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## **Who blogs what?**

A qualitative study on the role of the Euroblogosphere in a context of a European Public Sphere.

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to illuminate the perception of Spanish and English language bloggers and to understand them and their activities from the analytical perspective of an online European Public Sphere (EPS). The research, using a methodology of semi structured online interviews, answers two questions. The first one is how these bloggers give evidence of an actor-based online European transnational blogosphere. And the second what, based on the interviews, do they perceive to be the key attributes of the EPS, including its majors strengths and problems. The findings give evidence of what is it the role of the Euroblogosphere in the online EPS, and its contribution of more democratic debate.

**Word count: 17903**

**Key words:** Euroblogosphere, European Public Sphere, democratization, Spanish, English

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## Chapter I – Introduction

The idea of a European Public Sphere has aroused issues of concern. Several scholars in the field of Communications and European Studies have been researching and writing about the European Public Sphere, being the uncertainty of its existence the most common conclusion<sup>1</sup>. The Euroblogosphere can play an important role in the EPS. However we need to understand first what is its place and contribution to the EPS.

According to a pan- European online newspaper, ‘the blogosphere represents a large number of European citizens who criticise the democratic deficit in European institutions, or more simply those who want to share criticisms, suggestions or gossip in an online community’<sup>2</sup>. The research on the functions of blogs has shown that they create centred public spheres of varying coverage in hypertextual social networks<sup>3</sup>, influencing self-representation and identity construction of their users. Consequently, the blogosphere can foster feelings of belongingness and connectedness<sup>4</sup>.

The Euroblogosphere, due to its characteristics, is considered to be part of the European Public Sphere.<sup>5</sup> However there is not much literature about the specific topic of EU blogosphere and the function it has on society. Academically, only two papers have been written about the Euroblogosphere<sup>6</sup>. All the research done up to this moment has been until 2009, when an aggregator of blogs about EU topics was created by independent citizens: bloggingportal.eu, a web platform used for the selection of the participants in the research that contains already more than 1000 blogs comprised of different languages.

This study draws upon a series of online written interviews to Spanish and English bloggers to define the space and role of Euroblogosphere in the EPS and its contribution to the

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<sup>1</sup> Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "The Missing European Public Sphere and the Absence of Imagined European Citizenship," *European Societies* 9, no. 5 (2007), accessed February 2, 2012, doi 10.1080/14616690701412814

<sup>2</sup> Tiziana Sforza, "Blogging: The saviour of Europe?," *Café Babel*, accessed February 2, 2012, <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/article/17136/blogging-the-saviour-of-europe.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Bahnisch, "The Political Uses of Blogs," in *Uses Of Blogs*, ed. Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 141

<sup>4</sup> Scott Wright, "Political blogs, representation and the public sphere," *Aslib Proceedings* 61, no. 2 (2009): 157, accessed February 5, 2012, doi 10.1108/00012530910946901.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Risse and Marianne Van de Steeg, "An Emerging European Public Sphere? Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Clarifications," (paper presented at the Conference *Europeanisation of Public Sphere, Political Mobilisation, Public Communication and the European Union*, Sciences Center Berlin, June 20-22, 2003), 15

<sup>6</sup> Myra von Ondarza, "The Euroblogosphere - Advent of a social movement or source for expert information?" (Master Thesis, Hamburg, 2007).

André Feldhof, "Atomization overcome? The role of the European blogosphere in fostering more European democracy." (Bachelor Thesis, Maastricht, 2009).

democratisation of the debate. It is *how these bloggers give evidence of an actor-based online European transnational blogosphere*. During the design of methodology of the research it was also important to gather data on how the bloggers themselves perceive the European Public Space, since this is central to how and why they are active in it. Consequently I added a second research question *-what, based on the interviews, do they perceive to be the key attributes of this EPS-* that is answered by the information provided in the interviews done to the bloggers. This research question has the aim to situate and to define the European Public Space by the point of view of the interviewees. Therefore the second research question is inherently linked to the first one with the purpose of situating in a context the findings of the first research question.

The selection of the Spanish and English bloggers is made to give the study a broad and comparative dimension, with online written interviews being the best option to understand firsthand the social function of the Euroblogosphere inside the context of the EPS. With the sample of two different languages, and a priori two different styles of political blogging, the study offers a fuller, more robust picture as well as a more nuanced analysis.

I start by firstly introducing the debate of the EPS and how different scholars see its current situation and future development. I then move on to the theoretical and methodological considerations of the thesis, explaining the three interlinked prerequisites for the EPS I find in the literature, the two models of possible development, and a typology for the EPS. Furthermore, I explain the methodology used to answer the research questions and how it fits to this purpose. These three chapters –the debate, the theory, and the methodology- are important because the aim is to contextualize these discussions with the Euroblogosphere and to implement the concepts to the Euroblogosphere in order to understand what is its position and function.

I later present the results of the interviews with five themes conceived from the answers in the interviews. The first three themes provide an answer to the first research question while the next two respond to the second research question. They represent what is being said by the bloggers about the Euroblogosphere, and how they see the conditions of the EPS.

I end my thesis by presenting the conclusions deriving from the analysis of the selected materials. Through the research carried out, I argue that the Euroblogosphere share

similarities with the European Public Sphere. In addition further analysis suggests that the Euroblogosphere can play an important role with the democratization of the European debate, and as an excellent tool for integration and engagement of citizens into the EU debate.

## **Chapter II – Literature Review: The European Public Sphere Debate, the way to understand Euroblogosphere context**

The research done until now on the Euroblogosphere is not very extensive. Only two academic papers have been written so far. The first one, written in 2007, is a scholar paper by Ondarza, and the second was written in 2009 by Feldhof. The paper by Feldhof was published the same year that [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu) –an independent aggregator of EU topic blogs- was created. Feldhof concludes in his research that first, Euroblogosphere fails fostering political participation of the masses; and second, the European blogosphere has a limitation in the control of policy-makers.<sup>7</sup> Ondarza, on the other hand, and in her own words concludes that the Euroblogosphere is a partial public sphere where European institutions are responsible to provide a basis for the growth of it.<sup>8</sup>

However, the debate about the European Public Sphere is more intense. It is necessary to understand it to recognize the link within EPS and the Euroblogosphere. Scholars in the field of Communications and European Studies have been researching and writing about the European Public Sphere, not being clear if it exists or not. Apart of this blur conclusion, there are different tendencies to clarify this point in the literature. For Maria Heller and Ágnes Rényi, all preconditions for a development of the EPS are ready<sup>9</sup> but there are problems for its development that must be solved. Yet, there are two tendencies that must be considered: an Europeanization of national media, and the creation of a pan trans-national European media.

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<sup>7</sup> Feldhof, "Atomization overcome? The role of the European blogosphere in fostering more European democracy", 17

<sup>8</sup> Ondarza, "The Euroblogosphere - Advent of a social movement or source for expert information?", 30

<sup>9</sup> Maria Heller and Ágnes Rényi, "EU enlargement, identity and the public sphere," in *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making*, ed. John Erik Fossum and Philip Schlesinger (New York: Routledge, 2007), 169.

Jos de Beus supports an Europeanization of national media<sup>10</sup> as the best way to build public debate. Koopmans goes in the same line arguing in his research that contrary to the hypothesis of a public sphere deficit, the German mass media, for example, “seem to quite accurately reflect the Europeanization of policy making, at least in those policy fields where a clear-cut transfer of competencies to the supranational EU level has taken place”<sup>11</sup>. For other scholars, for example Bruggmann<sup>12</sup>, the thesis is totally the other side: a multitude of EU transnational media have evolved over the last 20 years and that they have a small, but significant and growing audience. Bruggmann even defines a typology of transnational media.<sup>13</sup>

Within all research we can find three main barriers Europe is facing when creating a European Public Space: diversity of languages, the national media and the different social cultures. In this line Kaitatzi-Whitlock suggests that “most EU institutions have already acquired Pan European scope and validity, but the political institutions of communications media remain nationally entrenched and oriented.”<sup>14</sup> Her argumentation also concludes that an Europeanization of the national public sphere is not the solution.

It is interesting how scholars link the phenomenon of lack of EPS with the lack of European identity -and correlated to the democratic deficit<sup>15</sup>-. European Public Sphere and European identity go together<sup>16</sup>, making it impossible not to link both of them. The question is what needs to come first in order to develop the second? We can find the opposite argumentations of Dieter Grimm<sup>17</sup>, on one hand, and Habermas<sup>18</sup>, on the other – the first assuming that an

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<sup>10</sup> Jos de Beus, "The European Union and the Public Sphere. Conceptual Issues, Political Tensions, Moral Concerns and Empirical Questions.," in *The Making of a European Public Sphere.*, ed. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (Cambridge, 2010), 23

<sup>11</sup> Ruud Koopmans and Jessica Erbe, "Towards a European public sphere?," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 17, no. 2 (2004): 97, accessed February 2, 2012, doi 10.1080/1351161042000238643

<sup>12</sup> Michael Bruggemann and Hagen Schulz-Forberg, "Becoming Pan-European?: Transnational Media and the European Public Sphere," *International Communication Gazette* 71, no. 8 (2009): 694, accessed February 24, 2012, doi 10.1177/1748048509345064

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 689

<sup>14</sup> Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "The Missing European Public Sphere and the Absence of Imagined European Citizenship", 687

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 690

Erik Oddvar Eriksen, "Conceptualising European public spheres: general, segmented and strong politics," in *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making* ed. John Erik Fossum and Philip Schlesinger (Routledge, 2007), 23

<sup>16</sup> Heller and Rényi, "EU enlargement, identity and the public sphere.", 170

<sup>17</sup> Dieter Grimm, "Does Europe Need a Constitution?," *European Law Journal* 1, no. 3 (1995): 290, accessed February 5, 2012, doi 10.1111/j.1468-0386.1995.tb00033.x



identity must precede a public sphere while the second author stating the exact opposite. Europeans have strong national or sub national identities and a weakly developed sense of being European. This is partly because, as Fligstein emphasizes, the development of a European identity hinges on frequent interaction between nationals of different EU states<sup>19</sup>.

Without a common space of communication it is normal that a feeling of being European is not growing within the citizens. In this line goes the Han Report<sup>20</sup> when affirming that European identity will only develop if Europeans are adequately informed. Kaitatzi-Whitlock agrees that “ignorance about our European Public affairs, the warming commitment to EU citizenship and the absence of an imagined common European result precisely from the perpetual lack of a European public sphere”<sup>21</sup>. Medrano argues in his research, following the line of reasoning, that the public sphere is not only a prerequisite in an EU that wants to be democratic, but also a key institution for the development, through communication, of a shared sense of belonging to a European community.<sup>22</sup> Scott Wright goes a bit more far and argues that this “deficit is considered most worrying as it helps to produce the others [the lack of a Europe-wide policy discourse, and the lack of a Europe-wide institutional infrastructure], and because the latter may be solvable by redesigning the institutions of Europe”.<sup>23</sup>

We have consequently, a triangle with European Identity, European Public Sphere, and democratic participation. In order to have one of these elements, we need to have at the same time the other two. They cannot be understood without any of the two elements that complement this triangle, as it is represented at the following figure:

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<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Why Europe needs a Constitution," *New Left Review*, accessed January 30, 2012, [http://www.newleftreview.org/II/11/jurgen-habermas-why-europe-needs-a-constitution#\\_edn2](http://www.newleftreview.org/II/11/jurgen-habermas-why-europe-needs-a-constitution#_edn2).

