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FACULTY OF LIBRARIANSHIP, INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND IT

The socioethical concerns associated with digitisations of Indigenous Oceanic cultural heritage materials

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Abstract: The rise of postcolonial theories in the 1970s did not yield much influence in the then practice of humanities computing, but following the mass-scale digitisations of cultural heritage materials over the past thirty years questions of Indigenous agency and the colonial roots of the digital cultural record have become more urgent than ever. This thesis operates within the area of postcolonial digital humanities and seeks to explore three questions. The first regards the socioethical concerns associated with the digitisation of Indigenous cultural heritage materials originating in Oceania, a geographic region which is peripheral on digital humanities maps but at the same time paradigmatic for exploration due to its cultural, political and linguistic diversity and multiple histories of colonial plundering. The second question investigates the extent to which global cultural heritage institutions digitise collections originating in Oceania in a culturally responsive manner, whereas the third focuses on the actions that digitising institutions can take in order to improve their websites from a decolonising perspective. The analysis that has been conducted on relevant literature and digitisation websites has resulted in an outline of theoretical concerns that should be taken into consideration prior to digitisation, as well as an assessment of existing digitisation activities and recommendations for improvement.

Keywords: Oceania, digitization, cultural heritage, ethical, Indigenous, legal, postcolonial, decolonisation

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The journey continues… To Woody Oliphant, Georgia Theodoropoulou and Paul John McConnon for sharing the boat with me.

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

(Article 31 of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples related to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity)

We learn in order to know, and we wish to know in order to master, not other men, but the tools put in our hands for establishing a satisfactory life for ourselves and for all men. Too often our learning, our knowledge, and our mastery are… concentrated on techniques and we forget about man himself…

(Dag Hammarskjöld address at Amherst College, Massachusetts, 13 June 1954)

1 Introduction

Digital humanities scholars have often commented and debated upon the absence of solid theoretical frameworks that can provide the basis for a more meaningful and constructive development of the discipline, with some examples provided below. This may be partly attributed to its interdisciplinary and fragmented nature, as professionals in digital humanities share different backgrounds and are used to different working practices. Edmond provides an overview of the advantages and challenges of collaboration in digital humanities, which is a fraught area not helped by the open-endedness of digital scholarship (2016, p. 61). On the other hand, Bauer argues that every project she has ever worked on or heard about is steeped in theoretical implications, as the groups involved in digital humanities are full of people with advanced degrees in the humanities, or people who know their theory anyway (2011).

The area of digital humanities is famously difficult to define, having been known by many other terms such as humanities computing, humanist informatics, and digital resources in the humanities among else (Nyhan et al., 2013, p. 2). One core activity within the discipline is that of digitisation of cultural heritage materials. This is the UNESCO definition of digitisation:

> Digitization is the creation of digital objects from physical, analogue originals by means of a scanner, camera or other electronic device. It is undertaken as part of a process that includes: selection; assessment, including of needs; prioritization; preparation of originals for digitization; metadata collection and creation; digitization and creation of data collections; submission of digital resources to delivery systems and repositories. This process is accompanied along the way by management, including intellectual property rights management and quality control, and evaluation at the end.[1]

A key concern expressed by Cameron and Kenderdine is that the discourse about the relation between cultural heritage and digital technology has been focusing on projects and technical considerations, leaving a lack in terms of creating a body of critical thinking about the transformations posed by communications technologies. This has resulted in digital technology

[1]http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/mow/digitization_guidelines_for_web.pdf (Last accessed on 26 September 2020).

remaining largely unmapped in terms of a critical theory for cultural heritage per se (2010, p. 3). Part of the reason might be that most digital cultural heritage projects have been developed as offspring of technical research without input from historians, archaeologists and humanists (Frischer et al., 2000). Writing in 2012, Newell states that at the time there was still little theorising about the possibilities afforded by digital technologies to transform structures of historical representation, because historians were as yet more often users than creative producers of digital material (p. 289). According to her, '[digital] technologies work best when they enable people who feel connected to museum objects to have the freedom to deepen these relationships and, where appropriate, to extend outsiders' understandings of the objects' cultural contexts' (2012, p. 303). Cameron and Kenderdine however list a whole range of issues that remain underexposed in the heritage sector, including digital cultural heritage as a political concept and practice, the interpretation of digital objects, and the relations between communities and heritage institutions as mediated through technologies (2010, p. 2).

It is possible however that the deeper root of these debates does not lie in the convergences and divergences or (in)compatibilities between technical practices and humanistic input, but in the histories and traditions both of which have been constructed and applied within colonialist and neocolonialist frameworks. Risam makes the case that the hallmarks of colonialism in the cultural record as generated by the humanities are being ported over into the digital cultural record unthinkingly, creating fissures and lacunae (2018, Introduction). In her book *New Digital Worlds* she makes a convincing case for paying significant attention to the circumstances surrounding knowledge production, including 'how [digital] projects are designed, how material in them is framed, how data in them is managed, and what forms of labor are being used to create them' (2018, Introduction). More specifically, she calls for an examination of how project creators are presenting their subjects: are they doing it in ways that rehearse colonialist knowledge production, or are they recognising the role of colonialism in constructing the digital cultural record and seeking to push against it? (2018, Introduction).

When viewed through this prism, a lot of the theoretical and practical conflicts that characterise the galleries, archives, libraries and museums sector (GLAM) which ordinarily carries out digitisations of cultural heritage materials make more sense. It is irrefutable that digitisation accrues many benefits. According to Corbett and Boddington, digital archives are less demanding of physical storage space, they can be used for interactive displays and can be made easily accessible, permitting a geographically widespread audience to view and copy the images (2011). The same authors however identify three main issues with the conceptual justifications for the digitisation of institutional collections which are surrounded by uncertainty and ambiguity. Following empirical research they have conducted in New Zealand, it transpires that even

though one of the main rationales for digitisation is presumed to be preservation of items, often the institutional objective is to provide increased accessibility to collections. This can be an issue if Indigenous communities are opposed to increased accessibility and appropriate consultations have not been carried out. Secondly, 'the concept of digitally repatriating images of Indigenous cultural artefacts may not meet the expectations of the Indigenous community from whom artefacts were originally obtained'. And thirdly, institutional claims to copyright are controversial and subject to criticism, especially as they are used as a means of controlling third party uses of the images as the basis of a financial enterprise for the institution (Corbett and Boddington, 2011).

Elsewhere, Mason focuses on the socio-political forces that influence cultural information standards and the effects of power that is unevenly held, assessing that these issues are very little discussed due to a considerable amount of attention being put on the competitive nature and risk-management aspects of digital cultural heritage (2010, pp. 227-228). In her discussion of sociopolitical forces in the context of cultural management, Mason states that 'the collection of and access to cultural heritage is primarily aimed at serving the cultural information needs of local or immediate communities' (2010, p. 230). The question of who libraries and museums are there to serve has been central and longstanding, being pertinent both to physical and digital contexts and inextricably linked to the issue of power to which Mason keeps returning. In her text 'A Crisis of Authority: New Lamps for Old', Hazan provides a commentary on the physical museum which has often been described as an ideological institution, characterised by hegemonic and patronising attitudes that exclude the public (2010, pp. 136-137). In the digital context, Calhoun identifies as one of the key challenges facing digital libraries the increase of their value and engagement with the communities they serve, since that has been uneven in the context of technical improvements (2014, p. 77). According to Singh et al., the rush to digitise without appropriate interdisciplinary and intercultural consultation has already resulted in publishing a large number of objects online with minimal interpretive text (2013, p. 78).

To bring another example, digital cultural heritage theory heavily focuses on the dichotomy between the weight of the material world and multimedia. In Western thinking, whereas the former is based on the aura of the physical, evidence, the passage of time, power through accumulation, authority, knowledge and privilege, the latter is perceived as 'the other' of all of these: immediate, surface, temporary, modern, popular and democratic (Witcomb, 2010, p. 35). Witcomb suggests that whereas the character of the opposition is rarely disputed, what is disputed is its significance, with multimedia being seen as either a threat to established culture or an opportunity for the museum complex to survive into the twenty-first century (2010, p. 35). Some theorists on the other hand argue that the digital 'disruption' is not a new

phenomenon. Giaccardi for example maintains that museum objects have always been virtual following their removal from their original setting and their recontextualisations within museums (2004). She also suggests that new forms of virtuality offer the opportunity of moving away from traditional one-way scholarship to multiple and differentiated narratives deriving from the communities to which the museums relate.

Western ideas, pinned as they are on colonial practices to which museology owns its origins, do not readily or necessarily fit into other cultural contexts. The terms 'West' and 'Western' throughout this thesis refer 'to the 'First World' countries that control the capitalist production and knowledge production in a global perspective, being European countries or other capitalist powers such as the United States and Canada' (Brulon Soares and Leshchenko, 2018). In their article 'Museology in Colonial Contexts: A Call for Decolonisation of Museum Theory', Brulon Soares and Leshchenko explain how museum theory has been disseminated through instruments based in the West and on legacies of European colonialism in different social orders and systems of academic production (2018). Colonial domination continues to be sustained by the global capitalist system, however museum practice has slowly begun to adjust to start considering non-European authority in the process of shaping the representation of reality by including Indigenous peoples in the institutional processes or recognising their own perspectives in exhibitions (Brulon Soares and Leshchenko, 2018).

Indigenous peoples around the world have had their own multifaceted approaches to physical and digital cultural objects which may diverge from or overlap with those of Western practitioners. Ranging from reservations about whether valuable cultural objects should be freely displayed on the internet to an enthusiastic adoption of new technologies, Indigenous use and treatment of objects, as well as the meanings created and attached to them, are simultaneously brought to the fore and ignored in the undertaking of digitisation practices. Francis and Liew, who have examined digitisation policies of Indigenous cultural heritage in Australia and New Zealand identify a research gap as they assert that 'philosophical debates about the nature of a digitised object are… surprisingly sparse and would benefit from further investigation' (2010). According to Cameron and Robinson, the Western classification systems applied to Indigenous collections are insufficient in relaying the multiple meanings Indigenous objects can have (2010, p. 173). To sum up, digitisation of Indigenous cultural heritage brings to the fore new and heightened differences in the meanings of philosophical debates which result in practices of digital cultural record creation that have important repercussions in the way 'reality' is represented.

2 Problem description, research aims and ethical concerns

Throughout *New Digital Worlds*, Risam refers to the dichotomy between Global North and Global South in order to discuss the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism on the digital cultural record. These terms, based on the Brandt line of the 1980s as a way of showing the geographical distribution of richer and poorer nations, are highly contested and some would argue outdated today, as countries in the Southern hemisphere have overtaken countries in the North in terms of GDP per capita. At the same time, it is also true that attempts to quantify digital humanities in terms of geography reproduce old colonialist schemas as the infographic produced by Terras shows[2]. Other projects, such as the DH Experience board game by Montague and Frizzera and Gil's map 'Around Digital Humanities in 80 Days' adopt methodologies that include diasporic and networked contributions, thus providing different approaches to world making in the global digital humanities (Risam, 2018, Section 3). In all of these cases however, including in Risam's text, there is a significant lacuna: none of the geographical representations that seek to amend colonialist thinking include Oceania as a whole continent. All maps and references seem to end in New Zealand.

The Pacific Ocean is the world's oldest and biggest body of water, large areas of which remain unsurveyed to this day (Winchester, 2015, pp. 2-3). The Oceania region which was divided by the Europeans into Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, includes more than 10,000 islands and is home to 1,800 different peoples (Kjellgren, 2014, p. 11). It is also the most linguistically diverse area of the world, representing almost 25% of all the languages spoken globally. This is a fragmented and diverse area, both in terms of geography as well as economics, politics and culture. It is also characterised by conflicts that have arisen due to subsequent waves of colonisation and constant redistributions of power in nations that consist of multiple tribes, local elites and old Western settlers or more recent arrivals. It provides in other words a paradigmatic example for an analysis of the social dynamics that determine the implementation of cultural digitisation projects and how individuals relate with cultural heritage within the Web 2.0 context. The region also represents an interesting case study for analysing Indigenous and minority rights and representation in the context of digital humanities studies.

One key problem in the region with direct consequences on the study of digitisation practices is that of the wide regional inequalities in terms of ICT access and usage. According to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia

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[2] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/infostudies/melissa-terras/DigitalHumanitiesInfographic.pdf (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the population of the Pacific Island developing countries is split between Papua New Guinea with 8.1 million residents and the other countries which are home to 2.8 million people. In a 2018 report on broadband connectivity in Pacific Island countries, the UN ESCAP found that although there has been significant development in the telecommunication sector, access to broadband connectivity is generally still lacking (2018, p. 12). According to data, in 2016 only 1.5 million Pacific islanders were connected to mobile broadband and about 0.2 million people were connected to fixed-broadband services. French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea account for 74 per cent of all fixed broadband subscriptions in the region. Most of the Pacific Island countries have large rural populations, with a majority of young, highly literate but unemployed people who have limited effective contribution to the formal economic sector. Furthermore, GDP per capita of most Pacific Island countries is quite low compared to other developing countries in the Caribbean for example. According to the report's findings, '[the] gap in access to reliable broadband service and the Internet within the Pacific subregion and between the Pacific and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region continues to widen and is unlikely to close without interventions' (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 13). Australia and New Zealand for example rank highly on global indexes of e-government services, mobile and broadband penetration rates and network readiness (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 9).

This thesis is anchored in the area of postcolonial digital humanities, aiming to address the empty space that the world's largest body of water represents on digital humanities maps and despite the regional inequalities that render this task difficult. According to Risam, 'postcolonial digital humanities explores how we might remake the worlds instantiated in the digital cultural record through politically, ethically, and social justice-minded approaches to digital knowledge production' (2018, Introduction). The case of Oceania is challenging from a research perspective because of the asymmetries produced between the rich analogue cultural records generated in the region which have been dispersed around the world, and unequal ICT access which privileges richer nations over developing ones.

It is because of these inequalities that this thesis has been designed as a contribution towards the growing input of postcolonial theories as part of a process of 'crucial decentering' of digital humanities 'that acknowledges how its methods and practices both influence and are influenced by other fields (Klein and Gold, 2016, p. xi). Postcolonial theories had initially gained foothold in literary and cultural studies in the 1970s with humanities computing being left unaffected at the time. This thesis is also an attempt to conform to the wider current digital humanities' task of creating platforms that amplify the voices of those most in need of being heard and pursuing projects that perform the work of recovery and resistance among else (Gold and Klein, 2019, p. ix). As Risam puts it, the absence of colonial subjects' voices both in

colonial archives and in digital humanities projects suggests the need for representation and recovery (2018, Section 1). This is because colonial violence is reproduced in the production of digital knowledge, by continuing to center the Global North and decenter Indigenous communities all around the world (2018, Section 1).

The tensions produced by colonial violence do not only manifest themselves in the analogue and digital cultural records produced by world heritage institutions, but also in the writing of this thesis, as well-established practices around academic writing may collide with the ethics of writing about Indigenous cultural heritage. To bring one example, popular handbooks on social research methods such as Bryman's do not address ethics in social research from an Indigenous perspective, even in later editions (2016). The philosophical underpinnings of academic writing are based on Western traditions that often promote 'objectivity' instead of subjectivity through privileging research results over the standpoints that produce them and decoupling the text from authorial agency.

Indigenous style guides on the other hand put Indigenous participation at the centre (Younging, 2018). The author of this thesis is geographically and culturally distant from matters of Indigenous Oceanic heritage and yet sufficiently curious and interested in the topic so as to want to write about it. The question of the 'right' to do this is a fraught one. There is an acute understanding of the potential ethical pitfalls of the studies described in this thesis, even as it is based on a review of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices in order to summarise the areas that are problematic from a socioethical perspective. The author does not wish to assume a position of expertise, but rather present a complex area of inquiry with the aim of encouraging decolonisation practices in the area of digitisation of cultural heritage. Readers are urged to exercise their own judgement and caution while reading this thesis as areas of lacunae from a postcolonial perspective are possible.

3 Research framework and similar studies

This thesis has been designed with the aim of answering three research questions:

1) What are the social and ethical concerns associated with the digitisation of Indigenous cultural heritage materials originating in Oceania?
2) To what extent do heritage institutions digitise collections originating in Oceania in a culturally responsive manner?
3) What actions can digitising institutions undertake as part of a decolonising process with regard to the way information is made available to the public?

In terms of existing empirical studies in the area, Francis and Liew published a paper in 2010 on policy and protocols followed by cultural heritage organisations in Australia and New Zealand with regard to digitisation of Indigenous heritage. The research questions were related to the socio-cultural issues involved, whether these provided reference for the digitisations, and what the accessibility policies were with focus on intellectual property rights. The existing literature up to that point was found to be divided into two main areas: law and policy, and societal/cultural influences. According to the findings, even though cultural heritage organisations play an active role in engaging with Indigenous concerns which are not recognised legally, they should be making their policies easily available on the Web and recognising their influence as socio-cultural agents. The authors identified as areas for further research more cross-national studies and investigation of digitisation policies by Indigenous people themselves.

In 2012, Singh and Blake published the results of a study comprising of open-ended interviews with people from the Pacific diaspora and museum specialists all based in Australia, on the subject of culturally sensitive consultation. At the end of their paper the authors suggest that the next step is to ask whether digitisation empowers the varied communities served by museums, and who benefits from the digitisation of Pacific cultural collections. There are several factors at play here: in a region so fragmented and so variously affected by colonisations and nationalisms, what kind of group priorities with regard to digitisation of cultural heritage have taken form? Who gets to 'represent' the communities during consultation processes and by what criteria? How do the selected 'representatives' feel about their role? The outcomes of this study were subsequently combined with a survey of 25 museum websites from around the world showcasing Pacific cultural heritage objects and presented in a 2013 paper by Singh et al. which concluded with a

checklist for digitisation for institutions. The checklist focuses on issues of consultation, collaboration, ownership, copyright and object management and was abstracted in the absence of specific guidelines for the digitisation of Pacific cultural collections.

Risam and Cárdenas similarly identified a gap in guides for designing digital humanities projects with social justice in mind following a course they offered on de/post/colonial humanities at Indiana University in 2015. This led to the creation of an open online platform called Social Justice and the Digital Humanities[3], where contributors are invited to add suggestions to consider when designing projects. This list is not geographically limited or referring to Indigenous cultural heritage exclusively. It provides a comprehensive guide divided into the categories of access, material conditions, method, and ontologies and epistemologies.

The present thesis consists of two qualitative empirical studies, with the first addressing question number 1, and the second addressing questions number 2 and 3. It has drawn inspiration from the work that has been carried out by the aforementioned researchers with the objective of furthering research in the area. More specifically, and similarly to Singh et al. (2013), it provides a cross-cultural perspective which was a limitation in Francis and Liew (2010), with the goal of presenting the socio-cultural issues involved in digitisation from different national angles. Similarly to Francis and Liew (2010), the epistemological stance for these studies is developed from the societal aspects behind the practice of digitisation rather than the technical and as such conforms to the interpretivist position. Both studies presented here aim to disentangle complex cultural environments, first by presenting how Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars grapple with the ethical and legal aspects of digitisation and secondly by applying these interpretations in actual digitisation environments.

