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How to cite this article

Peer review

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Creative Connections: The power of contemporary art to explore European citizenship

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Abstract

Across Europe, educational institutions are essential in assisting exploration of politics, culture and history, and the use of creative arts appears crucial to supporting this aim. This article reports on Creative Connections, a multi-partner research project that facilitated exchanges for young people to explore their European identities using online art galleries and blogging technologies. Their multimodal conversations revealed an openness to consider artworks as sources of knowledge and experience. Participants did not focus on the nationality of the artist, but concentrated on the relationship that the subject matter of the work had with their own concerns. Anxiety related to populism, exclusive nationalism, social inequality and new forms of labour appeared to impact young European citizens' relationships and their perceptions of democracy.

Keywords: education for citizenship, visual art education, civic competence, school collaborations, action research

Introduction

Current political tensions within European Union (EU) member states, and across Europe more widely, portray a continent in crisis and a union (both political and social) in danger of falling apart (Bassot, 2019). At such times, it seems that anxiety and confusion dominate public discourses and threaten the very heart of important links within public life. European states also appear to be facing a significant problem in the lack of a shared definition or accepted conditions that are required to convey citizenship of Europe, so specific programmes of education have been proposed as one way to counter such issues (Austin-Greenall and Lipinska, 2017). To such an end, the European Community's (EC) Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency has funded a range of programmes designed to advance understanding of European citizenship and to develop citizen competences through educational programmes run both in and out of schools (Eurydice, 2012).

The Council of Europe's educational agenda is framed by Civic Competences that characterize learning for democratic life as critical to a culture of integration and inclusion across all member states (see Council of Europe, 2018). They add

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that education is central to developing and maintaining an equal Europe built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Central to the evolution of the competences was the need to embed and sustain a culture within education that includes an appreciation and commitment to citizenship. The Council of Europe wants educators to employ a range of subjects, particularly the creative arts, when aiming for such important educational goals. This is important to the research described here because it reinforces our beliefs that through creative arts it is possible to provide opportunities to engage students in schools in ways that are simultaneously complex, ambiguous and surprising. And, as Enslin and Ramírez-Hurtado (2013) argue, such qualities are educationally valuable because they afford opportunities to engage across, within and between cultures. This is what matters because the shifting global political landscape is a part of what endangers the future of the post-war European project (see Leaton Gray *et al*., 2018).

The EU-funded project presented in this article, Creative Connections (2012–15), echoes the Council of Europe's goals in that it was designed to facilitate between-country exchanges for young people to explore their feeling of belonging within a European context, using visual art and blogging technologies. The research team was led from the UK, and included university art and citizenship teacher-educators/researchers who had conducted research together in the past. This multi-partner approach was not designed opportunistically, rather academic colleagues were invited to participate based on the UK team's knowledge that they would be committed to the longevity of the project and be open to creative and experimental approaches to using art and citizenship curricula. Building on a collaborative project, Images and Identity (2010), we wanted to balance the input of southern and northern European partners to better explore a range of cultural approaches and perceptions of citizen identity. The teams hailed from the UK, Ireland, Portugal, Finland, the Czech Republic and Spain.

Students from schools in the six countries worked with art and citizenship educators in 13 primary and 12 secondary schools using the work of contemporary European artists to explore perceptions and experiences of European citizenship. Using examples from their co-created artworks and blog discourses, this article presents some evidence from the students to substantiate claims that contemporary art is:

(1) a valuable means of allowing students to think about and represent their everyday life (Hernández-Hernández, 2015; Van Heusden and Gielen, 2015)
(2) respected as a way to explore the complex issues that characterize their lives as European citizens (Adams, 2014; Atkinson, 2012; Biesta, 2018).

