

The North Sea paper: 'What's going on?'

The story behind the European project 'Multiple Choice Identity'

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'Multiple Choice Identity'

Written on the beach of Callantssoog near the North Sea.

*In May 2005 I've initiated the project 'Multiple Choice Identity' to learn young people from 3 to 25 years to design an own identity in Europe 25. Two months later, Bono said in July 2005 to Barroso: 'Young people don't have a feeling about Europe'. I would like to learn young people to live in the new context of Europe 25 and to be a European in a subjective, creative and authentic way.*

*It's 8-8-2006 and the project is going on for one year. The first theme 'Identity' is tested in practice. It's about time to write the story behind the project. That story starts in the sixties and stills goes on. Lately people in the project ask me: Why do you believe in this (a boy of seven years from Riga)? What do you really want? Why are you doing this project, while young people are not waiting for Europe? What's in it for me? What's new? What's going on?*

*Sitting on the beach, I would like to compare the project with waves of the sea that are eternally coming and going. The waves have different colours and are not equally strong. I have to be careful, because I cannot see all the waves. In the deep evil waves are always present.*

*This is my personal story about the waves that I've internalised as brainwaves. It took a long time before I could recycle all these brainwaves in the project 'Multiple Choice Identity'. As a passenger in time I know where I'm coming from, but you'll have to find out where you're going to.*

I am a 'Coldwar kid', overwhelmed by the cultural and social revolution of the sixties. I'm twelve years old, when they build a wall in Berlin. Since the Second World War Europe is divided by an Iron Curtain. This will last forever, I guess. I don't get a lot of information about or from the other side. It makes me scared when in 1956 the Hungarians revolt against the Russians. My mother starts to collect food and other things and I'm sleeping next to big boxes of wash-powder. When it's dark it looks like a wall. In 1962 the Berlin Wall is built and the Cuba Crisis may be the start of the Third World War. In the same year I hear 'She loves you' from the Beatles', that my elder sister got from her boyfriend. I think that they are black singers from America, because the energy and the spirit. A lot

music from the sixties is an ongoing wave and it still is. It's an explosion of talent as Classical music at the end of the eighteenth century. 'Like a rolling stone' from Bob Dylan opens a new world for me. But all along the watchtower a dark wave is coming closer, the war in Vietnam. It will spoil the party. The music of the Doors and Jimi Hendrix is intensively reacting on Vietnam. Music becomes a weapon in the Cold War. Music is not only great fun, but also a life-style. Through music 'affinity-groups' are gathering.

As a student on the secondary school and a history-student at the University of Groningen I am fascinated by the interrelations between events and persons. What's behind? What's good and what's evil? Maybe it has something to do with my Catholic background? As a history-student I am very interested in the roots of fascism and Nietzsche's answers. Kafka's 'Die Verwandlung' and his philosophy is my main subject. In those days professor Baudet of the university in Groningen learns me to look at history from different entry points. The topic of my doctoral study is economic growth. One day I meet him in a bookshop and he's looking for books about economic growth in the department of film and music. It takes me some time to understand that I'm the one who's confused.

In the seventies I start to work on the Pedagogical Academy as a history teacher. I construct a learning style, working with students and children. Music, images and art are becoming essential elements, integrated in projects about nuclear energy, consumption, media, Amnesty, economic growth and the Third World. In 1976 I write a drama-play 'Nightmare' about the dangers of nuclear power with music of Hawkwind, Kraftwerk and Pink Floyd. It's performed by students and together we go on tour. Several times I visit Berlin with students. The Cold War looks frozen forever, like the guards in the U-Bahnstation in East Berlin.

I start to write songs about actual events or persons such as 'Ballad for Ulrike Meinhof'. Music is a way to stay in contact with reality and to express the turbulence and my own feelings.

