

The Common Ground Google Scribbles:

The following are extracts from the Google Group site, the shared 'communication platform' ... the partnership's 'Virtual Common Ground'.

Most of the messages have related to practical matters but the platform has provided opportunities for other discussions. So what follows are a few extracts from the Google Group that provide more evidence of the manner in which we have been 'partners', sharing the project & in the process not simply managing the formalities but also engaging in explorations of people, places and ideas.

The extracts are, apart from one section, chronological - and the exception is that at one point it seems sensible to keep the flow of the discussion - and thus another message (March 1st 2014) precedes the 'flow' which began in February.

The text below could be called 'The Edited Highlights of the Google Group Communication' & whilst they have a broadly chronological order they are not 'chronicles' - but are rather notes, comments, jottings made as we have progressed. For this reason I have called them 'scribbles'.

The word scribble derives from mediaeval Latin scribillare/scribere: 'to write' and relates to the word 'script' - 'escrit' in Old French (écrit), it is one of those words with very ancient Indo-European origins meaning to cut or separate (in Old Norse the word implies cutting or marking as on a stone - such writing surfaces precede any form of paper!).

This ancient word also emerges in English as 'shear' a term still used when cutting wool from sheep ('shearing'). The links with this word are considerable, including Sanskrit, Hittite (whose kingdom once included Konya), German, Greek, Lithuanian (skiriu "to separate"), Welsh etc

The use of the term 'scribble' thus associates with words that are part of a very wide multi-cultural linguistic tradition that stretches well beyond our European boundaries and provides yet another aspect of ancient Common Ground from which we are all derived.

Introduction: Early in the project the following message was posted:

27/10/2012

Dear commongrounders and dear Angela,
Here are some photos from our town of 100.000 inhabitants. Very soon you will have the chance to see with your own eyes our local modern artist Constantin Brancusi's masterpieces that decorate our little town. In the first picture is The Endless Column and in the second The Kissing Gate. I am sure that Ian will be very pleased to see them!!!!!!
.Brancusi lived and died in Paris, so he is our best example of common ground promoter.
All our best wishes to you all,
Teodora and Constanta

For this writer this early message, with introducing the Brancusi sculptures, seems to provide a framework for the whole project. The Brancusi monument, which was constructed as a memorial to local lives lost during the First World War drives a much wider vision than simply that of commemorating a single local incident.

The sculptures are structured to lead from

The Table of Silence

(the picture below was taken during our partnership visit)



To The Gate of the Kiss



And some distance away (but originally connected by a long avenue) was the Endless Column

..... and thus in these notes, that picture is not found at this point. First we have our own 'avenue'.

The messages:



The winter holidays have started.
Saint Nicholas puts in your boots a little bit of laughter and light.
Be good and work for projects!

Yours

Angela

1/01/2013

Hi friends,
I want to give you some info about Mevlana Rumi and Konya:

Seven Advice of Mevlana

- 1. In generosity and helping others be like a river**
- 2. In compassion and grace be like the sun**
- 3. In concealing others' faults be like the night**
- 4. In anger and fury be like the dead**
- 5. In modesty and humility be like the earth**
- 6. In tolerance be like a sea**
- 7. Either exist as you are or be as you look**

23/09/2013



26/09/2014

Dear Christine, just before you go ...

Thank you, once again, for your thorough and creative organisation, and for putting your heart into our partnership with your admirable ladies. We shall miss you, and we'll party on the Saturday night!

Best wishes,

Mic

2013/10/28 Hale, Mic (43.11.1) <Mic.Hale@hannover-stadt.de>

Dear All,

The impressions and experiences of the last few days will remain with us forever, and will take some time to reflect on – we make a start this Tuesday and Thursday.

So just for now:

From VHS warmest congratulations and heartfelt thanks to CiDFF staff, volunteers, participants, interpreters, partners in Marseille ... the list goes on – for welcoming us, creating and delivering a fantastic programme and making us part, however briefly, of their city and their lives.

Best wishes, here's to us all,

Mic

24/12/2013

teodragota.cntv

Dear commongrounders,

Merry Christmas and may all your dreams come true in the new year .May it find you healthy and ready for the new mobilites!!!

See you in the new year to come,

Big hugs,

Teodora and Constanta

21st January 2014

Dear Mic, Dear All,

As promised, here is Antoaneta's article, inspired by the Marseille meeting. It is being published in the volume with proceedings of our international QUEST conference 2013.

