe significantly, this is a huge deficit, since this study revealed that digital media can be used for bottom up activism and provides means for individual and community voices excluded both from mainstream media and society.

Recent social sciences and humanities studies showed that a better understanding of other cultures and societies with their history, heritage, values, self-images and current life circumstances in Europe will improve inter-cultural interactions and mutual understanding.²⁹¹ Therefore, the research carried out for this study was dedicated to positive potential of digital technologies, in order to embed the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for greater unity and cohesion of European society and for building a common European identity. With a focus on people's demands and needs, it provides not only important means and understanding of how European citizens understand and define (digital) Cultural Heritage, but also how their individual ways of dealing with digital Cultural Heritage give meaningful insights for both the further development and for the conceptualization of existing and future European digital Cultural Heritage projects.

In the following parts, we present the expected impact of this research in the framework of the RICHES project and we summarize its results and future perspectives.

6.1 RESULTS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

This study showed that for a more socially integrated European society and common European identity the present exclusion of minority groups in Europe has to be stopped and digital technologies have the potential to play an important role by achieving this goal. Innovative digital technologies and their useful integration have the great potential to be used more intensively than before to make connections between European cultures possible and to build a basis for creating a common European identity. With the help of digital Cultural Heritage European community members of all ages and ethnic groups are in a better position to be aware of their personal belonging and cultural background and able to engage critically and more reflectively with mainstream Cultural Heritage. In this sense digital technologies can help communities to create their own mouthpieces of identity and provide recognition in the digital and physical world.²⁹² This study shows that it is very important to encourage and instruct minorities of all ages and all other European citizens with a digital illiteracy to develop the creative, organizational and technical skills necessary for the creation and maintenance of digital media. Therefore it is necessary to set up systematic pathways that engage communities with direct productions of digital cultural content.

Catching the European communities' interest

European communities expect to find their specific cultural background represented on European Cultural Heritage platforms. They wish to learn about other cultures that are a part of today's Europe or about civilisations that played a role in European history, and have thus contributed in shaping the Europe of today.

²⁹¹ Resilient Europe 2014, 8.

²⁹² The same is true for communities living in European regions with poor IT-infrastructure.

Therefore, European portals should embrace the whole spectrum of European Cultural Heritage if they want to be compatible with current ‘cultural values’ of communities and multiple identities, and not only at a national level or that of cultural institutions. Mastering this means overcoming some of the barriers of the real world in a digital space.

Instead of a strict separation of groups it is becoming more and more important to connect the European communities to build understanding for foreign cultures and create European cohesion by stressing (cultural) similarities and fostering cultural exchange. In this sense innovative digital tools that start with the people’s digital practices and demands have the potential to support an awareness of cultural pluralism, by providing new ways of dealing with Cultural Heritage as an engaged experience.

Individuality of digital Cultural Heritage practices for recalibrating relationships

European citizens, although with very diverse cultural backgrounds, use digital technologies in a particular individual and dynamic manner, dealing with culture online always with very personal and present connections. Both the participants who tested the European Cultural Heritage websites in the first part of this study and the different community members of the case studies felt involved by digital Cultural Heritage that is visualised and contextualised by a high media richness, social presence and accessible by interactive tools that provide a lively, immediate reception of the European Cultural Heritage, thereby resembling the concept of digital living media practices.²⁹³

Moreover, the results reveal that people need a personal connection with Cultural Heritage, a connection that is either born from interest, from the own culture or from the latest events in their lives. If this connection is not developed, a deeper reflection on European Cultural Heritage and its personal meaning does not take place. Looking at large amounts of digital content provided by Cultural Heritage institutions, digital Cultural Heritage is, at the moment, more about the past and its preservation than its relation to the present. This research highlighted that there is a need for digital resources that are uniting the past and the present, thereby satisfying the complex means of Cultural Heritage that

*‘is not just history but is an iterative, continuous process which is concerned with contemporary ‘living cultures’ that may reinterpret and recreate their culture and can play a vital co-creative and participatory role in the expression, production and consumption of culture’.*²⁹⁴

Although there are extensive attempts to contextualise and visualise the European Cultural Heritage by certain forms of media richness and interactive tools, e.g. blogs, implementation of videos and offers to comment, the attempts are yet too academic and a consideration of the user’s demands has not taken place sufficiently.

²⁹³ A good example is the ‘Young European’ Website of Eurostat, unifying not only participatory elements and present personal circumstances and views but also comparing them to those of other young Europeans thereby fostering mutual understanding among young generations. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/youth/index_en.html (accessed May 30, 2015).

²⁹⁴ See RICHES definition of ‘Cultural Heritage’ in D2.1 CH Definitions and Taxonomy.

In this sense the mechanisms of both Social Media and ‘diasporic’ media (digital [cultural] offers created by minority communities) show with their combination of information and interaction, Co-Creation elements, a high percentage of participatory elements, as well as space for discussion and exchange, an undogmatic freely available provision of European Cultural Heritage on equal terms. Live or video chat functions are a simple tool for connecting people, their lives and to promote the exchange of cultural identities. This study showed that European citizens deal, in particular, with contemporary forms of tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage, the re-use of which is often restricted by IPR. Therefore, it is necessary to think about easing copyright restrictions in favour of closed communities. The managers, developers and designers of these websites should consider these changing practices, habits and perceptions when designing and implementing new digital tools.

Challenges for access and interpretation: semantic, multilingual and LOD technologies

Large amounts of digital cultural content need appropriate tools to explore it. Much remains to be done to develop the tools that will allow access efficiently to digital cultural contents, since there is a need for providing systems which people can understand and easily use for their own requirements, whether professional (e.g. within Cultural Heritage institutions) or personal. A major requirement for the implementation of shared cultural resources on the semantic web is open data available to the public, with an explicit open license in order to allow their use, reuse and redistribution. Giving access to European Cultural Heritage and allowing its use for the benefit of the society means that Cultural Heritage institutions must open up their data and make the Cultural Heritage objects publicly available as wide as possible.

Digital technologies can become a relative low barrier of dealing with foreign cultures for younger generations, compared to direct physical interactions or interactions mediated by cultural institutions that often appear as a deterrent to minority groups. For websites that aim to inform about the minority’s culture, multilingual technologies are often an essential precondition, regarding the exchange with members of the mainstream culture. Furthermore the research revealed that an improved contextualisation of Cultural Heritage content is needed to make comparisons between the different European cultures and communities more evident. Important steps towards a contextualisation of Cultural Heritage have been undertaken with the development of Linked (open) Data, better ways of implementing the technology more meaningful should be developed, for discovering parallels and commonalities between different European cultures.

Further analyses on user expectations and needs are necessary in order to understand how to integrate innovative digital technologies such as Linked (open) Data or multilingual technologies in a meaningful way for the audiences. For a wider audience, semantic representation of knowledge becomes a new way to provide context for digital collections online. Several museums have developed websites where a semantic network serves the representation and discovery of complex Cultural Heritage information. Smaller, more easily manageable tools with user-friendly interfaces can create added value for cultural content empowered by semantic and linked (open) data technologies and reach wider audiences, different than the academic audiences of memory institutions. User evaluation of present digital Cultural Heritage resources is necessary in order to optimize access and research functionalities.

6.2 SUMMARY

Europe has changed over the past century, with people adapting to political, social and economic upheaval, but above all holding on to their cultural identities. If anything, the pace of change has now increased with the great advances in digital technologies. However, the development of a European identity and feeling of belonging is highly individual and not easily influenced, digital technologies offer new opportunities and this has had further impact upon majority and minority cultures and will continue to do so throughout the 21st century.

This research has considered some of the advantages and disadvantages of this technological change and how some groups within European society have adapted to it and other have resisted it. It has explored the enhanced availability of culture and heritage, but recognises that to influence feelings of belonging and identity-forming, further work with new digital technologies is needed, to more effectively bring Cultural Heritage to people online. However, for communities, the technological change has offered new ways of communication and interaction and even increased the opportunities for social mobility, as people know the societies and communities that will greet them, while still being able to stay in touch with friends and news/culture from home.

This study has highlighted the ways that society is changing, how digital technologies have influenced that change and how this 'new Europe' must be considered at policy and planning levels as people move across the continent, but continue to interact with their culture and heritage.

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LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

API

Application programming interface (API) is a set of routines, protocols, and tools for building software applications.

CIP

CIP Competitiveness and Innovation framework Programme

GIS

Geographic Information Systems

GND

Gemeinsame Normdatei; German for 'Common authority file'

ICT

Information and Communication Technology

LOD

Linked (open) data

PSP

Policy Support Programme

APPENDIX. DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL

Survey on European Cultural Heritage websites Questionnaire

In our project, we want to find out if digital technologies can help bringing people and Cultural Heritage in Europe closer together. In particular, we would like to know if large volumes of cultural content in digital form, like the websites that we kindly ask you to explore, can support cultural pluralism in Europe and a European identity based on cultural diversity.

We would be grateful if you can help us by answering the following questions and we thank you very much in advance for your time and effort!

Please take time to explore these websites

1. **Europeana:** www.europeana.eu/portal
2. **Europeana 1989:** www.europeana1989.eu/en
3. **Inventing Europe:** www.inventingeurope.eu
4. **Euromuse:** www.euromuse.net
5. **Europeana 1914-1918:** www.europeana1914-1918.eu

1. Are you familiar with any of these websites? If yes, with which one(s)?
2. Please rate them on a scale from 1 to 10 (10= excellent):

Website	Search results: were you satisfied?	Content quality: was it interesting?	Ease of use:
Europeana			
Europeana 1989			
Inventing Europe			
Euromuse			
Europeana 1914-1918			

3. We would appreciate if you could write here the reason(s) for your best and worst rating:

B. We have now four specific questions on each website:

1. Do these websites show things - places, objects, monuments, persons, events or else – that you associate with Europe’s history and Cultural Heritage? Or do you miss something – for example, your own Cultural Heritage?

Website	Yes	More or less	Not at all	Things that I miss
Europeana				
Europeana 1989				
Inventing Europe				
Euromuse				
Europeana 1914-1918				

2a. Do these websites provide contents in your language? (Your language is:.....)

Website	Yes	No
Europeana		
Europeana 1989		

Inventing Europe		
Euromuse		
Europeana 1914-1918		

2b. Is European Cultural Heritage related to language diversity for you? (y / n)

3a. Have a look at these maps used in some of the websites that you have explored:

1. Europeana 1989,
www.europeana1989.eu/en/explore/#!/photos/index/#!/geo:50.762829,13.759035/zoom:4/
2. Euromuse,
http://www.euromuse.net/en/museums/list_museums/tag/1137/wtag/226/
3. Carare – part of Europeana
<http://carare.eculturelab.eu/Carare50m/Map.html>
 - a. Please write what you think of the use of maps on these websites: Was it easy to use? Was it interesting? Was the relation to a place meaningful for you? Did it improve your understanding of the content?

Website / Map	Use of the map
Europeana 1989	
Euromuse	
Carare – part of Europeana	

3c. What do you expect to see on a map when you explore a website that shows the European Cultural Heritage?

4. What do you think of the personal stories that people have contributed to some of these websites?

1. Europeana 1914-1918, www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?qf%5Bindex%5D=c
2. Europeana 1989, http://www.europeana1989.eu/en/baltic-way/#!/photos/index/baltic-way/1/hide_tabs/1/#!/geo:50.762829,13.759035/zoom:6/

Statement	Yes	No	Don't care
I am interested in content that the museums / institutions provide			
I am interested in personal stories			
Contents from museums give me the feeling of belonging to Europe			
Personal stories give me a feeling of belonging to Europe			
I would add my own story, if possible			
Participating in content creation gives me a feeling of belonging to Europe			

C. Finally, we would like to know some things about you:

- Age:
 Gender:
 Nationality:
 Current country of residence (one or more):
 In which other European countries have you lived?
 In which countries outside of Europe have you lived?

Which languages do you speak other than your first language?
Your highest education degree:

What makes you feel or not feel European?

How does this relate to your national or personal identity?

Are you interested in other European cultures?

What in general should such websites provide in order to give you a feeling of belonging to Europe?

Analysis of the websites

1. Europeana, www.europeana.eu

(State: 25/4/2015)

Type of application	Portal site, Europe's digital library, archive and museum	
Start date	2008	
Project description	Europeana is by far the most ambitious project in the field of European Cultural Heritage as well as in cultural digital technologies. With more than 36 Million records in the Europeana database, it's the largest collection of object records from Cultural Heritage institutions not only in Europe, but worldwide (according to statistics.europeana.eu). Via regional and national aggregators in many European countries any museum, Library and Archive can contribute to the large collection of data. Sophisticated search tools, digital themed exhibitions, API for use and re-use of data and a large number of projects related to Europeana content and Europeana's technologies make this source the most influential digital project in Cultural Heritage today.	
Partners	More than 2.500 Cultural Heritage institutions in Europe	
Target audiences	Different target audiences with interest in Cultural Heritage	
Content	More than 36 Million object records including 21 Million digital images, 500.000 sound documents, 400.000 videos and 17.000 3D-Scans (2014, according to statistics.europeana.eu).	
Rights policy	<p>"All metadata published by Europeana are available free of restriction under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication. However, Europeana requests that you actively acknowledge and give attribution to all metadata sources, such as the data providers (being a specific cultural heritage institution) and any data aggregators, including Europeana."</p> <p>Source: Europeana Usage Guidelines for Metadata, www.europeana.eu/portal/rights/metadata-usage-guidelines.html</p>	
Interactivity	MyEuropeana offers a personal space to collect information for later use.	
Features	Themed exhibitions, Blog, Search	
Services	API for use and re-use of data	
Media	Text, images, video, audio, 3D-scans	
Languages	User interface available in 30 languages. Content from partners or Europeana might be in either selected or one language only.	
Technologies	Multilingual	Yes (partly)
	GIS / Maps	Yes (partner projects)
	Semantic structure	Yes
	API	Yes
	Linked content from other sources	Yes
Social Media	Facebook	Yes, 77.000 likes
	Twitter	Yes, 21.000 followers
	Google+	Yes, 2.200 followers
	Pinterest	Yes, 6.200 followers
Updates	Ongoing. Through regional, thematic and national aggregators (e.g. National Digital Libraries).	
Other Platforms	IOS App	Yes
	Android App	Yes
Statistical Data	Yes, statistics.europeana.eu	
Bibliography	<i>New Frontiers, Europeana Annual Report 2014, Europeana Business Plan</i>	

	2015 and pro.europeana.eu
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2. Europeana 1914-1918, www.europeana1914-1918.eu (State: 25/5/2015)