In the eighties I also teach at a secondary school and the pupils learn me to go for it during each lesson with a mix of fascinating knowledge, active working-forms and music, film and drama. Afterwards I realize that in those days the trilogy of history, philosophy and music is finally transferred into practice.

In the eighties I go many times with my colleague Dick van Schreven and students to Viborg in Denmark. It's the start of the network of ETEN with institutions in Groningen, Malmö, Copenhagen and London.

It's great to meet European colleagues and to work in thematic-groups about democracy.

The eighties are a dark decade with unemployment and nuclear threats with punks and the New Wavers, dressed in black. Sometimes I feel a no-future-kid and I have to demonstrate against nuclear power, waste and deadly weapons. It's my duty to react and music of Pink Floyd and Kraftwerk is a guide. The nuclear missiles were not placed in Western Europe and the nuclear power station in Kalkar is turned into an amusement park 'Wunderland'! It proves to me that (young) people can make a change. History also shows its unpredictability with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. I'm totally confused. This is the end of the world I know and I don't know where to go. Another astonishing event is the peaceful implosion of the Sovjet Union in 1991. An old and cold wave is gone and new waves are coming. For me this is not the end of history or the victory of liberalism, but just another turning point in time. As a passenger in time, I have to adapt myself to this new situation. Finally I begin to understand the post-modern philosophers, who are writing about the end of the great narratives, 'anything goes' and the deconstruction.

The nineties are very inspirational with new waves: the theory of multiple intelligence (Howard Gardner), new learning theories (constructivism), new ideas about philosophy, history, sociology and economy, new music with grunge, gothic, techno, Radiohead, Nirvana, REM and U2, new learning strategies like the didactical route of Kees Vreugdenhil. Thom Yorke, Bono, Michael Stipe and Kurt Cobain create Kafkian signs of the time. Special are the book 'World of Sophie' (Gaarder), the film 'The matrix' and the paintings of Gerhard Richter. It's a great challenge to create a mix of all these waves and transfer them into a new history-book for students 'Unpredictable past' with a cd-rom, made together with Anja Sinnige, into European projects (f.e. Futures (Doug Springate) and Democracy (Sidsel Hansel)) and into intensive programmes with students or teachers from all over Europe. An ongoing source of inspiration and fun is the cooperation with Doug Springate from Greenwich University in London. As the Duke of Sidcup he introduces me to the world of Monty Python. In daily practice students and teachers of the Pedagogical Academy in Groningen are a great help, constructing and fine tuning the concept. It's great to work with Mirjam, Manda, Hugo, Sander, Jeroen, Arjen, Marie, Marie-Anne, Esther, Bastiaan, Martijn, Tessa and others.

The concept is getting more and more knowledge-based by reading many books, listening to and composing music, looking at art and films, visiting museums and festivals, making sculptures, paintings and poems, travelling in Europe and meeting of a lot of people. I'm standing on the shoulders of giants and I learn to use my own multiple intelligence. 'The longer the island of knowledge, the longer the shore of wondering'