As such, the students' discourses revealed an openness to consider artworks as sources of knowledge and experience, and focused on the subject matter of artworks and considered how those related to their own concerns. Dominant concerns included discourses related to populism, exclusive nationalism, social inequality and new forms of labour – all themes that consistently impact young European citizens' relationships and their perceptions of democracy (Fornäs, 2012). However, it was the students' sense of citizenship contrasted with political apathy and evidence of so-called states of disconnect (Eurydice, 2012) that resulted in some surprising artworks shared between schools. In turn, these artworks initiated blog conversations reflecting a growing sense of disquiet about their citizen selves. The multilayered approach to the research design enabled us to collate such a diverse range of 'voices' and expression. In the next section, we consider some of the issues in developing good-quality art education for exploring the slippery social and political nature of citizenship identity.

Reinventing the citizen through art

Art and image making have particular educational benefits in locating young people as social agents (Mavers, 2011) and the discourses that emerge from these activities in schools can provide a foundation for an individual's sense of citizenship and their place in society (Tavin *et al.*, 2019). Citizenship discourses appear frequently within the literature of art practice (see, for example, Bishop, 2006; Eschenburg, 2014) alongside community arts, participatory practice and socially engaged arts. Bishop (2009: 255) argues for the importance of a discourse that interrogates the rationale and outcomes of the socially engaged art model to ensure that 'good intentions should not render the art immune to critical analysis'. This reinforces the importance of confirming that socially engaged art is underpinned by a philosophy that engenders social bonds and encourages the provision of spaces for creative communications that might otherwise be missing in contemporary society. Bishop (2012) developed this theme further and argued for a proper consideration of the aesthetic contexts of socially guided arts-based projects, such as Creative Connections.

A critical appreciation of aesthetic contexts requires educators to be cognizant of how we perceive the artworks/artefacts in their own right, as opposed to the social construct(s) they purport to explore. This is relevant to the participants of Creative Connections because the work aimed to challenge established thinking, to change insights and develop creativity, with the potential of reframing the ways that young people thought about themselves as citizens. The horizontality of relations and the dialogue between all the participants have stimulated the participation of all (students and teachers, researchers from different scientific areas, and other partners of the arts and culture) in a critical way, creatively involving subjects in a perspective of sustainable development.

Concepts of culture, identity, citizenship, the values and rights of citizens and the role of art in society were addressed. Students were expected to position themselves in the position of the 'other', and to engage in critical dialogue through an examination of fundamental values. In Ireland, for example, students talked about migration and Roma. The description of real-life stories made participants aware of the importance of social interaction in personal development and of dialogue in resolving interpersonal conflicts. However, according to Lynch (1989: 26), visual, linguistic, aesthetic and other creative competences are needed in curriculum planning to enable dialogue and discourse within and across different cultures. The concept of prejudice was explained mainly through image analysis using group discussion and an individual question and answer sheet. Another strategy consisted of getting the students to talk about their personal experiences, their own physical characteristics, beliefs, attitudes and values, and this seemed to help them to understand that everyone is unique and special. Moreover, different perspectives were needed to interpret meaning and to deconstruct visual images. Hall (1997) looked at the social codes in images and classified them as a process of active reciprocation when decoding images in the classroom dynamic. The analysis of images that combines with the semiotics of art criticism are strategies that can be developed from the preparation of visual materials, including images from magazines, newspapers, slides, transparencies, famous paintings, contemporary art, television publicity and other means of communication (Berger, 1972; Barthes, 1985; Chalmers, 1996; Fulková and Tipton, 2008; Moura *et al.*, 2017). Images served as a pretext to explore key concepts and the development of general and transversal competences that permit the formation of critical and participative spectators. This means interpreting, decoding and deciphering fundamental questions in the debate

of postmodernism and the artwork, as well as knowing and understanding the effects of power in validating knowledge of art, deconstructing the analysis of artworks and recognizing their multiple codes (Efland *et al.*, 1996; Hall, 1997).