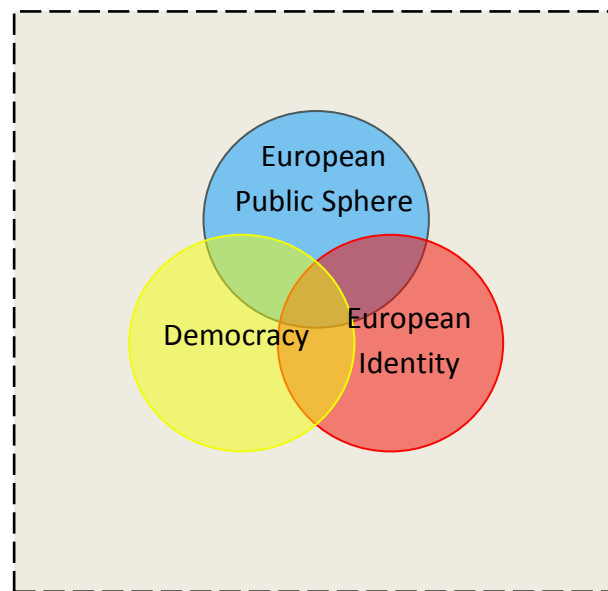
<sup>19</sup> Juan Díez Medrano, "The public sphere and the European Union's political identity," in *European Identity*, ed. Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 85

<sup>20</sup> EP, "The Hahn Report and the Resolution of 12.03.82, on Radio and Television Broadcasting in the European Community," *European Communities Official Journal* OJ C 87(1982). Accessed May 5, 2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOIndex.do>

<sup>21</sup> Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "The Missing European Public Sphere and the Absence of Imagined European Citizenship", 687

<sup>22</sup> Medrano, "The public sphere and the European Union's political identity", 89

<sup>23</sup> Scott Wright, "A virtual European public sphere? The Futurum discussion forum," *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 8 (2007): 1168, accessed February 1, 2012, doi 10.1080/13501760701656403



**Figure 1. The intrinsic preconditions.**

Nevertheless, what exactly is the EPS, and why I address it when researching Euroblogosphere? The answer is easy. According to Erik Oddvar Eriksen, the Public Sphere is “the social room that is created when individuals deliberate common concerns. It depicts a relationship between the speakers and the audience that is created by social actors experiencing the by-products of cooperation, which in turn prompts the inclusion of affected parties.<sup>24</sup>” This definition can be also applied to blogospheres in general, but more concretely to the European Blogosphere where people from all member states and outside Europe meet in virtual spaces to exchange their thoughts and reflexions. It is vital thus to understand very well the processes of the EPS if we want to understand what is the place of the Euroblogosphere, and what contribution it makes.

### **Chapter III Theory: the three elements for the EPS**

Seeing the general debate of EPS, it is time to have a look where the research will be theoretically rooted. I look into “the triangle” in more detail contextualizing them in the Euroblogosphere.

<sup>24</sup> Eriksen, "Conceptualising European public spheres: general, segmented and strong politics." Page 23

### III (I) Online European Public Sphere, the natural place of the Euroblogosphere

First of all I make a distinction between Online and Offline, and because of the natural characteristics of the Euroblogosphere, I attach it to an Online European Public Space. Online EPS is understood as a branch of the entire European Public Sphere<sup>25</sup>, referring to the public debate that is being done at the Internet and in all kind of virtual tools and websites.

Scholars argue that the Internet is ready to contribute to the EPS and it has developed enough tools<sup>26</sup>. Bohman goes further and argues that the internet can facilitate a transnational public sphere<sup>27</sup>. A problem for the internet could be the penetration of this technology in the society of different member states. The truth is that already by December 2011 more than 70%<sup>28</sup> of population in the EU have Internet access. However it must be said that we need to count the problem of the need of the necessary skills and knowledge of the technology for blogging, internet, etc.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless some scholars think that the Internet is not the best way to create a public sphere and that it is not the best medium to communicate with citizens<sup>30</sup>. For Kaitatzi-Whitlock a pan European TV channel is the solution to this lack of European common space<sup>31</sup>. In this light, John Hartley has suggested that television is in fact a ‘transmodern’<sup>32</sup> teacher that combines oral logic, information and entertainment.

However, the use of the Internet is growing day by day. The Internet is, and will be the key player. At some point the Internet will be more accessible than normal television, and television will be complemented with the Internet (internet on television). The Internet allows everybody to present and retrieve information without passing by the filter of traditional mass media. Although it is true that TV will still remain the main source of information for at least some more years. All channels of information will help each-other, will complement each

<sup>25</sup> Wright, "A virtual European public sphere? The Futurum discussion forum".

<sup>26</sup> James Bohman, "Expanding dialogue: The Internet, the public sphere and prospects for transnational democracy," *The Sociological Review* 52(2004): 135, accessed February 10, 2012, doi 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00477.x

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 139

<sup>28</sup> "Internet World Stats", European Union Internet Users, Accessed August 18, 2012, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Eszter Hargittai, "Second Level Digital Divide: Differences in People's Online Skills," First Monday, accessed July 12, 2012, [http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7\\_4/hargittai](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_4/hargittai).

<sup>30</sup> The scholars are cited in the next lines.

<sup>31</sup> Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "The Missing European Public Sphere and the Absence of Imagined European Citizenship".

<sup>32</sup> John Hartley, *Uses of Television* (London: Routledge, 1999), 41.

other. Though, the internet will be prominent in building European public sphere, especially the digital space thanks to the social networks, blogs, forums, debates, etc.<sup>33</sup>

Latzer and Saurwein<sup>34</sup> summarize that the current digital European public sphere is constituted of many partial public spheres that represent interest groups or elites, yet a European public sphere for the masses does not exist. Margot Wallström, ex Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Institutional relations and communication strategy, said: "I believe the Internet is THE new channel for debate and communication. The EU needs to get more into the blogosphere and engage in real debate"<sup>35</sup>

### III (II) First element. Creating Citizenship through the Internet: identity

Bryan Turner<sup>36</sup> argues that processes of globalization are diminishing the bonding power of the nation-state in favour of newer, transnational forms of community building. A new meaning of (cultural) citizenship could grow from the new uses of communications tools, for example, the blogosphere as way of creating a feeling of community (building).<sup>37</sup>

Until now Public Spheres were exclusively attached to nation states<sup>38</sup>. However, Hermes writes that "Internet- based communities make clear that new communication forms do allow for (new) citizenships and new groups to take up citizen identities: it is up to us to realize that it is what is happening."<sup>39</sup> Nigel Pocklington of the Financial Times pointed out that: "We are

<sup>33</sup> Ruud Koopmans and Ann Zimmermann, "Transnational Political Communication on the Internet," in *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, ed. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 171

<sup>34</sup> Latzer and Saurwein, "Europäisierung durch Medien: Ansätze und Erkenntnisse der Öffentlichkeitsforschung," in *Europäische Öffentlichkeit und medialer Wandel*, ed. Wolfgang R., Langenbucher, and Latzer (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006): 16, accessed February 5, 2012, [http://www.univie.ac.at/Publizistik/Europaprojekt/datei/pub/latzer\\_saurwein\\_2006.pdf](http://www.univie.ac.at/Publizistik/Europaprojekt/datei/pub/latzer_saurwein_2006.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Margot Wallström, "Communicating a Europe in stormy waters: Plan D," accessed June 19, 2012, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/05/396&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

<sup>36</sup> Bryan Turner, "Postmodern Culture/Modern Citizens," ed. Bart van Steenbergen, *The Condition of Citizenship* (London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1994): 167, accessed February 17, 2012, doi 10.4135/9781446250600

<sup>37</sup> Joke Hermes, "Citizenship in the Age of the Internet," *European Journal of Communication* 21, no. 3 (2006): 300, accessed February 7, 2012, doi 10.1177/0267323106066634

<sup>38</sup> Donatella della Porta, "Dimensions of Political Opportunities and the Europeanisation of Public Spheres.," in *The Transformation of Political Mobilisation and Communication in European Public Spheres.*, ed. Donatella della Porta (Europub, 2003), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Hermes, "Citizenship in the Age of the Internet", 307

in the middle of a rather uncomfortable generational shift. . . . We are dealing with online and digital worlds, where people get news from screens and mobile devices”<sup>40</sup>. The thesis is that new technology may facilitate a new type of citizenship commitment that combines exchange of information and evaluation, in which emotion and experience (traditional concepts of identity-citizenship) are not discounted but an accepted part of the processes of opinion formation.<sup>41</sup>

The question is whether by sharing, linking and building bridges the bloggers are creating or impelling a pan-European sphere, or in contrary an Europeanization of national public sphere is occurring. The best way to research it and to demonstrate if the three main barriers commented above are overlapping is through Euroblogosphere. Whether the Euroblogosphere could be a ‘hatchery’ for a European community and a pan-European public sphere.

There is a need to point out the difference of two concepts of identity. The first one is a possible European Identity within the bloggers. And the second is a group identity as a bloggers. Both of them are important and can be present in an online environment. The first one –European identity- is crucial to recognize belongingness, awareness and personal identification with Europe. The second -identity blogging- is the representation and recognition of the bloggers as a group by their experiences and behaviour.<sup>42</sup>

### **III (III) The second element contextualized theoretically: democracy**

A second requirement is democracy. I make here a distinction between two kinds of democratic deficit. The first one is the democratic deficit in the EU institutions and representativeness of the will of citizens of Europe, and second meaning is the democratic deficit in terms of citizen participation and engagement in political discussions. I analyze both of them in the answers given at the interviews to the bloggers. This democratic deficit is what bloggers and individuals might be criticizing from the EU according to a pan European

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<sup>40</sup> Jemima Kiss, "The Financial Times they are a-changin'," journalism.co.uk, accessed February 27, 2012, <http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/the-financial-times-they-are-a-changin-/s2/a51401/>.

<sup>41</sup> Hermes, "Citizenship in the Age of the Internet", 305

<sup>42</sup> Bahnisch, "The Political Uses of Blogs."; Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs, "Introduction," in *Uses of Blogs*, ed. Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs (Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 5

online newspaper<sup>43</sup> referred at the introduction. However, the aim of the research is not to find out what institutions have democratic deficit, as it is not linked a priori with the EPS, but to discover if the Euroblogosphere, in a context of EPS, has democratic participation.

Eder formulated a theory of democratic governance<sup>44</sup> that might be applied to the Euroblogosphere. It contains the principle of participation, deliberation and governance. The first one is that everyone can participate in debates and discussions freely. The second is that all bloggers should engage in exchanging arguments without restrictions by point of view or background. The last principle is if bloggers are able to make rational decisions from these discussions and to choose freely what they consider is the best option or position.