With best wishes to all of you

Laura Muresan

on behalf of the QUEST Team

“The present paper approaches the issues of “knowing each other” and “migration” within the context

of a face-to-face experience held in Marseille, in October 2013, within the above mentioned project.

In the introduction is presented the framework of this experience. The main part of the paper contains

an outlook on the benefits of providing a face-to-face stage in the process of “knowing each other”. A

detailed discussion of some key issues is presented in the paper. The last section consists of conclusions.

En effet, ce projet du programme Grundtvig a un d_nominateur commun, _ savoir mieux comprendre les autres, se rapprocher malgr_ les barri_res culturelles et politiques qui continuent _ diviser l'Europe. Et une ambition l_gitimement partag_e : oeuvrer au niveau local pour cr_er de nouvelles connexions entre les communaut_s traditionnelles et migrantes."

March 1 2014

Dear All

Dear Commonground Ladies



I would like to send you a Martisor as a token of my appreciation which will bring you joy and good luck in Romanian tradition and why not making it a common ground tradition.

Interwoven white and red threads bring good health, luck and prosperity. Today is the Day of Mărțișor, when Romanians, Moldovans and Bulgarians celebrate the beginning of Spring.

The month of March opens with a festivity common to many peoples of Eastern Europe, who celebrate the coming of Spring.

Originally Romanian (or rather Daco- Thracian), this ancient spring celebration, connected to fertility and the rebirth of nature, is a tradition authentic in Romania, Moldovans, and all territories inhabited by Romanians and Aromanians.

Alike though not identical customs can be found in Bulgaria.

The name *Mărțișor* [mərtsiʃor] is the diminutive of *marț*, the old folk name for March (*Martie*, in modern Romanian), and thus literally means "little March". It is also the folk name for this month.

Please Mic send my wishes to your dear ladies whom I met and liked a lot.

Best wishes

Angela

24th February 2014

Dear friends,

"Fuck the EU!": I wouldn't use this particular words. I'm not a diplomat.

There is obviously a lot to criticize about the foreign politics of the EU. If there is any.

Maybe this problem has something to do with the politics of the interior of the EU. If there is any. I mean: 'if there is any interior'.

It is said that Europe needs a new 'narrative', an identity beyond common market, trade, currency etc. And it seems that there is no narrative in sight. So far.

The EU has even hired some scouts all over in Europe to seek common ground. But they are still seeking.

So, what's wrong with Europe? What is Europe? And if so, how many?

10000 questions! And some answers are given: Rumours of our common ground project came to Berlin and as the journal of the Academy of Science was about to publish an entire volume about Europe the editor asked me about my experience with the project and my opinions about Europe. I wrote something down and it is published in "Gegenworte" volume 30. (www.gegenworte.org)

Beside all the cheap resentments about the EU I wanted to say something nice about the idea of Europe. My point is that there is nothing wrong with the lack of identity and it is no problem that we haven't found common ground yet. Maybe that's just the advantage of Europe.

The essay is in German. But the abstract is attached. It's very abstract, but also very short and - thanks to Mic - it's in real English.

Enjoy it

Holger

PS:

some further remarks about the essay:

In my first draft of the article I described *en detail* one of our drive & talk lectures in Bishop's Castle while we all were standing on a farm road and listened to one of Iain's lucid lectures about the Welsh-English Border. We were all deeply impressed by the dramatic situation some thousand years ago when it was a question of life and death on which side of the border you were standing at. Ian pointed at what was once a medieval Checkpoint Charly, but what we were actually looking at was nothing more than a small mound with grass on it, some sheep and a farmhouse in the background. (The sheep of course were not impressed. But, hey: sometimes history has mercy on bloody borders: sheep shit on it.)

Unfortunately I had to cut out this scene because the space for the article was limited. But my optimism concerning Europe is laying in the fact that we can get rid of borders in a peaceful way - even if there are some new ones .

But if we are in a process of a transnational unification what is actually unique about Europe?

"We're all basically seeking the same things." said a man with some experience in migration (Africa, Hawaii, Indonesia, USA), He was elected twice as President of the United States and he must know it - he has also an ear on what all the people are talking about on their mobile phones all over the world. But I fully agree and would add: Maybe we don't see what we are looking for because we are already standing on it. Common ground will turn out to be nothing very specific European. It is not just transnational, it's also transeuropean, transcontinental and trans-I-don't-know. It's probably all-human.