Connecting citizens

While many of the artworks and discussions that resulted from Creative Connections raise issues and ways of thinking that show how positively connected students can be with one another, we remain aware of the limitations of the aims of documents such as the Council of Europe's (2018) *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* and, within the context of school-based education, education policy may militate against attempts to achieve an education for citizenship. The global focus for education can often be dominated not by aims that draw us together, but by those that actually fracture our potential similarities through the pressure of high-stakes 'competitions', which pigeonhole educational achievement through the outcomes of international tests such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS (Lietz and Tobin, 2016). Research by Schulz *et al.* (2010) observed that a lack of common understanding about European citizen identity coupled with a lack of enthusiasm for defining a 'European dimension' is notable within education systems across member states (Jackson, 2018). Nevertheless, it is also evident (see, for example, Osler and Starkey, 2003) that citizenship education is a viable means to engender belonging, and schools have a role to play in facilitating the exploration of learners' identities and supporting them to forge connections within and beyond the school gates. In diverse societies and an ever-diversifying Europe, shifts from homogeneity to diversity in social norms and cultural policies require the rethinking and remaking of processes, instruments and interactions that are necessary for democratic policy development (Cohen, 2005).

In our present era of political uncertainty, it could perhaps be a rather simplistic view to assume that teachers currently accept the status quo in terms of the impact of curriculum without the questioning and deep reflection that was demanded of teachers involved in Creative Connections. Thus, educator cognizance is critical to developing those competences promoted by the EU. The utilization of exploring existing works of contemporary art and students making their own artworks are currently undervalued as valid tools for teaching and learning in English schools (Herne, 2005), and creative pedagogy has been almost abandoned as classroom practice due to stricter and tighter measures of student performance being imposed in an effort to quantify a generation of learners' abilities (Adams and Owens, 2016).

Creative Connections used contemporary art as a vehicle for learning in citizenship through questioning, exploring new thinking and opening dialogue between teachers and students. It used art in an innovative way, and as a means for focused learning opportunities for students to extend and develop their understanding of themselves and others. Getting to know different countries through the artworks, other students' works and blogging created connections throughout Europe (Collins and Ogier, 2013; Manninen, 2015; Manninen and Hiltunen, 2017).

Creative Connections: Research design

There were original dimensions to the design of this research study, for example the sharing of images via secure linked school groups and the machine translation in quad blogs. The research design of Creative Connections was necessarily collaborative and participatory; rather than academics doing research *in and to* schools, our aim was to

conduct our researches *with and between* the participating schools. We employed an arts-focused action research model based on approaches designed by Mason (2005). In this design, the art and citizenship teachers *and* their students are equal enactors in the process with the researchers. This method required significant planning and collaborative agreements to ensure the approach worked effectively because, as Pasmore (2011: 84) states, a robust action research approach necessitates:

- identifying a need for change – building participation and collective commitment to the project
- construction of overarching research questions – specific to each participant country's research enquiry
- identifying the action – to facilitate opportunities for change
- sustaining the change.

The last of these is challenging in any educational setting, but documenting longevity was a key constituent of this project given the political and social tensions prevalent across Europe during its lifetime. We wanted to be able to create a legacy resource to help other teachers and learners in the future.

Sample

Action research methodology does not usually seek large numbers of participants because the overall design is constrained by the work focusing on classrooms/teachers/classes of students as opposed to whole school/population analyses. Therefore, an opportunity sampling approach (Robson, 2002) was employed in each partner country with the goal of finding two primary (one urban, one rural) and two secondary schools (one urban, one rural) through established contacts. The fact that researchers had some prior connection with the schools helped to confirm a commitment to the project, and participation was agreed by each school signing a two-year contract. The project followed ethical guidelines based on British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) guidance, with schools, teachers, parents and students all giving informed consent to their participation. This consent included publication and sharing of artworks, written work and online communications. Ethical guidelines were translated into Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese, Finnish, Sámi, Gaelic and Czech.

A total of 25 secondary and primary schools in six European countries participated. Two teacher-training days were held in each country, and most schools began their research work in January 2013. Teachers learned how to use the project website, including a digital catalogue of work from contemporary artists across Europe on themes relating to identity and belonging. This resource was a stimulus for teachers to use when starting the project with their students, and it demonstrated how their artworks would be posted and displayed as the work evolved.

