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Europe is in Everyday Things: School Children's Visualisations of Europe through the Integration of Art and Citizenship Education

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Biography

Annamari Manninen, MA, works as a lecturer in art education with a focus on media education and is a PhD researcher in the faculty of Art and Design at the University of Lapland, in Rovaniemi, Finland. She has a background teaching visual art at the upper secondary school level and at an art school for children and youth. Her current research is focused on identity dialogues through contemporary art and using virtual and blended learning environments in art education to bring peer artworks along as a pedagogical tool.

Abstract

This paper presents a study of pupils' visualisations of Europe in their artworks and the visual means and roles of art they use. The data on pupils' artworks come from group blogs that were a part of the Creative Connections project, which aimed to develop approaches to contemporary art that encourage young people to explore European identities. The project, which ran from 2012–2014, was an action research initiative funded by the European Union's Comenius Grant. It brought together teams of researchers and coordinators

from six universities and pupils and teachers from 25 schools from the primary through upper secondary levels across Europe. Participating countries were Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Based on data obtained from the project, this paper sheds light on the possibilities of art education for addressing the topic of European citizenship.

Keywords

Art education, contemporary art, European citizenship, European identity, group blog, pupils' artworks

Background

How would you visualise Europe? Do you see yourself as European? In Spring 2013, hundreds of children and young people in Finland, Portugal, the UK, Czech Republic, Spain and Ireland were asked these questions. The questions were posed by art teachers, classroom teachers and civic education teachers and by researchers overseeing the Creative Connections project. Pupils were not asked to write, but rather to make a drawing, take a photo, make a video or installation—any art project using contemporary art approaches—to present their views. In addition, they were asked to share their works with three other classes from different countries in a shared group blog to connect with their European peers. To help to start the discussion and spark ideas for different artistic approaches, participants were given an online gallery of contemporary artworks addressing the questions of identity, citizenship and Europe and presenting contemporary approaches to making visual art.

Creative Connections (CC), an art education action research project operating from 2012–2014, was carried out in cooperation with six partner universities: Roehampton university, London (UK), the coordinator; Universitat de Barcelona (Spain); Charles University, Prague (Czech

Republic); the National College of Art and Design, Dublin (Ireland); the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi (Finland); and Instituto Polytechnico de Viana do Castelo (Portugal). It aimed to develop and promote an active inter-country dialogue, specifically among children, to enhance the understanding of different perspectives on European citizenship through contemporary art. The research involved 25 schools, ranging from the primary to upper secondary levels, with a selection of pupils and teachers who collaborated with national teams of researchers and coordinators from the above-named universities (see Richardson, 2014). The core of the project were the group blogs, which offered spaces for pupils' voices and dialogues alongside a web gallery, the Connected Gallery (see Creative Connections, 2014), of contemporary European artworks selected and categorised to approach the project's theme and art-producing methods.

This paper focuses on pupils' orientations to Europe, as represented in their artworks. By using the concept of orientation, I refer to European citizenship as a territorial and cultural identity (Mäkinen, 2012). Thus, the notion is considered through visual representations that construct and reflect cultural identities (Hall, 1999). How did the children and young people place themselves in relation to Europe in their artworks? This study aims to reflect on how art education materials and activities contribute to exploring the phenomenon of European citizenship and, ultimately, to help develop new teaching practices. The main data source are pupils' blog posts—the images and accompanying texts and comments they created and shared during the spring 2013 semester. The works were subjected to polarisation as a means of visual analysis, before a comparison was made between the notions of Europe drawn from the artworks and the comments on Europe made during pupils' interviews.

Several case studies, papers, PhD studies and master's theses have resulted from the CC project. The present paper adds another layer of reflection with a view focused on pupils' artworks. It pays special attention to discussing its results in comparison to a study by Mason, Richardson and Collins (2012) about pupils' visualisations of Europe in 2008, which were a

part of the Images and Identities project (2008–2009), the predecessor to the CC project.

As CC was an art-based project, visual art featured in many roles in the process, such as looking at and understanding artwork examples and others' works. Above all, the pupils' art-making process and artworks comprised the largest part of data and were at the centre of all dialogues. The CC aimed to combine research, pedagogy and methods of contemporary art in development work, which is the goal of art-based action research according to Jokela, Hiltunen & Härkönen (2015). Art-based research is often useful in studies involving identity, as it can evoke meanings and explore differences, diversities, prejudices and stereotypes (Leavy, 2017). Van Leeuwen (2001) emphasised the social modality of art from an anthropological perspective, defining the images as data to be analysed as representations of how their authors reconstruct reality. The present study adopted this view of visual anthropology for approaching pupils' artworks as expressions of how they see Europe and using the results to develop a new pedagogy for the visual arts.

European Citizenship and Cultural Identity

European citizenship was established as a legal status in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, when the European Union was founded. At that time, citizens of all member states acquired supra-national citizenship in the EU (Council of the European Communities, 1992). Before that, the promotion of European consciousness and the introduction of symbols for the EU were central to the European Community (Jacobs & Maier, 1998). The sense of European identity was seen as the basis for active citizenship, cooperation and solidarity (EC, 1998). As the EU funded the CC project alongside the Comenius programme, the underlying agenda was to work with the topic of citizens' identities. Throughout the project, all kinds of perspectives on Europe were allowed and discussed. The project's aim was to give a voice to young people to share their views and explore their ideas of Europe, with no expectations of a clear European identity,

given that none existed even among the adult population. For example, the Eurobarometer, a biannual EU study to measure public opinion in all member countries, resulted in the Spring of 2013 in an average of 62% of participants identifying as “citizens of Europe” (EC, 2013).

Keulman and Koós’s (2014) work indicated that most people make no distinction between their European citizenship and European identity. Through an interview analysis, they found that European identity can be seen as an emotional aspect of European citizenship. Mäkinen (2012) found that identity is also emphasised in the construction of citizenship in EU documents and is closely connected to culture and territory. In this paper, European citizenship is investigated as a question of cultural and territorial identity, alongside visual symbols, signs and narratives representing this identification. In the CC project, the aim was to connect European-level citizenship education and art education. This approach shifted the perspective from the legal side of European citizenship to pupils’ experiences of and identifications with Europe. According to Huddleston and Kerr (2006), the younger children are, the more they collectively identify with the dominant groups in their environments. Thus, the conversations began with personal, regional and national identities before moving toward European identity and different ways and means of connecting to Europe. This approach was chosen because “European citizens are first and foremost nationals, and the link they might establish with the EU is largely mediated through national institutions, attachment and culture” (Duchesne, 2012, p. 54).

Social psychology defines identity structures, and sociology and anthropology see European identity as a socio-territorial identity. To date, European identity has mostly been researched in political science (Keulman & Koós, 2014). In the context of the present study, Hall’s (1999) definition of identity is relevant. He defined identity as multidimensional, non-permanent and continuously changing. He also emphasised that cultural identities are affected by representations in art, culture, history and language, which leads to the linking of

visual expression, contemporary art and identities. Mäkinen (2012) noted that, in EU documents, citizenship is produced in connection to European culture, which promotes belonging with other Union citizens.

Contemporary Art, Education and Citizenship

Why use contemporary art and art education to approach European citizenship? The notion of the supranational European dimension is one of the most difficult topics covered in citizenship education (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz & Burge, 2009). Since the European identity is promoted through visual imagery (Mason et al., 2012), it is relevant to explore the visual representations that construct perceptions of “Europeanness” in people’s minds. Contemporary art offers visual representations that are not produced for political or commercial purposes; thus, it provides alternative representations and perspectives on identity and Europe.

Efland sees the contribution of art in education through its capacity to transmit cultural knowledge, “to construct cultural meanings and permit social communication” (2002, p. 7). He also explains that the arts present narrative, metaphorical modes of reasoning that differ from logical-scientific thinking. In this case, European citizenship was seen as an abstract and distant concept. The artistic examples and pupils’ own visual productions offered ways to create more personal connections to what it means and feels to be European. The arts-integrated experiences brought affective connections to learning, while the emotional impact optimised the learning experience (Thorndike Greenspan & Greenspan, 2016).

In the CC project, contemporary art served as a pedagogical tool by demonstrating the different roles of art when approaching a given topic. This was presented through the categorisation of the online gallery of artworks and introduced to teachers via trainings provided as part of the project. The aim was to help participants learn and use different strategies for art making and the roles assumed by contemporary artists. The five categories presented below were used in

the CC project based on Lacy's (1995) roles of art and develop by art education professor Mirja Hiltunen (2009):

- A. Art as cultural self-expression
- B. Art as cultural interpretation
- C. Art as cultural report
- D. Art as cultural guide
- E. Art as cultural activism

The chosen artworks by contemporary artists from the participating countries presented vastly different aspects of identity and views on citizenship and Europe in general. As a result, they could introduce the theme, generate discussions, inspire visual responses and demonstrate to students how they could use art to express concepts (Manninen, 2015).

The dialogues that emerged among the pupils inspired by the images online was one of the main aims of the project. These efforts were supported by defining the notion of contemporary art itself emerging from dialogues, encounters and relationships (Bourriaud, 2002). According to pupils' feedback, the impact of looking at others' works and presenting their own were the most essential factors for forming new views about Europe (Manninen, 2018). In this same vein, Kester (2004) defines dialogical art as centred around conversational exchanges and interactions.

Kester (2011) sees collective action and civic engagement as increasing features of contemporary art practises that emphasise the collaborative approaches and participatory and process-based forms of art. Similarly, Mullin (2016) points out that the works of contemporary artists approach active citizenship by creating real interactions between the audience and the artist in public spaces via the connection of participation, relativity and community. Elliot, Silverman

and Bowman (2016) make further connections between contemporary art practices and active citizenship by defining *artistic citizenship*. They emphasise that making art has always been connected to the community. Thus, art should be observed, studied and made as a form of ethically guided citizenship.

Data and Methods

Data for the visual analysis were extracted from one of the six group blogs, one by pupils with an average age of 14–16 and which had an average number of posts (n=144). This blog connected four classes, from Finland, Ireland, Spain and the UK. The European theme was processed distinctly in the art assignments in each participating school. Pupils' artworks were mainly collages, photos, drawings or paintings. There were also some sculptures, installations, videos and plans for environmental or community art. To test the validity of the visual analysis of the chosen group blog's images, a comparative analysis of two other group blogs featuring participants of the same ages was conducted to find commonalities. In addition to the visual data that were analysed, all citations that referred to Europe in the pupils' interviews were noted. This was extracted from the interview transcriptions with the Finnish participants and a condensed summary of pupils' comments compiled from the other countries' researchers.

When interpreting pupils' works, the short accompanying texts in the blogs and comments were important, as the author of this study, a Finnish and European citizen, is an art educator and artist who also served as a researcher in the project. When analysing works from other countries, all judgments and evaluations were made by relying on information given in reports, by other researchers and on personal knowledge of those countries, school systems and cases. This paper is part of a larger study that includes a previous analysis of case study reports and pupils' and teachers interviews from the project. All of this was kept in mind when analysing the artworks. The school context also limited and led pupils' expressions by exposing them to

social pressures, institutional expectations and unwritten classroom rules.

The analysis was completed using the visual polarisation method introduced by Räsänen (2008); it is based on analysing the methods used in visual media imagery from 1970s-era Swedish art education (Räsänen, M., Romilson, C., Nordström, G. Z. & Aspelin, G., 1990). Even though the method was developed for educational use, it has also been used in close connection to Collier's (2001) visual anthropology methods; thus, it is valid for use in qualitative research. The analysis models of visual anthropology and polarisation both search for patterns and meanings through a consideration of contextual information while emphasising the importance of the juxtaposition of images as part of the analysis (Collier, 2001; Räsänen, 2008). In particular, the polarisation method aims to find opposites in visual materials, which can be found in colours, composition or content.

Analysis and Results

The analysis began by categorising the visual motifs in the pupils' representations of Europe. In a majority of them, Europe was depicted as geographical area (Figure 4, Orientations from 1 to 3). The EU was also depicted as a peace alliance, economic union, common currency and marketing area and as an area in conflict and beset by economic crises (Figure 4, Orientations 4 and 5). The categorisation of the pupils' visualisations of Europe could be grouped into three themes:

- A. **Symbols and Facts:** 1. Flags and maps, 2. Monuments, 3. Symbols, 4. Languages
- B. **Union /Alliance:** 5. Money/Euro/Economics, 6. Market area/Products, 7. Conflicts/Crisis/Peace
- C. **Everyday Cultural Practices:** 8. Sports, 9. Travel/Tourism, 10. Foods/Dishes, 11. Animals, 12. Seasons, 13. Music groups/Bands

Two opposite pairs from each category were chosen to represent extremes inside the topic. These pairs were then analysed more closely using Panofsky's (1993) iconological model. The polarisation inside the themes formed the dimension axes to map the variations and key factors for expressing participants' orientations to Europe (Figure 1).