I also believe (along with the british ethnologist Nigel Bartley) that we are living in a world where concepts like culture will cease to exist. And therefore if Europe is not captured by national identities - we are in the pole position!

Dear, Holger and all

I don't know will it fit the context, but Latvia has experience how does it goes, when somebody tries to seek too much common, when nations are too different. Well, in our case it was aggressive approach (I mean Soviet Union), but still whenever it is democratic approach or aggressive, the question remains - should we seek for common ground and celebrate diversity? If we seek for common - what is really common and in which areas? I believe that all of us (meaning human) has some common values to share and none of the borders, languages etc., can affect it. At first, we are humans and only secondly - inhabitants of

specific territory. I think that nice outcome of the project would be also deliver understand that first we need to seek for common human values :)

Renate

25th February

Fascinating piece by Holger.

Europe has only recently (since C16th) had any sense of 'national' groupings. Our (personal views) as to 'who we are' 'who I am' have changed radically in modern times.

But this is 'where we are' now - in a sort of evolving post-national world, yet one which is still rooted in the sense of 'belonging' to a particular country (we need passports, another recent development - thus we need a country).

Maybe the EU (which is not 'Europe' -whoever and wherever that may be) has set its story in the context of nationalism and thus tries to become simply another 'nationalism'.

The British (in general) do not realise the degree to which the EU tries to leave the 'delivery' of agreed policies to local nations - however the justification for most of these policies is viewed as a necessary process due to the (trading & economic) impact of other places in the world.

Presumably underlying most of the actions relating to education (such as Grundtvig) are aims that further this attitude (the better we in the EU know each other, the 'smarter' we trade).

So - EU (which is a different place than 'Europe' - this last weekend Ukraine was being described in some reports as 'at the heart of Europe'...hmm!) as simply another factor in the globalisation process - and set alongside this is also the growing awareness of what may be called 'regionality' - Scotland, Catalonia etc And above/below/beyond that is a natural desire to 'belong' in a very local sense (a gas power station in Hannover, a green & wet valley in Mid Wales)

All these - nationalities, regionalities, city villages etc feed our psychic need to 'know where we are' (& we do not have to have a fixed point - we may wish to simply journey).

We live in a dream world which is of our own, socially & maybe genetically, construction. What we need to do is to identify what it is we have created & to control 'it' (rather than allowing the shadowing nature of the dream-world control us), thus becoming more socially conscious - of the other dreamers we cannot, being social animals, fail to encounter.

Quite a task.....

Europe - a place of dreamers

.....and as an ex-student of one of the schools I attended, mentioning first that we are the stuff on which dreams are made, commented

'our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'

Best Wishes

Ian Ball

Thank you Holger, Renate and Ian for the interesting thoughts, the discussion is very much in time. Watching events in Maidan, Kiev, (in tears) I was also thinking about what EU is for me. Is it something to die for? It is better to understand what it is thinking what it is not. Was remembering tanks in Vilnius at 13-th January 1991 going against unarmed residents. Escaping from the totalitarian past it is very clear what it is Europa and why it is better to belong to it (let's say it is difficult yet to pronounce EU with love). People really passed away. For EU? For freedom? For something they escaping from? For what kind of vision, for what kind of reality? One Ukrainian writer recently said in the interview: "Fascism did not die with the Second World War. It works as cruelty, and we saw this in Kiev's streets". Stalinism did not die also, I am afraid. Ukraine - one pure European country more? Which will give more immigrant donors to prosperous EU countries? People are going to Western countries not only to work, but to learn the world which was closed for them for many years, often from the birth (like for me) and I find this kind of "tourism" positive. What is wrong with dreaming, Ian? (I mean day-dreaming, Lithuanian language has 2 words, night dreaming is "sapnuoti", day-dreaming is "svajoti"). Dreaming (svajoti) I think is a cure for the soul, as "Humankind cannot bear very much reality" (T. S. Eliot), for me dreaming is not something connected with unconscious, but with more conscious, with imagination, which is a very strong creative power. Why not to dream Europe?

Best wishes to all -

Vitalija Norvilienė

Thank you Vitalija,

I am a dreamer!

We live, build our lives. make our judgements on the most insubstantial evidence - wisps and threads of thoughts that somehow become, through our 'gut', a solidity..... which, in reality, they never can be.