I will try to analyze if the Euroblogosphere has this democratic governance in accordance to the answers of the bloggers. The Internet here plays a very important role because the increase of interaction from the discussions online may lead to citizens more active participation at the EPS, and consequently enlarging democratic participation.

### **III (IV) The third element: Where is the EPS going? Theory of two models and six types for the EPS**

As we have seen, for some authors there is no European Public Sphere, for others there is sort of European Public Sphere, and for others the set up for a European Public Sphere is ready and it only needs a push to start. We could also discuss within all authors what kind of barriers<sup>45</sup> the EPS is facing in order to start/develop and in which directions it could go in the future

In addition, in which way EPS could go in the future? John Erik Fossum and Philip Schlesinger established two models for the future of the EPS: the regulatory model and the federal model<sup>46</sup>. Both of them are political models for the EU with different characteristics,

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<sup>43</sup> Sforza, "Blogging: The saviour of Europe?".

<sup>44</sup> Klaus Eder, "The public sphere and European democracy: mechanisms of democratisation in the transnational situation.," in *The European Union and the Public Sphere*, ed. John Erik Fossum and Philip Schlesinger (New York: Routledge, 2007), 50

<sup>45</sup> I presented already at the literature review three main barriers the EPS is facing: diversity of languages, the national media and the different social cultures.

<sup>46</sup> John Erik Fossum and Philip Schlesinger, *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making?* (Routledge, 2007), 12-19

and because of it, different public spheres, and thus postulate different models of public sphere.

The first one defines EU as a “regulatory entity engaged in problem-solving”. The purpose of the EU is ultimately a “network governance” where the members are together to discuss through institutions the problems and to learn from each-other the solutions. The model of EPS developed here -since the members have closed the political space- is the Europeanization of national public spheres. Although transnational communication within the entire EU territory might be possible, it is not however, addressed to general public.<sup>47</sup>

The second model –the federal EU- is the antagonist of the first model described above. Basing the EU as a democratic constitutional state, there is a need for a European identity. And for that there should be “a public opinion mobilized to influence”. It does not conceive - as the regulatory model does- a monolithic public sphere but an “overlapping public”. It means with a distinction between strong and weak public spheres (institutional and civil society), both of which are necessary for a discussion of different topics at the same level: European. In summary, this model aims for the Europeanization and transnationalization of national spheres, taking into consideration “a respect of democracy, difference, pluralism, human rights and vulnerable identities”<sup>48</sup>

None of these two models contemplate the use of internet in a big scale. There is a big lack of academic research about the use of internet as a source/complement of the European Public Sphere. Internet is here, and will be with us for a long time. A process of cannibalisation is starting between different sources of public fora, being internet the one that is growing faster.<sup>49</sup>

For Maria Heller and Ágnes Rényi the current EPS might be in the regulatory model right now. However, thanks to the development and access of Internet Communications Technologies to everyone, it can change. The Internet will facilitate to reach small local and regional groups, and at the same time an increasing interactivity may lead to citizens’ more active participation in discussions, including in the transnational public sphere. The increase

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 16-17.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>49</sup> Ruud Koopmans and Ann Zimmermann, "Transnational Political Communication on the Internet", 181

of interaction may lead to citizens more active participation at the EPS, and consequently enlarging democratic participation. In words of Heller and Rénvie it is the change from model one to two.<sup>50</sup>

Bloggers can have as well a very important role in the hypothetical transition from one model to other. Blogosphere is the platform for citizens to express without restrictions their ideas, and to share with other bloggers, included from all Europe, common points and discussions of all possible topics. However, it is not easy, and until now, bloggers have been nationally divided, with the majority of them not aware of the discussions about the same topics in different languages or countries<sup>51</sup>. This constitutes, as it was mentioned before, the Europeanization of the national public sphere.

In summary, two models to elucidate the alternatives to the EPS. What is clear is that any of them will evolve easily. It does not matter which one will be finally “the winner” -if any of them is, and if a third model is not born from both of them-.

Sicakkan, from Univesity of Bergen and head of the project EUROSPPHERE<sup>52</sup> goes further and explains in his research six different types<sup>53</sup> of EPS<sup>54</sup>. It is worth mentioning that these six types of EPS can be present and coexisting at the same time. They are present at the national and transnational level and are overlapping with each other, coexisting. In the end one of them takes predominance over the others.

This theory of six models is compatible with the two models explained above, and consequently they explain with more accurate approach the situation and typology of the EPS. Combining the two models plus the typology of the EPS, we can identity not only one, but different realities that might be present, not only for the EPS, but also the Euroblogosphere.

<sup>50</sup> Heller and Rényi, "EU enlargement, identity and the public sphere", 183-185.

<sup>51</sup> Ronny Patz, "Preparing the #rp12: Search in the multilingual Euroblogosphere". Polscieu blog, accessed July 25, 2012, <http://polscieu.ideasoneurope.eu/2012/03/23/preparing-the-rp12-search-in-the-multilingual-euroblogosphere/>

<sup>52</sup> The EUROSPPHERE Consortium comprises 17 European universities and research institutes and approximately 150 researchers work in the project's different parts and phases. The project is coordinated by the University of Bergen. The main objective of EUROSPPHERE is to create innovative perspectives on the European public spheres and to identify the conditions that enable or undermine the articulation of inclusive European Public Spheres.

<sup>53</sup> The six types are: single protected sphere, multiple segmented sphere, multilevel overlapping nested sphere, multilevel differential sphere, multiple composite eurospheres.

<sup>54</sup> Hakan G. Sicakkan, "Diversity, Polity, and the European Public Sphere," *Javnost The Public* 20, no. 1 (2012), 9



## Chapter IV- Methodology: Thesis and Research Proposal

### IV (I) The selected model for the research: Semi structured online interview

In the research I concentrate in semi structured online interviews<sup>55</sup>. I find it the most suitable methodology because the aim is to illuminate the perception of Spanish/English bloggers and to understand them and their activities from the analytical perspective of an online EPS in order to recognize and situate the Euroblogosphere inside this EPS. With this model of interviews, the blogger's experience interconnecting with others can be reconstructed<sup>56</sup>. The aim of the research is not the blog per se, but is the person who is behind the blog site: the blogger. With a qualitative research we understand human experiences<sup>57</sup> rather than making predictions about behaviour, the aim with a quantitative methodology.<sup>58</sup>

The Internet is the best way to make interviews about the use of the Internet. We cannot separate the interview from the social interaction in which it is produced<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore, e-mail interviews give the chance to researchers to study individuals that are difficult to interview face to face or by telephone<sup>60</sup>, as it is the case of bloggers dispersed around Europe.

The most suitable form to interview bloggers is a semi structured written online interview. According to Denscombe<sup>61</sup> the quality of responses gained by online research is the same than in traditional methods. Furthermore, Lokman and Meho explained in their research article that "e-mail interviewing can be in many cases a viable alternative to face-to-face and telephone". Where the studies were put in practice, "the participants interviewed via e-mail remained more focused on the interview questions and provided more reflectively dense accounts than their face-to-face counterparts"<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart, *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research* (Sage Publications, 2000), 75

<sup>56</sup> Jenifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, Second Edition ed. (Sage Publications, 2002), 64

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 64

<sup>58</sup> Henwood and Pidgeon, "Qualitative Research and Psychological Theorising " in *Social Research, Philosophy, Politics and practice* ed. M. Haammersley (London: Sage, 1993), 65

<sup>59</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 65

<sup>60</sup> Mann and Stewart, *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research*, 17-20

<sup>61</sup> Lokman I. Meho, "E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 57, no. 10 (2006): 8, Accessed February 5, 2012, doi 10.1002/asi.20416

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 8

It is in the same natural environment where bloggers express themselves, and where they feel more comfortable. A blogger is used to write and express the ideas in this way, with no problem of the Internet connection or skills. At the same time it can happen that an interviewee could not be comfortable speaking, but rather writing. They have time to write, to think, and to rewrite if they consider it. With a face to face or phone interview it is not possible. With a written online interview I avoid these problems.<sup>63</sup>

E-mail interviewing empowers both: the participants and the researcher. The participants because it essentially allows them to be in control of the flow of the interview<sup>64</sup> enabling them to answer at their convenience and in any manner they feel suitable.<sup>65</sup> These interviews can be structured in the same style they express themselves on the internet, and it provides useful information in how they transmit ideas, concepts and examples. Both, researcher and interviewee can be more careful in the communication with each-other that they would during a conversation.<sup>66</sup> In addition, there can be interaction between myself as a researcher and those I am researching<sup>67</sup>.

#### IV (II) Choice of Bloggers

I designed a criterion to select the bloggers that will be the base of my research. In order to answer the research questions, I chose two different blogging languages. I take the interviews of six bloggers speaking in Spanish, and six bloggers speaking in English (see appendices). The selection of the Spanish speaking bloggers will provide a basis to compare the answers provided by the English speakers with a specific national language domain. The comparison shed interesting light in regard to linguistic-cultural elements of the EPS. Having an interview with the bloggers of both languages will show what kind of interactions they have, and how they understand it.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 7-10

Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 65

<sup>64</sup> Natilene Bowker and Keith Tuffin, "Using the Online Medium for Discursive Research About People With Disabilities," *Social Science Computer Review* 22, no. 2 (2004): 230, accessed February 12, 2012, doi 10.1177/0894439303262561

<sup>65</sup> Tracy L. M. Kennedy, "An Exploratory Study of Feminist Experiences In Cyberspace," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 3, no. 5 (2000): 715, accessed February 12, 2012, doi 10.1089/10949310050191719

<sup>66</sup> Karcherm 2001 in Meho, "E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion", 8

<sup>67</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 65

The criteria I used for selection were that the bloggers:

- Are listed in [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu).
- Write mainly in Spanish/English.
- Are users of twitter, with more than 300 followers
- Focus mainly in European affairs.
- Published their last post not more than 3 months ago.
- Have a personal blog domain.
- Consist of an individual speaking by him/herself.

The sample of interviews is adequate to the purpose of the research, providing a good scenario. I have followed a sampling illustratively strategy<sup>68</sup>. It means that the sampling done tries to find “an example” of how bloggers interact, but the result of the research is not an absolute truth that can be generalized to all blogosphere. It indicates that probably my conclusions could be valid for nowadays, but a researcher in the future, with the same facts that I have been working for my thesis, will find another explanations, reasons, and conclusions different than mine. What is produced is a narrative that is particular, to that time and space, and partial, being based on a subjectivity interpretation.<sup>69</sup> My point of view is clearly interpretist as I see “a phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation of them”<sup>70</sup>, or in other words the world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it. However I do not think my thoughts are entirely one hundred percent with this epistemological view because I believe there are facts and empirical data that do not have room for interpretation, and that are objective knowledge –objective knowledge that interpretists refuse to admit-. Ontologically I am foundationalist because I believe there are some facts impossible to discuss, but epistemologically an interpretist as I think the explanations and conclusions we do of these facts depend of the context where we are.