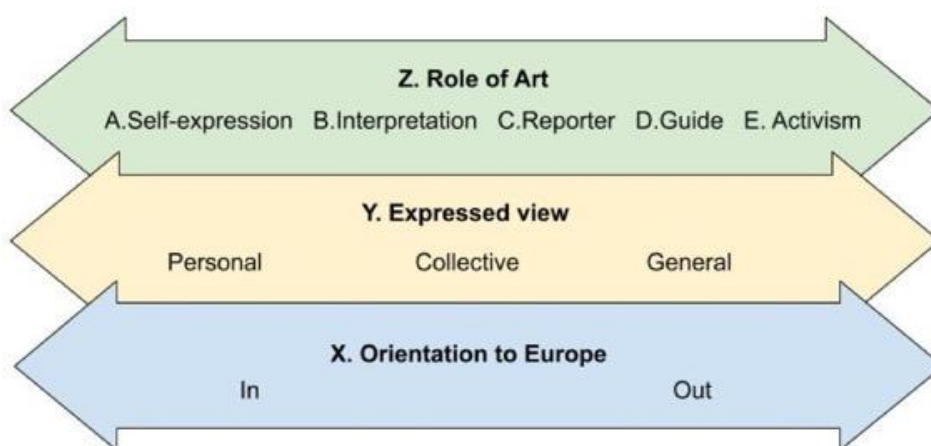


Figure 1. The dimension axes mapping the polarisation of expressions in pupils' artworks within the themes (A–C). X, Y and Z refer to geometrical axes in three-dimensional space, so that the position in one axis does not limit the position in the others.

The process was concluded with the selection of the most essential images. The method was expanded to yield four artworks depicting one pair of opposite images (Figure 2) that bring out the three dimensions of the data (Figure 1).

The polarisation method included producing a new visual product as a visual synthesis (Räsänen, 2008). A new drawing (Figure 3) was made by reproducing parts and elements of pupils' works. This began with the repeated monuments and symbols, then moved toward personal experiences and metaphors. The main two works identified as essential were a sculpture of serrated-edge scissors depicting the ruthless cuts to public funding and *Bob the European Cultural Tourist*, a cellophane man that was to be sent to visit the participating schools (see

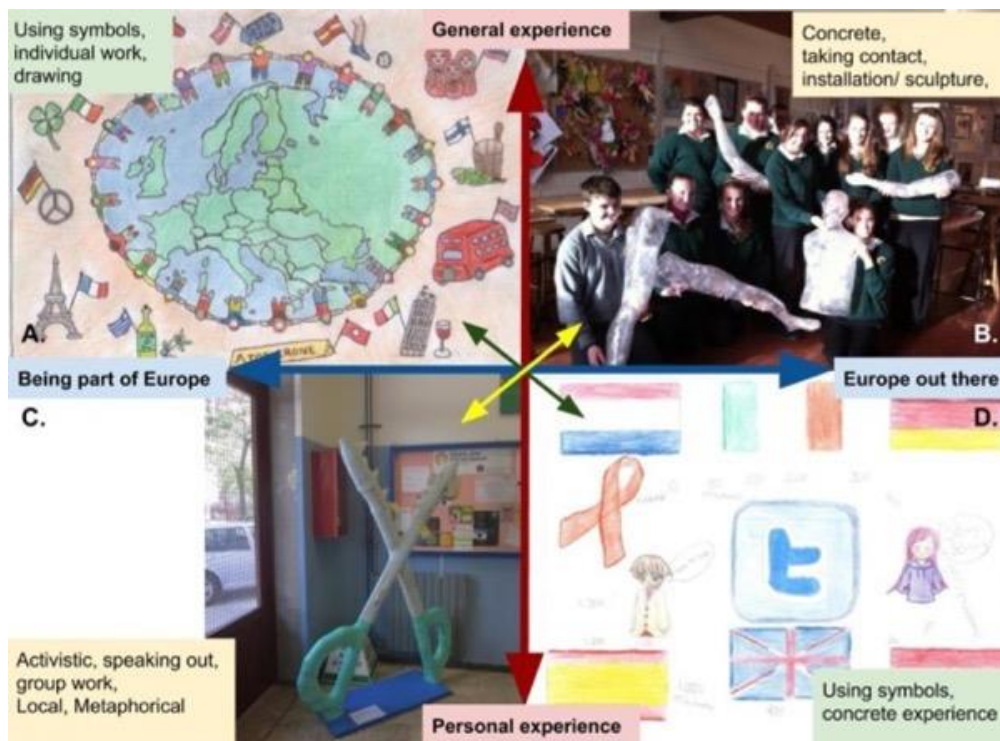


Figure 2. Concluding images and dimensions of the polarising analysis.

Figure 2, Images B & C). Both of these works were group projects connecting participatory and community aspects of contemporary art. They were also concrete and connected to pupils' everyday lives. By contrast, a majority of the pupils' works were drawings and collages. These two works summarised their connections to Europe as a common economic union where common products, market areas and downturns are connected, and to travelling, where Bob was the embodiment of their experienced, dreamed and imagined trips.



Figure 3. Visual synthesis as final products after analysing pupils' representations of Europe.

Being or Not Being a Part of Europe – National Variations

The main dimensional axis that organised the pupils' works was the subtle interpretation of whether the work depicted being a part of or outside Europe (Figure 1). This was the main question in looking at pupils' orientations to Europe. Five relationships to Europe were revealed in the images (see Figure 4).

1. The home country as a European country (Figure 2, Artwork A)
2. The home country and Europe as two entities, side by side, with the home country as a part of Europe (Figure 6)
3. Europe is somewhere out there, often actually central or southern Europe, where the

student travels for holidays (Figure 8)

4. A metaphor or visualisation of Europe that includes the artist's position (Figure 5)

5. A metaphorical representation of Europe (Figure 10)

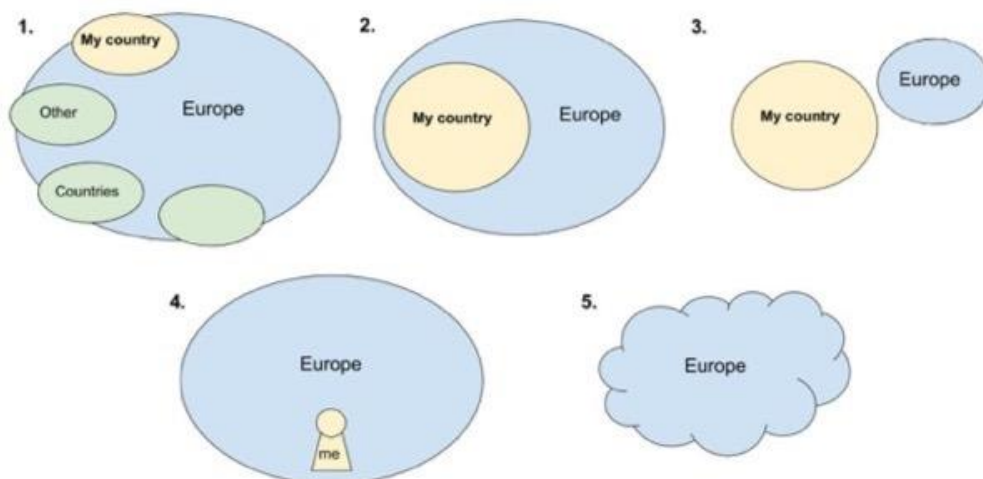


Figure 4. Orientations to Europe in pupils' artworks (1–3; geographical orientations; 4–5 metaphorical visualisations of Europe).

These different orientations in relation to Europe brought out national differences. The histories of Finland, Spain, Ireland and the UK in relation to Europe are different, as are the countries' lengths of membership in the EU (see European Union, 2019). Thus, national background has an impact on pupils' European identity. Finnish pupils listed Finland among the European countries, without highlighting their homeland (Figure 4, Orientation 1). This indicates the stability of the idea of Finland being a part of Europe. Finnish pupils also mostly presented drawings and collages listing the European countries, thus representing general facts

(Figure 2, Artwork A). With a few exceptions, older students (aged 16–18) often created their own visual metaphors (see Figure 4, Orientation 4; Figure 5).

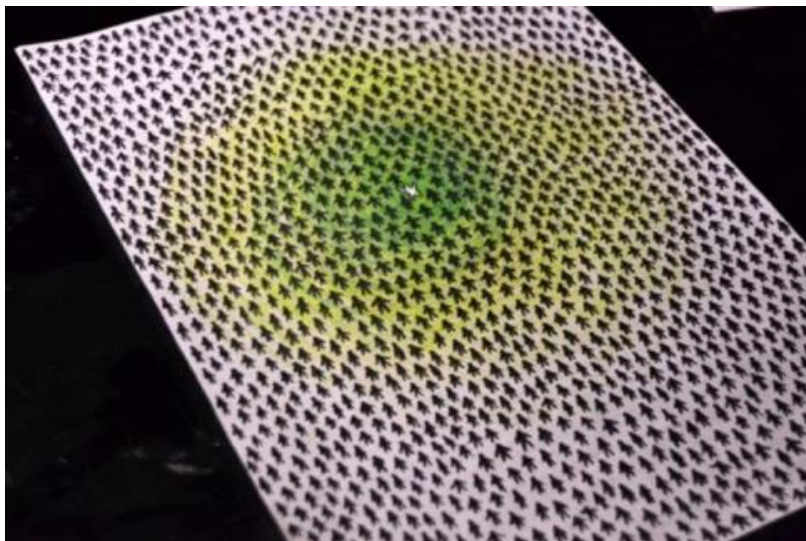


Figure 5. “Here is how I see my relationship to Europe. Obviously the middle one is me...” (Me and Europe, pupil age 17, Finland).

Irish pupils pictured their homeland and Europe as two entities (see Figure 6), but the accompanying texts explained that Ireland is a part of Europe. They also used a lot of Irish symbols, in addition to European ones. These visualisations correspond with Duchesne’s (2012) suggestion that European integration should be analysed as a component of and dependent upon national identification. This feature of using references to home and approaching Europe from the perspective of the homeland and the country’s relation to it was also distinctive for Irish students in the previous study (Mason et al., 2012). In CC, the aspect of communicating with others via the blog also inspired Portuguese, Finnish and Czech pupils to present their country and region in their artworks.

Spanish pupils were connected to Europe through the economic crisis, which affected their



Figure 6. Drawing presenting Europe and the home country of Ireland side by side (My Idea of Europe, pupil age 15, Ireland) as Orientation 2.

everyday lives. Their art also addressed different aspects of identity, from appearance and religion to music and sports. By contrast, for some British pupils, Europe was a place for vacationing, somewhere to travel to in central or southern Europe (Figure 8). They often depicted Europe as being elsewhere, and themselves as not being a part of it. British pupils' works were the only ones in which some had no references to their homeland. However, some British pupils approached Europe with the personal orientation of everyday life: products, sports, food and languages that they could relate to the concept of *Europe*.

The present analysis of the children's orientations drew no conclusions about the positive or negative connotations of their feelings of being in or outside of Europe. In each country, one can find a culture and environment with a perspective of the EU based on the majority's opinion and national media narratives. In the pupils' artworks, there were no clear divisions between positive or negative orientations. Some positioned themselves as Europeans and presented the downsides of this status (economic crises and conflicts, see Figure 10). Others presented them-

selves outside of Europe, but presented the idea of Europe positively (Figure 8) or vice versa. Richardson (2016), another CC researcher, conducted a close analysis of participants' concerns, such as the senses of precarity and alienation from Europe, found in some pupils' artworks (including those shown in Figure 10).

Recurring Symbols and Interpretative Themes

Famous monuments were common motifs for representing countries, telling about the participants' trips to Europe or their dreams of travelling (e.g., Figure 2, Artwork A). The Eiffel Tower was the most-often depicted monument, followed by the Leaning Tower of Pisa and Big Ben; other works included the Roman Colosseum, Brandenburg Gate and the Acropolis. Travel, tourism and vacations in Europe were common themes. More general imagery featured national flags, EU stars, maps, monuments, brands and logos. These images and the levels of expression were also blended throughout the works. In depicting personal connections to Europe, some used common symbols and emblems; for example, one British pupil presented her European connection with a drawing that included herself and her Italian grandfather with Big Ben and the Leaning Tower of Pisa in the background (Figure 7). While her connection to Europe was manifest in personal family relations, the two countries were indicated with their totemic monuments.

Maps of Europe, totemic EU symbols and landmarks were also recurring motifs in pupils' images of Europe in 2008 (Mason et al., 2012). These landmarks were used not only by participants of a certain age or nation, but rather were the symbols that connected all participating countries. The use of maps and landmarks indicates a physical, territorial and cultural orientation to Europe, where European culture is the connecting element of the Union's citizens (Mäkinen, 2012). EU symbols, national flags and landmarks are easy to recognise, and thus a safe and simple way to communicate a general, accepted view and set of known facts about

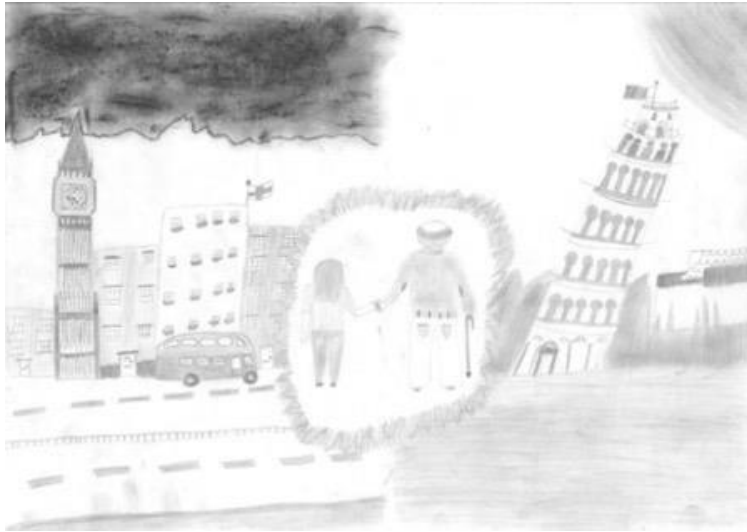


Figure 7. “This piece was created because I have an Italian grandfather” (Italian Connection, pupil age 15, UK).

Europe.



Figure 8. Figure 8. “What Europe means to me is family together in the sun” (Europe Collage, pupil age 14, UK).

The popularity of using landmarks in visual representations of Europe also points to the meaning of tourism and media in pupils' lives and cultures (Figure 8). European culture and mass tourism are connected to iconic or sacralised places created with narratives by locals and tourists alike, so that people's identities are attached to them (Gaggio, 2012). According to Gaggio, "the most powerful of these narratives has to do with European civilization itself" (2012, p. 164). The landmarks represent European culture, heritage and history, something that characterises Europe in the pupils' works. Gaggio (2012) argues that Europe, as an everyday experience, is also born of the experiences of millions of tourists and reproductions of transnational myths.

Personal Connections to and General Views of Europe

Polarisation is one of the dimension axes (see Figure 1) in the expression of personal experiences and participants' own views of Europe, in contrast to picturing general facts and views. In some images, pupils listed many European countries, while others ended up with visually similar outcomes by starting from some concrete experience or connection they had, such as listing the European countries they had visited, where their favourite bands come from, the football clubs they know or the nationalities of people with whom they had communicated online (Figure 2, Artwork D). These can be defined as the cultural practices of everyday life which include, for example, popular or mass culture, fashion, tourism, music and media (Bennett, 2005). These cultural practices are also connected to the construction of one's social identity, as consumption patterns are important sources of identity (Gaggio, 2012). Holiday travel and football, in particular, connected UK youth to Europe, a finding consistent with the previous study (Mason et al., 2012).

In comparison to personal orientations toward Europe born from products and experiences, participants' political orientation could be distinguished in only a few works. Those emphasised



Figure 9. “My artwork is showing how the EU is connected and often controlled by money (i.e., holidays, the euro, taxes, benefits etc.)” (Influence of Money, pupil age 16, Ireland).

Europe as a monetary union or common market area and highlighted the general alliance level of trade (Figure 9). The financial dimension of the EU was also present, especially in those works addressing the economic crisis. In addition to economic union, in one work, there was a historical orientation to the EU as a basis for safety and peace among the states accompanied by the text, “To me, Europe means different countries uniting after fighting” (European Collage, UK, age 14). Another pupil provided an opposite view by referring to conflicts (see Figure 10).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Europe was present in the pupils’ representations as a learned and taught area of facts and symbols, a union of markets and peace or as something to connect with through everyday cultural practices. Many participants indicated personal connections and experiences, as aimed for with the approach rooted in art making (see Räsänen, 2008; Thorndike Greenspan & Greenspan 2016). The artworks showed several orientations toward Europe (see Figure 4),



Figure 10. “The idea behind the work was to describe my thoughts about Europe: Children and young people are the future of the world and I think the children describe the joy and equality” (*My Europe*, pupil age 14, Finland).

featuring both territorial inclusion and exclusion. Orientations also included metaphorical visualisations of Europe, both with and without the inclusion of the self in the community. Identification as being a part of or outside Europe emerged as a subtle but meaningful difference among the participants; the artistic approach made it possible for them to express both general and personal views, European and non-European identities and to move from self-expression to speaking out and taking action (Figure 1). The artworks further demonstrated the communicative opportunities of art and visual culture for sharing narratives (Delacruz, 2009; Meskimmon, 2010). In their interviews, the pupils also brought out facts they had learned about Europe and other countries. They made observations based on each other’s artworks, compared their environments and everyday lives and found similarities.

In the interviews, 40% of the comments linked to Europe referred to the economic crisis, which was a prominent and oft-discussed topic in 2013. At the same time, the artworks showed

many other personal and varying connections to Europe apart from the economy. This indicates that the visual approach evoked deeper and more multifaceted explorations of participants' connections to Europe. Some created their own metaphors, indicating they had processed the idea of Europe both metaphorically and narratively (see Figures 5 and 10), which Efland (2002) noted is a means for building meaning through art.

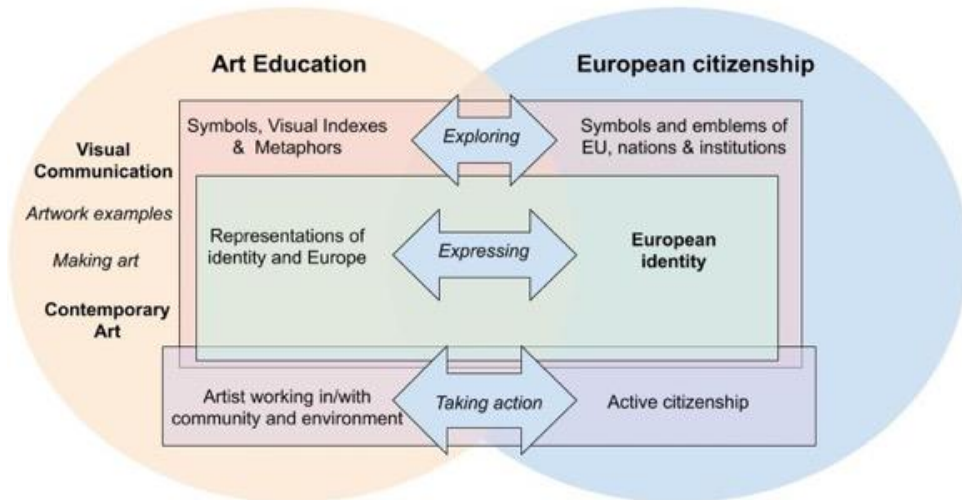


Figure 11. Figure 11. An art education approach to European citizenship as a synthesis of the study.

Following an analysis of the pupils' artworks, it is clear that the art education programme made it possible for them to explore, express and take actions of citizenship through the CC project (Figure 11). The artwork examples made it possible for participants to start by exploring Europe and the European identity and the ways of expressing it through art. The pupils used a vast variety of symbols, emblems, metaphors and everyday cultural phenomena to connect visually to Europe. This is an area that could be addressed in terms of visual communication and explored further. The key finding from an art education point of view is the appearance of

the roles of art presented in the artwork example gallery. Most pupils expressed their own experiences or common views about Europe, according to the roles of art as cultural self-expression and interpretation (roles of art A and B, referenced above). At least in Finland, and perhaps in other countries as well, teaching pupils to express their opinions visually and to interpret the political motives in images has been a part of art lessons since the 1970s. Contemporary art also offers pupils approaches to art making that take them outside the classroom to create dialogues. Elliot et al. (2016) called for an ethical dimension to art education, one that would enlarge it further by teaching pupils how to recognise and understand the fundamental issues in their community and address them with artistic actions. In the CC, some of the pupils' art projects used cultural reporting, guiding and even the activist role by exploring issues in their own community and environment and speaking out by creating artworks outside the school area in the city, with the aim of being seen, heard and participated in. In those works, the pupils moved from exploring and expressing their European identity to taking action as active citizens to express their opinions and effect change.

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