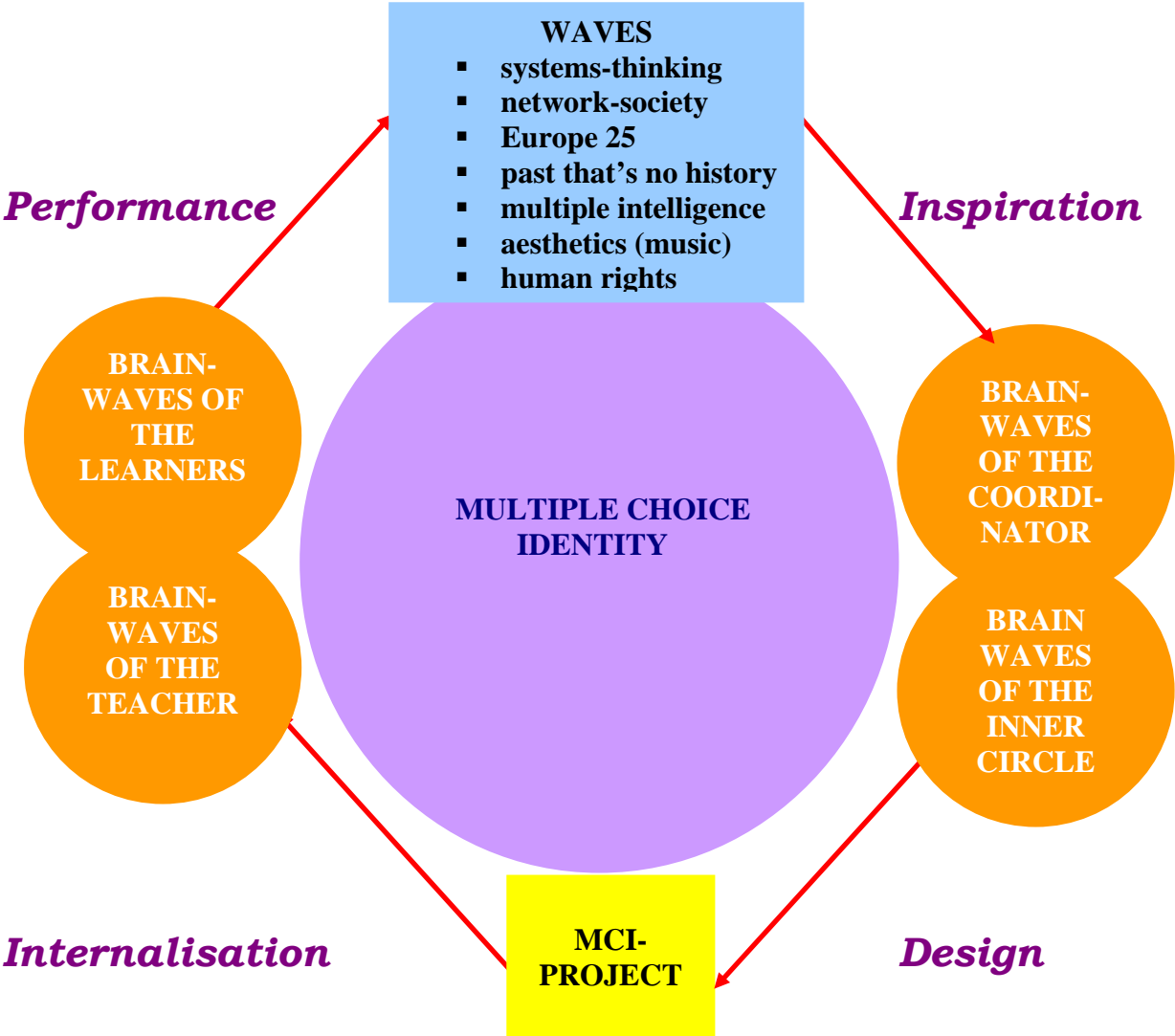
(Newman). Music is getting more and more important as a way to give meaning to reality. Music is a deep expression of the good and bad waves, a reflection on the future, a way of communication and an eternal source of inspiration and expression of my thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It's the music of meaning and the meaning of music. But a lot of work has to be done.

In the outside world economic growth is high and some economists believe that this wave will go on forever. They don't notice the dark and strong waves in the deep, that will cause 9/11 2001. Another. Less dramatic historical event is the expansion of the European Union in 2004 with East-European countries. The New World Order has turned into a New World Disorder. It's stimulating for my projects and they are getting deeper, more interactive and creative. One of my dream-projects is the cooperation with the famous Dutch band The Gathering. Together we create the cd 'The musical history tour', a travel through history in eleven songs. Another concrete step is the work in CiCe (a European network of hundred universities about citizenship) in project-groups about democracy and aesthetics with Henrik Bak and Anja Sinnige and the design of a Masters course about human rights with Robi Kroflik and Titi Papouliatou-Tzelepi. These are important steps towards the MCI-project. Another step is the design of a new history-method for children 'The trek'. Especially the tests with the children are a source of inspiration. Especially the children of special needs learn me how to teach with multiple intelligences. Children want to have fun.... in history. As a passenger in time it feels like a sort of homecoming.

During the annual CiCe-conference in Ljubljana in May 2005, I get a very strong brainwave. A Slovenian student Katja Jeznik says to me: 'When I think about Europe, my head is empty'. I feel that I have to start a new project about European identity. I share my brainwave with CiCe-colleagues Robi, Hugo, Wolfgang, Otto and Henrik and react positively. It's the right time. In three weeks the inner circle of the project is almost complete.

Through all these experiences I have internalised waves in my brainwaves and I want to transfer these (brain)waves into the project. It's my dream that teachers and learners internalise these brainwaves through the project and transfer them into new waves again. I'm a didactical criminal, because I've stolen a lot of ideas and maybe we'll meet in prison. An idea is the American project 'Systems-thinking'. I learn that the human being, the brain, the class, the school, the society is the same kind of system, in which the parts are connected and joined together in a web of relationships. The system is not understandable in the parts, but through the links between the parts. In the MCI-project

systems-thinking is integrated in the didactic route with the seven steps and the links between the steps. The system may be visualized in a graphic organizer such as BOTG's (Behavior Over Time Graphs). Learners learn to think step by step in a system with time on the X-axis and behaviour like happiness, sorrow, joy or anger on the Y-axis. It may be used to solve problems in the family or to develop the own identity. Together with Henk Visser, I construct the "Field of view", an organizer to look at a theme from four perspectives: past, future, inspiration and codes. The items in the different fields may be linked. Another aspect is the synchronisation of the didactic route and the network-society. Each step is a step through the network-society. Information is in constant flow and the route helps to get information and to look for patterns of behaviour and underlying interrelations.

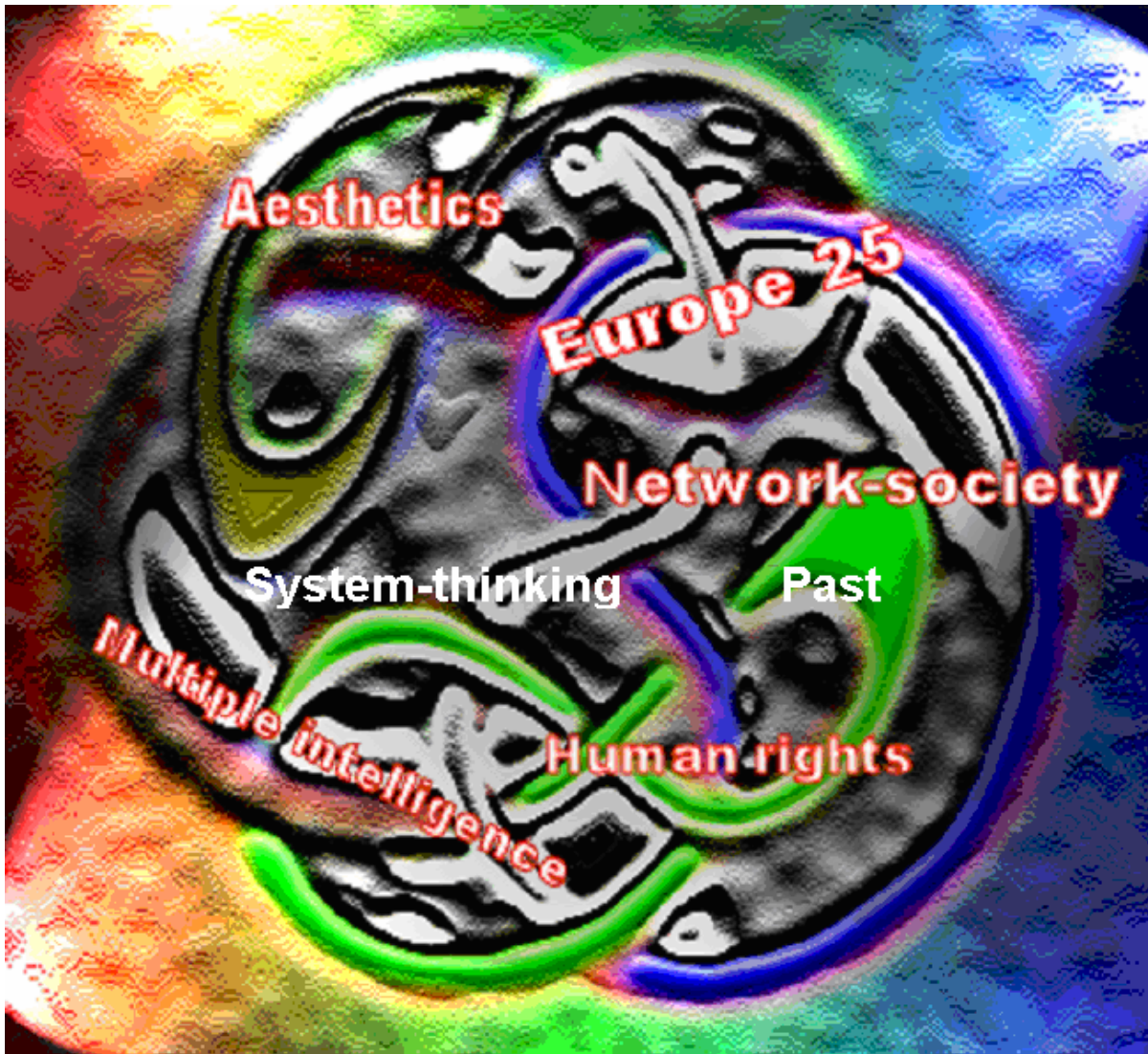


**'The circle of inspiration'**  
*'Inspiration is the breath of the soul' (Mathilde Santing)*

Other examples of systems-thinking are the way the net-generation learns through educational gaming and the theory of multiple intelligence. Educational gaming is the new learning style of young people to understand themselves and the world. In an educational game they are creating their identity, reality and/or virtuality. It's multi-tasking. If we don't want to loose contact, we'll have to learn how they learn.

Systems-thinking is a holistic world-view, resulting in a constant flow between elements. The flow occurs in a wave, a brainwave, the project and in the learning process. Everything is going on naturally and it doesn't take a lot of energy. 'If you listen carefully. You might feel the waves'(From 'Talking about the revolution', 'The musical history tour'). The organizer 'Circle of inspiration', is a simplification of reality. Systems-thinking is 'brainbased learning'. The brains integrate wholes and parts simultaneously. Emotions are very important. The process is stimulated by challenge and blocked by fear. Brains work the best when they are linked to other brains. They are not working with 'lists', but with 'spins'. The didactic route with the seven steps is brain-based. Elements are reactivated and combined with other elements. Aesthetics is essential as an intuitive and creative way of learning. I integrate systems-thinking in the song 'Anachrone circles' ('The musical history tour'): *'Listen very closely, you might hear the sound. It's getting deeper, spinning around. Anachrone circles in the sky. You may catch them if you try'* Do I have a role in the 'Circle of inspiration'? I have to take care of the regie of the energy and to be focussed on the concept. It's a matter of fine-tuning , because the energy is already there. Henk Visser, member of the inner circle, coaches me mentally. We try to keep the concept as clear, authentic, adaptive and strong as possible. It's a kind of 'dream-coaching' to realize my dream and to invite others to share the flow. The inner circle shall subsequently be connected to 'the brainflow' and after that the teachers and the learners. Everybody is a satellite, a sender and a receiver. I call it 'synchronisation-didactics', because everybody is part of the same process or system. That's why it's essential that teachers first experience and internalise the waves themselves. What do they want the learners to learn? Otherwise it's very hard for the learners to reach a high level. Another task is to design the routes together with the colleagues from the different quadrants of Europe. It's a project for and by Europeans. For many teachers it's a new way of teaching and that's why in-service-courses will be organised in the four quadrants of Europe. Also for the parents a special route will be designed to help them understand and assist their sons or daughters. It's essential that everybody knows all the ins and outs of the concept.