Participants started the research process by considering the question: *How does it feel to be a European citizen?* Schools were asked to review the digital catalogue and choose a theme that would underpin their projects:

1) mapping identity – getting to know each other, Part 1
2) mapping nation/community – getting to know each other, Part 2
3) visual reporters
4) cultural guides
5) action!

As work progressed, teachers were asked to keep a journal to record and document specific evidence:

- the feelings and issues children expressed through their artwork
- the extent to which the process of creating artworks facilitated an improved understanding of a sense of European belonging.

We were cognizant that action research practice often leads participants outside of the confines of a project's parameters, and we welcomed this by encouraging all participants to plan training events and conferences, and to feed the learning from Creative Connections into initial teacher education work and other teaching activities. From the outset, the researchers made regular school visits to record the evolving perceptions and reflections. These data were captured as visual diaries, interviews, classroom observations and surveys. Students posted their artworks and writing on to the project website via the secure school-to-school quad blogs. These are secure, private spaces where we grouped the schools (in groups of four, and one group of five), and where students were able to communicate in their own language, as automatic online translation software allowed them to post messages and 'talk' in real time. Children posted responses to each other, and they discussed the content of their work over the course of three months. Figure 1 shows an example of a posting with commentary.

My artwork is showing how the EU is connected and often controlled by money i.e. holidays, the euro, taxes, benefits etc.

10 Responses

Isabel Bages   May 8, 2013 at 7:33 am · Edit · Reply
You have a lot of reason. I really like your work. 😊

Sara Bages   May 8, 2013 at 7:36 am · Edit · Reply
I'll give you every reason, because you have all.
The EU is controlled by money, taxes, and many more things that are unfair with money, la crisis, etc.

Karime Bages   May 8, 2013 at 7:44 am · Edit · Reply
You've had a very good trip and you've very well known plasmasrlo about the role. is a good job 😊

Figure 1: One Euro – Freya

Final artworks were scanned and uploaded to each school's quad blog. Then each school organized presentations where students discussed their work in their classes and then as part of a series of online virtual presentations to their peers in their linked schools via the quad blogs. These mini conferences saw students engaging in dialogue with their peers in response to comments and questions about their images. The project concluded with conferences held in each of the partner countries, where participating schools presented their work both on screen and in gallery displays. Presentations from all research teams led to rich discussions on the use of these methods to explore and extend our understanding of European citizenship, and some of these themes are presented in the following sections.

Findings: Connecting themes

The students appreciated the highly charged political nature of European societies, and they were unafraid to explore perceived challenges to a sense of shared European citizenship and anxiety for the stability of their futures based on their current lives. Students practised ways of expressing themselves to explore cultural understanding and explain how they perceive themselves to be understood as individuals and as citizens. In all six countries there were popular themes: for example, the global economic crises, the recession that has significantly impacted countries in southern Europe since 2008, and fear of the events surrounding the recession were well articulated by entire classes in Portugal and Spain (see Figures 3 and 4), who boldly expressed anger and doubts about current political measures that directly affect their lives. Other children expressed their fears about individual issues, and these focused on personal and broad topics. As Figure 2 suggests, Stuart was fearful of poverty, drugs and the impact of the

Figure 2: My view (Stuart, Ireland)

recession on his country, but he can see links to other nations – connections that are depicted along the bridge on which he stands.

Students explored matters such as fear about the future of Europe (as the notion of Brexit was in its infancy during the lifetime of the project), the impact of financial instability, corruption and other key issues, such as employment and education. However, at the time of writing this article, Brexit has happened and now, Bassot's (2019) predictions *Beyond 2019* reflect the importance of EU member states being open to forging new alliances on individual policy matters with the UK. Indeed, he argues for the urgent need to prepare 'common ground beyond the usual political or regional alliances that have crystallised over the past decades' (ibid.: 5). While the political focus is on trade negotiations, there are issues, many of which relate directly to the nature of citizenship identity, that have not been explicitly discussed. The need for the acknowledgement of difference and commonality is fundamental to how populations view themselves as European citizens, or EU nationals, or both, or none of the above (Bourn, 2016).