Nota Bene (using the language that once bound different cultures in Europe) - in the UK we talk about 'gut' reaction meaning something that we feel in a rather solid (and sometimes immediate) fashion.

Thus we live in that world of emotion and thought - insubstantial.

there are no fixed points, there are no 'ultimate truths' - we are all just swept along, rather like our planet, surrounded by all manner of other forces that lie beyond our control.

However, we are 'embodied subjects' and thus we 'feel' (physical and psychologically) we have to make decisions, take action (even if only to eat).... and it is therefore better that we are as self-aware as possible.

We need to understand our dreams, manage them - otherwise, as the C20th demonstrated, they can lead to some very dark places.

We are looking at this word 'Europe' - from different angles.

Thus for anyone who had to 'look out' (from the grey grim Stalinist east) it forms part of a dream to which they may wish to move.... and since 1990 the combined efforts of 'the western countries' have, for very positive reasons (not just economics and trade) made that possible.

For me (but not necessarily many of my fellow 'wessies'), who had many more freedoms and choices, I was 'looking in' (to the east) but the difficulties of entering were too great.

I also could only dream of visiting names that fascinated: e.g. Porțile de Fier.

So in 1990 with the whole family drove east (passing trabants, lad as etc driving west!)

But I've still not been to the Iron Gates!

However, I did not have any great need or yearning to 'go east' & any such desire now is not because I need freedom but because I need to understand better where I am from.... and that is sometimes better down from outside one's own immediate social context. The contrast of colours helps the process.

Individuals "strive for a positive self-concept & the authoritarian east did not allow that to happen (though interestingly, the further people were from the western media, the less concerned they seemed to be - and still are (e.g. eastern

Ukraine).

My writing now is not against any sense of 'European identity' - but is simply trying to point out that any form of identity is insubstantial - and potentially dangerous (I watched on TV people beating a man simply because he had a different view from them about where 'Ukraine' should be placed.... why such anger?.... unless we 'know' our selves, these things will occur..... and even when we think we know, we sometimes are overtaken by emotional forces).

We need to abandon 'identity' (the British, especially the English, find this extremely difficult - hence no euro, no Schengen - most people in UK have not the faintest idea what in practical terms the word 'schengen' means).

Best Wishes

Ian Ball

March 9th 2014

Dear friends,

The chronicles 4 (Marseilles) are ready! And it is also part 2 of "criticism of culture".

The map of Europe on the official program of Marseilles-capital-of-culture was upside down. That gave me a hint to try to look different on what seems to be "identity" and some other small things.

Chronicles 4 is just 3 pages long, an impressionistic, sometimes absurd experimentation based on what participants of our project had said during the stay in Marseilles, it has some sunny weather in it - I hope -, mediterranean air, romantic troubadours and sailors, a little bit of southern blues and it's all inspired by Albert Camus whose *pensée du midi* are maybe the last remaining utopia of the 20th century.

I can imagine that our friends from eastern Europe are sick&tired of utopias for the rest of their lifes, so I reduced it to an absolute minimum: I put a single drop af John Lennon in it: Imagine! And take care!

Holger

(Maybe, Ian, you are a dreamer, but you're not the only one!)

Holger

I have yet to read your latest contribution..... but, sitting here in an hotel in Lisbon, a place from which Europeans began their global adventures, one muses about 'dreams' and 'utopias' that once focused (as did Thomas More's original) on a place out in or beyond the Atlantic

The greek base of the word had a meaning 'no place'. However there was also a word Eutopia - a 'good place'

How curious - for those who maybe hoped that all difficulties would be solved after joining the EU topia.

A circular process of discovering that which was a deep desire, is 'no place'

As for dreaming - we needs must distinguish between 'dreaming' - which is utterly abstract & unreal & 'dreaming' which implies 'wish', 'desire' or 'hope'.

The first type of dream is either disturbing or consoling (dependent on the circumstance) & good to share but the second is simply a pointless event unless it develops into effective social & ethically sound (and 'peer-group', evaluated) action.

We have had too many dreamers who were allowed to implement their nonsense without any 'testing' by their peers.

best wishes

Ian

March 9th 2014

Dear, Holger

Thank you for great material. At first, I liked several things in your article:

1) I was touched by expression - "*South*" is the dream for "*North*". It is so true. I am also on the cross roads and thinking, what is really better to try for next few years of my life - to enjoy sun and sea and go to south; or to understand better pragmatic way of thinking of Scandinavia and learn extra knowledge their educational system can provide?