Following the overview for the planning and preparation procedure for qualitative interviews by Jenifer Mason<sup>71</sup>, written interviews of ten big questions plus several sub questions were sent to the personal emails of the bloggers selected, in Spanish for the bloggers of this language, and in English for the bloggers of that language.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 126

<sup>69</sup> David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 28

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 18

<sup>71</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 72

The samples of questions are designed to provide enough information to answer the research questions. The designs of the questions are in concordance with the literature revised and taking into consideration the concepts and analyse from the scholars revised. I designed them with the aim to provide information mainly about the debate of the European Public Space, the role of the Euroblogosphere into it, the three interconnected prerequisites for the development of the EPS and Euroblogosphere, as well as their experience, opinions and worries about the situation of the Euroblogosphere. Furthermore, the questions give enough room to the participants to add more information requested in the case they would like to comment something was not included in the interview.

#### **IV (III) Thematization of the interviews**

I started the indexing, codification and categorization of the available data, using the methodology of data-driven coding<sup>72</sup>. It implies that the research starts out without codes, and develops them through reading the material. It is an inductive approach that pretends not to interfere and to type-cast the answers provided by the bloggers, forcing the situation to the extreme that some answers could not be taken into consideration because they “do not fit” into the themes. What I describe as findings in the following chapter is what the bloggers have been talking in the interview.

The five themes extracted from the interview can be divided into two groups. Each one of these two groups corresponds to one of the research questions. The first three themes correspond to the first research question, while the last two themes consequently correspond to the second research question. With these themes I can compare the case of the Spanish and English Euroblogosphere, and how the bloggers interact in order to build a possible pan European blogosphere as a preceding step towards a real pan-European debate. The themes prove the motivation of the bloggers, the state of the blogosphere and the online and offline EPS by the interviewees’ point of view.

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<sup>72</sup> Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkman, *Interviews. Learning the craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 205  
Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 159

## Chapter V – Analysis: The answers of the bloggers

### V (I) Why do bloggers publish on the internet?

The motivations for blogging of the two groups interviewed show similarities and differences. It means that the answers provided by the Spanish group have similarities that are not found in the English one. And it is the same for the English group towards the Spanish group. However the similarities found are not enough to make a real distinction between the two groups. What has been found are more similarities than differences.

Starting with the Spanish participants, they have a clear common characteristic in the motivation to blog about EU affairs. The interviewees consider the European Union as something that they belong about and as a part of them. That explains why they feel the need to write about it, and to describe what is going on in Brussels. They tend to defend the work of the European Institutions, and relating it to a pan European identity. For the Spanish participants the publication of materials about EU in their blogs corresponds to a “mission of teaching” about the EU and how the decisions taken in Brussels affect the life of citizens in their respective country.

*My contribution, aside of trying to create a blog that explains in an easy and clear way to citizens the European politics that affect them, is to help to create a sort of pan-European blogging union.<sup>73</sup>*

**Macarena , Spanish speaking blogger**

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The case of the English blogosphere is different. There is less unity in the answers when giving reasons why they write in a blog about EU affairs. However according to the majority of answers they do it because it is a good way to develop/express ideas. This point is also common with the Spanish participants. Nevertheless this common point does not explain why they use blogs to develop/express ideas for the English group. For the English bloggers is more a reaction to the mainstream media, a disagreement of these bloggers of what is being published or said in the traditional media and the need to reflect different point of views.

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<sup>73</sup> Original in Spanish: “Mi contribución además de intentar crear un blog que explique de forma sencilla y clara a los ciudadanos las políticas europeas que les afectan, es ayudar a crear una especie de unión bloguera pan-europea”.

*I started blogging on European affairs because it was a topic I wanted to talk about, and it was an aspect of politics that my friends weren't so interested in, so blogging seemed to be a good tool for discussing ideas and expressing opinions.*

**Conor, English speaking blogger**

*[...] the need to put forward an alternative view of the EU not typically found in the UK newspapers.*

**Jon, English speaking blogger**

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In summary, the motivation to write Euroblogs for the English group is a way of expressing different perspectives regarding what is going on in the European Union, while the Spanish group has a tendency to explain what is said by European Institutions, although being critic and stating their opinions if it is needed.

The motivations they have to blog are sometimes not enough to create debate. Especially the Spanish bloggers they tend to be, according to their answers in the interviews, neutral in their blogposts. The English bloggers, on the other side, try to be more provocative. However, European topics are not enough attractive, as the bloggers said, to open a deep debate that can attract general audiences.

Finally, I find an identity blogging that goes beyond any language and nationality within the bloggers. It consists in sharing practices and values such as trust, interactivity, and interest for European affairs. Although I find differences in terms of personal motivation to write and publish blogposts, I still think that both groups in the end have same hopes and aims for the blogosphere. Furthermore they speak of the Euroblogosphere using “we, the bloggers”, a signal of their consideration as a group and unity.

## **V (I.II) Role of bloggers**

Referring to the role the bloggers play in the Euroblogosphere, both groups agree in general terms that the blogger must explain what usually is not told, or issues that normally do not appear in the media, because they are not enough interesting for the media business but are important for the normal citizen.

In spite of this I find a clear difference between the two groups. Spanish bloggers are more ambiguous in what the role of the blogger should. For the Spanish group a blogger should contribute in creating a unique image, a *togetherness* within all bloggers in order to foment the idea that countries share more issues and interests than differences.

*The relation between all of us should improve, to avoid even excessive prominence and to promote a brand or image that reveals the common points we share as a bloggers. Only united we can be heard.*<sup>74</sup>

**José María, Spanish speaking blogger**

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On the other hand, the English group is more pragmatic. As an example, a blogger wrote down in the interview four bullets regarding what a blogger should do, in a sort of mandatory manual.

*My expectations are more limited to: (1) linking to sources, (2) being open for debate if you're aware of another blog post addressing your article, (3) having a comments section they are willing to engage with, and (4) having a bloglist (which I think of as an important way of being connected to the rest of whatever blogosphere a blogger is part of).*

**Conor, English speaker blogger**

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We can state that both groups have clear ideas of what a blogger must do in the Euroblogosphere: to try to make the Euroblogosphere grow in order to generate a pan European debate by raising more interest in citizens about European topics. They pretend to create a bigger and more interconnected Euroblogosphere, a space of discussion and exchange of ideas, whatever the language or cultural background.

If we apply these findings to the extent and how do these bloggers give an evidence of an actor based online transnational and pan EPS, we must say that bloggers act as watchdogs. They pay attention of what is being said and how is being said in order to react if there the need. However, the bloggers did not mention specifically that their motivation is to be the guards of the truth. Only with the English bloggers we might interpret this point of view more

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<sup>74</sup> Original in Spanish: "Deberían mejorar la interrelación entre todos nosotros, evitar los excesos de protagonismo incluso y fomentar una marca o imagen única que ponga de manifiesto los puntos que compartimos como blogueros. Únicamente unidos podremos ser escuchados. Únicamente unidos podremos ser escuchados".

carefully, as the main motivation for the bloggers is to have a voice and other position of the mass and traditional media.

## V (II) Patterns of influence in the Euroblogosphere. Who is the boss?

### V (II.I) Who influences the blogger?

All the participants declared they are influenced by other bloggers. There are two types of influence inside this pattern. The first one, and more common, is the interaction and exchange of ideas within other bloggers or people online. It is interesting to note that one of the bloggers explicitly affirms that the main reason why he writes blogposts about EU affairs is because the influence and ideas extracted by interaction and the influence of other bloggers as a source for inspiration.

*What other bloggers tell me influences me a lot. Moreover, as I said, many of my posts are based in ordering and structuring the contributions that have been done here or there and that I consider more interesting.*<sup>75</sup>

**Dídac, Spanish speaking blogger**

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The other type of influence is by reading articles and texts, but not necessarily interacting with others. It means that the blogger reads the blogposts and articles, and thinks about what is being said, but does not share the thoughts with others. It is usually known as “lurker”.<sup>76</sup>

The majority of the answers correspond to the first group. The general sense is that although they recognize they are influenced, it is very hard to quantify how much and how significant this influence affects them. More or less, in one way or another, all of them are influenced by others and this represented in their written materials.

In the first group described above, the blogger is more influential as there is more interactivity with the players of the discussion. There is room for a replica and counter argumentation from others and therefore a better convincing argumentation. It is a richer and more productive influence as the exchange of ideas and interaction creates more debate than

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<sup>75</sup> Original in Spanish: “Lo que me dicen los demás bloggers me influencia muchísimo. Es más, como decía, buena parte de mis posts se basan en ordenar y estructurar aquellas aportaciones que se han hecho aquí y allá y que me parecen más interesantes.”

<sup>76</sup> Blair Nonnecke and Jenny Preece, "Lurker demographics: counting the silent," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human factors in computing systems* (The Hague, The Netherlands: ACM, 2000): 75, accessed July 29, 2012, doi 10.1145/332040.332409



the second group. We can say that this influence has a double channel: a reader is influenced by what another writer is saying, and at the same time he/she has space to ask or counter argument in order to contrast the information.

The second group has less enrichment and productivity for debate as the influence has developed only in one way, and the bloggers extract their own conclusions by reading the materials of others. It means the influence others might exert and the learning process of reading other material only corresponds to what the blogger is reading at the moment, without any replica from other people in order to contrast the information.

There is an exception of two bloggers that declare they are not influenced at all. One pertains to the Spanish group, and the other to the English group. However, the explanation differs in each case. The first one argues that he has already his own arguments and reasons and is very hard to change his mind. Usually he agrees with others that they disagree in some points about what is being discussed, but always in a friendly way.

*My point of view is not usually affected by my contacts. In fact, many times we think different about certain questions and therein lays the debate about the European construction* <sup>77</sup>

**José María, Spanish speaking blogger**

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The second blogger declared that since he has poor language skills, is very hard for him to get different perspectives. This second case is very interesting because the interviewee links the lack of influence by others is caused by a misunderstanding of languages. It can be that the opinions and arguments from the same language –English – do not differ too much from his own opinion. It might also be the case that the bloggers always interact in the same language, and with a specific group of people with similar ideas.

In any case what the interviewees are declaring in both cases are does not correspond with the reality. Influence from others at the Euroblogosphere has very different levels, and at the same time it is very hard to identify and quantify. However, the two interviewees who deny

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<sup>77</sup> Original in Spanish: “Mi punto de vista no suele verse afectado por mis contactos. De hecho, en muchas ocasiones pensamos diferente sobre determinadas cuestiones y en ello radica el debate sobre la construcción de Europa.”

being influenced from others are very active in the social media, and as a result is more than probably they have been affected for what has been said by other people.

### **V (II.II) The influence bloggers provoke to others.**

The second pattern is the possible influence the bloggers consider might have on others. Two of the English interviewees have long relation with the Euroblogosphere. In the interview one of them quotes the other. It means they both know each-other, and they recognize the long participation any of them has had during the last years. The blogger cited has been active in the Euroblogosphere for the longest time (nine years). He declares that he has been called as “the grandfather of euroblogging” by others. From the Spanish group, an interviewee thinks that her blog has good reputation due to the number of visits and the awards won thanks to blogging.

*So I can safely sit back as "the grandfather of Euroblogging" (as someone once called me) and watch the newcomers do the hard work instead. I'm certainly one of the longest-running individual Eurobloggers out there, though some group blogs like A Fistful of Euros have been going longer, and a number of EU bloggers have said that they were in part inspired to start writing themselves by my blog.*

**James, English speaking blogger**

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Apart of these two English bloggers and the one Spanish, the rest of participants neither recognize, nor mention that what they are writing can influence others. The three examples given above prove that in order to be influential by blogging, the blogger needs to publish quality material constantly during long time. An example of it can be that the two bloggers commented above have been updating the blog, with some time breaks, during at least the last five years.

### **V (II.III) The influence of the euroblogosphere**

The third pattern is the influence the Euroblogosphere has in the general. Although this point has not been asked explicitly in the interview, the bloggers coincide in two points. The first one is that in general the Euroblogosphere is not big enough yet to be influential in any topic.

*Still small, still very few participants.*

*James, English speaking blogger*

*[...] It is very much atomized<sup>78</sup>*

*José Maria, Spanish Speaking blogger*

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And the second common point within all bloggers is that the Euroblogosphere has a huge potential for being a source of influence for topics, together with other platforms.

*Given that a public sphere is all about public communication, blogs can definitely play a very important role in both shaping and dominating the general debate.*

*Protesilaos, English speaking blogger*

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The blogger Pau Solanilla, in this respect claims that the Euroblogosphere lacks in what is called “soft power”. It is the pressure and influence that normal citizens, together, can get in some topics. The problem for Pau, and it is common in the arguments of all participants, is that the Euroblogosphere, is a “microcosmos of multiplicity of isolate opinions”, an atomized space without any kind of organization.

The question is what the Euroblogosphere needs in order to be more influential. There is diversity of opinions between the interviewees, but in general they express that what the Euroblogosphere needs is more integration and cooperation between them.

*Building links by promoting a culture of reading widely” might increase the size and participation of the Euroblogosphere, and so the Euroblogosphere may become more influential.*

*Conor, English speaking blogger*

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It is one of the affirmations all participants do: the euroblogosphere has a limitation of influence. In this specific point, the participants make a comparison between the European blogosphere and the US blogosphere. The US blogosphere has more influence and more of the called “soft power”. Some US bloggers, if we follow the argumentation of the participants in the interviews, have a huge potential in what they are writing. Putting them together, the

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<sup>78</sup> Original in Spanish: “Está muy atomizada”

influence they can cause is huge in some topics. However, in Europe there are almost no individual bloggers that have very huge influence. This last point is linked with the second pattern –the influence a blogger can incite to others- and again we conclude that for a blogger is very hard to get enough relevance to have repercussion in some topics by itself.

*The EU blogosphere remains a rather elitist talking shop between young academics and EU professionals. Secondly, and related to the first point, there are few connections between the European blogosphere and established national media which could allow blogposts to reach a wider audience in one of the member states. Other than in the United States, it rarely happens that an EU blogger's post inspires an article in a national newspaper.*

**André, English speaking blogger**

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## **V (II.IV) Going offline VS going online**

Another important aspect to comment is the issue that one blogger rose. The barrier between online and offline might disappear in the next years.

*We will soon have to abandon this distinction between the "online" and "offline" world, since their dividing line is blurred and will at some point cease to exist.*

**Protesilaos, English speaking blogger**

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It means that influence, as well as interaction, might also go to the street. An example of this is the platform [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu) that has achieved to be recognized, and three of its editors were allowed to be present and participate in press conferences of European institutions<sup>79</sup>. Until now this was not possible, and it is a symbol that the presence and influence of the Euroblogosphere, at least of some individual bloggers, is increasing. Álvaro Millán, a blogger from the Spanish group says explicitly the following in order to improve the situation of the Euroblogosphere:

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<sup>79</sup> BloggingPorta.eu editors were contacted by the Hungarian Presidency team, seeking ideas for how they could cooperate with the Euroblogosphere and to initiate a pilot project for blogger accreditation to the EU Council. They meet in March 2011.

"Pilot Project: Blogger Accreditation", [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu), accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.bloggingportal.eu/blog/pilot-project-blogger-accreditation/>

*The European Institutions in Brussels must allow access with press accreditations to the most active and interested bloggers<sup>80</sup>*

**Álvaro, Spanish speaking blogger**

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Another aspect of this distinction between online and offline is that some bloggers admit they meet in person regularly. Consequently, neither the interaction nor the influence can be understood exclusively as online. Not only because bloggers meet with others as colleagues or friends, but also because there is an increasing presence of bloggers as representatives of the Euroblogosphere movement in seminars and conferences<sup>81</sup>.

Another point of the practices by the bloggers is that every day is going to be harder to make the difference between online and offline world. We were speaking here exclusively about online transnational European Public Sphere. However, it has been transferred and linked by the bloggers during all the interviews by online and offline European Public Sphere. Nowadays, the two concepts are already mostly interconnected. In the last events we have seen in Europe, online and offline worlds have been going together. For the bloggers this blurry process is also significant of where the EPS is going.

*I know a lot of bloggers offline, so we meet to talk politics quite often, and keep the conversation going on Twitter.*

**Jon Worth, English speaking blogger.**

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An important aspect for discussion is if this influence might be interpreted as a lobbying by third persons, institutions or companies. Private companies might use the influence of the blogosphere by directly paying some bloggers to influence in aspects important for the lobbying company and its customers. This may be true not only for private companies, but also public, national, international, and transnational institutions.

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<sup>80</sup> Original in Spanish: "Las instituciones europeas en Bruselas, permitan un acceso mediante acreditaciones de prensa a los blogueros más activos e interesados."

<sup>81</sup> The 2 and 3 of May 2012, a well-know blogger gave a presentation of the situation of the Euroblogosphere at the re:publica Event in Berlin.

Ronny Patz, "re:publica 12 – Not enough ACTION" *Polscieu Blog*, accessed July 15, 2012, <http://polscieu.ideasoneurope.eu/2012/05/09/republica-12-not-enough-acton/>

#### V (IV) The problem: Self referential and lack of debate.

The bloggers, both groups, say that the Euroblogosphere suffers from lack of interactivity and debate.

*I observe that my blogging habit has changed over the last year. While I very actively surveyed EU blogposts last year and very vividly interacted with bloggers through the comment function or twitter in an effort to foster an enriching debate, I now spend less time on these two activities.*

**André, English speaking blogger**

*Little discussion happens on EU blogs themselves.*

**James, English speaking blogger**

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They understand that blogs about EU affairs are inside a small bubble of self referential writers, with not so much interest in what is said out of the bubble. Furthermore they consider that debate has decreased while the level of complexity of EU topics has increased.

It means for the bloggers, that the EU blogosphere was more open before, with more general topics, to the point that an occasional reader with not high knowledge of EU affairs could follow the discussion without big problems. There were more comments and deep debates about the topics spoken, being the size of the blogosphere smaller<sup>82</sup>, but richer in debate.

The bloggers agree with the development of the blogosphere from the past to nowadays. Now the EU blogosphere has developed a bigger size in terms of number of bloggers and websites on EU topics. However, this development has brought a specialization of some topics, being now the EU blogosphere a niche. Now occasional readers or even bloggers with a long tradition of participation have sometimes a feeling of being lost, according to one interviewee. A number of bloggers are writing very complicated and specialized blogposts about some topics that are very hard to follow their argumentation, and too complicated for the general public. Furthermore the bloggers argue that the debate has decreased since the interactivity is moving to social media where the debates and reactions of people have been reduced to just share a link or a comment with a short sentence.

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<sup>82</sup> Number of bloggers or people online. I am speaking here about the situation of blogosphere 8-10 years ago.

To clarify this last point, before, the interactivity, according to the bloggers interviewed, was more familiar and debates were longer and deeper. Now EU blogosphere is bigger in size, but the participation and interaction between bloggers and people online has decreased (depth of comments), or did not develop (lack of references to other blogs, or to other languages).

*It is true that at the beginning, when the blogging phenomenon started strongly, there was more interaction within bloggers, the networks were working better, the readers were assiduous and writing comments, but now the interest for analysis has been lost. The blogs have been losing readers, not only in the European sphere, but in general*<sup>83</sup>

Eva Peña, Spanish speaking blogger

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However, I see here a contradiction. Bloggers in the interviews say that the huge specialization the blogosphere has in some topics might be a problem in order to reach general audience.

*The interaction between bloggers has decreased as the specialisation of the Euroblogosphere has increased.*

Conor, English speaking blogger

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At the same time they are complaining that the EU blogosphere and the EU digital Public Sphere need more specialization, focusing this specialization, in foreign policy.

*Perhaps what I miss more right now is the lack of specialized blogs in European foreign policy (...) as it happens many times with the American foreign policy.*<sup>84</sup>

Álvaro, Spanish speaking blogger

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As we have seen, some bloggers compare this lack of EU blogs with the US blogosphere. Apparently, the US blogosphere has a more important role and there are some important

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<sup>83</sup> Original in Spanish: “Es cierto que al principio, cuando estalló el fenómeno blog con fuerza, había mucha interacción entre blogueros, las redes funcionaban mejor, los lectores eran asiduos y comentaban, pero ahora se ha perdido el interés por el análisis. Los blogs han ido perdiendo lectores, no sólo en el ámbito europeo, sino en general.”

<sup>84</sup> Original in Spanish: “Quizás lo que más pueda echar en falta ahora mismo son blogs especializados en política exterior europea, que publiquen con una cierta regularidad, como se da con los muchos casos paralelos en el caso de la política exterior americana.”

specialized blogs. The bloggers, comparing the two models of blogosphere, express and link this frustration with a perpetual lack of EPS.

All the participants in the research, from the Spanish and English group agree that there is a need for more interaction if they want to create a real debate online. As a conclusion, the level of participation is, depending on moments, low/medium but never reaching a peak, with the exception of important events such as meetings of the European Council.

*We only have to look Twitter every time there is a meeting in the Council, a real wave of tweets and comments, rumours, characters, even jokes and gossips about the personalities in the EU.*<sup>85</sup>

**Eva Peña, Spanish speaking blogger**

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The interaction is being transferred to the social media instead. It means the interviewees themselves find, and publish fewer comments in their respective blogs; they prefer to participate with more interaction in social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. In social media the level of interactivity within different bloggers and politicians is higher than in a blog nowadays. However, the level of debate and discussion is lower than before since social media does not allow for deep and long comments<sup>86</sup>, or the respective comments go away in a short time.<sup>87</sup>

There are not big differences between the Spanish and English bloggers. All of them believe there is a need for more interactivity. However, each interviewee has different definitions and explanations of how this interactivity should be developed. We can identify two groups. The first one thinks that interaction on the blogs should move to social media as it is the best way to spread links of blogposts—the real content of the debate-. They are against any kind of interaction/participation of European or national Institutions in the debate of citizens, as they consider the Public Sphere must remain independent of any influence or institutions.

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<sup>85</sup> Original in Spanish: "Sólo hay que fijarse en la que se genera en twitter cada vez que hay una reunión del Consejo, verdaderamente una oleada de tweets y comentarios protagonizados por el Consejo, los rumores, los personajes, incluso chistes y chismes sobre los altos cargos de la UE."

<sup>86</sup> Twitter allows only 140 characters.

<sup>87</sup> The specialised web in social media, Mashable.com, published that the average time of a status update in the news feed is about 22 hours.

Jeff Widman, "How to Time Your Facebook Posts to Reach the Most Fans," Mashable, accessed March 10, 2012, <http://mashable.com/2011/10/26/time-facebook-posts/>.



*I honestly don't know really what role EU institutions can play. I trust them on nothing in matters of public debate and communication. The entire foundation of European institutions – diplomats, bureaucrats, economists, etc, catering to national governments' sensitivities – is completely opposed to any concept of public participation and interest.*

**Craig, English speaking blogger**

*I do not believe that the European Commission should take an active role in establishing a framework for a European public sphere*

**André, English speaking blogger**

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The second group goes in the same line, but at the same time with the participation of European Institutions. This second identified group prefers the participation of European Institutions, creating debate, but never moderating in excess this debate.

*It does work for the moment, although with the disadvantage of the English, is the Facebook page of the European Parliament<sup>88</sup>*

**Macarena, Spanish speaking blogger**

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I see the bloggers do not trust, in the sense of communications, too much the institutions. It is a weak point for the European Institutions, when the bloggers and citizens do not trust them for several reasons. As a recent example of it we have the official European Commission video promoting enlargement, which was uploaded on YouTube<sup>89</sup>. After reactions and accusation of racism from the viewers, the Commission apologized and took down the video. European Institutions should work more towards offering further transparency and fluid communication, not only in English, but parallel and with the same quality to other languages we find in Europe.

*The EU has made many attempts to make people interested in EU policy-making, and the blogosphere is riddled with sarcastic posts about expensive EU communication attempts that failed. The latest one is a 30-second commercial by DG Enlargement that exhibits a very negative view of non-EU cultures, cost*

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<sup>88</sup> Original in Spanish: "Sí que funciona por el momento, aunque con el handicap del inglés, es la página de Facebook del Parlamento Europeo"

<sup>89</sup> European Commission, "Growing Together." YouTube, accessed July 3, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKN67ImpO4k>

*the European taxpayer more than 100,000 EUR and was withdrawn two hours after it had been launched on the internet.*

**André, English speaking blogger**

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I must notice as interesting that two interviewees pointed out that it is better not to do anything in order to create debate or interaction. It will develop or not and whether it will be developed by itself<sup>90</sup> or not, “it will be so, what we deserve”:

*Those individuals who constitute the blogosphere are good enough then the blogosphere will eventually reflect it and will at some point grow stronger and better. If we cannot do that, then we will simply get what we deserve.*

**Protesilaos, English speaking blogger**

*Make the EU a properly democratic, federal system and the “comms” will sort themselves out.*

**Jon Worth, English speaking blogger**

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The lack of debate and in some instances the lack of interactivity is a big problem for the Euroblogosphere, and also for the development of any arena of multi referential discussion. Together with the languages that I describe in the following subchapter, it is the biggest problem.

## **V (IV.I) Language issue**

The language question is a theme that has been present along all interviews, from an implicit form to a very explicit form. Usually the topics of languages have been associated with a lack of interactivity and time. The lack of languages skills makes that the interaction between different languages hardly visible. Furthermore, using other languages, for some participants, is very time consuming: to translate a comment or blog, to write a comment or blog, and to translate and answer again the possible replies takes a lot of time; in addition of the misunderstanding that might occur as the translation tools are not perfect. If we also add the

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<sup>90</sup> Klaus Eder, in the same line, argues that the EU has all prerequisites for democratization, but still there is a democratic deficit present. According to Eder it will come by itself, as a functional consequence of these prerequisites, one of them being the EPS ready and set up for development. Eder, "The public sphere and European democracy: mechanisms of democratisation in the transnational situation..", 45

specific jargon and technical words used in the European Union, the conversation cannot be as fluid as in one mother tongue.

The topic of languages has been more fruitful within Spanish bloggers. For the English bloggers it is more a personal problem than a “European issue”. It means if they do not understand other languages, simply they do not have interaction, generalizing it to the rest of the euroblogosphere. For the Spanish bloggers it is more a “European transnational issue”, a problem of everyone. However, in this respect, a Spanish blogger argues that each speaker prefers to interact with their own language for practical reasons.

Spanish bloggers argue that having more languages enriches the debate. Nevertheless we find inside the Spanish bloggers also a proposition to convert English as a *lingua franca*. It is also, within the Spanish participants that a blogger mention that barrier is not in the different languages but between north-south, making the cultural difference the main barrier for understanding in Europe.

A Spanish participant proposes a system where the interaction in different languages might be possible. It is that the interaction and comments can be made in different languages than the one the reader controls, using software translation. Using these tools the English bubble can be broken, and interaction between different languages can be higher than what is nowadays.

Within the English bloggers group there are different perspectives as well. Protesilaos thinks that languages are not a real obstacle nowadays, and that English is neither the unofficial language of the Euroblogosphere. Furthermore, another blogger argues that the websites that tried to create a pan-European debate, usually in English, have failed to reach audience beyond euro-geeks, ending these websites in niches.

What is true is that none of the bloggers speak only one language; they speak at least two or more languages. Furthermore, an article of Schlesinger<sup>91</sup> points out that an Eurobarometer already published in 2001 shows that over half population of the EU speaks more than one language, being English the first foreign language for one-third of all citizens. It shows that in

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<sup>91</sup> Philip Schlesinger, "The Babel of Europe? An essay on Networks and Communicative Spaces" (Working Paper 22/03, ARENA Oslo, 2003): 6, accessed May 24, 2012, [http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/workingpapers2003/03\\_22.xml](http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/workingpapers2003/03_22.xml)

theory the idiomatic barrier should decrease during the following years as citizens understand, or have notions, of more languages. However the Spanish bloggers exclaim several times on the interview the excess of prominence of the English blogosphere, and the bloggers based in Brussels. The English Euroblogosphere is too dominant. We can say that English-speaking Euroblogosphere is the biggest one of the Euroblogosphere.

However, the English bloggers are not guilty just because they achieve more influence or audience. Nevertheless European Institutions should potentiate the debate in other languages, and interconnecting them. In any case, the lack of interactivity between bloggers of different languages, or even in the same language –Spanish or English in this case- works against any kind of deep debate.

#### **V (IV.II) The Spanish blogosphere against the dominance of the English and Brussels based bloggers**

There is a tendency from the Spanish bloggers to complain against the domination of the blogosphere by the English language and the excess of importance of Brussels based bloggers. These two statements for the Spanish group of bloggers are creating a wall between the normal independent citizens and the so called “European geeks” -bloggers or people highly interested in EU affairs as well as in the latest technology available-, and therefore a formation of an EU bubble: English and Brussels based bloggers domination at the Euroblogosphere.

Spanish bloggers think it is not right that someone who does not publish in English reach less audience. According to them the motivation of an EU blogger should be to explain and to communicate in easy words what the European institutions are doing, and to explain it to the citizen in a familiar understandable language. They think that they should keep writing in Spanish, because they want to promote important debate not only in English, but also in Spanish and other languages.

*I think that the eurosphere which sins more of navel-gazing are the French and the English. A blogger who quotes a lot, but among content provided from English into English I do not think is the most representative place to find out*

*what's happening in what we call the 'eurosphere' (no matter if you have many readers, writes from Brussels, or is 'famous' ...).*<sup>92</sup>

#### **Didac, Spanish speaking blogger**

*Most of the documents and press releases are published in a first moment only in English, which limits the range of participation of the citizen as a writer and creator of blogs about the EU*<sup>93</sup>

#### **Macarena, Spanish speaking blogger**

*Tendency that have many eurobloggers to think that Brussels is the center of the world.*<sup>94</sup>

#### **Macarena, Spanish speaking blogger**

*The most influential bloggers write in English, and interact among them.*<sup>95</sup>

#### **Eva Peña, Spanish speaking blogger**

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Languages are an important factor for the development of the digital EPS. Some of the participants make a comparison between the development of the blogosphere in United States, and the development of the blogosphere in Europe, and how both of them contribute to the Public Sphere. The case of Europe is different since the EU has twenty three different official languages, and consequently a broken Public Sphere by languages. Here, the Spanish bloggers, with the exception of one, defend that all languages should have the same level of presence. At this point bloggers of both groups explain the tendency of the Europeanization of the national media by languages, and why this broken Public Sphere makes very difficult to build a pan-European debate, and thus a transnational public sphere (which could be perfectly illustrated by the example of the English blogger who speaks German, but does not

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<sup>92</sup> Original in Spanish: "Creo que la eurosfera que peca más de mirarse el ombligo son precisamente la francesa y la inglesa. Un blogger que cita mucho, pero entre contenidos siempre del inglés al inglés no creo que sea el lugar más representativo para enterarse de lo que se cuece en lo que llamaríamos la 'eurosfera' (más allá de si tiene muchos lectores, escribe desde Bruselas, o es 'famoso' ...)."

<sup>93</sup> Original in Spanish: "La mayoría de los documentos y notas de prensa están realizados en un primer momento solo en inglés, lo que limita el rango de participación del ciudadano como escritor y creador de blogs sobre la UE."

<sup>94</sup> Original in Spanish: "Tendencia que tienen muchos euroblogueros de pensar que Bruselas es el ombligo del mundo."

<sup>95</sup> Original in Spanish: "Los bloggers más influyentes escriben en inglés e interactúan entre ellos retroalimentándose."

understand what Greeks are saying about the eurocrisis, and consequently there is no communication neither exchange of discussion). Furthermore the domain of the English language is a barrier also in the European Institutions when at the beginning official documents are only available in English, as a Spanish speaking blogger pointed out at the interview. Regarding the English bloggers, there is no specific reference to this question. But they admit the over presence of English in all the Euroblogosphere.

#### **V (IV) Situation of the EPS and role of blogs in the online European Public Sphere**

The contribution of the bloggers to the Euroblogosphere, and the contribution of the Euroblogosphere to the EPS are evident by the answers given at the interviews. For the bloggers, the Euroblogosphere bears a responsibility of developing debate and sharing information. However, this contribution, due to the nature of the blogosphere, is very small if we take into consideration all the channels of communication the citizens have at their disposition.

The general understanding from all the interviewees is that the Euroblogosphere might contribute to the Online European Public Sphere. However, this contribution will be small. It is explained by the bloggers that the Euroblogosphere, although has grown in size, and some sort of influence, it is very narrow and elitist.

*Bloggportal.eu may list around 1000 EU-focused blogs, but most aren't regularly updated (my own included), and the vast, vast majority would struggle to get daily readership numbers in triple digits. It's now become a closer-knit community (partially through Bloggportal, as there's now a core of c.25 Eurobloggers who are all (theoretically) editors on that site who all email each other fairly regularly.*

**James, English speaking blogger**

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And comparing the Euroblogosphere within other channels of communication online and offline, the Euroblogosphere represents a very small portion of what will be the EPS. There is not entire unanimity of what role the Euroblogosphere has to play inside the EPS, however the participants, linked to their motivation think that the Euroblogosphere is a space where

everyone can have a voice and can express their ideas, regardless of the ideological position of the blogger.