During the research, discussions were situated in online spaces where students 'talked' using visual art and written text. This meant that participating schools were able to 'meet' and hold conversations (in real time and asynchronously) using the automatic machine translated blogs. The project was successful in facilitating a range of representations of identity/belonging using mixed media and, unsurprisingly, a variety of styles, themes and approaches to the work were employed. The research generated a large amount of data, so in this article we focus on themes of citizen identity: educating for citizenship, reinventing the citizen through art and reflecting on the views of citizenship. We examine these in the context of the Council of Europe's (2018) Citizenship Competences, and consider our working practices as a multi-partner project with differing views, opinions and cultural norms.

Educating for citizenship

Visual literacy and European activities related to this educational trend bring inspiring stimuli in the area of art education research. In the Portuguese context, both citizenship and development, and aesthetic and artistic education coexist as explicit dimensions in the student's profile when finishing mandatory schooling (Martins, 2017). This facet of Portuguese education policy aims to evidence the commitment of young people to values of citizenship that respect cultural diversity. In doing so, it is hoped that young people will evolve and sustain ways (competences) to understand, protect and value aesthetic and artistic diversity, and that they will know how to act in accordance with the principles of human rights, realizing the relationship between rights, duties and responsibilities. This succinct political and educational framework proposes what are intended to be methodologies and pedagogical–didactic procedures to be implemented in the school contexts of both primary and secondary education. In contrast, the picture is less clear in England, where the approach to citizenship education has floundered within the broader aims and goals of the National Curriculum. Citizenship is not a compulsory part of the primary curriculum and at secondary school its content is dominated by legislation/law, making it difficult to explore the subject creatively. As previous research has found (see Richardson, 2010), the lack of coherent assessment of the subject means its value is diminished in the eyes of students and teachers.

Figure 3: A little souvenir for our Portuguese friends (Jac, Olli and Ludwig, aged 8, Finland)

In the Finnish schools, Creative Connections used contemporary art as a valuable means of allowing students to think about and represent their everyday life – it has an innate transformative quality (Delanty, 2007; Mason and Buschkühle, 2013; Jokela *et al.*, 2015; Manninen and Hiltunen, 2017). Such transformations were also evident in the ways in which children worked outside of the classroom (as Figure 3 shows) and then shared online with peers.

Some students worked, literally, on the street, as in the case of a Catalan rural school. After several weeks of preparation and debate, the students agreed that they wanted to make a visually public statement about how economic cuts in public services had affected their lives. They went into the street outside the school and created a performative action to denounce the lack of resources to finish the construction of the school, which was now stopped due to cuts. Their contempt for EU spending was also

evident. The children from this class blogged about their work and focused largely on waste (see Figure 4):

> My name is Lucia. This artwork done with classmates is called *Crisis and Money Waste*. Euro notes 50 and 5,000 stuck on the asphalt and pavement are directed towards the sewer and school. Politicians throw money away; down the drain.

Figure 4: Money down the drain (primary school class, Catalunya)

In all six countries, some students created artworks that demonstrated their concerns relating to the global economic crises – such fears illustrate the close relationship the students have to real-life concerns (see Richardson, 2016). Individual students in all countries explored matters such as fear about the future of Europe, the impact of financial instability, corruption and other key issues such as employment and education.

The sophisticated conceptions of belonging were not confined to the older students; indeed, there were many artworks from young students in primary schools who found unique ways to explore and understand similarities and differences in relation to what could characterize a European citizen. Figure 5 is an example from a student in an English primary school explaining how she felt particular 'connections' to other countries in Europe: 'Europe means people linked together; the stone fountains linked together to show linked European cities' (Freya).
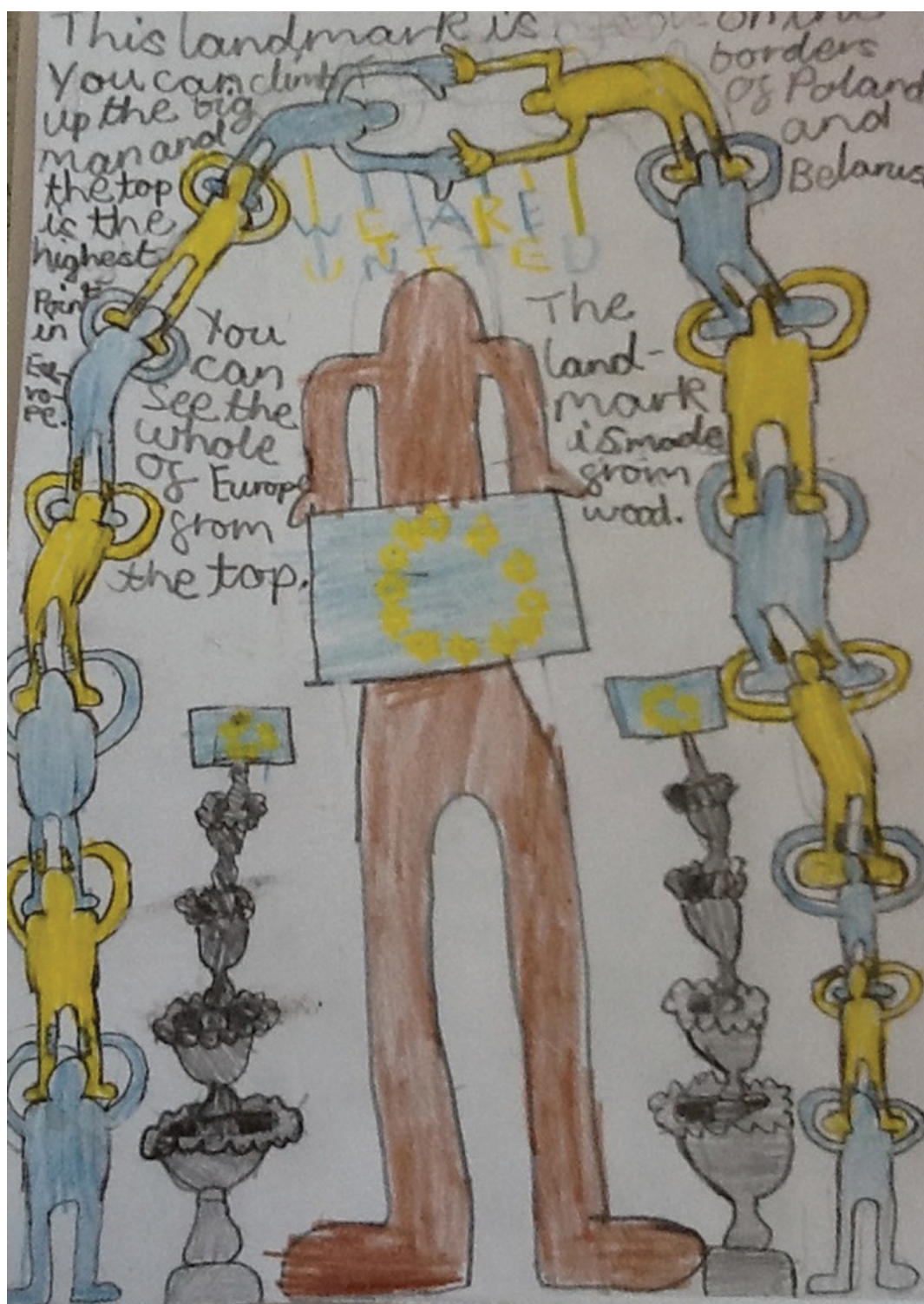
Figure 5: Fountains of Europe (Freya, aged 10, England)

Freya's comment suggests a propensity to link the visual with the necessity of belonging – it is the stones, the very foundations of building that link nations. Such reflections on the nature of belonging echo what Enslin and Ramírez-Hurtado (2013: 64) define as 'the very particular value that artistic narratives have in the promotion of understanding across group differences by revealing the subjective experiences, cultural values and situated knowledge of their members to those who are differently situated'.

In contemporary European contexts, this sense of the other, and the appreciation of another's situation, are vital in promotion of genuine citizen understanding. As Eisner (2002) urges, we should be prepared to experiment with alternative ways to explore citizen conceptions of belonging. Students in our study responded visually as well as verbally to personal issues relating to culture, identity and citizenship, developing a 'creative community' between teachers and students across the partner countries, with a shared sense of openness, experimentation and risk taking. The collaborative work from a Portuguese primary school (see Figure 6) is influenced by the Irish artist Seán Hillen's depictions of dystopian landscapes in nameless cities. This montage (3 metres high and approximately 1.5 metres wide) explains their views of Portugal's political landscape – the 25 April Revolution, the present and future – the Euro crisis and social instability.

Figure 6: Money rules in Europe (whole class work, primary school, Portugal)

The teacher explained, 'students were [expressing] anger, lack of values established by democracy, the dominant political power and money'. They wanted to *show* what they knew and, importantly, how they could 'feel' the recession.

The Connected Gallery was an online image bank of contemporary artists selected from the six participant countries. Artworks included examples from practising artists (such as Hillen), and these were integral to introducing students in schools to themes of personal, local and national identity and 'European connectedness' from different artistic perspectives. Seeing these images sparked ideas and helped students to develop their own artworks based on the examples they had seen. The educational purpose was to introduce the different approaches and ways of working that artists use today. Besides self-expression and visual reporting, the database presents community

art, place-specific, socially engaged art and environmental art as an artistic and art pedagogical strategy. The database was divided into five categories: (1) art as cultural self-expression; (2) art as cultural interpretation; (3) art as cultural reporter; (4) art as cultural guide; and (5) art as cultural activism (Hiltunen and Manninen, 2015; Manninen, 2015; Manninen and Hiltunen, 2017). Building on these ideas is a subversive approach to challenging prevailing ideas with an idea of a disobedient pedagogy proposed by Atkinson (2018: 1), who argues for opportunities to invoke pedagogies that are 'disobedient to established parameters of practice'. The Connected Gallery fostered learning encounters that considers Atkinson's (ibid.) pedagogy to value art practice as a process of the unknown, to disrupt one's thinking, to be bold and to search for authentic visual responses to complex and contested issues relating to unpacking one's identity from both a national and a European perspective.

Critical reflections

In comparing the work from the six countries, the researchers found that students generally demonstrated an openness to consider the works of other countries as sources of knowledge and experience. The students did not look so much at the nationality of the artist, but instead focused on the relationship that the subject matter of the work had with their concerns. The students' ways of communicating and learning from one another were also reflected in the practices of the six research teams. The final online gallery from the project suggests that recent economic and political decisions have had the effect of challenging a sense of shared European citizenship, and demonstrates concern for their future based on students' (and often the researchers') current lives. The management of a multi-partner project is challenging and complex, but its rewards are rich sources of educational exchange and continued opportunities to share good practice. The EU's goals to promote citizenship competences may require revision to meet the emerging challenges posed by populism, exclusive nationalism, social inequality and new forms of labour, which are affecting European citizens' relationships and their perceptions of democracy.

Thinking about citizenship and development implies the reframing of education in the direction of a transformative path that educates citizens and commits them to social issues, capable of understanding the world in which we live and acting on it (Moura and Barbosa, 2018). We are faced with a resizing of the role of the school, an institution that needs to commit to a global education that is attentive to the realities of the world, allowing students to participate dynamically and conscientiously in the world's problems, targeting individual well-being, local and global (Boni Aristizábal, 2006). With reference to the increasingly globalized, unstable, multifaceted and media-saturated contemporary society in which we live, O'Donoghue (2012: 131) asks: 'What does it mean to teach art in our time?'

Creative Connections sought to address this question through the students' engagement with the Connected Gallery. In today's society, where the media have a strong impact on the daily lives of citizens, the training of future artists, managers of art and culture, professionals of higher education institutions and art specialist or generalist teachers, should promote the levels of concentration and attention to develop a sustained critical sense, and should not be limited simply to the enjoyment or pleasure that images can provide. All these strategies need also to be studied in order to activate protocols of collaboration between associations, schools, museums, art galleries and other cultural entities. The analysis of the contribution of audiovisual language facilitated the awareness of the students in order to make them understand

better, discuss and act consciously and critically in the world, in constant interaction with the media and the technology, contributing to a reading of what they watch on television, in advertisements and in the visual cultural environment.

Moura *et al.* (2017) argue that current theories suggest that education and visual culture are closely related to the development of cultural values, and that images can offer teachers a practical medium through which they can empower students with complex ideas about their world. Recent studies (for example, Van Mol, 2018) focused on the use of images have been encouraging higher education students to consider multiple views and concepts, and to articulate their own understanding to be thoughtful citizens within the complexity of the present multicultural society. The findings provide useful information on cultural resources that encourage interdisciplinary discussions, with unique perspectives on cultural awareness and social activism.

In a European context, it is wise to be cautious about Vink's (2005) claims that heavy symbols and false sentiments are too clumsy to explain the complex nature of being. Indeed, perhaps we should be wary of imagining an *inevitable* goal of European citizenship. A more valuable goal might be to develop programmes for education that invoke empathy and encourage solidarity and, in doing so, mitigate some of the challenges facing society both now and in the future. To paraphrase Thomas Paine, we have it in our reach to enact change because, as educators, we can and indeed should be politically attentive in ways that can stimulate useful debate, but we should also be aware of what Jackson (2018: 443) states:

> As educational scholars we must recognise what education can do and what it does not or has not done well, for better and for worse. And we must also go further, to consider whether other institutions are not simply doing our jobs for us. In particular, new media and new methods of data gathering and information dissemination which it enables and employs, has irreparably restructured the landscape of social learning.

Jackson's point is a useful conclusion because, while many new technologies are now well embedded in our social lives, their role is education is still uncharted territory. Creative Connections was intended to explore ways to build specific connections between schools and students, and to explore those links using art and online spaces. However, the challenge remained in how best to attempt to invoke shared senses of what it means to be European, or even what it means to belong in Europe, in the twenty-first century. There are many limitations to such aims and, despite the best intentions of schools and their teachers, it is often education policy and broader societal concerns that can militate against attempts to achieve an education for citizenship.

Acknowledgements

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Anabela Moura is a PhD researcher at the Centre for Child Studies, Minho University, Braga, and Senior Lecturer in Art Education at Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, Portugal. She is a national coordinator of two international projects – Images and Identity (2008–10) and Creative Connections (2012–15) – and coordinator of the international project Rural 3.0: Service Learning for Rural Development, co-funded by Erasmus +Programme, European Union (2019–21) (https://rural.ffzg.unizg.hr/). She is author of several articles and critical essays and two books.

Marie Fulková is Associate Professor at the Department of Art Education, Faculty of Education, Charles University, Czech Republic. Her research focuses on the way in which cultural artefacts function as a polysemy across different social domains, on intersections between artistic, scientific and educational discourses, and non-linear learning. Her publications include books on contemporary art experiences and numerous articles. She is a leader of the Visual Literacy Research Group under project PROGRESQ17 supported by Charles University.

Fiona King is the Coordinator of the Professional Master of Education (PME) programme and a lecturer/researcher in art education within the School of Education in the National College of Art and Design (NCAD). Through NCAD, and as a member of the Ubuntu Network, she has published and presented research at national and international educational conferences, including the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI), the Five Nations Conference and the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER).

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