Let me suggest to focus on the metaphor 'The brainflow'. Seven waves are internalised to share them with the inner circle, the teachers and the learners. Hopefully 'the butterfly-effect' will work again. The movement of the wings of a butterfly may be the beginning of a tornado elsewhere. So the MCI-project starts with seven brainwaves: systems-thinking, the network-society, Europe 25, the past, multiple intelligence, aesthetics (music) and human rights.



'The brainflow'

Ljubljana, August 14<sup>th</sup> 2006

Dear Wim,

Thanks for sending route 2 'Family and friends' and I will try to adapt it to the age-group 12-16. This is my opinion on what's going. Honestly it's hard to understand the whole system and the links between the parts, but we're living in a complex world. It seems that everything's connected with everything. You know already that the waves sometimes look different in the Slovenian context and I hope you don't mind that I'll give some suggestions. Let's start with step 1.

It's a good idea to let the pupils collect and look at pictures of families from the four quadrants. I suggest that we include also here the historical perspective if possible. This opens the senses. And it is important to talk about the family today, because sometimes you can get the feeling that young people don't realise anymore when and why family (and friends) are important. But family is important and yes, the family influences each human being. When you are 15, you might think that you are free of your family commitment and that you know what all is about. And sometimes this is ok, especially if your family experience is not the best one. But you have to find out what is ok and what not. That's mean that you have to think about it. In Europe 25 it's all in the family. – I would say: Also in context of Europe, family is very important. We can see this also in "Atlas of European Values" but the question is about what kind of family do we think? There's the Islamic, gay and the nuclear family with father, mother and children and other possibilities.

The first step is also a sense opener for the pupil and we (the teacher) should focus attention on the first impression or maybe stereotypes that pupil's share with each other. I'm sure that there are some distinctions about these first ideas between the four quadrants. As we can see they may draw the faces on the images themselves and show the emotion through mimics and movement. This is a multiple intelligent, aesthetical and European perspective, you write. Myself I don't see "European perspective", sorry .... After that they celebrate the birthday of one of the family-members by giving a present and show and discuss the reactions of the family to the gift. I suggest that there should be also some problematic and funny situations (not so controversial as in step 3) – one example could be that in one group the family forgets the present and they must be creative by solving this situation in the best possible way for everybody. Motivation for creativity is also important! In this way it may be placed in a Slovenian context. A good start. What music about the family will be used or may I select it myself? I suggest that also the pupils select the music. They can ask their parents what music they

*listened to lately ... And younger/older sisters, brothers ... This can be one additional 'outschool activity' before starting the second step. In many ways this step is related to the first one. In step 2 the pupils concentrate on the rituals and codes at their home, related to the past and the present again. It's good to look at norms and values at home in a problematic way, now more oriented on human rights. This is their own 'life history'. Do I understand it well? It's also about aesthetics by collecting photo's, stories, music and poems about the family again. This step is knowledge-based and I suppose Howard Gardner will be happy about the use of multiple intelligence. It's the intra and interpersonal, logical-mathematical, verbal-linguistic and visual-spatial multiple intelligence. Some more?*

*This step is not so European because it's focussed on the national context – or should we say also personal?!? It's more related to the past and that's quite another family-history then in the Netherlands, Denmark, Latvia or Portugal or not? Would it be a good idea to use in this step the educational game 'Sims' and to let them play with roles and identities in the family? Or is it a step to far? To me that would relate very well to step 3, when they have to deal with a controversial issue in the family. It's very challenging that somebody comes out with a secret.*

*I really like that they may use masks with the bodily-kinaesthetic multiple intelligence. They have to stand for their (human) right. This is a good example of systems-thinking, because they have to discuss the changes in the roles in the family. The presentation with masks is an aesthetical way to perform knowledge that they have gathered from different entry points. It's well-timed that they have to look at the performances or presentations of pupils from other quadrants. Now the learners activate their multiple choice identity in a European perspective. They meet each other somewhere in the network-society. Until now I can follow you.*

*In step 4 they share ideas and feeling about the family with pupils from other quadrants. The multiple choice identity is challenged again. They will find out for themselves and find their place inside the framework of human rights. Fortunately there's a clear line in this route despite all the links and variations. Now's the time to make friends. Or not!! Who's part of the peer-group and who's not? The masks are very useful here. It's very challenging to let them make friends with somebody from another culture. This is what you call 'real-learning'. They will like it.*

*May they use their own 'identity-clip' of route 1? That's my systems-thinking!! They collect pictures, music or stories of peer-groups in other quadrants and construct a new peer-group with friends from different quadrants in step 5. What codes are important for them? All the waves are activated and turned into brainwaves. What will happen with the diversity in Europe 25. All these experiences are integrated in a soap*

*with good and bad times and the presentation is step 6. You told me before that communication is very important. Yes it is. Finally in step 7 they give and get feedback on the soap. It's a good idea to let them choose persons from the soaps, mix them in a picture with masks and put it on the website. In this way the waves are transformed into brainwaves and finally into waves again. I would like to suggest to use urban-music as a way of reflection.*

*So the circle of inspiration is completed by following the route through the network-society and activate human rights and Europe 25 in an aesthetical, multiple intelligent and contextual way.*

*My compliments to Layla for designing the route. I'm looking forward to the reactions on the forum.*

*Greetings from Ljubljana,  
Katja*

*PS My head is less empty now.*

Let me continue and finish my story. To me the project is a colourful piece of art and I want to invite the inner circle, the teachers and the learners to create it further. I want to enrich and stimulate young people to define themselves in an active, free, flexible and creative way. Like Vygotsky I want to guide them to the next zone of their development. I want to be learner-centred, but also want to show them the other(ness). A strong drive is needed. I agree with Fred Korthagen that the drive is the deepest part of learning ('Multi-level-learning'). I want to stimulate that drive inside myself in others. I want to see shining eyes. More than ever music gives meaning to reality and life. It's great to work together with Scanner (Robin Rimboud) and Katalena from Slovenia and hopefully some big names will follow! Music is the best globalised medium to design a multiple choice identity. Saying who you are, also means saying who you are not. Although diversity is the starting-point and the end of the project, there's still a lot of past that's no history. Remnants of communism in Eastern Europe and of fascism in Portugal are still alive. Young people have to be aware that evil waves are always somewhere deep down and that it will take generations before old evil waves will be gone completely.

I don't want to tell to my grandchild Nick of four years old that she has to live with evil. The project is meant as a kind of 'countervailing power'

against evil waves like corruption, estrangement, xenophobia, homophobia, criminality and dictatorship. I believe that a strong weapon against evil is a multiple choice identity. Howard Gardner tells me that the framework of human rights is the most appropriate one. To him education is for the future, not for the past. He writes in his new book about five minds for the future.

Europe 25 is 'a state of mind', where the brainwaves may flow with where as the interplay. In the past identity was simple and unchanging, now it's multiple, complex and overlapping. In the past an autonomous subject could operate in a stable society with a homogenous set of values. Authenticity is essential to find a personal, empathic and flexible identity in order to accept the other as a different person. The network-society assumes different values for an ethical judgment. To understand the project it's important to see it as a tool for an independent moral judgment, somewhere between common values (universality) and personal values (contingency). Thanks Robi.

The MCI-project is a making up of the past and a prefection on the future. Education is the best way to prepare young people for the future and it may be analogue or digital or a mix of 'blended learning'. My visit to Harvard University and the Project Zero Classroom in July 2005 is very inspiring. Project Zero is an educational research group at Harvard University Graduate School of Education. It's my mission to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific discipline, at the individual and the institutional level. I am fascinated by the great spirit of Project Zero with Howard Gardner, David Perkins, Lois Hetland, Mary MacFarland, Alison Marshall and others. They really like what they are doing. It's meaningful, on a very high level and it's great fun.

Sometimes you meet the right people at the right time and the right place. The inner circle is gathered in a flow. Martine as 'Coco' gives me music, spirit and feedback. Robi deepens the concept in a theoretical way and shares East-European music. Henk keeps the flow going by coaching me mentally, Katja helps to understand urban and the youth culture in Eastern Europe and takes me to Metalkova, the underground scene in Ljubljana. Henrik is great in aesthetics and design. Sandra deepens pedagogy and human rights. Anabella and Amandio learn me about the south-western quadrant, Casa da Musica and music. The young ones Darja, Petra and Anja are indispensable to help with the tests, to inspire and to hold the line. John and Loes keep me in touch with the media and the outside world. Manon gives me space, inspiration and time. In this way the inner circle represents the diversity of Europe through personal drives, identities, competences, talents and contexts. The project is only possible with a little help from my friends, inclusive

the teachers and the learners. The implementation of the concept in the curriculum of the Pedagogical Academy will be realised in the following years. Fellow-travellers are Jan, Roel, Layla, Nirmala, Frans, Frank, Elsje, Bernard, Willem, Harma, Ton, An, Ineke, Jelly, Juliette, Fienke, Nynke, Eddie, Dori and Carla. Furthermore the strategic plan of the Hanze University Groningen, Focus 2010 and cooperation with the schools of the Hanze University Groningen, Pentascope and Media Experience (Dutch Television) are important targets. We are on the same wavelength.

It's my drive to realize what I couldn't completely realize in the book 'Unpredictable Past' for students and the method 'The Trek' for children. Now I feel free to create good work and to renovate and improve the daily practice of education from a didactical, creative, European and theoretical perspective. With other passengers in time we have to create what young people need and it's the right time. *'I'll show you something that will change your mind'*. It originated in daily practice and will be recycled again.

The project is a medium to design an own empathic and flexible lifestyle, not to be overwhelmed by great economic, political, commercial and evil powers. I know that I'm part of a global wave of people who think, feel and act the same and I hear Michael Stipe singing: *'I do believe that I'm not alone'* (from the 'Final Straw' on 'Around the sun', REM) or like Petra uses to say: 'Enjoy the day and take care'.

Through the MCI-project young people may

- know more about young people in other parts of Europe and develop a feeling of empathy for the other in an inclusive society. They communicate in different ways with themselves in order to communicate and learn cooperatively with others.
- stay inside the framework of human rights and feel all right.
- listen and enjoy more, unknown and good music.
- use aesthetics as a way to open the senses, to understand, to communicate, to reflect and to act.
- use the own multiple intelligence as a learning strategy to feel better and to understand the system and the links between the elements in the system.

- transfer their own brainwaves into reality, select the good and the bad waves and act accordingly.
- be interested in the network-society and use the digital possibilities as a way to learn cooperatively, interactively and creatively
- feel free from the past to create a future that's not like it was before. It's a paradigm shift. It's not about national feelings and it's not only about economics and politics. It's about an open mind to the future and to the other with the right luggage. It's a new renaissance to realize humanistic norms and values.
- develop a multiple choice identity in a diverse and inclusive society instead of a commercial and materialistic identity. Young people should know what's going on and have hard fun.

*'Ain't seen nothing yet' (Bachman Turner Overdrive).*

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