The first study broadens the two categories reported by Francis and Liew, namely law and policy and societal influences (2010). Whilst law and policy remains an autonomous key area, societal and cultural issues were found to affect and be affected by objects and people, leading to a split between these two categories. Available online are some exemplary digitisation projects concerning Indigenous and/or colonial cultural heritage which were designed on the basis of a decolonising perspective and are thus rated highly by social justice humanists in terms of their architecture and quality of information. These include Livingstone Online: Illuminating Imperial Exploration[4], the Indigenous Digital Archive[5], and the Early Caribbean Digital Archive[6] which has an explicit goal of providing a space of revision and decolonisation of the

[3] http://criticaldh.roopikarisam.com/criticaldh/access/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020)
[4] https://www.livingstoneonline.org/about-this-site (Last accessed on 26 September 2020).
[5] https://omeka.dlcs-ida.org/s/ida/page/home (Last accessed on 26 September 2020).
[6] https://ecda.northeastern.edu/ (Last accessed on 26 September 2020).

archive[7]. These websites represent, according to social justice humanists, commendable examples of digitisation activities that have been designed with post/decolonial aims in mind. Since the majority of Oceanic artefacts have been digitised as parts of wider museum collections however, where decolonisation has not necessarily been part of digitisation strategies, it is considered important to examine these from a socioethical perspective and extract conclusions and suggestions for ongoing amendments. Van Hooland criticises the cultural sector for not having a tradition of self-reflective evaluation and tending not to confront initial expectations with the final outcome of projects (2009, p. 3). Furthermore, he problematises the term 'digitisation project' in itself, as revealing of 'the very problematic short term quality of digitization activities' and asserts that a critical analysis of the digitisation discourse within the cultural heritage sector is badly needed (2009, p. 3).

The five examples selected as objects of this study provide snapshots of prolific digitisation activities that have been taking place since the late '90s and which commonly conform to hegemonic institutional designs. The thesis concludes with recommendations for digitising institutions. Both the second empirical study and the checklist presented approach the matter of cultural responsiveness from the point of view of user experience, i.e. by assessing the quality of information and the ways in which this is relayed on websites that display Indigenous Oceanic cultural heritage materials. Whereas other checklists such as Singh et al.'s (2013) and the Social Justice and the Digital Humanities platform would better serve as springboards prior to digitisations, some of the recommendations of this study could be useful for institutions that have already carried out digitisations lacking in cultural responsiveness and who wish to make website improvements on an ongoing basis.

[7] https://ecda.northeastern.edu/home/about/ (Last accessed on 26 September 2020).

4 Oceanic cultural heritage – a Western perspective overview

[When] quoting or using books written by non-Indigenous People as a reference point, it's possible that you will be repeating inaccurate, possibly offensive accounts. It's also possible that stories and Traditional Knowledge in these books were printed without permission.
(Younging[8])

A brief history of Pacific cultures and histories is offered by Thomas in his updated edition of *Oceanic Art* (2018). There he describes the complex prehistory of Oceania, with New Guinea having been inhabited for more than forty thousand years and most of the other Pacific archipelagos much later by speakers of Austronesian languages, leading to a plethora of regional differences (p. 12). Local variations were complicated by trade, migration and interaction both before European contact and especially after (Thomas, 2018, p. 15). In the western Pacific, adaptation to different geographical environments such as coastal areas and mountains led to the emergence of distinct lifestyles resulting in social differentiation even within small areas. At the same time, motifs and styles spread due to bartering of objects, leading to mutual influences, appropriations and the acquisition of different meanings from one society to another (Thomas, 2018, p. 16).

Although the first encounters between Europeans and Islanders took place in the sixteenth century, sustained interaction began in the second half of the eighteenth century with colonisation. French Polynesia, which includes the Society Islands, the Marquesas, the Austral Islands, the Tuamotu archipelago and New Caledonia all came under French control and still remain within it albeit with a degree of local autonomy (Thomas, 2018, p. 23). Fiji and the Solomon Islands were British colonies until the 1970s; Papua New Guinea has experienced German, British and Australian rule as well as Japanese occupation; the New Hebrides was under joint Anglo-French administration, whereas American Samoa and Guam are formally part of the United States and Hawaiians and Māori are minorities within settler societies (Thomas, 2018, p. 24).

During this time, Islanders continued not only to travel and encounter other Pacific peoples and artefacts but were also introduced to European trade objects such as iron, cloth and guns. The work of Oceanian artists itself encompasses a wide variety of forms, techniques and materials such as wood, stone, metal, flowers, leaves and spider webs (Kjellgren, 2014, p. 11). The pace of exchanges between Islanders increased, as artefacts were obtained and given

[8] https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/19-12-Style-Guide-Media-Version-v8-1.pdf (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

away at different places. This was also the time when European collecting of Oceanic objects intensified, leading to the dispersion of cultural heritage in institutions all over the world, often without satisfactory documentation (Thomas, 2018, p. 19). According to Thomas, European preferences and interests had ramifications in the work produced, both for local use and for that destined for sale as Indigenous artists responded to contact with Europeans by introducing new materials and styles to their practices (2018, pp. 8, 9, 20). European artists were in turn influenced by Oceanic exchanges. As a result, even though Oceanic cultures differ profoundly from European ones, the histories of Europeans and Islanders have been entangled for a long time (Thomas, 2018, p. 8).

Whereas Thomas emphasises the positive aspects of European and Pacific exchanges, Kjellgren notes that the arrival of Western colonists had devastating consequences for the peoples and arts of Oceania. Apart from the fact that the introduction of manufactured goods supplanted earlier Indigenous art forms, the introduction of previously unknown diseases on the islands which in some cases eradicated as much as ninety percent of the population also meant the interruption of many art traditions. Conversion to Christianity involved the destruction of countless sacred images and objects even though ironically many of the finest works of sculpture were brought to Europe by missionaries as evidence of evangelical success (Kjellgren, 2014, p. 19).

Western understandings and definitions of 'art' are often disputed when applied to non-Western and postcolonial contexts. What is labelled as Oceanic art for example was understood differently by the Indigenous populations that created the artefacts that are exhibited in world museums today. Western publications present a wide variety of objects under the label Oceanic art (Brunt et al., 2012; Kjellgren, 2014; Thomas, 2018). Thomas defends the use of the term by stating that the Western domain of 'art' might even be defined too narrowly by Oceanic standards, as it excludes ephemeral art, self-decoration, outdoors spatial arrangements and animals as loci of artistic elaboration. At the same time, he acknowledges that Oceanic cultural milieux do not share Western premises about what art is, with meanings being shared unequally between insiders and outsiders, men and women, or sometimes being kept secret altogether, thus rendering the objects powerful. Western publications also prompt a 'narrative treatment of themes that had previously been handled allusively'. Ideas around what constitutes 'traditional' art vary extensively and have been subject to change in the Pacific, with objects produced during different time periods merely expressing a particular moment in the cultural process without status allocation (Thomas, 2018).

Thomas asserts that the most significant principle of differentiation in political authority in Pacific societies was and remains gender, even more so than genealogy or rank (2018, p. 26). Myth accounts for the juxtaposed capacities of men and women, with rituals frequently re-enacting the eclipse of

female power following male appropriation. Rewarding understandings of the meaning of Oceanic art frequently depend upon rich contextual knowledge which is often difficult to reconstruct, making interpretation of museum pieces that have been abstracted from their contexts a particularly arduous task (Thomas, 2018, pp. 28, 31). This is because a sense of object symbolism is not in itself sufficient without a deeper understanding of Indigenous ideas (Thomas, 2018, p. 31). Furthermore, the meaning of a particular motif in one culture may have a different significance in another culture where the same image is concerned, with interpretations varying radically even between closely related cultures (Kjellgren, 2014, p. 13).

Both Thomas and Kjellgren use a mixture of past and present tense when discussing the functions of Oceanic art, which is problematic since the historical presentation of the role of Indigenous practices happens at the expense of making their continuities clear, as illustrated in the rest of this section. More specifically, Thomas writes that '[art] forms were usually not looked at with the kind of detached contemplation that seems to characterize the Western viewer's observation of works in art museums; they were rather used to express accomplishments or parade power' (Thomas, 2018, p. 31). Kjellgren writes that objects were integral parts of broader religious and cultural practices, including ceremonies, chant, dance, oral traditions and hunting among else. In effect, all Oceanic objects were originally functional, created as they were to fulfil specific roles, with the supernatural being considered an integral element of daily life. The presence of hundreds of separate religions in the region, each with its own name, distinctions and classifications was reflected in the endless varieties of supernatural entities depicted in art, with the main categories being deities, ancestors and spirits. Beyond sacred sculpture and painting, one common trait across the whole Pacific is the human body as a central focus for visual expression. Apart from tattooing, which was one of the most widespread body art forms, people also used a wide range of materials such as paint, leaves, flowers, whale ivory, pearlshell, turtleshell and metals in order to decorate their bodies (Kjellgren, 2014).

Finally, it is worth adding a few words with regard to the role of the artist in Oceania and the current status of art in the region. The role of the artist in Oceania differs markedly from the role of the artist in the West according to Kjellgren (2014, p. 18). The gender divide has already been mentioned, with male and female practices being separate and using different mediums. Despite the fact that most artists were not full-time specialists, there were a few cases of master practitioners who did become professionals. Also, even though artists were far from anonymous in their own societies, their names were not recorded when their creations were collected for exhibition in Western museums and have been lost. In saying that, in some cultures the creators were considered to be the persons who commissioned the creation or sponsored the ceremony in

which the valuable object was used, and not the individuals who made it (Kjellgren, 2014, p. 18).

In the lead-up to decolonisation, some of the fledgling new nations such as Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and Vanuatu sponsored art with the aim of incorporating cultural heritage into the construction of national identities. Cultural centres were opened and the revival of certain selected arts was promoted (Thomas, 2018, p. 24). These processes however have been hotly debated by ethnologists and scholars of postcolonialism. This is because official support also operated as a factor of exclusion and concentration of power. As a consequence, '[the] twenty-first century's opening decades were marked by new opportunities… but also by the exacerbation of inequality and both local and global environmental risk' (Thomas, 2018, p. 195).

5 Theory

This thesis is informed by postcolonialist theories which have their origins in the 1970s. The material that the studies presented here are based on illustrates different viewpoints, such as cultural, legal and ethnological from a postcolonial perspective. As McLeod warns, the range of issues covered by the term postcolonialism is large and sometimes contradictory, but even though there is no one singular postcolonialism, the term can be productively articulated as an enabling and critical concept (2010, pp. 3-4).

The period which started in the last decades of the eighteenth century and extended until the beginning of the twentieth was marked by the colonisation of the Pacific region by the Europeans. What started as sporadic visits, developed into incursions 'that became more consequential and injurious' with the result that by the end of the period 'virtually every island was under some kind of colonial regime' (Thomas, 2010, p. 1). According to McLeod, acts of colonialism were perpetuated 'by justifying to those in the colonising nations the idea that it is right and proper to rule over other peoples, and by getting colonised people to accept their lower ranking' (2010, p. 20). In other words, colonialism 'establishes ways of thinking' and 'operates by persuading people to internalise its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumptions of the colonisers as regards the ways they perceive and represent the world' (McLeod, 2010, pp. 20-21). Furthermore, colonial discourse is used as a means of justifying and normalising a set of concrete acts such as violent resource extraction.

McLeod asserts that '[colonial discourses] form the intersections where language and power meet' (2010, p. 21). Language orders reality into meaningful units, which in turn tell us which values are important, and how we learn to differentiate between superior or inferior qualities (McLeod, 2010, p. 21). The term postcolonialism does not signal the end of colonial values, nor does it imply that the ills of the colonial past have been cured. Rather, as McLeod puts it, postcolonialism recognises both historical continuity and change (2010, p. 39). The perpetuation of colonial discourses and practices could be attributed to their productive function: whereas on one hand they enable colonisers to feel important and superior, the complicity of the colonised is gained by enabling some people to derive a sense of self-worth and benefit through participation in the Empire (McLeod, 2010, p. 45). Theories of colonial discourses can be particularly fruitful in the area of digitisation of cultural heritage. This is because these theories are interested in the ways in which *material reality* and *cultural representations* are intertwined and mutually supportive, making the realm of knowledge inseparable from the influence and operation of power (McLeod, 2010, pp. 45-46).

Following their independence from Empire, nation states were formed on the basis of new imaginative foundations, such as the notions of collectivity and belonging, and a mutual sense of community (McLeod, 2010, p. 82). In order to support these foundations, 'new symbols and devices came into existence', such as national anthems, flags and official or unofficial images (Hobsbawm, 1983, pp. 1-14). Attitudes to nationalism are fraught with conflict. On one hand, 'the myth of the nation has proved highly potent… in forging effective resistance to colonialism (McLeod, 2010, p. 90). On the other hand, nationalist agendas served the interests of intellectuals and leaders of independence movements who accepted new territorial borders often invented by the colonising nations (McLeod, 2010, pp. 90-91). Nationhood created a context within which it was not uncommon for the interests of Indigenous inhabitants to be sidestepped as a manifestation of the fact that 'settler nationalisms were perhaps not too remote from colonialist discourses' in places like Australia, New Zealand and Canada (McLeod, 2010, p. 92). Elsewhere, Indigenous people organised themselves into anti-colonial nationalist movements, thus suspending but not surpassing differences of tribe, region and caste (McLeod, 2010, p. 92). A large area of inquiry within postcolonial studies is indeed the extent to which the idea of the nation, which emerged in Western history due to specific economic circumstances, is an enabling tool for anti-colonial nationalist movements that challenge their subservience to Western views of the world (McLeod, 2010, p. 125).

In his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon describes processes of decolonisation from an African perspective and analyses the shifting role of the so-called 'native intellectual' in cultural practices. McLeod understands the term 'native intellectual' as referring to 'the writers and thinkers of the colonised nation who have often been educated under the auspices of the colonising power' (2010, p. 103). Fanon identifies three phases in the evolution of the native intellectual: the first one he calls 'the period of unqualified assimilation' during which 'the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power' (1963, p. 222). In the second phase, the native intellectual makes a return to the Indigeneity from which they have been cut off, and as they still stand apart from the people, they can only laud cultural traditions from the past, ignoring present struggles (McLeod, 2010, p. 104). The third phase is what Fanon calls 'the fighting phase' (1963, p. 222). This comes about when the native intellectual realises that the proof of the nation does not lie in inert cultural traditions but in the people's fight against oppression. During this phase, '[traditional] culture is mobilised… and transformed in the process' (McLeod, 2010, p. 105).

There are at least three points that Fanon makes and which would be useful to keep in mind with respect to the question of power dynamics in the context of cultural heritage, serving as warnings. In the first instance, Fanon criticises the reification of culture through the statement that '[culture] has

never the translucidity of custom; it abhors all simplification' (1963, p. 224). Fanon not only sees custom as the deterioration of culture, but also asserts that attaching oneself to abandoned traditions means going against the current of history and opposing one's own people (1963, p. 224). This is a position that has been taken up and debated by the ethnologists of the Pacific as briefly discussed in this thesis. The following two warnings have to do with the agents of culture: on one hand Fanon comments on the anxiety induced in the native intellectual when they utilise techniques and language borrowed from the stranger and create cultural achievements through behaving in fact like a foreigner (Fanon, 1963, p. 223). On the other hand, Fanon warns about the role of the Indigenous middle class that uses its privileged education in order to replicate the colonial administration of the nation for its own profit (McLeod, 2010, p. 108). The self-interests of this class come into conflict with those of the people and essentially betray them (McLeod, 2010, p. 107).

Beyond the conflictual interests of the ethnic groups and classes that inhabit the newly-formed nations, there is another factor to take into account when discussing cultural heritage both in the analogue and the digital record, and that is the role of the diaspora. On a general level within postcolonialism, the term diaspora signifies 'the movement and relocation of groups of different kinds of peoples throughout the world' (McLeod, 2010, p. 236). On a more specific level, diasporic communities living together in one country 'acknowledge that "the old country" – a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore – always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions' (Cohen, 1997, p. ix). Regardless of whether the members of the diaspora have experienced migration themselves, or whether they are influenced by the migration histories of their ancestors, the emotional links experienced to a distant location can be powerful and strong (McLeod, 2010, p. 236). This results in a role of agency when it comes to cultural heritage. Members of the diaspora are active in how culture is created and represented in their country of residence and often embody the links between the two countries.

This role of representation is contested however, because even as diasporas are implicated in the construction of a common 'we', they are differentiated and heterogeneous spaces due to a multitude of differences such as those of gender, class, religion, language and generation (Brah, 1997, p. 184; McLeod, 2010, p. 238). These differences render diaspora spaces 'dynamic and shifting, open to repeated construction and reconstruction, contestation and change' (McLeod, 2010, p. 238). Empirical research conducted on consultation practices with regard to digitisation practices of Oceanic cultural heritage as presented in this thesis, validates the claims of postcolonial theorists by capturing this added layer of contested territory. As the academic and digital humanities centres rely on diasporic contributions, the members of diaspora who are called upon to represent Indigenous cultures grapple with the

difficulties of doing justice to cultural phenomena from which they themselves might have been excluded or distanced. This is particularly problematic when Indigenous cultures are in a constant state of flux and at the same time represented as static by the former colonisers or settler nations. For how does one get to 'package' and transmit cultural meanings that have been dislodged from their places of origin?

Huggan problematises the concept of the *postcolonial exotic* both in terms of its impact on culture and on a metalevel, that of the academy profiting from cultural difference as commodity. Postcolonial cultures are characterised by oppositional practices at the same time as they operate within a global apparatus of assimilative codes (Huggan, 2001, p. 28). Huggan therefore wishes to draw a distinction between postcolonialism as anti-colonial practice 'that works towards the dissolution of imperial epistemologies and institutional structures', and postcoloniality 'that capitalises both on the widespread circulation of ideas about cultural otherness and on the worldwide trafficking of culturally "othered" artefacts and goods' (2001, p. 28). As McLeod puts it, in commodifying exotic cultural objects for consumption, marketing strategies effectively neutralise their disruptive potential and turn their cultural marginality into unique selling points (2010, p. 311). The role of cultural institutions in this context should be subject to continuous assessment.

(Neo)colonialist processes have long objectified Indigenous people, a situation which can and does become accentuated in the digital cultural record. The points raised in this theoretical framework inform the studies presented in the thesis which provide illustrations of the pitfalls that are created when Indigenous or minority standpoints are sidestepped or suppressed and show both the extent to which this is problematised by Indigenous scholars and the actions that cultural heritage organisations need to take in order to build more just worlds. Within this context, any eventual conflicts between theory and technological practice become irrelevant: the Web 2.0 world offers new possibilities for the emergence of Indigenous standpoints both within and outside academic centres, leaving open questions around the role of cultural heritage institutions.

6 Methodology

Since the thesis presents and discusses the results of two studies, this section is divided into two subsections, each explaining the methodological tools that were used towards designing each one of them. Even though both studies are qualitative, the problems, ethical or otherwise, surrounding them are distinct and explained. In the first case, the literature analysis reveals the bias that is produced through the concentration of academic centres in the Global North. The second case was more complicated, because even though the results of the first study formed the backbone of the assessment questions, the user experience perspective is hard to implement without risking offensiveness. The philosophical frameworks surrounding the definition of aesthetic image quality for example may be varied and quite distinct, but since further research is required the aim of the study is limited in delineating the areas of lacunae where further research is needed.

6.1 First study: Themes

The first study of this thesis is inductive and builds upon an analysis of the literature resulting in gradually emerging themes operating within the postcolonial theory framework, which form the basis for answering the first research question regarding the social and ethical concerns associated with the digitisation of Oceanic cultural heritage materials. Data was harvested from book publications and scholarly articles compiled via the Web. Searches were conducted both through institutional databases and search engines with the aim of locating material relevant to Indigenous Oceanic cultural heritage and digitisation. The material includes both theoretical/cultural analyses and empirical studies in an effort to break down interdisciplinary boundaries and practices. The method used for analysis is based on Braun and Clarke's six phases, namely familiarisation with data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and report production (2006).

Because this investigation into Indigenous Oceanic cultural heritage started without an authorial background on Oceanic cultural policies or Oceanic digitisation practices, the lack of familiarity with the research area meant that no prior conceptions or expectations with regard to the categories that could potentially be found were carried over. As a result, the six-phase process was iterative rather than linear. A first instance of coding was already conducted during the literature search stage, which involved the reading of titles and abstracts and the categorisation of the data into thematic folders that were created in parallel with the harvesting process. The folders that emerged

contained three types of material; the first was geography-based, the second revolved around legal and societal issues and the third was activity or project based. Even though only the second folder was directly related to the topic in question, material from the other two was also selected for analysis.

Book content was analysed first because this provided a more thorough contextualisation which was needed by the researcher, before proceeding with the shorter and more conceptually fragmented texts of academic papers. Book passages deemed relevant for the research were filtered and copied. Thematic analysis of academic papers on the other hand was a more challenging process, because despite their short format, information on legal and ethical issues often branches out into other areas such as philosophy or politics. This was an intellectually stimulating process which required several iterations of the six phases. The material was manually coded in order to highlight the main conceptual categories that transpire from the literature. Key words and concepts such as maximalist and minimalist IP, Indigenous exclusion, representation and network society were noted according to a card system and subsequently mapped out and classified, leading to ontological clusters. The resulting first-level ontological classification consists of three major areas of socioethical concerns, presented in three sections with subcategories following code splitting. The first regards the cultural meanings and values of physical and digital objects, the second the legal frameworks under which digitisations take place, and the third the people and the communities who interact with digitised cultural heritage. The study is presented in the form of a descriptive narrative supported by quotes.

There is an important caveat with regard to the first empirical study which needs to be taken into account. The fact that academic and digitisation practices are carried out predominantly in constellations of urban centres often far removed from communities of origin leads to a bias, as the literature almost exclusively originates in the Global North, irrespective of whether Indigeneity is represented or not. The academic literature therefore commonly omits discussions of digitisations in the rest of Oceania. This is indicative of the inequalities within the Oceanic region, with Australia and New Zealand representing the central powerhouses and the rest of Oceania the blank spaces on the map. Both the literature selection and the analysis itself therefore confirm Risam's thesis that '[organizational] digital humanities has created a world shaped by centers and peripheries according to a global distribution of representation and power' (2018, Section 3). This is an important limitation of the thesis.

6.2 Second study: Digitisations

The second empirical study consists of an analysis of selected cultural heritage websites. The study looks into five institutional examples of digitisation activities concerning Oceanic cultural heritage materials that have been carried out in different parts of the world and which are freely available on the Web: the Spencer & Gillen project which represents Aboriginal Australia; the Fiji Virtual Museum collection; the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa which hosts both Māori and non-Māori heritage as well as collections from other parts of the Pacific; the French Musée du quai Branly online collections; and finally small digitised samples carried out by Cornell University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art as presented on the Artstor digital library. The selection of these projects/organisations guarantees sufficient width and depth in the analysis as well as geographical representation as the agents of digitisation operate under different legal frameworks and cultural practices. The effects of these aspects of digitisation which are lifted in the first study are then concretised here. The research results both in an assessment of the extent to which digitising organisations can be perceived as socio-cultural agents for change and to recommendations for decolonising practices from a user experience perspective.

The digitised collections are first presented separately, under a two-part structure which offers some background information, and content analysis and evaluation. In order to design this study, the results of the first study which lift the value of cultural objects, legal frameworks and Indigenous agency as the three key areas of socioethical concerns were taken into account. Furthermore, it was considered important to draw input from other empirical studies that have assessed institutional websites in terms of cultural responsiveness. Two papers in particular served as springboard for the design of this study: Srinivasan et al. (2009) and Francis and Liew (2010).

Srinivasan et al. were interested in ‘the processes by which knowledge is produced and represented within cultural institutions that are starting to open up the means of describing their collections to diverse stakeholder communities’ (2009). They set out to explore how museum objects can play a role in the creation and sharing of diverse forms of knowledge from a community perspective, and how knowledge can be appropriately represented in Web 2.0. practices. In order to do that, the researchers tested an experimental interface to the University of Cambridge’s Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology website from a Canadian Inuit and American museum student user experience perspective. The researchers found that the specialist language of the catalogue provided too little contextualisation for users to be able to make sense of objects in relation to their own needs, uses and understandings. They also identified a number of issues that need to be

rectified when constructing culturally responsive databases. These include static and disembedded systems that are not fit for purpose in an environment of dynamic knowledge production; lack of diverse inputs; lack of discursive conversation about objects; lack of images; and lack of social contextualisation of objects. Even though this was an isolated study from a non-Oceanic perspective, the findings highlight some key issues that set institutional databases on a backfoot in comparison to social networking sites. The study also provided recommendations for improvement such as the implementation of narratological tags, diverse inputs, the enablement of discursive conversations, high quality images and the provision of a blogging framework, all applicable in the Oceanic context as well (Brown and Nicholas, 2012).

Francis and Liew's project investigated the extent to which the rights of Indigenous peoples are being protected by policy and protocol documents through asking the question 'What are the fundamental characteristics of policies and protocols of cultural heritage organisations in Australia and New Zealand in relation to the digitisation of Indigenous cultural knowledge'. In order to answer this, Francis and Liew designed four sub-questions: a) Do heritage organisations in Australia and New Zealand structure digitisation policies that include reference to Indigenous cultural knowledge? b) What are the socio-cultural issues that are involved in digitising Indigenous cultural knowledge? c) How accessible to the public are digitisation policies on the Web? d) What protection exists for the cultural and intellectual property rights of Indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand and is this reflected in organisational policy? The research was based on a survey of the virtual face of heritage collections across Australia and New Zealand and resulted in the finding that many cultural heritage organisations employ policy measures in order to bridge the gap that exists between Anglo-American legislative development and Indigenous intellectual property rights.

Drawing inspiration from these two empirical papers and the theoretical perspectives resulting from the first study presented in this thesis, a checklist of eight questions was put together from the viewpoint of user experience. These are the following:

- What is the aesthetic quality of the images?
- What is the metadata quality with regard to images and descriptions? Is the terminology used in terms of categorisation and contextualisation easily understood?
- How are copyright and IP issues explained?
- Has cultural permission been sought?
- Are cultural sensitivities acknowledged and explained?
- Are there any access restrictions?
- Is there a participation role for Indigenous/minority community partners?
- Are the projects interactive and is social media embedded?

Roughly speaking, the first two questions refer to the value and meanings of objects and the ways in which these have been handled and relayed by the digitising institutions, the following four address legal and ethical concerns, whereas the last two touch on the role of Indigenous individuals and communities in shaping the activities. Even though all of the guiding questions are answered across each digitisation example, it becomes obvious to the reader that weight is not evenly distributed, with some aspects discussed more than others depending on the individual collection. For example, particular focus can lie on the descriptions, interactivity or Rights explanations depending primarily on where the strengths and weaknesses of each website lie. These deserve lifting as they provide material for a comparative discussion and recommendations for best practice presented in the final section of this thesis.

The first assessment question is the most challenging from a methodological perspective, particularly so because technical image metadata was found to be missing across all of the institutions examined. The technical quality of the images, which affects aesthetic reception, is taken to be a more relevant factor of cultural responsiveness than the managing and preservation qualities from a user experience perspective. This is because managing and preservation qualities are disputed areas as ideas about the treatment and use of digital objects within Indigenous groups vary. Even though these aspects are also lifted in the project discussion, the digitising institutions are not assessed on these features. Technical quality on the other hand is decisive in relaying the intended meanings of the cultural objects on display which should be the motivating factor behind the decision to digitise. If technical quality for whatever reasons is low, this can be perceived as culturally devaluing the object. The study uncovers ways in which this issue can be addressed. The fact that technical image metadata is not provided on the institutions' websites is not seen as deterrent from investigating the first question despite its subjective character. In their work on designing high level features for photo quality assessment, Ke et al. identified the perceptual criteria that people use for rating photos by ignoring metadata, since only a small fraction of images available online were found to contain them (2006). Image quality can be described in terms of image quality attributes, which according to Keelan may be classified into four categories, namely personal, aesthetic, artifactual and preferential, with aesthetic attributes being relevant to someone not directly involved in the picture taking process (2002). Phillips et al. define image quality 'as the perceived quality of an image under a particular viewing condition as determined by the settings and properties of the input and output imaging systems that ultimately influences a person's value judgment of the image' (2018, p. 32). In their work on image quality benchmarking, Phillips et al. analyse a range of global and local image quality attributes, such as exposure, colour, optical distortion, image nonuniformities, sharpness and resolution,

noise, texture blur, colour fringing, image defects and artifacts (2018, pp. 35-62).

Even though it is not within the scope of this thesis to analyse extensively image quality, comments are made with regard to some of these attributes while readers are invited to visit the websites and make their own assessments. The remaining seven questions upon which assessment was based are directly drawn from the results of the first study. These reveal the areas of information quality, authorship and copyright, cultural permission, respect for cultural sensitivities, access restrictions, the participation role of Indigenous communities and website interactivity as the backbone of socioethical concerns with regard to digitisations. Because this thesis understands digitisation as a process that extends past the initial publication of digital objects and accompanying metadata as the locus of exercise and shifting expressions of power, these areas should be subject to continuous interrogation.

An initial research problem was whether the type of digitising organisation, i.e. virtual museum or digital library mattered. In the end it was decided to analyse both virtual museums and digital libraries, partly because the roles of GLAM institutions have become blurred in the digital era. At the same time, it was thought that basing the analysis on different types of institutions would leave open the possibility of finding an answer to this question after the analysis had been conducted. This is not however treated as a research question per se. Another research problem was how many and which websites should be studied. Due to space restrictions, the number was limited to five. At the same time, this is a sufficient sample representing different geographical areas as it was deemed important to include collections from different types of nations, such as predominantly white settler (Australia and New Zealand), Indigenous majority (Fiji) and Western (France and the USA). The word nations is used intentionally here instead of regions, in order to highlight the predominant role that national frameworks and strategies have come to take in terms of cultural heritage management in the postcolonial setting. This is an issue that is discussed in the course of the first study. Finally, some comparisons between the digitised collections were drawn and areas of strengths and weaknesses were identified in each one of them which may be applicable to digitisation activities in general.

Other initial questions, such as whether research focus should be placed on tangible or intangible heritage, old or new objects or images of people, or natural history heritage, were quickly sidestepped after the research started. During the literature coding phase it became apparent that the socioethical concerns were common and overrode the type of heritage and object concerned, whereas in the second study the digitisations were found to be not object specific. This facilitates the research and at the same time illustrates an interesting philosophical conundrum, in that according to a certain Western perspective the aura of physical objects is lost in the digital environment,

whereas according to a specific Oceanic perspective the material qualities of the objects are not as important as the meanings they carry. Some of these aspects are discussed in the first study.

7 STUDY 1: Themes

Analysis of the literature on the subject of digitised Indigenous Oceanic cultural heritage reveals three main areas of socioethical concerns. The first refers to the value attached to cultural objects according to different cultural environments. Section 7.2 is dedicated to the second area of socioethical concerns which deals with legal issues such as copyright and ownership, whereas section 7.3 deals with what is probably the most important area of socioethical concern: that of the individuals and the communities who represent Indigeneities and their standpoints.

7.1 SECTION 1: Value

The study begins with a presentation of three Western cultural critics who were selected as representative of discourses around the *aura* of cultural objects as a marker of value and authenticity. Departing from Benjamin's seminal text, Berger and Betancourt provide their own distinct responses to it, illustrating a certain evolution of thought up until the digital age. This includes changes in the functions of objects, which have been described in chronological terms but are more likely to have been overlapping for a long time. These functions have been identified as religious, political and commercial, with cult, exhibition and commodification values attached to them respectively. Other contested key concepts discussed by the theorists are the role of the author who interprets and presents information around the object, the fragmentation of meanings and objects, and the issue of access. From an Oceanic perspective, the overview presented after the Introduction makes reference to the multiplicity and variety of meanings of similar types of objects even across kin cultures. Section 7.1 expands on the divergence of Oceanic outlooks with regard to objects and presents the concepts of significance and relationality as more important than the materiality of physical and digital objects.

7.1.1 Some Western perspectives: The aura of authenticity and the aura of the digital in Benjamin, Berger and Betancourt

The way humans perceive objects is an important area of investigation within several disciplines, such as neuroscience, psychology, philosophy and archaeology, which all systematically deal with the question of recognition of physical or digital objects. The impact of these types of knowledge on the

domain of digitisation of cultural heritage materials is however debatable. The fact that objects are prototypically invested with meanings underlies the importance of adopting or developing theoretical frameworks that are incorporated into digitisation processes. Furthermore, closer engagement with the multiplicity of Indigenous ideas around the potency of objects opens up new areas of inquiry as revealed by the literature presented in this section.

Within the Western ideological framework, one of the most prominent figures is undoubtedly Walter Benjamin. In ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, first published in 1935, Benjamin focuses on the *uniqueness* and *authenticity* of a work of art as key qualities that reproduction cannot capture. If anything, reproduction depreciates the quality of the object’s *presence*, affects its *authority* and disrupts *tradition*. By creating a stiff dichotomy between the object’s *permanence* and the reproduction’s *transitoriness*, Benjamin argues that the field of perception is affected through ‘adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality’ (1999, p. 217).

Here, Benjamin emphasises the role of the physical work of art within a first chronological stage of object use, namely its *ritual* function, first of a magical and then of a religious kind (1999, p. 217). According to Benjamin, it is the ritual function of the object that imbues it with *aura*, which is defined as a ‘unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be’ (1999, p. 236). *Unapproachability* is thus interpreted as a major quality of the cult image. Through mechanical reproduction however, the work of art ceases to be dependent on ritual and becomes a *political* tool, by which stage its *exhibition* value is superimposed on its *cult* value. What is more, Benjamin understands that the hidden political significance of photographs requires the obligatory use of *captions* in an entirely different way than, say, the title of a painting does. As a matter of historical interpretation, captions are subject to authorship. The question of who gets to author becomes therefore a matter of great significance. Long predating the explosion of Web 2.0, Benjamin sounds ambivalent about the dissolution of the distinct roles that the *author* and the *public* had: ‘At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer… Literary licence is now founded on polytechnic rather than specialized training and thus becomes common property.’ (1999, p. 225). The concept of *common property* should be emphasised, because it is central in the digitisation of cultural heritage materials. It will be examined in more depth throughout this thesis.

In 1972, John Berger uses Benjamin’s ideas in order to introduce a different perspective to the question of images as art reproductions. He agrees with the idea that an image is an appearance that has been *detached* from time and place, and emphasises the agency of the photographer, who selects a specific sight from an infinity of other possible sights (2008, p. 10). The concept of *absence* also recurs here, in that not only do images outlast what they represent, but they also show how the subject had once been seen by other people. The *historicity* of representation is thus reintroduced, albeit with a

different twist. Berger is completely against the *cultural mystification* of the past, arguing that if works of art are made unnecessarily remote, the well of the past will offer us fewer conclusions from which we can draw in order to act. By the term mystification, Berger means 'the process of explaining away what might otherwise be evident' (2008, pp. 15-16). He is very critical of the agents of mystification, namely the privileged minorities which are inventing histories that retrospectively justify the role of the ruling classes.

Berger describes the process by which the uniqueness of art objects is destroyed through reproduction, thus *fragmenting*, multiplying and diversifying the meanings of objects. As the work of art travels to the spectator, rather than the spectator to the work of art, meaning is detached from what the original says and focuses instead on what it is, i.e. *the original of a reproduction* (2008, p. 21, emphasis in the original). Whereas Benjamin assumed that reproduction affects the authority of the object, Berger argues on the contrary that it enhances it, because the value of the object now depends upon its *rarity*. And he introduces a third stage to the evolution of object use, namely *commerce*, which follows ritual and political uses. But just because modern society has done away with magic and religion, this does not mean that the work of art has been disinvested from religiosity: the mere evidence of survival of an object guarantees its treatment as a *holy relic*.

Benjamin had identified the increasing importance of *statistics* in the theoretical sphere as a characteristic of modern society (1999, p. 217). Berger complements this observation by identifying *information* as another rising phenomenon, a consequence of meanings becoming transmittable, carrying no special authority within them. Berger complements Benjamin in another way also: when he talks about the role of language, he highlights how words, in their own ways, change images and make images subservient to sentences which now assume their own verbal authority (2008, p. 28). But unlike Benjamin, who begrudges the toppling of authorial authority, Berger grasps the opportunity to ask: 'to whom does the meaning of the art of the past properly belong? To those who can apply it to their own lives, or to a cultural hierarchy of relic specialists?' (2008, p. 32). It is these same questions that lie at the heart of this thesis. Berger is conscious of the fact that in the past it was the physical dimension of space and the experience of ritual as set apart from the rest of life that contributed to the exercise of *power* over art. The *ephemerality* of modern means of reproduction has deprived images of meaning according to Berger, equating their role to that of language, always shifting. This is a deeply political issue, because '[a] people or a class which is cut off from its own past is far less free to choose and to act as a people or class than one that has been able to situate itself in history' (Berger, 2008, p. 33). What renders the act of *interpretation* political is the exhibition or *display* value of the object, hosted as it is by cultural heritage institutions (McCrary, 2011). According to McCrary, 'interpretation is a social attempt to understand where we are in time, what

brought us to this point, and what things we should be passing down to our children' (2011).

Michael Betancourt's 2015 publication 'The Critique of Digital Capitalism' consists of five essays offering an analysis of the political economy of digital culture and technology. With a background in the arts and in cultural theory, Betancourt also picks on Benjamin's ideas, providing insights into what he calls 'the aura of the digital' and 'the aura of information'. In the current era, it is not only the meaning of art objects that gets fragmented but the physical world as a whole, governed as it is by the semiotic rules of digital computers which separate source from meaning. As a consequence, Betancourt argues, the technical capabilities 'obscure the nexus of capital, human agency, social reproduction, and physical production', reconfiguring human life as a *commodity* (2015, pp. iii, viii). This is a challenging picture that enthusiastic adopters of digital technology might overlook or disagree with, but which echoes the concerns expressed by other theorists of the 'balkanization and fragmentation of the public discourse' as Burri puts it (2014, p. 353), such as Sunstein and Pariser (2001 and 2011 respectively). Betancourt specifically uses the word *colonization* in order to describe the manner in which the digital transforms previous social activities into new forms of economic production (2015, p. ix).

Betancourt's aura of the digital is a reconfiguration of object perception, during which seeing-through becomes seeing-within, a transcendent vision (2015, p. 12). And because all digital objects share the same binary code form, Betancourt argues that unlike physical objects, they are all basically the same, despite the apparent form they take once they are interpreted by a machine (2015, p. 38). Elsewhere, he makes some dubious claims about digital reproductions being identical without change or loss, and not degrading or disappearing over time (2015, pp. 41, 45), before arguing that the idea that the digital is immaterial is a falsehood. Far from it, the digital 'is actually a physicality whose encounters with human actors produce the same divergence between object and form that is familiar in our encounters with language' (2015, p. 54).

Betancourt offers a reconceptualisation of Benjamin's 'aura' for the digital age, arguing that art objects have two distinct values, one residing in the physical object (*historical testimony*) and the other lying in the spectator's knowledge of the object's relationship to other, similar objects (*symbolic relationship*). It is within this context that the idea of 'aura' results from the role the work plays for its audience *sociologically*, meaning that the audience's access to the art work makes conflicts over 'intellectual property' inevitable (2015, p. 41). This is a very contentious area for Betancourt. He wonders what the 'uniqueness' of digital works consists of, in order to justify the separation between possession and access. Controlling access, he argues, reproduces a

conflict over whether non-object based works are entitled to the same treatment as object-based works (2015, p. 56).

Finally, Betancourt offers a third strand to the authorship question, previously covered by Benjamin and Berger. For Betancourt, individual authorship is not an idealised concept, but something that serves the ideology of automation and a valorisation process which 'requires both constant surveillance and the imposition of digital rights management (DRM) as a way to extract value from digital works' (2015, p. 94). The digital author is therefore also a commodity lacking human agency, because the choice to produce or to not produce has an equal commodity status (2015, p. 96). Furthermore, the state of information pitches multiple and equally valid interpretations against one another, with only one interpretation being immanent at any given moment (2015, pp. 123, 125). Even if at times Betancourt's writing can seem obfuscated, his analysis of the digital as a vector of possibilities warns of serious social consequences, threatening both political domination and political resistance due to the possibility of subversion of the messaging codes of both. Betancourt belongs to a tiny group of theorists that engage with a concept that is little-known and yet central in our social and political lives: that of *agnotology*, meaning the 'systemic uncertainty about the factuality of any claim made, any evidence presented, any empirical proof shown' (2015, pp. 149-150). Whereas pre-industrial societies' social structures self-replicated because information was less transmissible to those who might use it, Betancourt argues, in the context of digital capitalism, agnotology creates 'decoherence about social, political, and environmental conditions' (2015, p. 185). For him, it is the issue of human agency that remains a fundamental constraint on all production and value generation, as they are both social demands ultimately dependent upon it (2015, p. 187).

7.1.2 Some Indigenous Oceanic perspectives: authenticity as social construction and the importance of relationality

Benjamin's concerns around the loss of 'aura' and authenticity are particularly relevant in the (post)colonial context. While the next section deals with the legal aftermath of a long history of pillaging, including the policy of virtual reciprocation, it is logical to assume from a Western perspective that '[community] co-managed contextualizations of digitized cultural materials are never quite the same as having the objects within their context of origin' (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 314). This is because '[time] estranges people from the institutionalized objects that were once part of their communities, and the opportunity to reinstate the personal relationships between people and their cultural treasures diminishes as it passes' (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 314). For Newell, 'the sudden immediacy and physical presence of distant pasts' as

represented by physical objects on display provoke a kind of response that matters, as sensory and emotive responses are just as important as information and data analysis, which is the reason why museums still privilege the authentic object as central (2012, pp. 296-297). As objects may contain a particular potency, knowledge, and ancestral or spirit presences, a fertile area of exploration is to examine in what ways these attributes may or may not migrate into digital forms (Newell, 2012, p. 294). As it turns out, the picture is more complex when we turn to the multiplicities of Indigenous Oceanic perspectives.

In an example taken from the Melanesian context and as reported by Were (2015), Manžuch examines the notion of authenticity as a social construction 'embedded in a set of established and agreed practices' (2017, p. 10). The case study in question concerns the digitisation of wooden carvings used in funeral rituals by one particular tribe. Custom dictates that the carvings, made for a deceased person, are destroyed at the end of the ritual because their preservation and exposure seem dangerous to the community. Digitisation on the other hand offers a safe way of sustaining funeral traditions, leading to the creation of three-dimensional models of the carvings that allow a detailed examination of their various elements (Manžuch, 2017, p. 10). This example offers a different perspective to Western understandings of authenticity and is not an isolated case, as the practice of abandoning elaborate objects after their ceremonial use is common elsewhere in the region. Drawing on other examples, Bolton makes the assessment that Melanesian museum curators are less concerned with the objects themselves and more with how physical and digital collections can be used to address contemporary issues (2001, p. 231). Newell similarly reports that in many Melanesian societies, 'the particular physical form of the original object is not as important as the significances it contains' (2012, p. 302). In some parts of the Western Pacific and among Māori people on the other hand, 'artefacts… may be regarded as embodying ancestral presence', with digitisation changing their affect (Newell, 2012, p. 297). In Vanuatu for example, 'objects may be regarded as vessels for spirit entities' which have the potential to transform the object into an item of danger, thus requiring careful handling by certain kinds of people only and in accordance with the right kind of rituals (Newell, 2012, p. 299).

In their research on consultation practices in Australia, Singh and Blake discovered little uniformity of opinion amongst people from the diaspora and other experts, which 'point to the immense cultural diversity in the Pacific' (2012, p. 100). Indicatively, representatives of cultures that have long been exposed to Christianity, such as Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands, 'could not think of anything that was secret or sacred' primarily because the taboos that are associated with certain traditional objects were felt to have been set aside following Christian practices (Singh and Blake, 2012, p. 100). Opinions also differed with regard to infringement of copyright and traditional

knowledge, with some respondents arguing that it 'is the knowledge relating to making the cultural object that is secret…, rather than the object itself (Singh and Blake, 2012, p. 101).

Māori cultures provide some of the best-documented ideas around the value of objects in Indigenous Oceania. Deirdre Brown, a curatorial and intellectual property advisor who has been involved with the application of augmented (AR) and virtual reality (VR) for the creation of virtual objects, people and environments made from real world examples, gives some background to Māori ideas around photographic reproductions. In the late 19th century, she says, some Māori were fearful of the camera and made reluctant sitters because they worried that their *mauri* (life force) would be taken from them. The moment it was realised however that photography could effectively replicate the *wairua* (spirit) of a person for posterity, they started regarding images as having their own *mauri* that is separate to the life force of their subjects. As a result, portraits to this day are being taken great care of and venerated as ancestors, even though they are not sustained by offerings as if they were human (2008, p. 63). Brown explains how AR and VR objects are considered a new type of *taonga* (treasure), which will also come to be regarded as having their own *mauri* despite the several challenges involved in the standard processes of production, storage and display (2008, pp. 59-60). This has implications for the treatment of virtual bodies of people as opposed to images of *koiwi* Māori (human remains) which are governed by many restrictions due to a loss of *mauri* (Brown, 2008, p. 70).

The New Zealand context is also interesting from the point of view of a transition to commodification, whereby the meaning of *taonga* becomes contested at the intersection between old and new uses. The rise of the Māori tourism 'industry' has inflected the language with commercial terminology which describes performance as 'product', venues as 'marketplaces' and audiences as 'consumers' (Brown, 2008, p. 69). For many people there is a loss involved in this process, because the description of a *taonga* as a product returns it to a 'non-aestheticized, and potentially kitsch, state, with a consequential loss of *mana* [status] and *tapu* [sacredness]' (Brown, 2008, p. 69). According to Ngata et al., '[there] is a tendency nowadays to use the term 'taonga' indiscriminately' regardless of its history (2012, p. 242). According to certain Māori tribes however, the *taonga* status of an object is *relationally determined*, meaning that it is the quality of a person's relationship with the object, including knowledge of its history, that determines whether the object is a *taonga* to the specific person (Ngata et al., 2012, p. 242). The implication of that is that the same object which can be 'just an artefact' to one person may be a *taonga* to another, and that artefacts which have become detached from their stories are only potential *taonga* until connections are re-animated. The different forms that *taonga* may take are therefore subject to infinite variation (Ngata et al., 2012, p. 242).

The concepts of *mana* and *tapu* are a specific example of cultural ideas around the value of objects producing legal consequences. Trademark applications are being assessed for risk of violation, prohibiting the registration of marks that are 'offensive', with the threshold of offensiveness being much higher than that of inappropriateness (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 312). For Burri however, the whole discussion on 'trade' and 'nontrade' values which pitches cultural protectionism against free-market proponents, is so extremely politicised it becomes counterproductive because it misses out the many nuances of the complex commerce and culture interlinks (2014, p. 351). At the same time, Burri cites literature concerned with trends which are driven by 'for-profit' organisations such as Google and Apple and which are remaking public memory institutions. Not only do commercial enterprises buy out copyright portfolios with cultural significance, but business models can change at any time whilst copyright law adds pressure on memory institutions to change their policies towards third parties (Burri, 2014, p. 357). De Largy Healy and Glowczewski describe for example the creation of the Google UNESCO portal as a problematic process, masking a logic of disappropriation of both peoples and researchers and the reappropriation of intellectual property and data usage which cannot be protected (2014, p. 51).

7.2 SECTION 2: Ownership

This part of the study begins with a description of the impact of colonialism on Indigenous cultures, which were objectified, reified and considered as 'out-of-time' and communal at the same time as Western colonial powers started developing intellectual property laws protecting individual rights. Originating in Enlightenment philosophy, the proliferation of liberal values served to marginalise Indigenous communities who were left outside the new legal frameworks following pillaging of their physical cultural heritage and its dispersion around the world. Intellectual property has become a highly contentious issue, resulting in conflict between the interests of the public domain and unacknowledged Indigenous rights. The section concludes with an outline of rules and policies that Oceanic cultural heritage institutions have been adopting in order to balance these conflicts of interest. As technology is progressing and the future social impact of current practices is as yet unknown, scholars are alerting with regard to the legal repercussions of future use of material.

7.2.1 Colonial subjects and copyright – a background

The previous section briefly touched on the ideas of common and intellectual property within the context of the digital era. This section serves to cover them more in depth, with Berger's concern about the agency of people who have been cut off from their own past at the centre of this discussion. A literature review in the area of digitisation of Indigenous heritage materials provides some fascinating insights into the interplay between technological and societal advances, and the tensions that are produced in the space between the two. Limiting harm to Indigenous perspectives is one of three factors identified in limiting digital access, the other two being economic interests and political activism (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, pp. 308-309).

In 'The Politics of Global Information Sharing: Whose Cultural Agendas Are Being Advanced?', Bowrey and Anderson argue that the agendas of open access, public domain and creative commons oscillate around terms such as freedom, openness and sharing which are firmly placed within liberal and democratic frameworks of action (2009, p. 480). More specifically, liberal ideology characteristically champions the cause of freedom, is committed to human progress and stresses both the power and the limitations of the human mind in designing a rational political and social order (Wall, 2015, p. 5). Liberal politics also presupposes some commitment to universalism and is inextricably linked to commercial activities, free markets and private ownership (Wall, 2015, pp. 5, 7; Menard, 2017, p. 1065).

This basic outline of liberalism is important in the context of this study, because postcolonial theorists have worked extensively on the idea of the origins of the nation in the West as coupled with the human ideals of the European 'Enlightenment' which gave rise to liberal values. More specifically, European nationalisms have been seen to represent 'the attempt to actualise in political terms the universal urge for liberty and progress (Chatterjee, 1986, p. 2). At the same time, a so-called 'liberal dilemma' arises. Chatterjee describes how on one hand nationalism carries with it the promise of liberty and universal suffrage, whilst on the other it can be complicit in undemocratic forms of government and domination (1986).

Another reason why an understanding of the liberal order is important, is that not only does freedom presuppose a degree of agency on all levels, individual, local and national, that all might contradict one another, but also because in liberal democratic societies the rights of individuals versus the public with regard to access have led to increased protections for the former at the expense of the latter (Menard, 2016, p. 1062). In other words, liberalism is premised on the two contradictory principles of 'Individual Freedom' and 'Means Equality' which cannot be fully satisfied at the same time, with intellectual property being a 'fictitious commodity', consisting of reified

knowledge that can be meaningfully exchanged in the market (Menard, 2016, pp. 1063, 1065).

A key problem is that the nature of the terms associated with the liberal order is not only shifting but has been formed to the partial exclusion of peoples, perspectives and cultures which was a result of colonial relations anchored in the mid-late 19th century. This is an issue which has not been dealt with adequately by cultural institutions which trace their origins in the colonial period. What is more, according to some theorists the adoption of these principles fosters historical amnesia about knowledge accumulation and continues to repeat significant historical exclusions. Bowrey and Anderson for example drive a wedge between Indigenous people and 'the public', which should not be assumed to share a common interest (2009, p. 480). Salmond highlights the divergence of group interests in a world of 'no obvious political alliances' by asserting that 'Open Source activists may find their popular politics of resistance to entrenched capitalist and legal power structures rejected by the very minority groups they may have once regarded as natural allies' (2012, pp. 222-223). Interestingly though, despite the conflictual nature between 'free culture' movements as a product of 'the liberal democratic ideal that information is for all' (Francis and Liew, 2010) and Indigenous communities who seek to treat knowledge more protectively, they both challenge institutional copyright, the former through disputing the concept of licensing images, and the latter through questioning the ownership of cultural treasures (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 311). When Menard argues that it is mass digitisation that has exposed the artificiality of IP rights (2016, p. 1065), he does so from a vantage point that is not concerned at all with Indigenous rights, and yet leading to the same conclusion.

The issue of the sociopolitical forces in the postcolonial context of cultural management, which is mentioned in the Introduction, is thus appearing at full force, because 'the discourses around access to knowledge continue to be largely conducted in global metropolitan centres… where Indigenous people remain outsiders…' (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 481). Furthermore, an interesting dynamic is at play here: within the context of maximalist intellectual property, 'while knowledge itself remains disassociated from cultural politics, contemporary economic agendas and new projects of governance', the exclusion of Indigenous peoples is explained away as cultural (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 482). This claim brings to mind Betancourt's thesis on the effect of technical capabilities as obscuring the nexus of capital, human agency, social reproduction, and physical production, with adverse political consequences. Elsewhere, Bowrey and Anderson explain how the 'culture' that is present in institutional practice is dissociated from questions of ownership, control and autonomy, thus marginalising localised contexts (2009, p. 496). Through their analysis, one also understands that the dichotomy between permanence and ephemerality in culture predates the digital era and

was symptomatic of a European interpretation of modern science as 'hard-line' and Indigenous knowledge as ephemeral (2009, p. 484). According to the authors, the cultural particularity of Enlightenment philosophy which lies at the heart of this interpretation and which was enabled within a context of industrial espionage, piracy and pillaging of texts and inventions, has been obfuscated and dislodged from any current copyright debates.

Bowrey and Anderson are firmly on the side of repatriation and restitution of stolen Indigenous property and are concerned that the current politics of access seek to prevent these actions. The term digital repatriation describes the process of 'a cultural heritage institution taking digital photographs of cultural items held in its collection but originating from a particular Indigenous community and making the… images available to the specific Indigenous community from where the items were obtained' (Corbett and Boddington, 2011). The problem however as Bowrey and Anderson see it, 'lies with the hierarchies of knowledge formation that support the legitimacy of western law in settler polities' without any real reference to the public and their interests (2009, p. 486). For, who is entitled to speak for the public? And how can one begin to understand the magnitude of the problem, when the multiplicity of Aboriginal languages and cultures to take one example was never recognised by colonial Australian administration and Aborigines made concessions in order to partake in political and economic power? (Michaels, 1994, p. 150).

The attribution of a homogenous pan-Indigeneity is the first of three ways that contribute, according to Bowrey and Anderson, to the continuing marginalisation of Indigenous subjects, because copyright and authorship are synonymous with private rights (2009, p. 488). Secondly, the Romantic philosophy that underpins Anglo copyright law, simultaneously reifies Indigenous culture as universally sacred and fundamentally opposed to commodity relations, therefore excluding it from copyright law that supports commodification (McKeough et al., 2002/2007). Romanticism, as a philosophical movement that developed during the age of Enlightenment is intimately associated with the concept of authorship, that most central of the foundational concepts associated with Anglo-American copyright doctrine (Jaszi, 1991). Finally, the assumption that Indigenous citizens have 'collective' rights also serves to exclude them from private property law. As a consequence of colonisation, 'under copyright law the copyright is not owned by the Indigenous community but by the creator of the derivative materials or the institution which employed or commissioned the creator' (Corbett and Boddington, 2011).

At the same time as Indigenous cultures are being reified and homogenised, in the eyes of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) they are treated as a bounded 'subset of the broader concept of heritage', operating 'in a traditional setting and context' which presumably

places them in the past and outside modernity, therefore marking Indigenous people as ‘different’ (WIPO, 2001, p. 26). Paradoxically, all these attempts at ‘bounding’, ‘packaging’ and homogenising Indigenous cultures coexist alongside the decontextualisation, disembodiment and fragmentation of Indigenous cultural objects that takes place when physical objects are removed and distributed around the world under the auspices of colonialism.

7.2.2 The digital era - current and future issues

Bowrey and Anderson argue that the same old colonial frameworks are reproduced when institutions rush to make available digital collections under the guise of ‘public domain status’ without appropriate permissions having been sought (2009, p. 494), whereas Brown and Nicholas estimate that a majority of institutional databases still seem to be repeating the architecture of their institutional hierarchy (2012, p. 320). However, other theorists such as Manžuch believe that ‘the issues of inequality, subjective judgment, [and] discrimination… that were caused by the decisions of memory institutions’ have been highlighted precisely because of the emergence of digital community archives (2017, p. 4). Manžuch specifically identifies biases in three areas that became obvious through digitisation processes: firstly, in terms of imposing a ‘Western approach’ when selecting and interpreting cultural heritage; secondly in the application of metadata schemas; and finally by providing access to digitised objects that are of a limited use in a community (2017, pp. 4-5). Manžuch clarifies that because some heritage objects are sacred and secret and their view should be restricted to persons of specific age or gender groups, open access comes into conflict with the community worldview (2017, p. 5).

Even though Brown and Nicholas see the disruptive capacities that digital technology can have with regard to existing hierarchies, they sound a note of caution when it comes to policing digital intellectual property due to ‘the intangibility of cyberspace, the possibility of infinite simulacra, and the rapid development of… personal interfaces’ (2012, pp. 308-309), a position that Manžuch would concur with (2017, p. 7). At the same time, it is exactly the development of these new interfaces that allows greater public access to institutionally held Indigenous treasures (2012, p. 310). Approaching the subject from a different perspective, Burri identifies limited access due to copyright concerns as a serious drawback, because ‘the user may be presented with a much skewed picture of our cultural heritage’ and become disinterested (2014, p. 355). But unlike Brown and Nicholas, Burri does not include Indigenous concerns in her list of barriers to access (2014, p. 356).

As a general outline, there is a whole spectrum of opinions on the contentious issue of traditional cultural heritage in the public domain: there are

those that argue that traditional cultural entities are in the public domain because they were never and are not protected by copyright; others suggest that copyright protection should start covering collectively produced works by reconsidering the originality threshold; whereas a third opinion is that a cultural entity cannot now become part of a system that has never regulated it and protected it before. The issue is further complicated by the fact that permitted exceptions to institutional copyright such as 'fair dealing' can be of limited use firstly due to the fact that contract law often trumps copyright law when institutions impose contractual terms and conditions ousting public good uses, and secondly because the effect of copyright law provisions varies between countries. The reason why contract law steps in is because explicit protections for the public domain do not exist, with its use being seen as highly problematic by Corbett and Boddington (2011).

In her paper 'Ko to ringa ki nga rakau a te Pakeha - Virtual Taonga Māori and Museums', Deirdre Brown takes a more positive stance, because even though she concurs that 'there is no universally agreed method', she asserts that '[New Zealand national] policies… expect museums to store and display… images of Māori people, and to lesser extent objects, in a manner that is culturally responsive to Māori perceptions' (2008, p. 63). She also argues that since the museum standards authority advocates a bicultural approach to the display of *taonga*, it should follow that the same consideration should apply to the production of virtual *taonga*, with consultation and Māori participation being the most critical part of the production process (2008, p. 67). When it comes to accessibility of two-dimensional Māori images, New Zealand museums have limited display of digitised *taonga* on their websites due to Māori concerns (Brown, 2008, p. 70). Increasingly, institutions will not provide reproduction rights or access for provenanced Māori images unless permission has been obtained from the communities of origin (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 311). In some cases, rules around the viewing of digital *taonga* are conformant with rules around physical *taonga* which should not be stored near food preparing or ablution facilities. The Auckland Art Gallery for example, requires online patrons to agree that they will not view online Māori images if they are in close proximity to food (Brown, 2008, p. 70). It is also possible for databases to be governed by tiers of accessibility, providing for example open access, password access and/or a cache of sensitive information depending on who uses them.

Furthermore, the fragmentation of legal categories vis-à-vis Indigenous heritage, which is seen as adverse by Bowrey and Anderson, might nevertheless be convenient under a different perspective: by differentiating between original *taonga* as having cultural properties and virtual, replicable *taonga* as having intellectual properties, the two categories can be subject to different laws and conventions that better protect the two types of *taonga* (Brown, 2008, p. 70). The New Zealand Copyright Act 1994 also makes

provisions for ‘moral rights’ and ‘economic rights’ (Brown, 2008, p. 71). Corbett and Boddington argue that it is essential and extremely difficult at the same time for institutions to obtain an assignment of copyright as well as a waiver of the moral rights of the author, because the owner of copyright is not necessarily the author or artist. In other cases, authors and artists may be reluctant to waive their moral rights (Corbett and Boddington, 2011). Brown also ends up acknowledging that the copyright issues associated with the creation of virtual objects are many and complex, both in the case of old materials and new productions where the copyright is not owned by a single person, thus introducing the concept of ‘related rights’ which belong to people who act as intermediaries of works (2008, p. 71). To further complicate the picture, legal provisions with regard to copyright law in New Zealand and Australia vary between archives and museums, the consequences of which are discussed by Corbett and Boddington (2011).

The ushering of the digital era is an example of technological development surpassing social and legal frameworks, often leaving people in the margins. Burri points to the challenges of creating an appropriate regulatory design which needs to be holistic whilst considering multiple domains such as telecommunications, IT, standards, trade, intellectual property and Internet governance, each marked by its own peculiar dynamics (2014, p. 353). Corbett and Boddington identify two alternative approaches to digitisation of cultural heritage in New Zealand: the risk management strategy and the risk averse strategy (2011). The former justifies the online display of images whilst being prepared to take down ‘sacred’ entities upon request, a policy which is assessed as legally precarious by the authors because once an image has appeared online it is subject to unauthorised copying and adaptations that remain available (2011). The latter strategy is based on an assessment of what may *not* be legally digitised.

Digital access, reproduction and global dissemination were simply not possible when original material was collected, and names or details pertaining to people were often omitted from documentation. The business of retrospectively seeking permission is complicated. Bowrey and Anderson claim that allowing such material to be digitally accessed is a serious oversight, especially when this was not intended for use outside the community or even to everyone within the community (2009, p. 495).

Ignoring the possibilities for future use of material is a serious concern, and one that is extremely relevant today, including digitally born material. Brown highlights the risks that are likely to be involved when AR and VR use real people for ‘recording tribal narratives from elders…, three-dimensionally visualizing Māori arts that have few practitioners, and of demonstrating narrative-based performance for wider audiences’ (2008, p. 66). Whilst acknowledging the advantages inherent in these possibilities, ‘people who have their bodies digitized will need to demand due recognition so that their virtual

bodies are not exploited…' (Brown, 2008, p. 66). Furthermore, the use of a virtual environment must become subject to consultation as the introduction to one's tribal *marae* (courtyard) via a virtual environment 'may… devalue the importance of a personal journey of discovery back to one's *turangwaewae* (place of origin and standing)' (Brown, 2008, p. 66). While Aoetaroa New Zealand museums have made some effort in incorporating *kawa* (protocol when welcoming new *taonga* into the world) into the management of their existing Māori collections, there are considerations concerning how *kawa* might be extended into the digital domain (Brown, 2008, p. 67). Brown makes some suggestions that include combinations of Western interfaces with Māori knowledge, or the separation of customary and institutional needs (2008, p. 68).

7.3 SECTION 3: Voice

The impact of liberal ideas extends to the conflicting rights of local, regional and national actors who are not necessarily acknowledged on an international level that is characterised by the reification of national states and legally treats cultural heritage as national property. Torn between their communal and individual identities and homogeneity versus diversity, Indigenous people both in their ancestral and diasporic homes are caught in the margins and expected to represent contested versions of Indigeneity. The network society (Dijk, 2012), characterised as it is by digital technologies offering new kinds of access, opens new fissures in the way people relate to their cultural heritage and problematises the role of cultural heritage institutions. The growing multiplicity of cultural heritage actors puts emphasis on consultation and process in a context within which tribal identity formations are revitalised and changes in the relationalities between people, their ancestors and their objects are ongoing.

7.3.1 Social liberal paradoxes

The long ethnographic tradition of documenting lives and cultures in Oceania has produced a lot of material, however one of the many ethical questions is to what extent the images that have been taken represent people the way they would have chosen to be represented (Kinnane, 2004, p. 257). Furthermore, Indigenous people who have not yet been able to find their own voice, are expected to 'speak for' and represent particular indigeneities (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 491). This is an onerous intention, because

the action of political representation itself can be an alien concept to Aboriginal cultures (Watson, 2007, pp. 31-32). Bowrey and Anderson assert that it is not clear on any level, international, institutional or otherwise, who is authorised to capture and represent the diverse interests that are articulated locally (2009, p. 492). In addition to this, there is another risk involved in the issue of representation: that of non-Aboriginal people delegating responsibilities in order to avoid genuine understanding which comes through difficult communication (Langton, 2003, p. 122). These issues are covered in more detail in the last part of this study.

Questions related to identity formation become pertinent here: Who qualifies for which subject position, and who decides at the intersection between self-definitions and public definitions of identity? Like all cultural or ethnic identities, Aboriginality may also be viewed as an 'inherently unstable' classification (Haebich, 2000). At the same time, it has been treated as a homogenous entity, which disqualifies its members from recourse to private property law. Furthermore, in the case of Oceania, the geographical fragmentariness and small national capacities of the islands have led to a pooling together of trans-oceanic resources in the form of the Forum of the South Pacific Islands and the Festival of Pacific Arts. De Largy Healy and Glowczewski argue that this allows 'local singularities' to become important forces (2014, pp. 44-45).

It is in this way that another door to the paradoxes of liberal discourse opens: as Helliwell and Hindess put it, 'a stress on sameness or homogeneity is at the expense of the recognition of the disorder that can also be observed within a society or culture, and of the ideational diversity pertaining between its members' (2000, p. 2). As far as intellectual property is concerned, '[political] differences experienced at a local, regional or national level are seldom articulated within national or international discourses' (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 494). This is happening on an international plane that is quite sclerotic, since cultural policy toolkits 'conceive of culture as static property linked to national sovereignty and state boundaries' (Burri, 2014, p. 349). De Largy Healy and Glowczewski illustrate several tensions that exist at the postcolonial crossroads: between community and singularity, space and time, and types of value, all within the context of asymmetry between what is supposed to be an expert world heritage discourse and the subjective responses of the descendants of the Indigenous peoples who provided this heritage (2014, p. 46).

So how can the reification of states and national cultures accommodate internal differences and tensions and allow for the emergence of different standpoints? An example of these differences is Aborigines who cooperate with the national media network and are then viewed by fellow Aborigines with suspicion, accused of having 'sold their Law' (Michaels, 1994, p. 33). Another example is that of old people who opt out of knowledge transfer when

they realise that this is incompatible with the colonised space and holds no context beyond commodification as a form of exotica (Watson, 2007, pp. 34-35). This is a view that can be rejected by fellow community members who think that engagement is vital. In the New Zealand context, tensions exist within the Māori community around the rhetoric and expectations surrounding *taonga* display which can be viewed either as a tourism 'product' or art 'object' (Brown, 2008, p. 69).

On the other hand, Brown asserts that Māori people are active makers and participants in the digital process, having always targeted museums as the destination for their work. She argues that *tikanga* (Māori custom) is not incompatible with high technology, as the Māori have always appropriated 'offshore' technologies without considering this process as assimilation into western cultures, thus challenging the perception that Indigenous people retain their identity by using primitive technology (2008, pp. 60-61). 'Māori artists see digitization as a heterogeneous, rather than homogenizing, process' at the same time as they use new technologies that connect them to the origin stories of their communities as well as core Māori values, through establishing parallels between the use of new technologies and the Creation narrative (Brown, 2008, pp. 61-62). A similar argument is made by Ngata et al. (2012) in their examination of the Māori tribal group Te Aitanga a Hauiti, which has 'built an international reputation for their innovative use of digital technologies in the service of cultural, artistic and economic development (pp. 229-230). This has happened despite the group's relative isolation from main transit routes (Ngata et al., 2012, p. 232).

7.3.2 The network society

The question now is, to what extent the rise of the network society (Dijk, 2012) will finally provide 'that impossible space' that opens up for an Aboriginal context that is still waiting to emerge (Watson, 2007, p. 33). Additionally, in what ways may the network society be able to capture the fluid meanings of the local contexts within which cultures are created and allow Aboriginal people to 'participate as people of the 21st century rather than as representatives of dead artefacts'? (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 500). Whilst Betancourt argues that the digital era coincides with the fragmentation of the physical world as a whole, McCrary identifies another parallel movement, that of the rise of the network society in which audiences are moving from passive to active, with institutional attempts to provide more holistic interpretations of the world rather than the actual objects themselves (2011). An important aspect to this debate is that Indigenous communities form part of the physical world that is being fragmented, as people get dispersed through crossing regional and national borders and therefore become

disconnected from their tribal area (Ngata et al., 2012, p. 240). Ngata et al. ask a pertinent question: 'Are tribal identity, language, custom and tradition compromised through relocation and then reconnection through non-traditional means?' (2012, p. 240).

According to Burri, international treaty-making has failed in considering 'the broader societal effects of digital technologies', which she identifies as instantaneous communication at low cost, low threshold of participation, perfect copies, no tangible medium, no scarcity, and a different organisation of cyberspace information (2014, p. 352). Bowrey and Anderson argue for the necessity of involving extensive localised knowledge networks in decision-making about access, as part of a reconsideration of the practices that led to the archiving of Indigenous culture within a context of new communicative technologies that facilitate new kinds of access (2009, p. 496). As a result, the notion of a research community is reformulated (Rowley et al., 2010). Some institutions that have so far been subject to political hegemonies keeping distance from communities, are now managing joint initiatives that enable Indigenous people to organise and maintain digital collections in relational databases, a type of virtual 'reciprocation' project (Srinivasan et al., 2009, pp. 667-668) that balances digital accessibility and cultural accountability through retainment of intellectual property rights over digital material created by community members (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 313). *Process* becomes central not only in decision-making, but also in knowledge mobilisation and benefit sharing (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 311) and is subject to constant negotiation (De Largy Healy and Glowczewski, 2014, p. 48). Brown discusses a bicultural consultation model which may be used in the production and display of virtual *taonga* (2008, pp. 59-60). Even though access to this new research environment can be controlled through the use of questionnaires and applications (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 311), Bowrey and Anderson remind us that there are many more individuals, agencies, corporations and organizations currently working with Indigenous contexts than there were at the height of the colonial endeavour (2009, p. 497).

This welcome multiplicity of actors however modifies and extends the problem of ownership and control. De Largy Healy and Glowczewski outline the ways in which the three-level question of how, why and for whom heritage is being transmitted is posed within a context of a multiplication of museums, cultural centres, art exhibitions, festivals and other platforms of diffusion, the rise of social media and the transnational forums of exchange on issues that have to do both with memory and the past and seeking solutions to current problems (2014, p. 45). Various projects, even when involving only one specific community, may focus on different cultural aspects and have different sources of funding. This means that the agreements between researchers, funding agencies and State Councils are not unified, leading to the question of who 'owns' the new databases that are being produced. Furthermore, the

application of the business mindset in the public sector raises ethical issues with regard to selection biases and limitation of access (Manžuch, 2017, p. 6). Traditional law does not make provisions for these new mediums, whereas historical community controls are also untranslatable in the new communications technologies (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 498). So how can the management of local complexities be undertaken when communities themselves are unable to manage their rights and the future uses of the material are unknown?

An associated question is whether digital illiteracy among the communities concerned matter. There are considerable variations between communities in different parts of the world in terms of the confidence that would allow members to engage with research platforms (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 314), leading to gaps in content where the perspectives of some social groups are underrepresented and may create biased interpretations (Manžuch, 2017, p. 12). This is taking place in a context whereby bicultural co-partnerships are out of step with the fluidity of the technology and the way that Indigenous people are communicating electronically with one another, often through social networking or genealogical websites (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, pp. 314-315). Social media has come to rapidly fill the spaces that were created by law-making in its attempt to 'capture' and 'classify' Indigeneity: while the New Zealand government for example recognises 'ethnic' kin groups, more meaningful connections are occurring at sub-tribal levels through social networking sites (Sissons, 2004). The fact that social networks are not regulated by cultural custom or copyright mediated through organisational hierarchies, is the very reason why they achieve the goals of knowledge sharing, retention and discussion where institutional databases are failing (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 316).

We have to imagine the function of social media as an endless gluing together and pulling apart of networks. Where ancestors may have engaged in family disputes and cut off contact with tribe members for example, their actions can now be undermined, with their *mana* becoming unrecognisable and irrelevant in the social networking context in which people are seeking to re-unite (Brown and Nicholas, 2012, p. 317). A transformation of the significance of objects is occurring in 'real time', as *taonga* loses its meaning of treasure and is treated as 'historical' document instead. The question then is whether users will start creating more culturally responsive social networking sites through self-policing or a new type of digital cultural etiquette (Coombe and Herman, 2004, p. 571). The use of social media has been marked by a rise of abusive comments and expressions of hatred and therefore of misleading information in a context within which moderation and control are very difficult to implement, both on the part of social media platforms and memory institutions (Manžuch, 2017, p. 12). Agnotology is a very serious issue which is still insufficiently addressed, even on a theoretical level. Matters are further

complicated by changes in cultural attitudes, which may oscillate between the wish for collective memory preservation to a new dimension of individual privacy, namely the right to be forgotten, a concept introduced to the European Union General Data Protection Regulation in 2016 (Manžuch, 2017, p. 7).

Burri identifies another risk in the so-called ‘attention economy’ where granular level of competition for audience rules, by asking to what extent editorial decisions may be distorted in favour of topics that have mass appeal (2014, p. 353). Digitisation in other words does not do away with the consequences of commodification of physical cultural heritage, problematised by McCrary when he says that ‘interpretation can rarely afford to offer the kinds of serious and troubling historical reflections that are likely to drive vacationing visitors away’ (2011). This is particularly pertinent at a time when digitising institutions increasingly apply business approaches (Manžuch, 2017, p. 6) and social media is a cheap and highly commercialised way of expanding the reach of cultural heritage institutions.

7.3.3 Consultation and representation: who gets to decide?

Processes of decolonisation and the integration of Indigenous concerns into organisational procedures arise from the need to synergise what can be legally digitised with what can be ethically digitised, also termed as the ‘soft side’ of copyright (Francis and Liew, 2010). In two co-authored papers, Singh and Blake provide an insight into the world of consultation, through interviews conducted in Australia with people from the Pacific diaspora and museum experts (Singh and Blake, 2012; Singh et al., 2013). Even though culturally sensitive consultation before digitisation is expensive and time-consuming, it is considered important in terms of understanding the access restrictions that might be required in order to avoid perceptions of technological colonisation and loss of local ownership (Singh and Blake, 2012, p. 96). In Singh and Blake’s opinion, source communities, diasporic populations, museum and cultural experts all have an important role to play in culturally sensitive consultation (2012, p. 95). In the previous part, a question was left hanging with regard to how tribal identities are affected through relocation and then reconnection through non-traditional means. Singh and Blake’s research reveals other potential cracks that open in the representation space, alluded to at the beginning of the current section. For a start, the voices of the diaspora, closer as they are to urban academic centres and removed from their communities of origin, may be perceived as privileged in comparison to the voices that are ‘left behind’ in geographically remote areas at the same time as the ‘representatives’ of Indigeneity might feel inadequately prepared for the task. This is partially a direct consequence of technological development that needs to be highlighted. Secondly, Singh et al. urge us ‘to keep in mind that

audiences such as the source communities reached via digitization are likely to use information in very different ways from museum professionals' (2013, p. 79).

A much more complex plateau opens up when we turn towards anthropological and cultural studies that have long focused on Oceania in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Regardless of where one positions themselves in the debates on nationalism that split postcolonial scholars, the work of ethnologist Alain Babadzan is a passionate critique of the cultural appropriation that has been implemented by the national postcolonial elites of the Oceanic countries, to the expense both of ethnic and linguistic diversity as well as of the disadvantaged lower classes (2009). On the other hand, Witcomb outlines the cultural criticism directed against museums, which describes their ongoing role as shaped by the power relations established between centres of empire and colonial peripheries, the bourgeoisie and the working class, men and women, and between the public and private spheres (2003, p. 14). Critical writing on museums has accused them for 'inculcating bourgeois civic values that served the needs of the emerging nation-state and the dominant interests within it.' (2003, p. 14).

It is partly thanks to this kind of postcolonial work that Indigenous concerns have been lifted and cultural homogeneity challenged. Babadzan criticises two tools that have been used by the local elites, namely the ideologies of the 'Pacific Way' and of 'kastom'. The former refers to a set of values that are supposedly prevalent in an idealised rural setting and in opposition to urban Western society. They project an idea of Oceanic customs as anti-materialist, anti-individualist and communalist (2009, p. 19). The latter refers to a set of customs and traditions that supposedly originate in ethnic historical settings, but which have been reified and appropriated for material and political means (2009, p. 32). Babadzan identifies a paradox in the creation of 'kastom', in that traditionalism is promoted by the very same social layers that previously used to mock the 'backwardness' of 'savages' in the name of colonial 'progress' and 'civilisation', and which are the most distanced from the traditional ways of life (2009, p. 34).

Babadzan's critique of the 'Pacific Way' and 'kastom' relate to the ethical concerns associated with the digitisation of Indigenous cultural heritage materials as investigated so far in two ways: firstly, through unveiling the complicity of local Oceanians in the homogenising (post)colonial practices that marginalised and obscured the Indigenous cultures of Oceania; and secondly, because the project of regrouping disparate cultural traits towards nationalistic aims is a process that mirrors Betancourt's argument on the fragmentation of the physical world as a whole, whereby source is separated from meaning. As Babadzan puts it, the disparate cultural traits that form 'kastom' first get separated from their traditional conditions of transmission and subsequently become reified and abstracted, no longer representing a system of relations but

an assembly of material discontinuous elements that are observable and therefore *replicable* (emphasis mine, 2009, p. 35). By incorporating into 'kastom' traditions that are considered 'true' and by rejecting traditions that are considered 'false' and which are usually connected with local politics that are opposed to the state, Babadzan shows how the latter's ideological mechanisms thus manage to embrace Western ideas of authenticity and reproduce colonial practices (2009, p. 39).

7.4 Summary

This study started with a presentation of Western ideas around the value of cultural objects and ran full circle by citing ethnological research that shows how postcolonial practices have given form to ideas around 'authenticity' and 'falseness' of Oceanic cultural heritage that emulate those of the West. The rest of the study consisted of an analysis of three main thematic areas of socioethical concerns as they transpire from the relevant literature. First, Western ideas of authenticity were juxtaposed with Oceanic attitudes towards valuable cultural objects; second, an array of legal and ethical challenges relating to copyright was presented both within the postcolonial and the digital era context; and third, but most importantly, analysis centred on Indigenous people as creators, users and decision makers in a liberal era which is being supplanted by a network society, both promoting and undermining liberal values at the same time. In trying to answer the question 'who are digitisations for' and identify the multiple roles of communities and individuals in institutional decision-making, a wide spectrum of opinions has been presented which shows how complex the question of cultural responsiveness is. The next study looks into specific digitisation examples in order to assess the extent to which they fulfil specific criteria and processes as indicators of cultural responsiveness vis-à-vis communities of origin and users.

8 STUDY 2: Digitisations

The questions that guide this second study serve to crystallise on a micro-level the socioethical issues that have been discussed so far and provide answers to the two remaining research questions, namely the extent to which heritage institutions digitise collections originating in Oceania in a culturally responsive manner, and the actions that digitising institutions can take in order to improve the cultural responsiveness of their websites as part of an ongoing decolonising process.

Five digitisation activities have been selected for examination of the following:

- What is the aesthetic quality of the images?
- What is the metadata quality with regard to images and descriptions? Is the terminology used in terms of categorisation and contextualisation easily understood?
- How are copyright and IP issues explained?
- Has cultural permission been sought?
- Are cultural sensitivities acknowledged and explained?
- Are there any access restrictions?
- Is there a participation role for Indigenous/minority community partners?
- Are the projects interactive and is social media embedded?

These questions correspond roughly to the three key areas of socioethical concerns, namely value of cultural objects, ownership and Indigenous agency. The results of the study are presented under a two-part structure per digitisation activity, offering some background information, and content analysis and evaluation. The institutional background information serves as an introduction framing the analysis. During the research, evaluative assessments were made simultaneously with the content analysis, sprinkling the text. Other checklists for culturally responsive digitisations are more comprehensive and intended for use in project planning stages. However, most cultural institutions have already carried out mass digitisations without following criteria of social fairness. This study identifies areas of lacunae from a user perspective and makes suggestions for improvement within the context of postcolonial theory presented earlier, thus providing a ground for constructing new methods of evaluation.

The first website is a project that has been built around the colonial work of Spencer and Gillen in Australia. The three following websites are operated by important national institutions in Fiji, New Zealand and France. The fifth example functions as a coda due to the small digitised sample size. It

was selected because it illustrates the priorities that have been given by US institutions to questions of Rights rather than cultural significance. All of the digitised activities have been carried out in post/neocolonial contexts, with any decolonising intent not directly and explicitly explained even where it applies. The digitisation activities are presented and analysed separately but a comparative assessment and discussion is provided in the following Section, including recommendations for improvement.

8.1 Spencer & Gillen: A Journey through Aboriginal Australia

> This website showcases notebooks, films, audio recordings, illustrations and photographs collected during Spencer and Gillen's studies in anthropology between 1875 and 1912.[9]
> On this site you will find a digital reconstruction of the original materials either collected or created by one of Australia's most well known collaborations in the social sciences.[10]

8.1.1 Institutional background information

This website showcases notebooks, films, audio recordings, illustrations and photographs collected during Spencer and Gillen's studies in anthropology between 1875 and 1912. Francis James Gillen was an Australian ethnologist who collaborated closely with Walter Baldwin Spencer, an English scientist and anthropologist who first arrived in Australia in 1887 in order to assume a role at the University of Melbourne. The two men met in 1894 and subsequently undertook expeditions together, the results of which were the influential works *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* and *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* among others.

Spencer and Gillen were products of the Victorian colonial era. In 1912, Spencer was appointed Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. The Australian Dictionary of Biography describes them both as paternalistic and authoritarian, having met with approval and opposition by Aboriginal people. Spencer in particular 'drew upon the assumptions and models of biological evolution and applied them in a mechanistic manner', seeing Aborigines as dehumanised 'survivals' from an

[9] http://spencerandgillen.net/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[10] http://spencerandgillen.net/about (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

early stage of social development'. Despite that, his work is assessed as innovative[11].

During their travels and research, Spencer and Gillen amassed what is perhaps the most influential collection of Australian ethnographic material ever assembled according to the project website, which contains all of the objects collected during the pair's studies in anthropology, independently and together, between 1875 and 1912. This enormous collection was ultimately donated to Australian museums, traded with other museums across the world, or kept by their respective families[12]. In other words, Indigenous cultural heritage was turned into a commodity that even helped clear Gillen's debts when he incurred heavy investment losses and decided to sell his ethnographic collection to the National Museum of Victoria in 1899[13].

The total number of digitised objects amounts to 6,113, with only 3,696 displayed images. The digitisation project started as a cooperation in 2009 between the Australian National University, Museum Victoria and the South Australian Museum by means of Australian Research Council funds and with the aim to integrate all the dispersed material into a single catalogue for the first time. There are now 26 contributing institutions from around the world. The digitisation's stated aim is thus centripetal, in the sense that it seeks to counterbalance the fragmentariness caused by colonisation practices. Another stated aim is for digitisation to serve as material for further research. Two initial areas of interest concern the investigation of the research questions that Spencer and Gillen were trying to answer, as well as the documentation of the significance of the collection to Central Australian Aboriginal groups[14].

8.1.2 Content description

The reason why a large percentage of the catalogued objects is not available for viewing has come as the result of a three-year consultation period with cultural groups connected to the collection. It was senior Aboriginal men and women who reviewed the items and determined whether access should be restricted or not. The objects are divided into six types: objects (2,191 items), photographs (1,859 items), documents (1,990 items), specimens (24 items), audio (32 items) and moving images (17 items). Other filtering categories consist of places, fieldwork, ceremony types, people, totems and institutions. The project website functions as an agglomeration of information provided

[11] http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spencer-sir-walter-baldwin-8606 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[12] http://spencerandgillen.net/about (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[13] http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gillen-francis-james-6383 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[14] http://spencerandgillen.net/about (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

directly by the participating institutions, and 'makes no representations, warranties or assurances (either expressed or implied) as to the accuracy, currency or completeness of the information presented'[15]. Most of the descriptions concerning titles and documentation are the original ones pertaining to Spencer and Gillen.

The items that cannot be viewed are either accompanied by a brief title/description or lack description. The research conducted for this thesis is focused therefore on the images. The 2D photographs can be magnified, but metadata is missing. The different object types are not thematically subcategorised, which means that scrolling down the list presents the viewer with a collection of head and neck ornaments alongside spears, shields and samples of human hair. Without a thematic division, the items become decontextualised, a problem which is aggravated by the lack of explanation. The existing descriptions refer primarily to the material qualities of the items and not to their cultural significance. The question then is, who are the project's target users?

According to the website, users 'are advised that the information… is presented largely from a research perspective'[16] without further clarification. Even though older Aborigines might be in possession of the cultural knowledge that is associated with the objects, there is a lack of transmission perspective on the website even when selecting alternative filtering criteria. The search options lack explanations so that it is unclear to the uninitiated user what the different ceremony types or totems are for example. When selecting and exploring the items associated with a specific ceremony type, the purpose and use of the different objects remain unexplained.

When it comes to photographs, pictures of Aboriginal people are as decontextualised as pictures of objects are. To take one example, the title 'Atninga avenging party' that accompanies several pictures does not contain any information relating to the event. A Google search returns a result at the top of the list that links to a website called 'Mabo: The Native Title Revolution'. This is an online resource that 'delves into the Mabo legal case and the important issues it raises for Australians and Indigenous peoples everywhere' following the death of Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo who was a key plaintiff in a land rights case in the High Court of Australia[17].

The picture, which is held by Museum Victoria, is accompanied by extracts from several of Spencer's writings that shed light on the event. The fact that the notes surrounding it are split between different manuscripts and publications may be of literary/anthropological interest, but also the reason why the presentation of Spencer and Gillen's work is a more complex undertaking than merely digitising images. On the Mabo website, the notes are

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[15] http://spencerandgillen.net/about (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[16] Ibid.
[17] https://www.mabonativetitle.com/home.shtml (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

assembled in a way that creates a comprehensible narrative that is otherwise missing from the Museum Victoria website that feeds the project, and from the project itself. A similar situation arises with the *corroboree* type of ceremony which is documented by Spencer and Gillen. Further search engine use offers essential information that is missing from the project site and found among else on the Indigenous Australia website, which provides an Aboriginal perspective[18].

Returning to the Spencer & Gillen site, as with other object types, images of people and events under the category photographs are listed alongside images of tree graves and drawings on rocks that may be unrelated. Furthermore, some of the titles of displayed objects can be so generic that research is hindered. The title 'Warumungu ceremony' is a case in point, as the type of ceremony depicted is not specified and the situation remains the same when browsing through the object types documents, specimens and totems. Some documents are titled 'Document', whereas others are called 'Clothing and ornament', which is a subcategory of a document, or 'Boats' or 'Spear throwers' all listed one next to the other. Handwritten pages are presented in fragmentation, and if some of them belong to the same manuscript there is no link connecting them. It is therefore not easy to see how they can be used from a research perspective. Recordings are also fragmented, with one object carrying the title 'Another song sung by the same women on the same occasion. Charlotte Waters 29th March 1901', without specifying what is meant by 'same women' or 'same occasion'.

In terms of copyright, this resides with the Australian Research Council team with permission from Museum Victoria and the South Australian Museum. According to the website, materials may be accessed and downloaded solely for the purposes of personal study, whereas no reproduction is authorised without the prior written permission of each relevant collecting institution. The Spencer & Gillen project can provide further advice regarding the ownership rights and/or use of materials[19].

The main strength of the Spencer & Gillen project, and one which is clearly communicated on the website, is that Aboriginal people were consulted during the process of deciding which images should be displayed or not. This advice resulted in digital access of just over 50% of all cultural objects collected by Spencer and Gillen and is a marker of cultural responsiveness. One aspect that is not conveyed on the website is whether Aboriginal participation is ongoing or has been terminated, especially since social media use is not embedded in the project. A drawback of the project is the lack of cultural information surrounding the objects, which hinders one of the stated aims of digitisation, namely research. There are a couple of ways in which this

[18] http://www.Indigenousaustralia.info/culture/corroborees-a-ceremonies.html (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[19] http://spencerandgillen.net/about (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

could be rectified; the first would be to further develop the project through incorporation of Spencer and Gillen's writings which have a high scholarly value in themselves and showcase their work in a fuller manner; the second would be to provide links to Aboriginal websites such as the ones presented here, or directly add Aboriginal contributions on the site which have the potential of enhancing it. A good start for improvement would be if the object types were regrouped according to culturally meaningful categories with explanations, following a consultation process that is transparently described and with a clearer idea of the target user in mind.

8.2 The Fiji Virtual Museum

> Mission: The Fiji Museum inspires and promotes respect for all the diverse cultures of Fiji.
> Vision: The Fiji Museum will become known as a world-class museum. It will enhance this reputation by working locally, nationally and internationally to maintain and strengthen its focus on the diverse cultures of Fiji. It will be a place where the tangible and intangible heritage of these cultures is safeguarded and made accessible to community members and researchers. Its innovative and imaginative exhibitions and programmes will serve local communities and be a significant draw for all visitors. It will make a difference in people's lives.[20]

8.2.1 Institutional background information

The Fiji Virtual Museum is incorporated in the Fiji Museum website and provides a presentation of the items displayed in the physical space. The three main objectives of the museum are stated as preservation, education and heritage management. The museum website also provides a brief acquisition guide, which informs users on how the museum acquires collections and how individuals can donate[21]. All of this information is easily accessible with one click from the main page.

The backbone of the virtual museum collection is formed by a series of key historical and cultural elements of Fiji life. The area which includes Fiji

[20] http://fijimuseum.org.fj/vision-mission-objectives/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[21] http://fijimuseum.org.fj/acquisitions-2/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

and Western Polynesia was settled about three thousand years ago, whereas it took another thousand years after that for further settlement to the east to happen (Thomas, 2018, p. 15). At that point, a distinctively Polynesian culture developed which differed from the cultures of Melanesia and Micronesia. Archaeologists associate expansion into the Pacific with a distinctive pottery style known as Lapita, the spread of which suggests that one population with a distinctive culture settled the region relatively rapidly (Thomas, 2018, p. 15).

According to the virtual museum website, by the 1800s war occupied the entire male population of Fiji[22]. Thomas writes that 'fighting was integral to the expansion and contraction of rivalrous chiefdoms', with great emphasis being placed on the accomplishments of individual warriors and weapons being ornately carved and stylistically diversified (2018, p. 85). Another important element of Fijian culture is *masi*, 'a non-woven cloth produced by beating the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree to form a compacted web of fibres. According to the virtual museum website, masi was used both for everyday purposes, such as clothing and wall hangings, as well as for ceremonial and religious purposes such as the installation of chiefs, being as it was the primary form of clothing for men[23]. Thomas discusses in more detail the meanings and ceremonies associated with *masi*, as the making and the presentation of the cloth reveal a lot about the spiritual and community practices and beliefs of the Fijians (2018, pp. 127-129).

During the expansion of Western trade interests in the Pacific in the nineteenth century, some of the most prized commodities were sandalwood and bêche-de-mer or sea cucumber on the part of visiting traders, whereas Fijians valued sperm whale teeth (Thomas, 2018, p. 20). From the late nineteenth century until 1970 Fiji was a British colony and has consequently been troubled by a succession of military coups (Thomas, 2018, p. 194).

The Fiji Museum website does not state the number of items held in its collection, and the Virtual Museum does not state how many digitised items are displayed either, however a manual count calculates the number of digitised objects on display to 495.

8.2.2 Content description

The Fiji Virtual Museum collections are divided between five main thematic categories, called galleries, which are then further divided into subcategories. The five main galleries are Maritime, History, Masi, Girmit and Natural History. Every gallery and subcategory is accompanied by a brief introduction. On several pages there are also brief recorded explanations

[22] http://virtual.fijimuseum.org.fj/index.php?view=objects&id=9 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[23] http://virtual.fijimuseum.org.fj/index.php?view=objects&id=64 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

available for download. The 2D pictures are not accompanied by any metadata, but 3D objects have been shot from different angles in order to give a more rounded view of how they are exhibited in the museum room. At the bottom of every page, the copyright logo appears with the text 'Copyright © Fiji Museum. All rights reserved. Copying of any elements of the Virtual Museum, in part or in whole, for any purpose, is expressly forbidden without the prior permission of the Fiji Museum.' An additional note states that 'not all objects on display in the Virtual Museum are exactly the same as those in the Fiji Museum.'

The Maritime gallery consists of nine subcategories which include objects related to maritime vessels, fishing techniques, European arrivals, trade periods such as the sandalwood trade period between 1800 and 1820, marooned foreigners, popular trade items and whalers. The different types of objects such as 3D, drawings, sketches and photographs are not divided but presented together in the same thematic category within which they belong. This is a user-friendly approach which guarantees some sort of narrative coherence and assists the user in getting a more holistic picture of any given topic. All terms, such as *drua* or *camakau* are succinctly explained in accompaniment to the images, so that any layperson understands.

The History gallery is by far the biggest and richest one, comprising of 21 categories which showcase 276 items, and covering areas as diverse as Lapita and post-Lapita objects, trade, adornment, the old religion and Christianity, cannibalism, weapons, different ethnic communities and political events. When exploring the website, the user discovers that a few items such as *drua* overlap in different galleries. The old religion gallery offers unrestricted access to objects such as *kalou vatu* and *nariva*, sacred stones which were thought to be inhabited by gods, as well as sacred eel clubs and sorcerer sticks among else. These objects are not accompanied by any cautionary note alluding to offensiveness. On the other hand, caution warnings are displayed alongside videos that contain images of human burials, such as the important archaeological site of Sigatoka sand dunes, and of human remains in the cannibalism gallery.

The search function works fast and efficiently, with results appearing as a list of titles followed by the beginning of the object description. Even though the descriptions are easily read, the authorship is unknown and there is potential for adding to the information provided in order to give users a more comprehensive view of the cultural and historical significance of the exhibits. One example is that of the Masi gallery, which does not provide the kind of cultural background that can be obtained through other channels. The simple layout of the galleries has the potential to host this extra information. Furthermore, the Fiji Virtual Museum does not have any social media functions embedded on its site, even though Fiji Museum maintains a Facebook page and is also active on Twitter. The Facebook page includes a reviews section, videos

and a contact form among else. It has over 19,000 followers. The Virtual Museum could also embed these functions and thus become more interactive.

The Fijian leaders gallery does not contain a lot of information, which can be viewed as a consequence of the turbulent political history of the country. The fact that a significant historical event, that of Indian indentured labour in Fiji, known as *girmit*, which took place between 1879 and 1916 is presented in a separate gallery can be interpreted as another political decision, especially since literature on Oceanic art often omits the influence of the Indian settlers. According to the UNHCR, in Fiji it is the Indigenous Melanesian/Polynesian population that constitutes a majority. This group is considered to be more homogenous than in other Melanesian states since 'they have one language, a more hierarchical and hereditary social structure, and a chiefly system more akin to those in Polynesia'[24]. The second principal ethnic group is the Indo-Fijian, whereas other minority groups include the Rotumans, Banabans, Melanesians, Chinese and other Pacific islanders.

Considering that Fiji's society has long been marked by tensions between the majority Indigenous Fijian population and the Indo-Fijian minority and that the smaller minorities remain socially and politically marginalised, it is important to research this kind of representation issue when it comes to the Fiji Virtual Museum. According to the UNHCR, divisions have at times resulted in coups and outbreaks of violence, sustained by the legacy of colonialism, land tenure questions and the politicization of ethnicity, even though 'in recent years steps have been taken to resolve these issues and end decades of ethnic politics'[25].

As mentioned, some of the history and culture of the Indo-Fijians is covered in the Girmit gallery even though the authorship provenance is an issue. The Rotuman community is dedicated a subcategory which only contains eleven objects within the History gallery. The need for a more detailed cultural/historical framing becomes more acute, since the descriptions are limited to a couple of sentences per displayed item. There is a lot of potential to involve the community concerned with the digitisation activity.

A search for Banabans returns one result, that of the iKiribati community category, also under the History gallery. There we read that the island of Banaba (Ocean Island) is an isolated island that lies between Nauru and the Gilbert Islands. In the 1940s, the majority of the people of Banaba moved to the island of Rabi in Fiji because the island of Banaba had been devastated by phosphate mining. Around 5,000 Banabans who now live in Fiji and are full Fijian citizens continue to administer the island of Banaba. The artefacts on display however are mostly from the Gilbert Islands, with the

[24] https://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce3e53.html (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[25] Ibid.

category not containing Banaban objects[26]. A search for the term 'Melanesian' returns 0 results, whereas the Chinese community does have its own category under the History gallery. This category only contains fourteen objects, most of which lack description. Again, there is huge potential here to involve the community concerned directly, so that the items acquire a context that is meaningful and relevant to them and to website visitors.

A key strength of the Fiji Virtual Museum website is that it is structured in a user-friendly way, which makes information quick and easy to access. The object descriptions are easily comprehensible, and sensitive images are accompanied by appropriate warnings which take into account the cultural background of the majority of Fijians which is informed by Christianity and the demise of the old religions. However, because Fiji is a country where the Indigenous population is a majority and the mission of the museum is to inspire and promote respect for all the diverse cultures of Fiji, an assessment of cultural responsiveness needs to include the representation of minority cultures. As objects from some minority communities are lacking from the website, it is recommended that the Acquisitions department take a more proactive approach following consultation with the communities concerned. Another suggestion for improvement would be to involve the communities of origin directly where their cultures are already represented on the website in terms of the description information provided.

8.3 Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa – Online collections

> Te Papa's vision for the future is to change hearts, minds, and lives.
> Our role is to be a forum for the nation to present, explore, and preserve the heritage of its cultures and knowledge of the natural environment. Te Papa was established with this role by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act 1992.[27]

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[26] http://virtual.fijimuseum.org.fj/index.php?view=objects&id=31 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[27] https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

8.3.1 Institutional background information

The Museum of New Zealand has its origins in the colonial period and more specifically in 1865 when it opened behind the Parliament's buildings in Wellington as a tiny Colonial museum[28]. According to the Artstor website, the National Museum and the National Art Gallery of New Zealand united in 1992 to become Te Papa Tongarewa (meaning "container of treasures" in Māori), a partnership between Tangata Whenua (Māori, the Indigenous people) and Tangata Tiriti (a Māori term for non-Māori people)[29].

The Māori population first settled in New Zealand in the eleventh century. According to the 2013 census their number amounted to 598,605, making up 14.9% of the total population, and whereas for over a century of European settlement Māori tended to remain in rural areas, by the 2000s more than 80% lived in urban areas, a fact which contributed to the breakdown of *iwi* (tribe) and *hapū* (clan) systems. According to the UNCHR refworld webpage[30], the Māori are disadvantaged socially and economically relative to most ethnic groups in New Zealand, other than Pacific Islanders. Most Māori are concentrated in inner urban areas of unskilled employment or unemployment, often in conditions of poor living and health and with inadequate housing. Despite that, the Māori enjoy a relatively strong position compared to other Indigenous peoples around the world, thanks to the Treaty of Waitangi which was signed in 1840 and which guaranteed Māori 'the full, exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands', or *te tino rangatiratanga* which could be translated as 'the sovereignty of their lands'. Over the past decade, policies promoting the recognition of Māori culture and identity have been a positive factor in the revitalisation of the language, thus enabling Māori development. This part of the study provides a short assessment on the extent to which Te Papa Tongarewa is a culturally responsive actor, both in terms of Māori but also of other Pacific cultural heritage, and more specifically the collections from Fiji.

Today, the institution is a significant cultural and educational resource, providing physical access to a big range of thematic exhibitions, online information on almost 800,000 objects, blogs dedicated to different topics, quizzes and videos for both adults and children, as well as research tools and guides to caring for objects. A first contact with the website can at the same time be an overwhelming and exciting experience due to the wealth of knowledge shared. For the purposes of this thesis, focus is limited on the Taonga Māori and Pacific Cultures collection areas.

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[28] https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/what-we-do/our-history (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[29] https://www.artstor.org/2020/01/27/new-45000-images-from-museum-of-new-zealand-te-papa-tongarewa/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[30] https://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cd8c.html (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

8.3.2 Content description

In order to explore the digital collections, the easiest path is to click on 'Discover the Collections' and then 'Collections Online'. The category links that appear at the bottom of the page do not lead to actual collections. In order to view digitised objects, the user has to enter a search term. Search tips are provided elsewhere on the site. A search for Taonga Māori returns 164,277 results, which can be filtered through Type; Image Reuse which includes No Reuse, Unrestricted Use and Some Reuse/Creative Commons; and Collection, which contains 22 categories. A lot of these categories are related to Natural History. It is not clear what some of the types such as 'Topic', 'Organisation' or 'Taxon' are, as subcategories are not listed on the same page. In order to understand these, the user has to find the 'About Collections Online' page where 'Taxon' is listed as short for 'Taxonomy'.

The selection of several filtering criteria cannot happen at the same time but consecutively, once a new result page is uploaded. A selection of Taonga Māori with No Reuse rights returns 9,865 results, almost all of which are Objects, in no particular order or subcategorisation. This makes it difficult to navigate the site, unless the user is looking for specific items that can be searched for by their names. The images are of varying technical quality and no photograph metadata is provided. Pictures of some 3D objects have been taken from different angles and with different colour backgrounds. Regarding the question of technical quality, the website informs that digital imaging started in the 1990s, meaning that as technology develops the early digitised images of collection items which are very small are slowly being replaced with higher quality images. Furthermore, images which have been taken for identification purposes only may not be suitable for reproduction. The museum advises users to contact the Media Sales and Licensing team if they would like a higher quality image of a particular collection item to be produced[31].

Images are accompanied by Item Details and an Overview. This is a description of the relevance and use of the item. The authorship is unknown. According to the website, 'the documentation that accompanies a collection item can vary depending on when it was collected, what information came with it, and how recently the object has been accessed or researched'. The acquisition history is provided. One strength of the website is the emphasis on copyright and reproduction rights. The 'About Collections Online' page states that all collection artworks and objects are accompanied by a rights statement which lets users know what they can and can't do with the images[32]. The statement is prominent next to the image, and when one clicks on it a 'Buy or license' page appears which allows visitors to communicate with the museum

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[31] https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/collections-online/about-collections-online (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[32] Ibid.

regarding their intended use of images. Items are either subject to reserved rights or under no copyright restrictions. Application for use of images that have All Rights Reserved is required because rights may be: a) either controlled by the artist, the artist's estate, or other rights holders; b) unclear, where Te Papa needs to do a more detailed analysis of the work's rights history; or c) covered by Te Papa's *Mana Taonga* principle which supports the rights of holders of traditional knowledge to determine how the image may be used. More information about copyright issues is supplied through the museum's website.

The possibility to access the Pacific collections is not offered through the 'Collections Online' option for the reasons stated above. It is only through further exploration of the site and by clicking on 'Read, Watch, Play' under 'Discover the Collections' that the user can see the option 'Pacific' at the bottom. The hyperlink leads to a page which opens up collections split by region. The Fiji landing page provides information about the country and a listing of 2,247 objects. An advantage of the site is that the user can filter through the geographic areas of Fiji, such as Central, Northern Division, Koro Sea etc. This is a useful function that opens up the possibility for local cultural traits and identities to be showcased and could be an improvement tool for projects where cultural responsiveness is required. There is clearly a lot of work that has gone towards explaining cultural heritage on this site, however the involvement of communities of origin is not explained. Access to images of sacred objects is fully open. Taonga Māori objects are also presented without viewing restrictions. The Museum maintains active Facebook and Twitter accounts.

A strength of the website is that it is interactive in the sense that pop-up windows ask the user to submit the purpose of the visit, rate the site or subscribe to blogs on a whole range of topics of interest. On the other hand, the content and the scope are so big that navigation is not intuitive. The 'About Collections Online' for example is not easily (re)traceable and search engine use had to be employed in order to find pages that had been accessed and not easily found again. The object descriptions are comprehensive, however it is not clear if Māori people are involved. The crucial question is: what is the relevance of the digitised objects to the disadvantaged urban Māori communities and their way of life? As an overall comment on cultural responsiveness, it may be assessed that the strength of Te Papa Tongarewa does not so much derive from the digitised presentation of cultural heritage objects themselves, as from the other research and education activities that are embedded both in the physical and the digital space, such as the teaching resources, videos, how-to-do guides and skill development programmes.

8.4 Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

> Missions: An original dialog between the cultures of four continents.
> Conserving, documenting and enriching a historic collection.
> Creating bridges between cultures.
> Attracting varied audiences and inciting curiosity.
> Highlighting the collections on a museographic and scientific level.
> Located on the banks of the River Seine, at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac aims to promote the Arts and Civilizations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, at the crossroads of multiple cultural, religious and historical influences. As a space for scientific and artistic dialog, the museum offers a cultural program of exhibits, performances, lectures, workshops and screenings.[33]

8.4.1 Institutional background information

The website of the French Musée du quai Branly is available in three languages, French, English and Spanish, and provides a historical background as well as ample documentation on its current mission and activities. In common with other world museums, this too, which holds almost 370,000 works, has its origins in European colonial expansion. At the beginning, the collections were private but as they expanded special venues were created for the exhibition of 'curiosities', items which were eventually transferred to national museums[34]. In parallel with this development, instructions for the collection of objects were given to sailors and scientists who undertook voyages around the world in the 19th century, thus further enhancing the collections. The acceleration of colonial conquests led to the birth of the Colonial Museum, which opened in parallel with the Colonial Exhibition of 1931. Collecting expeditions continued well into the 20th century, whereas eventually ethnographic collections that were exhibited in different museums were merged under Musée du quai Branly which opened in 2006.

[33] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/missions-and-operations/the-musee-du-quai-branly/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[34] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/collections/all-collections/history-of-the-collections/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

Thomas comments that even though ‘ethnographic museums were long regarded as warehouses of colonial loot, or at best irrelevant to the contemporary cultures of Oceania, they have come to play a more positive role’ (2018, p. 198). He also asserts that the renewal of museums which is represented by institutions such as Musée du quai Branly ‘has brought the great French collections to new and wider audiences’ (2018, p. 198). Digitisation must have undoubtedly played a role in that. Positive actions include the offering of residences or scholarships, the curation of more collaborative exhibitions and the commissioning of contemporary artists who offer different perspectives. Two examples are the 2013-14 exhibition ‘Kanak: l’art est un parole’, and the Aboriginal works on the roof and ceilings of the museum[35]. There is a missed opportunity here to communicate these actions in a more consistent manner on the website. The section ‘Cultural democratization and regional action’ only contains information about action within France[36]. The research conducted on the digitised objects collection serves to provide an assessment on the extent to which that operation side is culturally responsive.

8.4.2 Content description

Before going into an examination of how the search functions work, an exploration of the collections section leads to an online presentation of the physical main collections level which is split into five geographic regions. The Oceania region covers artefacts produced from the south of Malaysia to the limits of the south Pacific, with the exception of Micronesia[37]. There are three themed exhibition tours of the main collections level available online, including Masterpieces, Adornment and Masks. The way that the tours are presented under each region can be a bit misleading, because only the Masterpieces tour is region specific whereas the Adornment and Masks are not.

When clicking on ‘Masterpieces from Oceania’, the user lands onto the page which contains a star-shaped button at the bottom. This takes the user back to the main museum page, whereas the button with the tiles leads to a list of themed tours, including one of the *Pavillon des Sessions* of the physical museum which is not region specific. The section ‘Masterpieces of Oceania’ contains 15 items. The photographs are of superior and consistently high technical quality, even though metadata is missing. Another drawback is that 3D objects cannot be viewed from different angles. However, this is counterbalanced by the fact that the background is studied and the pictures can

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[35] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/public-areas/aboriginal-works-on-the-roof-and-ceilings/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

[36] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/missions-and-operations/cultural-democratization-and-regional-action/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

[37] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/collections/all-collections/the-main-collections-level/oceania/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

be magnified. There is inevitably some quality loss in the bigger size pictures which can be viewed and adjusted through the same frame by moving the mouse. Overall, there is a dynamic feel to this website. The object description includes the title, an explanation of the use and cultural significance of the object, and the object metadata in italics ending with the copyright which is held by the museum. If the item was previously held in another collection or museum, this is mentioned. Authorship is not specified.

In order to view all of the digital items, a click on 'Explore Collections' launches a search page from which 1,069,960 results can be accessed. These include so-called Works (meaning objects), Books and Journals, Movies and Videos, and Audios. The number of these catalogue entries is therefore much higher than the objects held by the museum as non-exhibition items are included. A search for Oceania through the category 'All' provides an unyielding list of results. A search through the individual categories however opens the possibility to filter through People, Culture and Country. 'People' refers to individuals, most commonly collectors/donors, and not ethnic groups. The Culture filter however allows for a breakdown first by geographic region and subsequently by ethnic/language groups in alphabetic order. This is a useful division, as it lifts the importance of groups and highlights them in their own right instead of bundling them under a national category. It is a feature that enhances the site's cultural responsiveness.

The number of Oceanic objects listed under the Culture tab is 15,302, whereas filtering by Country returns 39,366 Oceanic results. This is an arithmetic discrepancy that is not easily explained. Search can be refined through a selection of exposed/non-exposed works and objects with or without images. Further thematic subdivision is not possible, meaning that objects of different types such as spears, tapa and photographs are displayed one next to the other. Display however can be arranged by chronological order, even though it is not explicitly specified what chronology implies here: does it refer to the date of creation, acquisition or cataloguing?

Even though the quality of the images remains as a rule high, the cultural contextualisation in the descriptions flounders. Often, more space is dedicated to the object description metadata than to the cultural description which can be limited to a couple of lines. For example, the picture of a 'Russian pic-nic, Apia' in the Samoa collection is decontextualised.

The Related Records list that accompanies object descriptions is at face value a useful feature. However, closer examination puts into question the logic that links items together. For example, a picture which was taken by an anonymous photographer in 1888 is related, according to the site, to a postcard from 1916 depicting a Samoa War Canoe and a photograph of a female taken in 1935 among else. A click on 'See all results' leads back to all the objects from the same country. This, however, is not a sufficient criterion of

relatedness. On the other hand, the related bibliography can be of use, leading the researcher to catalogue information that can assist with further study.

Items can be viewed on two different interfaces, whereas users can select favourite items by clicking on the heart symbol at the bottom of the page. Saved items can then be forwarded by email or downloaded in PDF format. Social media is not embedded in the collections site. There are no access restrictions to the digitised images, however the reason for the non-shown images is not explained and therefore it is impossible to know whether cultural sensibilities have been taken into account or not. If they have, this should have been outlined.

The site contains some features that show a high degree of cultural responsiveness, such as images of high technical quality and the ability to view items by ethnic/language groups. However, the lack of authorial information and the decontextualised way in which images appear are evidence that the 'bridging between cultures' happens more in the physical rather than in the digital space. Any eventual involvement of communities of origin in how digitisations have been carried out and exhibited is invisible, whereas when it comes to physical displays collaborations are sought out. Considering that the website is the tool by which the museum reaches out to the world, the role that communities of origin play or could play should be communicated more prominently. For example, the historical information on the museum is presented from the former coloniser's perspective and without a mention of alternative views on the history and impact of pillaging on the objects' source communities. It is a one-directional narrative which reinforces a neocolonial attitude that should be addressed and rectified[38].

8.5 Cornell University and Metropolitan Museum of Art through Artstor

> Artstor is a not-for-profit organization committed to enhancing scholarship and teaching through the use of digital images and media. The Artstor Digital Library includes millions of high-quality images for education and research across disciplines from a wide variety of contributors around the world. We also developed JSTOR Forum, software that allows institutional users to catalog, manage, and distribute digital media collections and make them more discoverable.

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[38] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/missions-and-operations/the-musee-du-quai-branly/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

> Our primary goals are to support educational and scholarly activities by assembling image collections from across many cultures and eras, and to work with the arts and educational communities to develop collective solutions to the challenges of working and teaching with images in a digital environment.[39]

8.5.1 Institutional background information

Artstor is a digital library containing over 2,5 million images and 300 collections, primarily designed for teaching and learning purposes. In order to gain full access to the collections, users have to log in via an institution. Otherwise, open access is provided to 1,3 million images that belong to the public collections. The library has its origins in the late 1990s, when institutions 'were struggling with migrating from analogue slides to digital images' and with the first phase of development involving partners in China, France, the UK and the US building a digital repository of high-resolution images. Today, 'Artstor is a part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization helping the academic community use digital technologies… to advance research and teaching in sustainable ways'[40]. The library maintains active accounts on Facebook and Twitter, with approximately 9,500 and 4,000 followers respectively.

The list of participant institutions includes the educational institutions that subscribe to Artstor[41]. The vast majority are US based, whereas some European and Asian countries are also represented. Australia has a fairly strong presence with 24 institutions, and New Zealand with 6. The smaller Oceanic nations are however absent from the list, as are the African ones. This is not without significance. Inequality of access has ripple-down effects, as the world is divided between those who control and use resources and those who remain voiceless.

8.5.2 Content description

For the purposes of this study, only the public collections were accessed. A search for 'Oceania' produces 229 results, whereas a search by geography returns 198 results for Australia and Oceania. This is a small sample, however it provides a snapshot of how some American institutions have digitised the region's artefacts. With the total number of contributors

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[39] https://www.artstor.org/about/mission-history/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[40] Ibid.
[41] https://www.artstor.org/about/participants/ (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

being 10, it is easy through Artstor to compare the data that is made available to the public and assess where any possible strengths and weaknesses of these American institutions lie in terms of cultural responsiveness. The two biggest contributors are Cornell University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, displaying 139 and 41 items respectively.

The search result shows objects that can be filtered by 'Classification', meaning type, as well as by date. Because the date range is so wide, it is obvious that chronology refers to the making of the object and not to acquisition or cataloguing. The research was initially conducted on the Cornell University objects. The technical quality of the images is not of high standards as the photograph's composition shows the shadows behind the objects and photograph metadata is missing. Reproductions of digitised photographs are also of low quality, either producing fuzzy results or looking odd due to hand colouring. The item details are presented next to the image, however there is no accompanying text explaining the use and cultural relevance of the object. What does take more space on the Object page is the Rights section. Partly due to the effect of US legislation and partly due to the role of Artstor both as software supplier and viewing platform, the Rights text is comprehensive. Furthermore, it openly invites contributions from individuals who might have additional information regarding the item on display. This is a feature that should be standard in all relevant digitisation projects. At the same time, the emphasis on rights clarifications and the absence of cultural information about the items is an obvious example of priorities made by Western institutions, which privilege national legal concerns over cultural understanding.

Information about the item use, where it exists, is either unauthored and/or of low quality. A description of 'fire sticks with cover' reads like this: 'Twp fire sticks bound in decorated fire stick cover / yellow rafia, pink and white string and resin / resin on top covered with red seeds' (sic)[42]. A description of an Aboriginal 'rod with silver stripes' is presented in this way: 'shaft is slightly bowed / carved design at one end / the carved end has many parts shaved off, but still has circular appearance- there are 4 "stairsteps before reaching the tip / other end moderately sharpened / silver stripes made from aluminum foilstripes are in a pattern of 7-3-6 from the bottom to the top / the stick itself was stained with med/tar? / the bottom tip shows early signs of wear' (sic)[43]. This kind of presentation seems to have been put together from a preservation perspective rather than a user-centric one, employing terminology that is removed from user communities, thus begging the question of why these items were digitised for public display purposes in the first place. If the aim

[42] https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/SS34457_34457_33444123;prevRouteTS=1585494987874 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).
[43] https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/SS34457_34457_33440808;prevRouteTS=1585494987874 (Last accessed on 27 September 2020).

was preservation alone, then this either needs to be explicitly stated or the items do not necessarily need to be available for public viewing.

Objects pertaining to the Metropolitan Museum of Art are of varying digitised quality but still of a low overall level. The Rights text differs from that of Cornell University. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's text is more 'aggressive' from an ethical perspective, raising questions with regard to the legal language used. In a particular example of an object which was created in ca. 1800, the formulation by which all rights to the work have been waived worldwide under copyright law by 'the person who associated a work with this deed' presents a completion of the act of appropriation. Furthermore, as the object has entered the public domain, the rights to 'copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, all without asking permission' are explicitly granted, as an example of neocolonial exploitation. This is in accordance with the Artstor terms and conditions, raising further questions with regard to the role that digital libraries play. The website provides features that facilitate downloads and printouts. Just because an act has legal backing, are cultural memory institutions absolved of ethical responsibility, especially when their aim is explicitly stated as educational? The fact that institutions from the communities of origin do not participate in this 'knowledge sharing' makes this kind of presentation problematic.

In conclusion, the digitisations carried out by Cornell University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art as displayed on the Artstor digital library fail in terms of cultural responsiveness on several counts: image technical quality, authorship, terminology, cultural sensitivities and a consultation role for communities of origin are sacrificed with full legal backing in the name of providing quantity for educational purposes. These are two examples that despite their small size show why Indigenous criticism, as exposed in the first study, is growing and justified.

9 Discussion and recommendations for decolonising actions

During the colonial period, Indigenous peoples were presumed inferior in the scales of civilisation and were not accorded a status among the literate. Even during postcolonial times, Indigenous peoples have maintained political non-status and been excluded from access to ownership and control entitlements following the 'right' on the part of colonisers to pillaging of all sorts of Indigenous objects, including body parts (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 485). The costs of appropriation and commodification of Indigenous heritage are incalculable and may include loss of access to ancestral knowledge, loss of control over heritage care, diminished respect for the sacred, replacement of originally produced work with reproductions and threats to authenticity among other things (Nicholas and Hollowell, 2006). It was not until the late 20th century when an Indigenous IP law presence was made, meaning that legal responsibility for Indigenous dispossession is largely assigned to other categories of law and legal systems that are often in conflict with one another (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, pp. 487, 495). According to Bowrey and Anderson, a view of Indigenous peoples as 'unindividuated subjects within Nature', has led to them becoming objects of discovery on the one hand and as incapable agents of discovery or invention on the other (2009, p. 490). As a consequence, expert knowledge about Indigenous subjects has come to weigh more than Indigenous articulation itself. The studies presented in this thesis uncover ways in which 'expert' knowledge, often not subject to revision, is being ported over to a digital context through lack of essential metadata or lack of transparency with regard to digitisation processes, at the same time as the same digital context offers means of reinstating Indigenous articulation.

An examination of digitising institutions based on socioethical concerns that were found to be important in the first study, namely quality of data and metadata, copyright and authorship, cultural permission, respect for cultural sensitivities, access restrictions, community participation and interactivity, reveals wide areas of lacunae. These are due to the tensions inherent in digital cultural management within a capitalist system which often tries to find a compromise between financial constraints and the fulfilment of a liberal desire for increased/open access to cultural objects that resist simplified interpretations and whose meanings are ever-elusive. In that respect, Fanon's warnings related to the function of culture that 'abhors all simplification' (1963, p. 224) continue to ring true, also in the Oceanic context. The overview of Oceanic cultural traditions provided in this thesis highlights the highly *elusive* and *relational* character and diversity of cultural meanings, as these are not only produced infinitely in the spaces between acts and objects but also in

the spaces between community and individual relationships with objects. There is a real difficulty in bringing these relationalities to life in the exhibition context created by Western institutions and this should be acknowledged.

Central in this activity is the role of the author: who should be an 'expert' according to Benjamin, an empowered community according to Berger, or could choose to be completely absent according to Betancourt. When applied to postcolonial contexts however, none of these categories is self-evident or sufficient. Postcolonial theories put both expert individuals and Indigenous communities under scrutiny: is the 'producer' of information a 'native intellectual' who utilises techniques and language borrowed from the coloniser; or is it an Indigenous middle class that replicates colonial practices for its own profit; or is it then again a diasporic individual or community that is in itself in a state of uncertainty and flux? Or does the author still get to be the voice of the former coloniser? Also, what are the implications of lack of authorship? The range and depth of these important questions is not sufficiently addressed by the digitising institutions examined here, reflected in the presentation of the second study results when compared to those of the first. Some level of comparative evaluation however can lead to recommendations for decolonising practice.

The fact that none of the institutions displays any digital photograph metadata is problematic but should not hinder assessment from a user perspective. The quantity of images uploaded on the sites examined does not always correlate with the quality of object description. As can be summarised, Musée du quai Branly is the institution that provides the highest technical quality images from an aesthetic reception perspective and Cornell University through Artstore some of the lowest. The use of the term aesthetic however is problematic, as will be explained in the Conclusion of this thesis. When it comes to categorisations, the Fiji Virtual Museum approach of dividing objects into types is user-friendly. The item overviews on Te Papa Tongarewa on the other hand are more detailed than the ones on the Fiji Virtual Museum, providing both historical and cultural backgrounds that explain the item's significance, as well as a list of references. Musée du quai Branly and Artstor provide a search by date filter which is useful. However, in the case of Musée du quai Branly it is not obvious whether the date refers to the making of the object, or acquisition or cataloguing. By providing a wide date range, Artstor makes clear that the chronology refers to the item production. In some cases across all institutions, descriptions are either missing, or the language used is unintelligible. In some other cases, the descriptions are of good quality, but lacking authorial information. None of the institutions presents descriptions that are explicitly authored by Indigenous/minority persons or communities. Also, the content across all websites is mostly static, partly due to a lack of interactivity and social media embeddedness.

All organisations examined in this study are thorough with explaining the copyright and IP situation. Partly due to the effect of US legislation and partly due to the role of Artstor both as software supplier and viewing platform, the Rights text on this site is much more comprehensive than in the other collections. Te Papa Tongarewa adopts an interactive approach to Rights issues by dealing with them on a case by case basis and enabling the user to contact the museum directly through the submission of an online form. Taken in isolation, this is not a sufficient indicator of cultural responsiveness however. For that to be established, the three parameters of cultural permission, cultural sensitivities and Indigenous/minority consultation need to be assessed. When it comes to these, Te Papa Tongarewa is not completely transparent.

Most institutions fail the consultation factor. When it comes to Spencer & Gillen and Te Papa Tongarewa, we know that consultation has been part of the digitisation process, but it is not clear whether this is an ongoing concern. This is particularly imperative for sites such as Spencer & Gillen which are explicitly built on colonial work. Digitising institutions should be constantly examining the interplay between colonial knowledge and Indigenous articulation, by making sure that Indigenous voices are in control and present their own narratives. Some ways of doing this are illustrated in the following paragraphs. The results of this study confirm the scholarly reservations that are outlined in the Introduction and first study of this thesis, namely that objects seem to have been digitised too quickly without an underlying cultural policy that does justice to the heritage source communities or to the digitising institutions themselves. All institutions employ features that would have been culturally responsive if the rest of the structure and content adhered to the markers presented here.

Prior to undertaking this study, there was an underlying question with regard to the fundamental differences, if there are any, between how virtual museums and digital libraries manage digitised cultural heritage. It was therefore deemed important to examine different types of online cultural heritage institutions from different parts of the world in order to get a wider picture. Following the examination of these five institutions, an answer seems to have emerged. When it comes to the specific area of cultural responsiveness which is at the heart of the study, hybrid museums, especially the large world ones, have the possibility of offsetting any shortcomings on the digitisation side through other actions such as intercultural physical exhibition curations and production of educational material among else. A common problem which has been identified in this study is that community power is not harnessed when it comes to digitised cultural heritage. For this reason, digital libraries displaying cultural heritage need to treat the matter of user and community needs as their very *raison d'être*, otherwise they risk becoming irrelevant in a dynamic Web 2.0 context where other platforms are preferred by Indigenous or minority people. As was shown in the first study, the interests of the ‘general

public', which is usually defined by Western normative standards, do not necessarily coincide with those of Indigenous and minority people and the specificity of their relationships to the cultural heritage that is being digitised. It is imperative that digital libraries have missions that are followed through by concrete action. Failing to do that, they undermine their own role and any benefits that could come out of digitisation.

In his thesis on metadata quality in the cultural heritage sector, Van Hooland uses a broad definition of the term metadata as data about data and attributes importance to the connotative meaning of the informational resource when considering a cultural heritage object. As opposed to denotation, which is the literal meaning of a resource, connotation corresponds to the secondary meaning, which does not reside within the objects that are depicted, but in the information that is associated with them. This has fundamental implications for information retrieval and metadata. Van Hooland locates the value of cultural heritage resources particularly in the complex set of connotative, historically grown meanings that make up the relevancy of a cultural heritage resource. Furthermore, the author identifies user needs as the starting point when defining the different metadata fields, with difficulties in identifying user needs having a clear impact on metadata quality. Needs that evolve through time also have an impact, as do funding models of digitisation projects that prevent institutions from developing their own strategy, obliged as they are to adapt the content and form of digitisation projects to accord with the reigning paradigms of policy makers. As advances have been made which allow for digitisations of very high qualitative and quantitative level, a bottleneck for the success of projects lies in the costs for the description of digital images, which is a very resource-intense activity. Van Hooland argues that in the case of repurposing existing metadata, project managers need to preview resources for adapting the existing metadata. For all of these reasons, including the interdependence between images and metadata, the existence of metadata is increasingly used as a criterion of digitisation, as their creation from scratch can form a serious threat to the success of a project (Van Hooland, 2009).

With all that in mind, and following the results of the two studies, it is possible to draw some conclusions with regard to actions that digitising institutions can take in order to become more culturally responsive. There is an awareness of cost, however the decolonising dimension should be taken into account before deciding to maintain collections with poor metadata. Because metadata is more sustainable from a preservation perspective than digitised data, this is a consideration worth taking into account when thinking about cost.

All three main categories of socioethical concerns identified in the first study are reflected upon data and metadata quality. First of all, when it comes to the value of objects, images should be of good technical quality as users of social media have come to expect this (Srinivasan et al, 2009). If this is not

possible, some explanation should be offered with regard to how photographic decisions were made and when, providing a historical context. High managing and preservation quality of images are not in themselves markers of cultural responsiveness. Te Papa Tongarewa's advice towards users inviting them to request higher quality images if they wish so is both user-friendly and culturally responsive. Photographs should not be considered static content but subject to change, partly depending on users' input and as a result of continuous consultation. Non-displayed images should also contain descriptions following consultation and the reasons for the access restriction. It should be clear to the user whether there are any cultural concerns. Out of the projects examined in this thesis, only Spencer & Gillen provides a straightforward answer to that.

The website layout should be simple so that explanatory text can be accommodated and amended in a user-friendly way. The Fiji Virtual Museum is a good example of an interface that does not tire the eye and is aesthetically pleasing. Object categories should make immediate sense and be useful to the user. However, the category user does not necessarily encompass Indigenous communities even when Indigenous cultural heritage is concerned. When Te Papa Tongarewa uses the terms 'Topic', 'Organisation' and 'Taxon' for example in order to categorise items, it is not immediately obvious who the terms are for. If the terms are obscure, explanations should be provided on the same page. For categorisation to make sense, consultation with the communities of origin is required. The consultation process should be transparent and not limited to receiving advice about which items should be digitised or not. Filtering categories that represent regional splits, in the way Te Papa Tongarewa handles the Pacific collections, and ethnic/language groups following the example of Musée du quai Branly are very useful from a user perspective. These two types of categories can serve as guidance for ensuring fair representation as well as open up a navigational perspective that is enriching for the user. When employing a chronological filter, it should be immediately obvious whether this refers to date of object creation, acquisition or cataloguing. Furthermore, a list of related items/objects is useful from an educational and research perspective, but only if there is a logic to the relationships and irrespective of whether this is intuitive or needs to be explained. Listing related records as Musée du quai Branly does, which bear no obvious relationship to the object displayed other than that they come from the same country, or which lead back to the whole catalogue, is counterproductive.

When it comes to the question of copyright and user rights with regard to the displayed objects, user and third party contributions should be explicitly sought and invited as per the example of Cornell University which states: 'Cornell would like to learn more about items in this collection and to hear from individuals or institutions that have any additional information.' This type of statement should be displayed prominently on websites, both prior to

entering a collection and accompanying individual objects. Furthermore, the role of authorship is of utmost importance. All the examined institutions fail in providing names of people or groups who stand behind the object descriptions. There are a lot of Indigenous resources to draw from when describing items and their cultural significance, as the analysis of the Spencer & Gillen example shows. These resources should be sought out and deployed. National institutions, such as the Fiji Virtual Museum or Te Papa Tongarewa need to ensure that minorities are represented in their digital projects. In the case of Fiji for example where the Indigenous population is a majority, it is important to include objects and narratives from all minority groups and not only the most 'powerful' or visible. Postcolonialist theories on nationalism and the role of the 'native intellectual' such as presented in this thesis warn against homogenising practices carried out by local Indigenous peoples themselves, as imposing nationalistic aims on culture is synonymous with exercising power over marginalised groups.

Finally, sites should be interactive to an extent that enhances the user experience. A good example is that of Te Papa Tongarewa, which makes it easy for the user to submit requests, evaluate the site and subscribe to blogs through pop-up windows. The responsibility towards persons and communities of origin should be concretised through the institutional mission statements and lists of action. Historical backgrounds to the collections need to be inclusive of the creator standpoints and not just present the former colonisers' perspective. This is one of many ways of ensuring that tribal identities, languages, customs and traditions are not compromised during the digital transition, which is an important question lifted by Ngata et al. (2012, p. 240). The fact that global access and digital dissemination were not possible when original material was collected (Bowrey and Anderson, 2009, p. 495) means that utmost care should be given not only in terms of how Rights issues are explained but also in terms of how colonial history is narrativised. As technology is ever-involving and unleashing consequences that are as yet unknown, it is important to maintain an ongoing dialogue that is transparent on websites. Because this is ultimately where value resides: not in the objects, but in the exchange.

10 Conclusion and suggestions for further research

Critical digital humanities, and postcolonial digital humanities in particular, is an area of inquiry dedicated to remaking the postcolonial hegemonic structures that have defined the study of the humanities and its digital applications. Through identifying the needs of the marginalised and enabling the emergence of previously suppressed voices and standpoints, the discipline 'takes as its basis the belief that a postcolonial approach requires designing new tools, methods, and workflows that are based in local practices' (Risam, 2018, Introduction). Whereas postcolonial theories thrived in the 1970s in the humanities and social sciences, they did not permeate humanities computing at the time. Following mass-scale digitisations of cultural heritage materials that have been taking place since the 1990s however, new needs for the application of these theories have arisen in the digital humanities context. Significant efforts have been made to map out digital humanities activities on a global scale, some of which employ methods designed to include marginalised and Indigenous communities. There is however one area of the globe that remains uncharted territory in these map-making practices: the continent of Oceania beyond Australia and New Zealand.

The aim of this thesis has been to pay attention to this neglected geographical area from the digital humanities point of view. Oceania is a continent that has fascinated and inspired European artists, ethnologists and anthropologists for centuries. Following subsequent periods of colonisation and extensive exchanges between colonising and Indigenous populations, what traces are these leaving on the digital cultural record especially in view of the fact that the analogue cultural record has been enforcing and replicating colonial dynamics whilst wide inequalities with regard to ICT use exist within the region? If attention is not paid to this matter, there is a risk of perpetuating epistemic violence 'which contravenes cultural survival for communities whose languages are underrepresented, histories are suppressed, and stories are untold' (Risam, 2018, Introduction).

The first study of this thesis was an attempt to map out the socioethical concerns associated with the digitisation of Indigenous Oceanic cultural heritage materials, resulting in the identification of many key concepts and eventually three main categories of concerns: namely the values and functions of cultural objects, the legal frameworks, and the people who are the producers and users of cultural heritage. More specifically, it was found that Western ideas about the values of objects do not necessarily overlap with Oceanic ones, and that beginning to understand the latter enriches the overall appreciation of the function of digital objects. The long history of European colonisations depleted the populations of Oceania and involved mass pillaging of cultural heritage at a time when the emergent copyright laws excluded Indigenous

people who still find it difficult to make ownership claims, both in the physical and in the digital realm. Furthermore, representations of Indigeneity in the postcolonial context of emergence of new nation states is a contested concept in itself. As Pacific diasporas have spread around the globe, and more heavily so in Australia and New Zealand, Indigenous individuals and communities grapple with new technologies in various manners, and by their embracing Web 2.0 tools the role of traditional cultural heritage institutions becomes a matter of concern.

The research confirmed the limitations of neocolonial dynamics replicated in the academy: peer-reviewed work is almost exclusively produced through affiliations with institutions in the Global North and the centres of Australia and New Zealand, and as such significant focus is put on Aboriginal Australian and Māori voices. Even though a lot of this literature does justice to and honours Indigenous concerns, Indigenous spokespeople for the rest of Oceania are quite often members of Oceanic diasporas, with voices from the communities-in-place missing. This is something that is problematised in the thesis and considered a limitation, partly a failure, by its author. Even though the results provide a comprehensive outline of the socioethical concerns that should be considered prior to and during the undertaking of digital humanities projects, a more socially responsive study would have sought out voices from the Oceanic regions that are absent from academic and digital humanities maps.

Whereas there is a number of projects that have successfully and carefully digitised cultural heritage originating in other parts of the world with a decolonising intent, projects that do justice to Oceanic cultural heritage are often small-scale and not up-to-date. On the other hand, the dispersion of Oceanic cultural heritage that has ended up in institutions all around the world following colonisation has resulted in the fragmentation of the material and Indigenous voicelessness. The mass-scale digitisations of collections enabled by technology were not accompanied by appropriate consultations, resulting in websites that lack vital cultural information.

The second study, based on an analysis of digitisation activities undertaken by important global cultural heritage institutions, was designed in such a way so as to locate on the microlevel of information presentation and user experience both the gaps that perpetuate colonial violence and the tools that contribute to a better understanding of Indigenous Oceanic culture. The study analysed website features that have the potential of enhancing cultural responsiveness. The evaluations provided with regard to the quality of image metadata, object descriptions, authorial information, consultation policies or Rights explanations from a postcolonial perspective were activity specific but the conclusions drawn, especially following a comparative assessment, are generalisable. The results of the study found that the studied website features were of varying quality and on the questions that mattered the most in terms of

cultural responsiveness, i.e. transparency with regard to Indigenous consultation and Indigenous authorial input, there were serious gaps that need to be addressed. The recommendations that have been drawn following an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each studied activity can be replicated on other digitisation websites that have been deployed without issues of decolonisation having been considered at the outset.

The studies presented in this thesis have revealed lacunae and spaces for improvement in the digital cultural record with regard to Oceanic cultural heritage which provide a lot of potential for conducting future research. To start with, the issue of authorial voice is flagged up in both studies, being central to postcolonial theories. A limitation of this thesis, as stated above, is that it has not sought voices in Oceanic nations outside of Australia and New Zealand. Considering the resource inequalities and lack of ICT access in parts of the region, Indigenous voices do not necessarily need to be institution-affiliated but are absolutely essential in any future work.

Another element that jumps out in terms of omissions in the cultural record is the linguistic one: the fact that Oceania represents 25% of world languages is another gap on the digital humanities map. This thesis has not touched upon the linguistic problem at all, however in order to construct a more balanced digital cultural record, input from local populations and linguists is required. The exclusive use of English as lingua franca of digitisations excludes other worldviews understood and expressed through languages that are at risk of disappearing. This thesis has focused on the quality of information provided in English only.

Another area where future research is needed is that of image quality which is a contested area, and possibly more so when related to the multiplicities of meanings associated with Indigenous cultural objects that have been dislodged from their original functions. More specifically, it would be useful to approach this issue from a philosophy of technology perspective prior to contextualising it within existing digitisation guidelines. Phillips et al. assert that the systematic assessment of image quality by means of measurements is a non-trivial task, partly because aesthetics does not always correlate with technical quality, whereby the strength of emotional responses can overwhelm the impression of technical excellence (2018, p. 27). Defining 'image quality' is not a straightforward task and nevertheless a prerequisite for providing reliable methodologies for the quantification of image quality (Phillips et al., 2018, p. 27). The design of this study has stumbled upon a double methodological problem: on one hand website assessment is impossible without assessment of image quality that is hard to define; and on the other, the aesthetic responses of a single researcher cannot be left out of the assessment and at the same time cannot be used as a yardstick for objective evaluation, especially where Indigenous cultural heritage is concerned. This is the reason why the Methodology section invites users to visit the websites examined and

draw their own conclusions. Developing a methodology for image assessment in the area of Indigenous cultural heritage would facilitate future similar studies and would by necessity have to involve Indigenous people. At the same time, this knowledge can still be found to be falling out of 'objective' quantitative criteria developed according to Western standards.

The second study of this thesis applied a set of questions derived from themes emerging from the literature analysis presented in the first study in order to evaluate the extent to which heritage institutions digitise collections originating in Oceania in a culturally responsive manner. These questions are subject to future application across other websites and evaluation. At the same time, it could also be fruitful to apply them alongside other checklist tools that have already been developed by Singh et al. (2013) for example, or through the Social Justice and the Digital Humanities platform on existing digitisation activities as part of a more extensive study. Furthermore, and considering that input for this thesis has also been derived from postcolonial theories and empirical research sourced from the African and Canadian Indigenous contexts, it would be worth interrogating the applicability of these evaluation methods across a range of Indigenous cultural material from different parts of the world.

Finally, an interesting finding of the second study, and one which did not correspond to one of the designated research questions but came about by accident, is that cultural responsiveness on the part of GLAM institutions is not primarily expressed through their digitised cultural collections but through other activities in the physical and the digital space. This opens up another avenue for academic exploration which would seek to interrogate the reasons for that and investigate whether it is necessary or not for hybrid museums to implement policies of aim convergence when it comes to offering different types of activities.

This author's interest in Oceania was piqued by the history of the Polynesians, whom the famous Māori anthropologist Te Rangi Hīroa called 'the supreme navigators of history' (Crowe, 2018, p. 11). As Crowe puts it, by the time the Europeans entered the Pacific realm, every island they encountered had already been inhabited. This had not been the result of accidental 'drift voyages' as some scholars claimed in the mid-20th century, but of remarkable seafaring and wayfinding skills which did not depend upon or use instruments. The 1970s which marked the beginning of a flourishing period for postcolonial theories was also the beginning of '[the] restoration of the Polynesians into their rightful place in the history of world exploration' (Crowe, 2018, p. 11). 1976 marked the first voyage of *Hōkūle'a* from Hawai'i to Tahiti through reinvention of the ancient Polynesian seafaring skills and this in itself is a remarkable story. In 2017, *Hōkūle'a* completed a three-year circumnavigation of the earth. How can we remedy the fact that 'one of the great sagas of world history' (Crowe, 2018, p. 11) taking place in the world's greatest Ocean had

been obscured for so long despite European fascination with the Pacific? The final question then is, how does the plethora of Oceanic achievements translate into the digital humanities global maps? To begin to make amends by listening to the Indigenous people of Oceania is an indispensable act of digital humanity.

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