2) *Imagine there are no countries*. I can only dream about it. When we are not Latvians or Germans, but just humans, it is much better world, but I think there is long way to go, while some new form on global management can be established. I am not against identification with nation and culture, but I more believe in identification with true human values like I am romantic or I am in love with nature, art etc., Identification with specific nation rather than lifestyle or values, puts more clichés than gives answers.

Regards,

Renate

May 2nd 2014

Jurmala: at the turtle (symbol of Jurmala sustainability)



Dear Common Ground friends,

joining to Renāte's words, I am extremely glad that Your visit to Latvia went well and everyone has reached home safe!

Thanks for Your efforts (to be good guests) and contribution of sunny smiles, attitude and active participation in making this visit successfull!

And thanks for letting me go on Sunday because I managed to catch the garden exhibition and made a deal with a company to make a new fence around my garden in Jurmala. So, next time You come to Jurmala - tea in the garden from me! :)

As I promised, I send You some **group pictures** (in a separate e-mail with higher quality). I do believe that Alex from Holger's group will have much more professional photos to share! Still - I'm sending some of mine!

For those (from Mic's group) You asked about **Gunta (Shelter house) contacts** (willing to ask additional questions on immigration issues) - here is her e-mail: gunta.viksne@gmail.com, website: www.patverums-dm.lv

Once again - thanks for Your kind words You have already sent to us! We are really happy to hear that!!! It gives us inspiration and energy for doing more :)

Vita

May 2nd

Riga: at Ratsquare (in front of the Black Heads' house)



June 18th

here we are back home ,still in mind with the wonderful time we have had on Mic`s tunes.Hanover was music,definitely...
Thank you dear hosts,Thank you Mic
I wish I could say See you in....!But ,maybe we will!
Hugs to you all, commongrounders,
Teodora,Constanta

Hi, Dears,

we are back (thanks Mic, Sina and all our German friends + Lufthansa!) and wanted to reflect that **visiting the international gardeners** was my most memorable part of being in Hannover - sitting in the middle of block houses, listening the Russian romances and having a great food - we really enjoyed! And made a very misterious picture (attached) that I will spread and talk about in LV!

Best wishes,
Vita



19th June 2014

Dear All ... wow. Thank you so much for coming to Hannover and throwing yourselves so wholeheartedly, creatively, good-humouredly and energetically into all the crazy things we asked of you. I had a ball, as did all the TuesdayThursdayFähries, and we shall be talking about it for years to come.

.....

Best wishes and here's to us all,

Mic

Dear all,

we are safely at home today by the bus Hanover-Berlin-Poznan-Warshow-Marijampolė-Kaunas, until not asleep - many thanks for Mic, Sina and all group, it was unforgettable time, hope to see all once again.

With full heart of thankfulness -

Vitalija and Jūratė
Kaunas

abdulkerim ayhan

Dear friend Mic,

It was really wonderful programme and you were great host. Common ground is really very good and efficient project for me. I hope we (all partners) would do new projects together. Thank you and your great team so so much...

31st July/1st August 2014.

AFTERWORD:

The above messages began with the the early message from Teodora & information regarding the Brancusi sculptures.

The final sculpture in his 'ensemble' was the Endless Column - a series of modules rising from a low hill on the edge of Tirgu Jiu.

It is believed that Brancusi left the last module incomplete to express the concept of the infinite.

The journey, begun at the table is thus never quite finished - it reaches out beyond its own physical existence.

So maybe it is similar for us, having shared 'Common Ground'.

We began, unknown to each other – and thus were in a sense at the Table of Silence gathered together - but unknown to each other. We moved through the Gate of the Kiss sharing together places, people, events and progressed down the avenue of the project to a point where, as with the column, we move out and away.

We, formally, have 'drawn to a close' but does that mean we have reached a final point? Or are we, as the column suggests, moving into other spaces, times & realities?

So – ‘thank you’ to Mic and his team for putting all this together – for creating ‘the avenue’ along which we have, with his guidance, travelled.

Mic, writing of the to Marseilles, but maybe producing a phrase applicable to the whole project stated:

The impressions and experiences.... will remain with us forever, and will take some time to reflect on



.....

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein