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# Digitality as a cultural policy instrument: Europeana and the Europeanisation of digital heritage

Carlotta Capurro

## Introduction

Europeana, the online platform aggregating digital heritage data produced by cultural institutions in the member states, is one of the most prominent digital cultural projects promoted by the European Commission (EC). The platform, inaugurated in 2008, resulted from a robust political will voiced by six heads of state in a letter addressed to the president of the EC in 2005 (Chirac et al. 2005). Today, *europeana.eu* is the largest public aggregator of cultural heritage data in Europe, with over 60 million digital objects provided by over 4,000 cultural heritage institutions, including libraries, archives, museums and audiovisual collections. It has become the most extensive and most significant digital cultural project and driver of heritage digitisation in Europe.

The creation of Europeana can be framed as part of a global phenomenon that has profoundly transformed the heritage field since the advent of digital technologies. New digital innovations have led to a revolution in the way heritage objects have been curated, documented, studied, shared and – in consequence – defined and valued in the public sphere. This ongoing process has been labelled the *digital turn* and has revolutionised every discipline interested in studying or curating the past (Nicholson 2013). Cultural heritage institutions have produced digital resources for various purposes (Bury 2019), which, due to the creation and widespread use of interactive online heritage platforms

like *Europeana*, are increasingly contributing to identitarian discourses alongside the more traditional forms of heritage.

Due to the versatility of digital support, digital cultural heritage has largely been perceived as a neutral working tool (Cameron and Kenderdine 2007). Despite some early conceptual debates in archaeology and archival studies that questioned the advantages and modes of sociality produced by digital technology, the broader field of heritage study has underestimated the sociopolitical aspects of the digitisation of the heritage sector (Walch 1994; Wheatley and Gillings 2002). The technical aspects of digital heritage have been widely debated, while less attention has been paid to the politics and the cultural implications, that is, how people are impacted by digital engagement with cultural heritage or by the process whereby objects are selected to be digitised (Cameron 2007).

Throughout this chapter, digital heritage is conceived as the *entanglement* of physical objects, their digital remediation and the set of information created to describe them – the metadata (Capurro 2021). Like traditional forms of heritage, digital heritage is *socially assembled*, representing a non-objective construction of the past (Geismar 2013). As such, the use of digital heritage has cultural, ethical and sociopolitical implications. Furthermore, digital heritage gives access to *information* related to heritage. The digital artefact is immersed in a network of connections with people, cultural meanings and technical qualities, revealing what values are embedded in its status as a heritage object (Forte 2003). From a critical perspective, digital heritage reflects the cultural environment in which it is created while defining its sociopolitical context, becoming an agent in creating future scenarios. Ultimately, the selective understandings of the past and the cultural assumptions encoded into digital heritage contribute to creating people's historical framework, which informs their practice and actions.

Digital collections are also autonomous cultural artefacts. Many studies have investigated how brick-and-mortar museums have developed their policies of collecting, ordering and presenting material (Bennett et al. 2017), while these processes have not received the same critical attention within the digital context. Cultural institutions can be compared with what Latour (1988) calls *centres of calculation*, where materials with different provenance are brought together and ordered according to specific criteria. These criteria are critical for selecting the objects to be collected, as they determine what is worth including in the collection. At the same time, both the actions of collecting and ordering inform the praxis of governance of the institution and are, in turn, shaped by governmental logic. In terms of Foucault's concept of governmentality,

this governmental logic consists of a combination of discourses, practices and technologies used by cultural institutions to control peoples' behaviours and understanding (Foucault et al. 1991). Within the digital sphere, cultural institutions exercise the same prerogatives when digitising, documenting and sharing their collections online (Cameron 2007). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the infrapolitics embedded in digital collections in order to assess how digital cultural heritage is used today to build narratives around identities and the past, and the role of digital infrastructures in this process.

This chapter analyses how digital heritage has become instrumental to the identity politics promoted by the European Union (EU). Although the digitisation of the cultural sector is a global phenomenon, the European case represents an indicative entry point to analyse its broader cultural implications, due to the massive political support it has received. Over the past two decades, the EC has actively invested in digitising the cultural sector and promoting the online accessibility of cultural heritage. To this end, consistent funds were allocated to projects designed to foster cooperation between member states and to support them in digitising their cultural resources and sharing them on the web or through new technological infrastructures.

## Europeana and the EU policy framework

This contribution focuses on the historical development of Europeana, exploring the political will that led to the creation of the digital repository and how it is functional in promoting the core principles of EU policy. Following its historical development allows analysis of Europeana in its double role as a product of European cultural policies and a key actor in the digitisation of the cultural sector. This work shows how Europeana has used its infrastructure to *conduct* the digitisation of the cultural sector. Thanks to a comprehensive approach that considers the different aspects of the Europeana initiative, this work brings light to the cultural implications of its digital infrastructure and its political role as the two inseparable dimensions in which Europeana operates. Such an approach reveals the relationship between the actions of *representation, regulation, identity and meaning production* through which Europeana works (Hall 1997).

Europeana has been the topic of many publications describing the technical features of its service, while its societal or institutional role has received only marginal consideration (Petras and Stiller 2017).

The few notable exceptions that have dealt critically with Europeana have limited their analysis to a single element, such as the user interface or the digital collection (Valtysson 2012; Almási 2014; Valtysson 2020; Stainforth 2016; Thylstrup 2018). Therefore, they have failed to approach Europeana as a whole, underestimating the cultural and social implications of all its components.

Aiming to offer a holistic understanding of Europeana, this chapter firstly analyses how it has been conceived as a political and cultural product through the joint action of cultural heritage institutions, the EC and the member states. Then, by analysing the development of the Europeana initiative, the chapter discusses how it has shaped digital cultural heritage policy in Europe, on the one hand as an advocate for cultural institutions in the EC policy debate, and on the other as the provider of a European standardised infrastructure for dealing with digital heritage online.

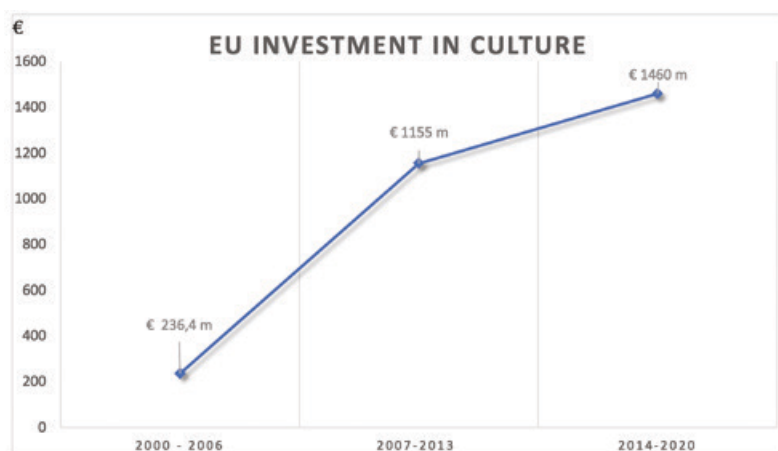
The methodology employed to study Europeana and its impact combines two techniques. The first is the critical analysis of the documentary sources released by both the European institutions and Europeana. These documents were retrieved through archival research on the online archives of the EU and Europeana. Second, the documentary resources are complemented by information collected during interviews conducted with several employees of the Europeana Foundation during an ethnography of the institution that I carried out at its headquarters in The Hague in the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> The words of Europeana employees produce a clear image of how Europeana perceives its role and identity within the European cultural heritage panorama.

## The European policy framework

The introduction of culture as an instrument to reinforce a European sentiment of collective belonging represented a turning point in the political agenda of the EC (Shore 2000). In the 1970s, it became clear that the economic and legislative union was not enough to create a union of the heterogeneous European people (Haas 2004). To make the project relevant for each citizen, the European institutions adopted a strategy of *imagining communities* similar to how nation-states in the nineteenth century tried to encode the nation in their inhabitants' hearts and minds (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 2010). Therefore, bringing to light the common traits defining *European culture*, in which all citizens of the member states could recognise themselves, became instrumental to the survival of the European project, and cultural projects were introduced among the commission's primary objectives.

Milestones in this process were the promulgation of the Solemn Declaration on European Union in 1983 and the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The EU Solemn Declaration explicitly addressed Europe's history and culture to improve citizens' recognition of Europe, inviting each member state to 'promote a European awareness' and undertake joint action in cultural areas (European Council 1983). A step further was Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty, which offered a legal framework for EU actions, adding culture to the list of areas under European competence.<sup>2</sup> In this way, the treaty initiated the creation of structured funding schemes to finance cultural initiatives. These documents made the construction of collective European identity and memory an integral part of the cultural agenda of the commission (De Witte 1987; Shore 2000; Sassatelli 2006; Calligaro 2013).

The EC used its budget to finance various cultural projects promoting the core principles of its cultural policy. Since 2000, the commission has financed four main actions explicitly dedicated to culture, investing €2,851 million, according to data from the commission's Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS, <https://cordis.europa.eu/en>; Figure 13.1).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, several initiatives have been promoted to foster European awareness through concrete cultural heritage actions, such as the annual nomination of the 'European Cities of Culture' (Patel 2014), the assignation of the 'European Heritage Label' (Lähdesmäki 2014; Lähdesmäki et al. 2020), the Museum of European Culture (Cadot 2010) and the House of European History (Kaiser 2017;



**Figure 13.1** The European Commission's investments in culture between 2000 and 2020. Data aggregated from the documentation available on CORDIS.

Jaeger 2020). All these initiatives had the scope to bring Europe closer to its citizens while normalising a narrative of *Europeanness* encompassing local and national identitarian discourses (Shore 2000).

## Introducing digitality to the EU cultural policy

In this cultural policy framework, the EC envisioned a central role of technologies in facilitating the diffusion of a common *European identity*. During the 1990s, the commission initiated the construction of a European *information society*, aware of digital data's growing economic, political and cultural roles. In this context, new technologies were crucial for creating and distributing information. The commission promoted a common regulatory framework, instrumental for enabling a high level of internal interoperability among the member states and capable of influencing the global market (EU Publications Office 1995: 17). According to the EC, 'the information society provides the opportunity to facilitate the dissemination of European cultural values and the valorisation of a common heritage' (European Commission 1994b: 14).

In 2000, the EC launched the eEurope Action Plan, promoting the creation of an 'information society for all' by boosting the development and use of the internet and internet-related technologies and services (Liikanen 2001). The plan actively encouraged the digitisation of cultural heritage, asking member states to promote it and support cultural institutions (Thylstrup 2018). To this end, the EC financed several projects dedicated to achieving interoperability between digital practices in each member state and across cultural domains. The following part of this chapter describes the projects funded by the EC to realise its digital cultural policy and how the creation of the European Digital Library – eventually renamed Europeana – was vital in harmonising the digital practices of European cultural institutions.

## The digitisation of European cultural heritage: libraries take the lead

During the 1990s, libraries started exploring the potential of digital technologies to share information about their collections on the internet. With the support of the EC, national libraries throughout Europe took on a leading role in the digital shift of the cultural sector (Jefcoate 2006). Between 2001 and 2009, The European Library (TEL) project

**Table 13.1** Projects for the creation of The European Library (TEL). Data aggregated from the documentation available on [CORDIS](#).

Project title	Duration	EU budget
TEL	February 2001 – January 2004	€1,977,527
TEL-ME-MOR	February 2005 – January 2007	€1,399,919
TELplus	October 2007 – December 2009	€3,250,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>€6,627,446</b>

received about €6.6 million for creating a set of agreed digitisation policies and technical standards (Table 13.1). Under the coordination of the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), TEL worked to create unified access to the digital catalogues of all its members. It was the first project addressing the issue of uniformising the multiple information structures used by the national libraries (Woldering 2004). The project resulted in the launch of the *TheEuropeanLibrary.org* portal in 2005.

TEL represented a successful collaborative effort: institutions with different cultural backgrounds and missions, at diverse stages of their digital transformation and with varied budgets, developed a joint strategic plan for their development (Collier 2005). The creation of a pan-European service led to harmonising several aspects of the internal workflows, the general objectives and the business plans of the institutions involved. It was a first step towards standardising content and procedures, opening the way for establishing European digital development in the cultural sector. Therefore, it was unsurprising that the commission used the experience of TEL as a starting point for the creation of Europeana, the digital repository for all the cultural heritage data of the member states.