I speak in future when talking about the concept of EPS because with exception of one blogger, that believes there is already a sort of EPS, the rest of bloggers think the EPS is still at the very beginning, or not existing yet at all. I find, consequently, two groups between the interviewees: the blogger that thinks there is already an EPS, and a big group that thinks the EPS is not yet developed. For the first group, or the blogger who thinks there is sort of EPS, he believes that it exists because brings people from different cultures together and reinforces the feeling of being European, but however in a very limited level not reaching yet people on the ground.

*As an elitist concept, I think the European public sphere already exists and brings people from different cultures together under a common umbrella.*

**André, English speaking blogger**

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Inside the second group I find two ways of thinking. One goes in the direction that an EPS will never happen. A second way of thinking is that the EPS can happen in the future if the conditions are set up.

There is not unity when speaking about the EPS. We can say as well that each interviewee has a different overview on the EPS. It is true that some thoughts are in the same line for some, or all the bloggers. Nevertheless the argumentations given and the order of these arguments show that they have different pictures in mind of what is the European Public Sphere, and what will happen to it.

It may indicate that they do not know exactly what processes the EPS needs in order to take off. Some bloggers think that there must be a common institutional policy and image to make the citizens feel that the institutions are for them and not just the face of the national leaders in Brussels. For others the problem is that there is a need to show people how the EU affects them, in order to create interest. Following this point, I quote an interesting proposition made by one of the bloggers:

*People will care about the EU when they know that they are directly affected by it - and a very good way for that to be realized is through direct taxation. Once you get European-level taxation, you will get European-level discussions on how*

*to reform the executive and legislative branches of the EU, how to decisively address the democratic deficit, how to make everything more approachable, understandable, transparent and human. Yes human, since now everyone is acting like an emotionless drone, thanks to the kind of "super-official" status EU institutions have.*

#### **Protesilaos, English speaking blogger**

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One of the most interesting thoughts between bloggers is that three of them believe there is not EPS, or has not been developed –depending which interviewee is giving the arguments– because of the current design of the European Union. For them, this current design, and the lack of a political union is the main cause why EPS did not take off. Since the institutions are not enough transparent, and the citizens do not feel they can partake and control politics, is very hard to engage them and to create debate. If this does not change, an EPS will hardly develop.

One of the propositions that call the attention was the proposition of the Spanish blogger José María. He argues that the EU must be listened, by “imperative”. His proposition is to launch a series of TV commercials to explain what the EU is doing, in a kind of explanatory session of the activities of the institutions in the EU. I think that this point is very controversial issue, and other bloggers or people might differ, or could see it as a propaganda or brainwashing.

*Now is when the Union must commit itself to be heard and seen on radio and television, even by legal imperative that public television must run the ads the Union considers. Citizens must feel close to their institutions as they have been created by and for them.*<sup>96</sup>

#### **José María, Spanish speaking blogger**

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One question of the interview sample was openly asking the relation between the European Public Sphere and democracy. For some scholars the public sphere is central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate<sup>97</sup>. Analysts have consistently stressed

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<sup>96</sup> Original in Spanish: “Ahora es cuando la Unión debe apostar por hacerse escuchar y ver en radios y televisiones, que incluso por imperativo jurídico las televisiones públicas deban emitir los anuncios que estime la Unión. La ciudadanía debe sentir cerca a sus instituciones pues han sido creadas por y para ella.”

<sup>97</sup> John Erik Fossum and Philip Schelesinger, eds., *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making?* (Routledge, 2007), 4



that an important component of the EU's democratic deficit is the absence of viable European Public Sphere.

For the bloggers this question is open to different answers. The most common thought extracted from the answers is that both concepts –democracy and EPS- need each-other. There cannot be democracy without PS, and there cannot be PS without democracy. What is clear is that in all this process the blogs are an element of democratization, and a necessary element, in the online environment, to create debate.

*I think this is absolutely true. No democratic debate, no democracy, it's that simple.*

**Craig, English speaking blogger**

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For the bloggers, blogs alone are not enough but they can be a key player in the EPS. The Euroblogosphere is a very important democratization tool because it provides voice and debate to people about questions that would otherwise be impossible for these people to express themselves.

## **V (IV.II) A possible European Identity**

What is to be European? It is not an easy question for the bloggers, neither for the literature<sup>98</sup> that has been published about this question. Dídac, a Spanish blogger, points out about this matter that is impossible to have a definition:

*It is an impossible question. There are as many ways of feeling European as people that feels European.*<sup>99</sup>

**Dídac, Spanish speaking blogger**

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The interviews illustrate that the Spanish bloggers show more appreciation to a possible Europe identity than the English group. The Spanish group uses a deeper vocabulary when describing what means for them Europe.

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<sup>98</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein, eds., *The EU, European Identity and the Future of Europe*. (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Original in Spanish: "Es la pregunta imposible. Hay tantas formas de sentirse europeo como personas que se sientan europeos".

*To be European, besides coming from the Old Continent, involves a series of universal human values made in Europe. The spirit of the liberal constitutions and the shaping of European states, result of the historical development, provides an international framework that impregnated with the European cultural background outlines a type of citizen until then never seen. The European trusts in the democracy, in the defence of human rights and the unity of all European societies without speaking any other language than the one of democracy and freedom.<sup>100</sup>*

**Jose Maria, Spanish speaking blogger**

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It does not mean that the English group does not feel that belong to Europe. They also have belongingness to Europe. Although the vocabulary and the expressions used have less emotional load. Furthermore it is within the English group where I identify more clearly this difference within then English and Spanish bloggers:

*Europe's just where I happen to have been born. There's a certain shared cultural identity across European countries, but this is more due to a common Christian heritage and shared historical experience than anything. I feel more "Western" than I do European - these are almost, but not quite, synonymous. I don't see the need for a European identity. I simply am European - it doesn't \*mean\* anything.*

**James, English speaking blogger**

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In a first impression, the Spanish participants seem more European than the English. However, deeper analysis suggests that it may not be true. The English bloggers also show belongingness to Europe, but their vocabulary, as has been said, is less emotive. All of the Spanish bloggers are originally from Spain and native Spanish speakers, although some of them are living or have been living abroad. In the case of the English bloggers, the majority are non-native English speakers, or are bilingual. In any case, the English bloggers appear to have more experiences abroad; have had more intercultural dialogue than the Spanish participants. However, from what I have been reading, the Spanish show a feeling of being

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<sup>100</sup> Original in Spanish: "Ser europeo, además de provenir del Viejo Continente, implica una serie de valores humanos y universales *made in Europe*. El espíritu de las constitucionales liberales y la configuración de los Estados europeos, fruto de la evolución histórica, establece un marco de referencia internacional que, impregnado de el bagaje cultural europeo, perfila un tipo de ciudadano hasta entonces nunca visto. El europeo confía en la democracia, en la defensa de los Derechos Humanos y en la unidad de todas las sociedades de Europa sin necesidad de hablar más lengua que la democracia y la libertad."

European much stronger than the other blogger. Some of the words used by Spanish bloggers describe philosophical concepts of belonging to a united Europe. On the other hand, English bloggers are less emotional about such definitions and concepts.

From my point of view, English participants are trying to be more pragmatic. Maybe because they understand, after having more international and transnational experience, than things in Europe, for a European Public Sphere, and for the development of a common European identity are not as easy as Spanish bloggers describe.

In that sense, Spanish bloggers describe in the interviews what values has this European Identity, and what should be promoted within the Public Sphere (democracy, pacifism, human rights, freedom of speech, etc). While the English bloggers accept them, they think there are different understandings of these concepts throughout Europe.

Across the answers of the interviews we can find constantly references to what has been explained at the literature review. The “triangle” of preconditions is present here one more time. I spoke before about it when the bloggers consider the need for democracy in order to speak about EPS, and at the same time the need of EPS in order to build democracy. Here again we have the third intrinsic factor: identity.

*As a European citizen myself, I should make my ancillary contribution towards that direction by participating in the broader political discussion, through my blog - ideally every single European citizen should participate in this grand debate, as only then there will be a European public sphere, which will give birth to a European identity.*

**Protesilaos, English Speaking blogger**

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At the end, the question is if bloggers share a common representation of Europe. Medrano and Gray's research <sup>101</sup> shows that the British representation of Europe diverges from those in Germany and Spain. The British, in this research, have different conception of the one in Germany and Spain. The research presented here takes the example of two of them –Spanish and English–, and it shows, this time in language matter, but not by nationality –as some of the English speaker bloggers are German– that it is the same in these findings: there is a sort

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<sup>101</sup> Juan Díez Medrano and Emily Gray, "Framing the European Union in National Public Spheres.," in *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, ed. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 195-219

of difference within the two groups. However, these differences are not enough big to make a distinction between the two groups.

### **V (V) The role of the European Institutions and institutional aspects of media.**

There is not a majority of bloggers with one opinion. Some of them think that European institutions must participate in some sense in the debate, providing a framework but never interfering with it. Other bloggers think it is better that European institutions are totally out of any kind of management, organization or creation of framework for debate. These bloggers think the public sphere must come by itself, and if it does not come, it is because we are not ready yet. For the bloggers, the EU needs to change if we want the EPS to take off. I compiled three different ways the EU must follow in order to achieve the EPS that the bloggers explained at the interviews.

- For Jon the problem is that the EU has institutional issues that prevent even active citizens from being able to have any control over what is happening. That is, for this blogger, much more important to fix than the communications aspects. Firstly it is necessary to make the EU a properly democratic system and federal, and the communications will sort themselves out.
- For Pau, the EU has changed in terms of aim and structure. The aim of the founders was to create a federal union. However, now the EU does not look as the original project by size, neither by objectives. The crisis, the lack of leaders and the weight of nationalism -for example in elections with national list- does not permit to build a European Public Space in a short or medium time.
- For Protesilaos the fundamental obstacle to a European public sphere is the perverse and ill-shaped institutional structure of the EU. No language barrier, no cultural diversity, no national medium can be a greater obstacle than this. Consequently if we really want to see a European public sphere out there, we need to be aware that we must ultimately ask for thoroughgoing reform in the way things are done in Europe, being the main obstacle the current EU design.

In that sense, the Internet has the potential to improve public communication. As it was said by the bloggers, institutions should try to communicate and make the citizens feel that institutions are for them. Because in order to get close to democracy, institutions must be sensitive with the reality and problems, to keep in touch with people by referendums, votes, etc, and a close relationship between speaking and being heard.

The bloggers agree that the Internet is the best way to communicate and to create debate. However it is a very elitist channel of communication and the users are still low compared to traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper, etc), although increasing fast as I showed at the theoretical chapter. A problem with the Internet, which at the same time might be an advantage, is that everybody can have a voice. In opinion of Habermas<sup>102</sup>, it can cause some problems of unreliable information. However it is good that citizens can have a cheap channel of communication, as it could be the Euroblogosphere, where to stand up and to organize themselves. Furthermore, the Internet offers tools to contrast the information that the traditional media does not.