Type of application	digital exhibition with user contributed content and content from Cultural Heritage institutions
Start date	2011, website launched 2014
Project description	“Europeana 1914-1918 brings together resources from three major European projects each dealing with different types of First World War material. The result is an archive that allows the national collections of libraries to sit beside personal stories and treasures and important film archives. Together, this creates a unique perspective of the First World War, showing it from every side of the battle lines and with insights from every point of view. Over time, even more material will be added...” (from the project website)
Partners	<p>Project leader: University of Oxford</p> <p>Project partners: Provinzialbibliothek Amberg Staatliche Bibliothek German National Library – die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek National Library of Luxembourg – Bibliothèque du Luxembourg National Library of Ireland National Library of Slovenia – Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica Museum of Jutland, Sønderborg Castle Denmark Ministry of Culture Denmark Military Museum of the Slovenian Armed Forces Celje Public Library Europeana</p>
Target audiences	General audience with interest in history of WW1
Content	<p>Text, images, video</p> <p>Institutional content: Europeana: 381,308 DPLA (USA): 44,136 DigitalNZ (New Zealand): 213,074 Trove (Australia): 404,140 Canadiana (Canada): 5,387</p> <p>User generated content: Stories: 13,612 Items: 176,694 Tags: 2,900 Image annotations: 41 Source: Statistics, contributions, www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/statistics</p>
IPR	“As part of this policy, the Europeana Terms for User Contributions establish that all content that is contributed to Europeana by its users will be made available on Europeana.eu under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike license.”

	<p>Source: Europeana terms for user contributions, http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/about/terms There is no information on rights policy concerning the content provided by Cultural Heritage institutions on this website, one can assume that the same terms as in Europeana are applicable.</p>	
Interactivity	<p>Content features for browsing the collections: Types, Subjects, Fronts Contributions can be made in two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Europeana 1914-1918 website - adding a picture of the item or type in the story online. 2. Family History Roadshows - bringing the item(s) to the event where project staff will photograph the items and record the stories that go with them. At the Family History Roadshows, members of the public are invited (Enter löschen) to bring their documents, artefacts and stories from the First World War to be recorded by the project staff. The stories and scanned or photographed images of the objects are then added to the archive. 	
Services	Download, share, embed, tag images and stories.	
Media	Text, images, video, audio	
Languages	15 languages (interface) Automatic translation of content available (Microsoft translator).	
Technologies	Multilingual	Yes
	GIS / Maps	No
	Semantic structure	No
	API	No
	Linked content from other sources	Yes
Social Media	Facebook	Yes, 23.900 likes
	Twitter	Yes, 4.543 followers
	Google+	No
	Pinterest	No
Updates	<p>Unknown. Related projects: Europeana Collections 1914-1918 European Film Gateway 1914</p>	
Other Platforms	IOS App	No
	Android App	No
Statistical Data	<p>Detailed statistics are available online: http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/statistics</p>	
Bibliography	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europeana_1914-1918	

3. Europeana 1989, www.europeana1989.eu (State: 25/4/2015)

Type of application	Thematic site about the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.
Start date	1.1.2012 (project ended 31.12.2014)
Project description	<p>“Europeana 1989 is pan-European project concerning the political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe in the year 1989; commonly known as the fall of the Iron Curtain. The project aims to create a vivid and complete picture of the revolutionary events in Europe with stories, photos, videos and sound recordings from every country affected. Personal stories, memories and experiences can help</p>

	others to better understand what it was like and to see events from a different perspective. By collecting personal memorabilia and stories from this period, and combining it with institutional collections, we aim to create an engaging user experience.” (Source: project website)	
Partners	Europeana and 10 partners from 8 European countries	
Target audiences	General audience with interest in history and a special interest in sharing related personal stories.	
Content	Europeana 1989 collects memories and items that relate to the fall of the Iron Curtain from seven Central and Eastern European countries. The website offers Europeana content enriched with personal stories, photos, videos or sound recordings from institutions and individuals from all over Europe. Aim is to (re-)create a personal experience and to offer a complete picture of social and political changes during the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. It is based on community contributions as well as on visualization of contributed data based on maps (GIS).	
Rights policy	Not explicitly stated. Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) or Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (CC-BY-SA) for user-generated content	
Interactivity	Strong focus on user involvement and personal contribution.	
Features	Blog, Search, Maps, add comments	
Media	Text, Images, Video, Audio	
Languages	User Interface available in 9 languages. Content might be in one language only. Automatic translation of content available (Google translator).	
Technologies	Multilingual	Yes (content No)
	GIS / Maps	Yes
	Semantic structure	No
	API	No
	Linked content from other sources	Yes
Social Media	Facebook	Yes, 2.400 likes
	Twitter	Yes, 380 followers
	Google+	No
	Pinterest	No
Updates	Unknown.	
Other Platforms	IOS App	No
	Android App	No
Statistical Data	No	
Bibliography	Europeana 1989, pro.europeana.eu/web/europeana-1989; About Europeana 1989, www.europeana1989.eu/en/about	

4. Euromuse, www.euromuse.net

(State: 25/5/2015)

Type of application	Exhibition and museum portal
Start date	2001
Project description	Euromuse.net is a public access portal of European museums. It was set up as the first exhibition portal that gives up-to-date and accurate information about European museums and their major exhibitions.
Partners	National Gallery in London Musée du Louvre Réunion des musées nationaux in Paris

	<p>Kunsthistorische Museum Vienna Rijksmuseum Amsterdam Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Administration: Institute for museum research in Berlin and the National Gallery in London.</p>
Target audiences	General audience with interest in museums and exhibitions
Content	<p>The portal represents more than 580 of the most important museums in 29 European countries – with a constantly growing number of participating museums.</p> <p>Besides the current exhibitions on the portal (ca. 500), euomuse.net contains an exhibition archive with more than 3.500 past exhibitions. The exhibitions cover not only the arts from every period (In time, they range from pre- and early history and antiquity to Old Masters, 19th century and contemporary art) but also technical, natural scientific and ethnological Cultural Heritage objects from all over the world as well as European art itself.</p>
Rights policy	<p>‘Copyright in the text of euomuse.net is held by the relevant individual museum, whether relating to exhibitions, news articles, resources, institutional information or any other matter. Responsibility for clearance of copyright on image material shown in euomuse.net is that of the museum concerned.</p> <p>Copyright to the navigation, site structure and navigational texts within euomuse.net lies with the euomuse consortium.’ Source: http://www.euomuse.net/en/copyrights_disclaimer/</p>
Interactivity	<p>Search by date range, country, city, topic and keyword. Map with search results and links.</p>
Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Museums – offering comprehensive background information on the museums’ history and their collections 2. Exhibitions – providing in-depth information on current and upcoming exhibitions throughout Europe, as well as opening period, opening time, admission fee and online-ticketing 3. News – linking to up-to-date information on the museums’ activities 4. Resources – presenting special online services and projects from and for museums, such as virtual exhibitions, digital catalogues, educational material, and museum directories 5. Shops – inviting to browse and order online the merchandise assortment of the museums’ online shops. <p>E-mail alert for exhibitions as a service.</p> <p>Because all the information published on euomuse.net – information about the exhibition, images, the museum, admission fees, opening hours and relevant web-links – is supplied directly by each institution, euomuse.net offers a high quality and accurate website.</p> <p>The information published on euomuse.net is available in the language of the exhibiting country and in English.</p>
Media	Text, images
Languages	<p>Navigation in 12 languages. Content in English and language of the exhibitions location.</p> <p>23 languages represented: Albanian, Bosnian, Czech, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, French, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek,</p>

	Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Spanish and Swedish.	
Technologies	Multilingual	Yes
	GIS / Maps	Yes
	Semantic structure	No
	API	No
	Linked content from other sources	Yes
	RSS Feed	Yes
Social Media	Facebook	Yes, 758 likes
	Twitter	Yes, 500 followers
Updates	Constant updates in the exhibition section by participating museums.	
Other Platforms	IOS App	No
	Android App	No
Statistical Data	Not available	
Bibliography	Inés Matres, Thorsten Siegmann, Euromuse.net - The Exhibition Portal for Europe (http://www.euromuse.net), <i>Uncommon Culture</i> , 3:5-6, 2012, 109-115, available at uncommonculture.org/ojs/index.php/UC/article/view/4778/3702	

5. Inventing Europe, www.inventingeurope.eu

(State: 25/4/2015)

Type of application	digital exhibition (referred to as "digital museum")
Start date	2011
Project description	The <i>Inventing Europe</i> website is product of collaboration between history and science museums and other cultural institutions from eight European countries, as well as of the European digital library Europeana. The website explores "the history, culture and formation of Europe by presenting technological objects and their images" and aims to show "how technology has shaped Europe in the last 150 years and how Europe has shaped technology".
Partners	Europeana and 11 Science and Technology Museums or Research Institutes from 8 European countries.
Target audiences	Education (university and school), general audience with interest in history of science (not explicitly stated)
Content	Images of more than 1000 objects (artefacts, illustrations and graphic materials, photographs, etc.) from 10 different museum collections, contextualized through hierarchically structured thematic narratives and stories written by digital curators (6 exhibitions, 43 guided tours – where the "museum" is used as a metaphor). They highlight the history of science and of invention in Europe (as continent – geographical, wider as actual EU borders). Additional content to browse from partners' collections (171 images of objects) and from Europeana – embedded in the website.
IPR	The texts and objects shared on the Inventing Europe website are the result of extensive research and consultations with scholars and curators of Cultural Heritage collections. Use of these materials is highly encouraged for educational or non-commercial purposes under the following conditions: Tours may be freely shared with proper citation of author, title and url. A citation suggestion is given at the bottom of every exhibit text.

	<p>Inventing Europe does not hold the rights for any of the images or videos reproduced or embedded in the tours. Please consult the metadata for each image and contact the relevant rights holder to obtain permission to reproduce any of the images found here.</p> <p>Image metadata has been provided by the image publisher. Every reasonable effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted images. We would be grateful to be notified of any errors or omissions in this process, so that we can take any necessary remedial action as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Source: http://www.inventingeurope.eu/about/termsfuse/</p>	
Interactivity	It allows curators from partner institutions and other interested projects to create new tours and rethink their collections in transnational terms.	
Services	<p><u>Educational environment</u>: resources for university courses for professors and students with learning material (downloads), manuals, community activity pages</p> <p><u>My Europe</u>: personal space where registered users can interact, browse the tours in detail, create and save their own collection of objects.</p>	
Media	Text, images, video	
Languages	English only. Content from partners or Europeana might be in other languages only (no translation).	
Technologies	Multilingual	No
	GIS / Maps	No
	Semantic structure	No
	API	No
	Linked content from other sources	Yes
Social Media	Facebook	Yes, 357 likes
	Twitter	Yes, 219 followers
	Google+	Yes, 5 followers
	Pinterest	Yes, 11 followers
Updates	Through new tours. Additional partner material can be linked to original content. Via RSS feeds, it allows partner institutions to tag additional related objects on their home sites to allow the exhibition also to serve as a research portal, and offer a gateway into further rich heritage environments. These objects are not included in the search, they just enrich the content as “gadget” images with captions.	
Other Platforms	IOS App	Yes
	Android App	Yes
Statistical Data	Not available	
Bibliography	<p>“Inventing Europe”, <i>MW2013: Museums and the Web 2013, Portland, 17-20 April 2013</i>, mw2013.museumsandtheweb.com/bow/inventing-europe</p> <p>A. Badenoch, “Harmonized spaces, Dissonant Objects, Inventing Europe? Mobilizing Digital Heritage”, <i>Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research</i>, 3, 2011, 295-315.</p>	
Technical problems	images not available; dead links; Europeana import does not function properly; search results links not functioning	

Case study 1: The Romani Community of Coventry

Interview and Focus Group Guides

Open-ended interview. Chairman, Roma Project (prompts)

The Roma Project

- Aims and evolution
- Team
- Approach to supporting the Roma
- Relations between the Roma Project and the Romani community; outreach strategies
- Achieved programmes/activities

The Romani community: history and profile

- Reasons for settling in
- Evolution throughout the years
- Nationalities; Romani sub-groups (Kalderash, etc.)
- Can we speak about a community? What kind of ties are there (by provenance, kinship)?
- Economic situation, access to jobs
- Education – access to education, issues, accomplishments
- General issues/problems faced

Social and cultural characteristics, cultural expression

- Customs and rules – Romani/national; tensions and conflicts with local culture
- The Romani family – relationships, rules, norms; degree of observance of ancestral norms regulating behaviour with respect to gender and age
- Relations between Roma and non-Roma/*gadjo*

Influence of British culture and relations with the British

- Settling in and gradual changes observed
- Relations with the British – perceptions on both sides
- Generational differences in appropriating/interacting with British culture

Use of digital technology

- Motivation and aims: communication/networking/information search/content production
- Access to computers and the Internet
- Initiatives by Roma Project using digital technologies

Vision on social inclusion and role of culture

- The approach of Roma Project to social inclusion
- What role does culture have to play

Open-ended interview. West Midlands police officer (prompts)

For how long have you been working with the West Midlands Police?

For how many years did you work in Foleshill?

What is the approach or strategy of the West Midlands police in approaching the Romani community (if any)?

How did you arrive to engage with people and establish a relationship with the Romani immigrants?

The Romani community

- Can we speak about 'Romani communities' because they stick together?
- Do they have their own internal legal structure and law enforcement structure in Coventry?

- What is the economic situation/what kind of jobs are accessed by the Roma?
- What are the main problems faced by the Roma?

How included are the Roma (socially/economically)?

- Other groups are socially included, such as the Polish. What are the reasons?

How are relations between the Roma and other social groups? The British population?

- Does it ever happen that the Roma's cultural practices come against local norms?

How are the Roma perceived right now? Is there any change in the perception of the Roma?

- The Roma are often perceived negatively, associated with crime, theft.. What is the reality?

Do you believe the Roma actually have something to offer to the UK as well?

What about the role of the media?

- How does British media portray the Roma?
- Did you come across different approaches, reporting on positive experiences?

Focus group guide. Coventry-based Romanian Roma (prompts)

Personal history and reasons for settling in Coventry

- Reasons for coming to Coventry
- Time of settlement

Living in Coventry

- Location, grouping in relation to Roma, Romanians, other groups
- Social relations and interaction with peers and other groups
- Economic situation, access to jobs

Relations between Cultural Heritage, expression of identity and sense of belonging

- Being Roma vs. being Romanian
- Meaning and value of Cultural Heritage: what Cultural Heritage means
- Sense of identity and belonging: defining oneself; defining the larger community to whom one belongs
- Relation between culture and identity/belonging: what aspects of culture and homeland are missed; what objects have been brought to remember home

General access to and use of digital media

- Types of technologies accessed and used
- Use of digital media: goals pursued (e.g. information), type of media (e.g. online portals, social media), type of activity (passive consumption, interaction with social media), type of content (e.g. news, information)
- (if applicable) Production of digital media: goals (e.g. expression, dissemination), type of media, type of content

Digital CH practices for Cultural Heritage representation, and expression of identity and belonging

- Means and technologies by which they represent, transmit and preserve heritage
- Use of digital technologies for expressing identity and belonging
- Objects/digital objects used to remind them of home and their wider community (e.g. photographs?)
- Inquiring reasons for use/non-use of relevant websites (e.g. lack of information, lack of access, etc.).
- Future perspectives: How can they represent, preserve and transmit their heritage in the future? With which practices? How can they use digital technology to enhance their memory of home and their community?

Impact of British culture on culture and identity

- Interactions with British people and culture – type, frequency
- Type of British content/media they are exposed to
- Personal opinion on how they feel attracted to or influenced by diverse manifestations of British culture

Semi-structured interview. Organisers, Flamenko Coventry Festival
(Adapted to the profile of respondents)

You and Flamenco

1. To start with, please tell us about your work.
2. How did you become a Flamenco artist (dancer/guitar player)?
3. What does Flamenco mean to you?

Flamenco and Romani culture

4. Thinking now about Flamenco and Romani culture. How would you describe Flamenco as an art form and cultural form in relation to the Roma culture?
5. What elements of the Romani spirit does Flamenco embody?
6. How is the woman Flamenco dancer? How does Flamenco enable her to express her Romani spirit?
7. Flamenco has also grown through the integration of other, non-Roma, cultural elements. Can you tell us a few words about how does this make Flamenco unique?
8. Flamenco is appreciated and appropriated by many other cultures. Does Flamenco change, in this process? Is there a 'pure' Flamenco?
9. How do you see the role of Flamenco as a vehicle for bridging and enabling communication between the Roma and other social groups?
10. To what extent do you think that Flamenco has the potential to strengthen a positive image for the Roma? What about strengthening intercultural communication and understanding?

Flamenco, the Roma and media

11. In general, how do you see the role of media in representing/promoting the Roma and their culture?
12. How can Flamenco and Roma culture be better communicated through the media? Is it important to communicate them? Why?
13. Who is entitled to speak about the Roma? Can non-Roma do so? Why?

The Flamenko Coventry Festival

14. Please tell us in a few words how the idea of the Festival came about.
15. How did you position this festival in the mind of a potential audience: what did you want to achieve, and what messages did you want to convey?
16. The Festival was about Flamenco but also about the Roma. How did you think through the festival organisation, the selection of events, in order to achieve a fair balance between engaging with Flamenco and engaging with Roma culture?
17. What were the most memorable events in the Festival, for you?
18. Thinking back at what you initially wanted to achieve with this Festival: were your expectations fulfilled? How happy are you with the results?
19. In an expanded perspective, what role do you see for this kind of events in promoting Romani culture at the same time with fostering intercultural understanding?

Thoughts for the future

20. What are your future projects that relate to Flamenco and Romani studies?
21. Your vision: How do you see the relations between the Romani minority and other populations evolve in the future? What role do you see for Romani culture in promoting dialogue in the future? What about media and communication? Is there a 'mission' for the Flamenco dancer and teacher that ties with your vision?

Focus group guide. Dance students, Coventry University

You and Flamenco

1. Why and how did you become interested in Flamenco?
2. If you had to describe Flamenco for someone foreign to this notion, how would you describe it, in a few phrases?
3. Is learning Flamenco dance different from learning other dance forms?
 - How important is to learn about the history and tradition of Flamenco in order to become a Flamenco dancer?
 - What about knowledge of Romani culture: is it important or necessary to learn more about the Roma and their culture to advance your dance practice?
 - Can you share a few examples of pieces of content, stories, or historical episodes that impressed you, while doing research on Flamenco?

Flamenco and Romani culture

4. In your view, how 'Romani' is Flamenco? What elements of the Romani culture and spirit does Flamenco embody?
5. When you first started engaging with Flamenco, what did you know about the Roma?
 - How (if at all) did your views on the Romani people and their culture change during your engagement with Flamenco?
 - If your attitude towards the Roma changed in this process, what were the triggering factors that determined you to change your views?

The Flamenko Coventry Festival

6. How was your experience of performing in the Flamenko Coventry festival? (For choreographers)
7. Please share with us the process of creating the dance pieces for the Festival: How did you seek inspiration? How did you create your main message? How did you conduct research for your pieces?
 - What kind of reaction did you intent to trigger in the audience, through your pieces?
 - Was there any intention to challenge the views held by the audience? How?

Flamenco, the Roma and media

8. What is the impression on the Roma that you got from typical media communications, for instance through newspapers or television? What about the internet?
 - What do you think about the way the Roma are portrayed in the media?
 - What do you think about the way Flamenco is portrayed and represented in the media?
9. When doing your research on Flamenco, what kind of media did you find most informative? (for example print, television, internet)
 - How did you use YouTube or Vimeo? Did you seek inspiration in Flamenco videos posted on YouTube or other sites? Can you share some examples of performances or names of performers that impressed you? Why?
 - Are there internet materials that you trust more than others? What makes you trust a certain website or video or content?
 - Did you ever comes across pieces of content or video on the Internet that were done by Romani people themselves? Did this affect your engagement with these materials? How?
 - (for choreographers) How did you use the internet to do research for the pieces that you created for the Flamenko Coventry festival?

Semi-structured interview. Coventry University student (Flamenko Coventry Festival Media crew)
Why media studies

1. To start with, please tell us about your studies: what exact profiles you are studying and why did you choose Media Studies?
2. What are you hoping to do after you finish your studies?

Your experience documenting the festival

3. In general, how was the experience of filming the Flamenko Coventry festival?
How did it feel to be behind the camera and record the events?
Are there any particular moments that impressed you and stayed with you?
What did you learn and understand, that you did not know before?
Did this experience make you want to know more? (For instance look up for more information on a particular subject, on the internet?)
4. We would like to know your impressions about the 72 hours challenge.
How did it work, what was the format for the challenge?
How did you identify the themes for the documentaries?
What did you want to transmit with the documentaries? Any particular message?
How is Flamenco represented in relation to Roma culture and Romani people, in your documentaries?
How did you choose the content to include, and what to leave out? Any difficulties?
Did you have to do additional research for producing the documentaries? How and where did you look? Did you use the internet? Did you use YouTube? What kind of content did you find useful (audio, video, for instance)? Did you have any concerns with the authenticity and truthfulness of the content you were browsing? Did you come across content produced by the Roma themselves? Please describe impressions
5. Overall, how much did you enjoy the filming and production experience?
6. Anything you would have done differently..?
7. What is the most important thing you learned or got out of this experience?
8. Your documentaries are now published on Vimeo, also other sites (which)? Are you hoping to get any reactions/inform online users? Do you think your documentaries will have any impacts on users' perceptions of the Roma culture and people?

Flamenco, Romani culture and the media

9. How do you think the Roma are portrayed in general in UK media (television, radio, internet, print)? What do you think about this portrayal?
What about the internet, is internet different in this respect, did you find different content/representations of the Roma and their culture as compared to print or television?
10. How familiar you were with Flamenco before being engaged in the Flamenko Coventry Festival?
What about the Roma people, how familiar were you with the Roma and their culture before the festival? Do you remember how you used to portray and relate to the Roma before?
11. Now, after your experience, did anything change with respect to how you relate to the Roma?
What, and how? What triggered these changes?
12. How would you now describe Flamenco, in a few phrases?
How would you now describe the Roma, in a few phrases?
13. How (if at all) did this overall experience change the way you are looking at your future profession?

Case study 6: The Spanish-speaking community in Berlin

Guideline questions of the conducted interviews (Case studies 2-5: Have used a similar but adapted version of the following questionnaire).

Part 1 - your life in Berlin – relation to your home country

- How long are you living in Berlin?
- Why did you move to Germany?
- Why did you choose to live in Berlin?
- Can you tell me something about your vision on Germany and Berlin before you moved here?
- Can you tell me something about your expectation of Germany and Berlin before you moved here?
- Do you remember the situation when you first arrived in Berlin? What were your feelings like?
- Did you already know some people or did you already have friends in Berlin? Did they help you?
- Do you help other Spanish speaking people when they first arrive in Berlin?
- How many German and how many Spanish-speaking friends do you have?

Part 2 – your digital activity

- Through which channels do you communicate with your friends, how do you arrange to meet each other? Are these digital ways?
- Is there a difference between the way you communicate with each other in Spain and in Germany?
- In your point of view, how is the community of Spanish-speaking people organized? How do they network?

Part 3 - your relation to your culture

- Now that you live in Berlin, are there aspects of your culture that you miss?
- What do you miss most?
- What would you like to learn/tell your children about your culture?
- Which aspects cannot be experienced in the everyday life in Berlin?

Part 4 Practical part

- Can you keep up with the things you miss on the web?
- Which websites that deal with the Spanish culture do you know? Can you show them to me?
- Do you use these websites? Why? When do you use them? / Why not?
- How do these websites work? What makes them attractive?
- Do you know of some other apps, games, video-broadcasting, online-books/Spanish literature on the web and blogs that deal with the Spanish culture?
- Do you use them? When do you visit them and Why? / Why not?
- Now I'm going to show you some websites that deal with Spanish Culture and that have relevance to the Spanish-speaking community in Berlin.
- Questions: Do you know these websites? / Do you use them? → Speaking-out-loud method.
- What do you think about the content, the look, the operation, the possibilities these websites offers?
- Websites:
 - **Facebook group: "Sobrevivo en Berlin"**
 - **Berlunes.com** (+ Facebook page)

- **Instituto Cervantes** (section Culture)
- **Musas20.com** (blog) – would you visit this website more often?
- **BerlineseEspagnol.net**: What do you think is the most interesting part of the website? Where would you like to read further? What do you think about the section 'Cultura'?
- **Ibero-American Institute**

Further questions:

- Do you think that digital technologies help you to keep up with your culture?
- Are you able to express your culture on a digital way? If not, what is missing?

Part 5 - your relation to the German culture

- In your eyes, what do you think is an important German cultural good? Is it a person like Goethe, Beethoven, or is it a special type of architecture, a famous painter or a festival?
- Can you describe the German culture? What do you think about it?
- Has your relation to the German culture got more intensive throughout your stay in Berlin?
- Do you feel like you are influenced by the German culture?
- Do you visit German websites?
- Do you visit German culture websites

Personal questions

- Where do you come from? City / Region / Country
- How old are you?
- What is your profession?
- Do you plan to go back to your home country?
- Now that you live in another country. Do you feel like a European? Why / Why not?