## The EU versus Google: towards the creation of Europeana

The European plans for digitising cultural heritage institutions experienced a sudden jolt when, in 2004, Google announced its Google Books project. Several European countries were concerned about the appropriation of shared cultural heritage by a private (American) actor, the issue of respect for copyright and the dominance of English language cultural resources on the internet (European Commission 2005a). Therefore, on 28 April 2005, the heads of six European member states signed a joint



letter calling for the creation of a *bibliothèque numérique européenne*, an online library of all European bibliographic collections. The letter described European cultural heritage as a treasure of diversity and a testimony to the universality of the continent in relation with the rest of the world (Chirac et al. 2005). To preserve the cultural position of Europe in the future ‘geographies of knowledge’, they called for joint action in the digitisation and publication of this material online.

The EC swiftly responded to this call. In a letter of 7 July, President Barroso (2005) endorsed the requests, recognising that the digitisation and online availability of cultural heritage were crucial for creating a European knowledge-based economy and society. Barroso assigned the preparation of an official communication about the opportunities and challenges of creating such a European digital library to Viviane Reding, the then Information Society and Media Commissioner, and Ján Figel, the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth (European Commission 2005c). The EC accepted a leading role in the digital shift of European cultural heritage institutions, as both a coordinator and a financial sponsor of the project.

On 29 September 2005, in front of the CENL assembly, Reding outlined her view of a European digital library, proposing the creation of a network of online collections connecting all European heritage institutions (Reding 2005). In the commission’s view, the European digital library had a more ambitious scope than the Google Books project, providing access to all digital heritage resources. While each member state would have the responsibility to implement and facilitate the digitisation process of its cultural institutions, an organisation coordinated by the commission would work towards the implementation of standardised practices, reducing legislative obstacles and ensuring adequate financial support for the action.

Next, Reding (2005) explained that the commission would facilitate the creation of the European digital library, acting on two levels: first, politically, by providing assurance of the European authorities’ constant political support for the action; and second, strategically, by advocating the advice of experts from the cultural sector. The commission made over €90 million available under various funding schemes to support the plan. In this way, the creation of the European digital library became the most extensively funded cultural action in Europe. The substantial amount of money allocated is proof of the strong political will that supported the technical developments required to create a unified digital library of European cultural heritage.

CENL prepared a proposal to create a cross-domain portal. The European Digital Library (EDL) project was initiated in November 2006, focused on constructing a digital library for showcasing digital heritage from all cultural domains. The project grouped together representatives from the heritage, knowledge and IT sectors and addressed the issue of the interoperability of the diverse content held by European heritage institutions. The project's main result was a functioning prototype of the portal for digital cultural heritage from European institutions named *Europeana* – meaning 'European things' – to immediately describe the platform's purpose and content.

The portal went live in November 2008, offering about two million digital heritage objects (European Commission 2008). During the inauguration of the service, Barroso (2008) presented Europeana as a 'shop window' and a 'digital doorway' to European culture 'in all its glorious diversity'. Aware of the portal's role in constructing a European identity, he stressed that 'Europeana has the potential to change the way people see European culture. It will make it easier for our citizens to appreciate their own past, [and] become more aware of their common European identity.'

## Europeana as an instrument of digital governmentality

Over time, the mission of Europeana has evolved considerably: from the digital repository of European cultural heritage, it soon became a digital infrastructure in charge of supporting the digital transformation of European cultural institutions. The initiative's progress did not depend only on political support from the EC and the member states. Europeana needed to mobilise as many cultural institutions as possible while expanding its digital collection. To make this possible, between 2008 and 2010, the commission financed a series of projects to transform the Europeana prototype into a functioning and stable service (Purday 2009). In this phase, strategic decisions on the Europeana infrastructure were taken, and much attention was devoted to extending the digital collection and the network of content providers. Then, between 2011 and 2014, Europeana became an operational service consolidating its infrastructure and services. Lastly, between 2015 and 2019, Europeana focused on outreach and creating a significant impact on society. The following part of the chapter shows how Europeana, conceived as a digital resources aggregator, has also become a central actor in designing

and enforcing European digital cultural policy by shaping its operational infrastructure.

## Europeana's content

The main operative obstacle to creating a European heritage platform was harmonising all digital heritage objects. Libraries, archives, museums and audiovisual collections have very different standards for producing and documenting their collections, which are often incompatible. These differences are determined by the heterogeneous nature of the heritage, the vocabularies of the various authorities documenting the resources, which are discipline- or domain-dependent, and the reference models for the metadata sets in use. To accommodate such a multitude of descriptions within the same digital collection, Europeana had to design an architecture capable of bringing this variety of data together.

The first fundamental decision with a significant impact on the Europeana service's architecture regarded the nature of the collected objects. In line with Reding's view of the European digital library as a network, Europeana was not designed as a repository of digital heritage but as an aggregator of *surrogates* of the digital resources (Purday 2009). Surrogates are composed of three main elements: (1) a set of metadata describing the object, (2) a thumbnail for its preview on Europeana and (3) a URL linking the surrogate to the full-resolution digital object preserved on the server of the owner institution (Gradmann, Dekkers and Meghini 2009). This choice allowed Europeana to overcome the issues posed by the diversity of digital resource file formats, leaving the owner institutions responsible for digital conservation and accessibility. On the other hand, partner institutions kept control over their digital collections. Thanks to the surrogate model, Europeana could achieve a leading role in the governance of cultural heritage information on the web with minimal investment in the management of digital resources.

The second constitutional decision shaping Europeana's contents structure involved establishing an optimal way to describe the resources, accommodating the 'information perspectives' of the different cultural domains within the same digital library (Aloia et al. 2011). Introduced in 2010, the Europeana Data Model (EDM) was then conceived as a standard for interoperability, allowing each data provider to use its preferred metadata standard and vocabulary of reference (Isaac and Clayphan 2013). In designing the EDM, representatives of all cultural domains worked together to identify its requirements, resulting in a metadata

model where every domain could reuse each other's data (Charles and Olensky 2014). Thanks to its open model, the EDM could accommodate the variety of cultural heritage documentation in an unambiguous model, symbolising the European motto 'Unity in Diversity' with its semantic structure (Capurro and Plets 2020).

To facilitate browsing the resources and highlight their *European value*, Europeana started to curate the digital collection. By creating curated collections, Europeana (2015) aimed to 'build and sustain an active online community of interest for the wider cultural heritage sector in Europe'. A team of curators worked to bring the best stories and quality content into the spotlight. By selecting topics and stories that reveal the commonalities between the member states, curators bring to light the European value of the resources (field notes, May 2019). In this way, heritage is used to create linkages among different realities and promote a feeling of unity and shared *European identity* (Capurro 2021). Since 2014, curated collections have acquired a prominent place on Europeana, thanks to the launch of the *Europeana Collections* interface, and have gained a central place in the new *Europeana Experience* interface.

## The digital service

Critical to Europeana's success was the definition of its operative infrastructure. This consisted of a framework for facilitating content providers' sharing of their collections on the portal. To this end, Europeana devised a supply chain working at the national, domain or thematic levels, based on a network of data aggregators. They are institutions acting as intermediaries, supporting data providers in mapping their resources according to the EDM, gathering the metadata and verifying its quality before uploading to Europeana. When working at the national level, these institutions were identified by governments as national aggregators. In contrast, those working at the thematic or domain level resulted from specific projects funded by the EC (Purday 2009). Content aggregators are grouped in the Europeana Aggregators' Forum, where they share experiences and best practice (Europeana 2021).

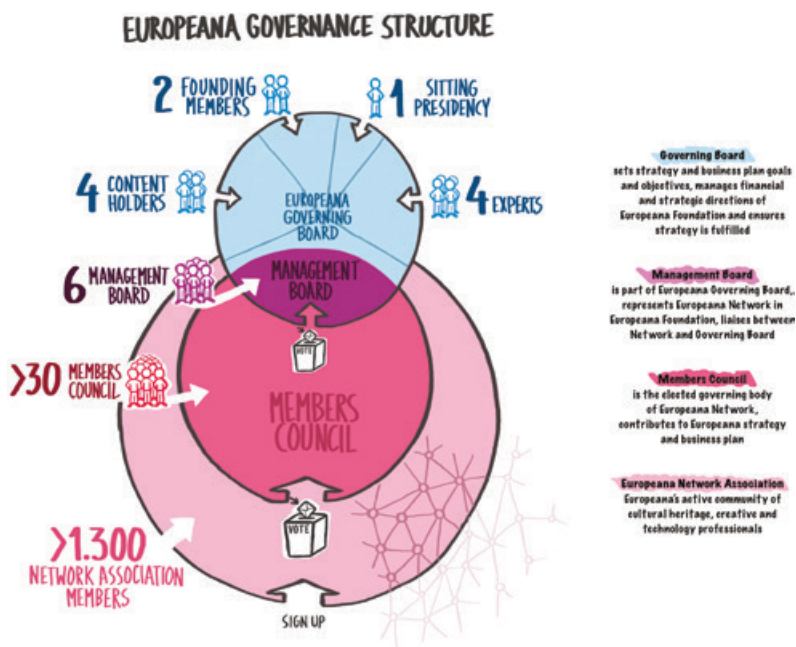
In 2018, Europeana flattened the structure of the aggregation model by transferring to aggregators the role of expertise hubs (Europeana Foundation 2016). Aggregators were entrusted to facilitate the digital transformation of heritage institutions, supporting them in adhering to Europeana's standardised practices. In this way, Europeana was positioned at the centre of a Europe-wide network of cultural institutions,

united by shared digital procedures. This infrastructure simplifies Europeana's work by reducing the number of organisations uploading content to the database. It also facilitates the penetration of Europeana's standards into cultural heritage institutions, which are closely supported in their digitisation processes. Therefore, Europeana imposes its technical and operative requirements on institutional procedures by constructing its operative infrastructure, creating a network of *European cultural institutions* adopting common standards and digital working procedures (Capurro and Plets 2020).

## Europeana's governance

Lastly, it was crucial to define Europeana's governance. In 2007 the EDL Foundation, later renamed the Europeana Foundation, was established to run the service. It was the legal entity owning and taking responsibility for the progress of the digital library, applying for funding and employing dedicated personnel. Two collegial bodies managed the foundation: the Board of Participants and the Executive Committee. The former, which included representatives of Europeana's partners and content providers, elected the Executive Committee and supervised its activities. The latter oversaw the foundation's day-to-day management, making decisions on budget and development strategies. Therefore, the governance of the foundation was devised as a distributed model that enhanced the representation of Europeana's partners (Europeana Foundation 2010).

The Council of Content Providers and Aggregators (CCPA) was created as a collegial advisory body grouping together the cultural institutions partnering with Europeana. The CCPA elected representatives to sit on the foundation's board: in this way, cultural institutions could express their views on Europeana's future. In 2011, the CCPA was renamed the Europeana Network Association, including all the practitioners interested in cooperating with Europeana. Members shared expertise in an international and cross-domain environment, contributing to the creation of Europeana's best practices. Therefore, the Network represents a *community of practice* operating around the digital heritage (Lave and Wenger 1991). It is a resource of know-how for the smaller institutions with few internal resources, and a driver of the standardisation of the cultural heritage sector. The website Europeana Professional was created to facilitate knowledge exchange, collecting the documentation of all technologies and services developed by Europeana. It occupies a central role in disseminating the digital practices promoted by Europeana.



**Figure 13.2** Governance of the Europeana Foundation, as presented in the 2017 Business Plan. © Europeana. Reproduced under the Creative Commons licence CC BY-SA.

In 2015, Europeana’s governance became more inclusive (Figure 13.2). Firstly, the Europeana Network was registered as an independent association, adopting a representative structure. Members elected the Member Council, which elected the association’s Management Board. Composed of six representatives, the board also had the task of representing the association to the Europeana Foundation Governing Board. Within this renewed structure, the Network Association gained a predominant role in the functioning of Europeana.

Secondly, a political representative of the country holding the EU presidency was included on the Europeana Foundation’s Governing Board. In 2017, the number of national representatives sitting on the board increased to three, including the predecessor and the successor of the country holding the presidency (field notes, June 2019). While Europeana has always had to account for its results to the commission, this transformation embedded political control into the initiative’s governing structure. Through its representatives, the commission gained an active role in steering the direction of Europeana’s development from

the inside; working with the representatives of the cultural sector sitting on the board, they devised a digital strategy abiding by the EU cultural policy guidelines.

With the democratisation of its governance, Europeana became an effective instrument for enacting EU digital cultural policy specifically addressed to (national) heritage institutions. Through their open participation in the work and decision-making organs of Europeana, cultural institutions became actors in designing a digital practice in line with the EC policy guidelines. Once promoted by Europeana, these standard procedures gradually entered the workflow of Europeana's content providers. Therefore, by democratising the foundation's governance, Europeana gained a central position in designing and implementing the harmonisation of the digital practice of cultural institutions.

## Europeana's infrapolitics

Since its inauguration, Europeana has outgrown the aims of a digital archive of European heritage. In an analysis of the technical, cultural and political choices behind the construction of its infrastructure, Europeana can be conceptualised as an instrument of European *governmentality*, acting upon multiple levels of the construction of *Europeanness*.

Firstly, it facilitates the collaboration of international partners within the framework of EU-financed projects. By promoting a common *modus operandi* through the definition of standardised best practices, Europeana has constructed a network of *European institutions*. Secondly, it discursively produces *European heritage* by curating a transnational collection of digital resources. By accommodating opposite and potentially conflicting perspectives on selected topics within the same collection, Europeana constructs narratives of shared European experiences. Lastly, it brings together a community of practitioners, creatives and end users around its collection, creating a *European (cultural) audience*. All these aspects are made possible by Europeana's governance and infrastructure.

As a policy actor, Europeana promotes its technical standards to the cultural sector. Although not an official body of the EU, Europeana has been given the power to address the digital development of the cultural sector. Thanks to its infrastructure, Europeana implements European top-down policies, incorporating them into the bottom-up attempts generated within its community, adopting and normalising the EU rhetorical discourse on European heritage. Europeana successfully implements

the EU's digital cultural policy through the Network Association and the Aggregators' Forum.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed how the EC has conceived and implemented cultural policy and digital policy and how they were mutually influenced in the digital cultural sector, leading to the creation of Europeana, a political and cultural product. The EC has used culture to promote citizens' European identity and a sense of belonging to a joint European culture. Due to the encompassing nature of digitality, the policy designed to lead Europe's digital transformation soon included the cultural sphere. The official EU documents narrate the digital transformation as a medium to democratise access to culture, sharing cultural content with citizens using innovative channels. Conceived as the most ambitious European cultural project ever, with the aim of aggregating digital resources from all the member states, Europeana has become a central actor in designing and enforcing a European digital cultural heritage policy.

The creation of Europeana exemplifies how the EC designed and financed digital cultural actions oriented towards reaching interoperability between the digital practices in different member states and across cultural domains. By promoting the cooperation of cultural heritage actors within Europe-wide networks through their participation in Europeana, the commission created a digital cultural policy that shaped the digital identity of cultural institutions. Thanks to the enthusiastic support of the members of the Europeana Network Association from the bottom, and the recommendations of Ministries of Culture from the top, heritage institutions have had to adapt their data to the new standards when sharing their collections on Europeana. In this way, the Europeana infrastructure subtly produces the Europeanisation of national cultural heritage institutions through the introduction of standardised technical practices.

It is possible to conclude that Europeana has played a crucial role in the governance of the cultural sector. Thanks to the creation of democratically approved digital procedures and in line with the main EC guidelines, Europeana has become an intermediary organisation leading the digital transformation of European cultural institutions. Digitisation has not only transformed their practices and methodologies but has also forced them to adhere to common standards and procedures. By promoting international cooperation and financing projects that align with the



required parameters, through Europeana the EU has implemented a digital cultural policy that has successfully shaped the identity of European cultural institutions.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

1. This information relies on field notes taken between 2017 and 2020, as a result of meetings with the staff of the Europeana Foundation, participation in events promoted by Europeana, and a research residency at the Europeana Foundation between May and July 2019. During this residency, 11 employees of the Europeana Foundation agreed to be formally interviewed. Their identities and positions remain confidential.
2. Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty was firstly amended in Article 151 of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), then in Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2009).
3. Two previous actions, Raphael (1997–1999) and Ariane (1997–1998), financed projects dedicated respectively to the restoration and preservation of cultural heritage and of books and reading. Raphael had a budget of 30 million ECU (European Currency Unit), while Ariane had 7 million ECU.

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