In the Euroblogosphere context, Euroscepticism is given by the bloggers as a source of unreliable information. By the point of view of bloggers, the Internet loves extremism, and it is more common to find euro-sceptics comments as it is a cheap way for the people with these ideas to express them. These comments and non right and accurate information that spread very fast, starting false myths of the EU. Furthermore, aside of publishing their own material they go explicitly to comment the Europhiles blogposts criticizing European institutions.

*[... ]The proliferation of Euroscepticism can be virulent in some countries, and can be spread easily on the Net, sowing the seed of populism, so easy to turn in times of severe economic crisis.<sup>103</sup>*

**Eva Peña, Spanish speaking blogger**

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<sup>102</sup> Habermas, "Why Europe needs a Constitution".

<sup>103</sup> Original in Spanish: "La proliferación de un euroescepticismo que puede ser virulento en algunos países, y puede contagiarse fácilmente por la Red, sembrando la semilla del populismo, tan fácil de prender en épocas de grave crisis económica."

*If a medium says one thing, the citizen can immediately check it on the internet.<sup>104</sup>*

**Macarena, Spanish speaking blogger**

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The bloggers, in the opinion of the interviewees, can contribute, but as the same as other groups. Bloggers are not the only group on the Internet that can develop debate and interaction. Associations, local media and others are contributors at the same level with eurobloggers. The difficult falls in to put all of them together working in the same line.

Some interviewees explain that the bloggers are speakers that sadly are not used by European institutions to promote pan-European debate. Another interviewee, following this argumentation, indicates that policy-makers fail listening to the Internet. In this case the Internet is viewed by the bloggers as a forum where all opinions are expressed and where Institutions and organizations can learn or can take notes of what is being said. Additionally the interviewee expresses that bloggers can provide feedback of what is being spoken, in a kind of channel between citizenship on the street and European Institutions.

Finally, concerning other channels of communications as TV, radio, newspapers, the bloggers agree that they are still very important due to their audience. The problem with this media is that, as more than one interviewee said, they are the gatekeepers of information, and consequently this media controls the flow of information. Furthermore, the information provided is always nationalized information. It connotes that instead of information with a neutral point of view, the information is put in perspective depending of the country.

## **Chapter VI. Discussion: Contextualizing blogosphere**

I have presented the five themes that emerged from the responses of the bloggers. They give an overview of what bloggers have been mainly commenting, and providing even more information than the requested. Following in this chapter I analyze the characteristics of the Euroblogosphere extracted from the interviews in discussion with the literature and the

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<sup>104</sup> Original in Spanish: "Si un medio dice una cosa, el ciudadano puede inmediatamente comprobarlo en internet."

context of the EPS. The answers from the interviewees shed helpful light on factors that are central for the emergence of the EPS and the role of the Euroblogosphere on it.

### **VI (I) Very similar groups**

Before the research I was expecting to find common characteristics of blogging and behaviour in each group of bloggers, which could make both typical Spanish, and English blogging practices, easily identifiable. After analysing the answers, I arrived to the conclusion that each one of them does in fact have some common points. However those common aspects are rather superficial. The findings suggest that there are more common values, practices and worries shared between all bloggers than within the Spanish or English bloggers groups specifically.

Apart from the different motivations found in the Spanish and English group, the bloggers share with each-other more similarities than differences in regards to the rest of practices, experiences, troubles, or worries. This could be a first, preliminary profile of shared practices that can be attributed to a digital pan-European level. However, it is necessary to point out that only in very few occasions there is unanimity within all the bloggers interviewed. The similarities are more frequent in general and randomly with the bloggers as they depend on the background and experiences the bloggers had. Consequently, the research did not find a defined behaviour of the any of the two groups, but practices seen in both groups at the same time.

### **VI (II) Understanding Euroblogosphere is understanding European Public Sphere**

The Euroblogosphere can be seen as the current embodiment of the Public Sphere in Europe, but on a rather small scale. It means that the Euroblogosphere fulfils the characteristics of the European Public Sphere, and by examining the Euroblogosphere one can in a sense grasp the contemporary reality of the actually existing EPS. In short the main conclusions extracted from this research can be applied to the European Public Sphere in its entirety.

I discuss here how the Euroblogosphere fits very well into the definition of European Public Sphere. According to Oddvar Eriksen, a Public Sphere is “the social room that is created when individuals deliberate on common concerns. It depicts a relationship between the speakers and the audience that is created by social actors experiencing the by-products of cooperation, which in turn prompts the inclusion of affected parties.”<sup>105</sup> Furthermore Bruel, Mokre and Siim<sup>106</sup> agree that Public Sphere must meet two basic requirements to start working. The first one is inclusiveness and the second is accountability. The Euroblogosphere fulfils the basic requirements of a public sphere because it is a forum of communication that can be joined and observed, in principle, by every citizen.<sup>107</sup>

If we apply these concepts, the Euroblogosphere is a community of people with very different backgrounds but with a common interest in the EU project and Europe. They meet virtually - or some of them even face to face-, they deliberate concerning topics of interest, and they interact with each-other, networking and exchanging ideas and thoughts. Anyone can open a blog and start publishing their opinions and reflexions about different European topics, regardless of their economic, social or identity background. There is not limitation or filter to any citizen to spread content. How the blogger deals in a communications strategy is another point to analyze. In spite of this, any citizen can reach the same number of audience as big corporations or parties. It means blogs are not moderated by press media corporations or any other filter and all of them share the same audience. It is important here to mention that [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu) is just an aggregator. The editors are not responsible of what is being said in the personal blogs; neither do they have any sponsor or income from European institutions or corporation. They are truly independent in this sense. We have seen by the answers given by bloggers, that an influence and implication of the bloggers, although still small, it is growing slowly at European level. Every time we can see some bloggers or representatives of [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu) site present in conferences, seminars or talks. Also they start to be influential in politics when criticising some aspects and the mass media takes them to an upper level. We have seen it with the patterns of influence.

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<sup>105</sup> Eriksen, "Conceptualising European public spheres: general, segmented and strong politics", 24

<sup>106</sup> Cornelia Bruell, Monika Mokre, and Birte Siim, "Inclusion and Exclusion in the European Public Sphere.," *Javnost* 20, no. 1 (2012), 39

<sup>107</sup> Koopmans and Zimmermann, "Transnational Political Communication on the Internet", 172



Fossum and Schlesinger affirm that “a viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate.”<sup>108</sup> In that sense the Euroblogosphere is a democratization tool as it has elements of democratic governance. It has the three principles of participation, deliberation and governance<sup>109</sup>. Again, any citizen can participate in the Euroblogosphere, and can discuss any topic the blogger considers relevant. Finally the blogger can elaborate or choose what election or idea is better by or for his point of view. However the last principle, governance, is not totally true at the Euroblogosphere level. The blogger can pick up what thought is better under his point of view and to discuss it in the public arena. Though, the blogger as an entity does not have power of political decision or decision-making, and as we have seen the influence of the entire Euroblogosphere and individual bloggers, it still is very small, although growing.

On the other hand, a blogger can influence people or other blogger in the sense that citizens without enough expertise of one issue can relay about one topic on a blogger that has build trust during the time speaking or writing about that specific topic. This is called liquid democracy<sup>110</sup>. It does not occur nowadays by the impressions given in the interviews as the influence bloggers have is still very small. However institutions should be aware of the potential of bloggers to influence other people, for or against European projects.

I must note that bloggers do not have any specific or unique model of the blogosphere, Furthermore neither do they have a specific model of EPS. It goes in concordance of what is said by scholars. Eriksen explains that is difficult to realise a common EPS in the foreseeable future, but that there are traces of a segmented EPS in the making on some issues<sup>111</sup>. In my research I described two models of EPS with the purpose of situating the Euroblogosphere in their respective contexts. Furthermore the six types of EPS I described at the theoretical chapter as well can be, at the same time, catalogued, in one of these two models. As discussed in the same chapter, the two models are different: One of the two models is an

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<sup>108</sup> Fossum and Schelesinger, *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making?*, 1

<sup>109</sup> Eder, "The public sphere and European democracy: mechanisms of democratisation in the transnational situation..", 50.

<sup>110</sup> GlobalFree to, 2011, <http://globalfree.wordpress.com/2011/11/06/liquiddemocracy/> accesed March 20, 2012.

<sup>111</sup> Erik Oddvar Eriksen, "An Emerging European Public Sphere," *European Journal of Social Theory* 8, no. 3 (2005): 351, accessed February 7, 2012, doi 10.1177/1368431005054798

Europeanization of national Public Spheres, a more intergovernmentalist position, while the second group is a trans-national option.

I situate the Euroblogosphere in the middle of these two models. Euroblogosphere has developed from being focused nationally to start an interaction within other countries, in a pan European debate. It has grown in size and specialization, although nowadays the Euroblogosphere is facing a problem of deepness of discussions. Internet and the social media have changed the behaviour of reading and writing, promoting the speed of information more than the reflexion of the information.

In summary, what the bloggers have in mind, each one of them with different perspective of the Euroblogosphere, correspond to what scholars have found in their researches: we are still at the beginning of the process, and a trans-national European Public Sphere –one of the six types presented of EPS described by Sikkakan– still has long way to go, and multiple problems to solve. I can identify the Euroblogosphere within the six types by the answers provided in the interviews. The Euroblogosphere is represented by the Multi-level Overlapping Nested Sphere<sup>112</sup> type. It is a small community of citizens specialized and interested in European issues, with interactivity in different levels –local, regional, national, international and transnational- and with an increasing importance and presence –although this last point very slowly-. If we believe in one big and exclusive trans-European public sphere without an overlapping of other types or models of EPS, I must say it will not happen, at least not in the short or medium term. A trans-European public sphere is just one of the models identified by Sikkakan that could predominate in the future. However any of these six types can predominate in the future.

### **VI (III) The triangle of conditions as a prior step for European integration**

I described the intrinsic preconditions for the development of the EPS, where democracy, identity and EPS itself are woven together. From the answers provided by the bloggers, I see these three preconditions also present in the Euroblogosphere. First of all, the bloggers have a sort of common identity, not only the identity blogging as a group already discussed, but also a European feeling. The selection of bloggers was not according to any specific identity

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<sup>112</sup> Sikkakan, "Diversity, Polity, and the European Public Sphere", 10

criteria. However, at the end all the bloggers selected were pro-Europeans. It does not mean they do not have critics or other suggestions to develop Europe or the European Union, but at the end all of them believe in the European project.

Contrary to Koopmans' research<sup>113</sup> and his theory of an Europeanization of national media where he argues that an increase of integration will develop the EPS, I consider it in the other way around: integration will be a second step once the EPS has developed enough the "triangle of preconditions". With these three elements, the European integration will be accelerated. Integration as such is not a prior step to an EPS. Furthermore according to Beus<sup>114</sup>, the creation of EPS might have the opposite effect: it can foster disintegration as more disappointed groups with the EU project or affected by the eurocrisis, for example, can interconnect and lobby against the EU project. However the truth is that the topic of the eurocrisis, seeing from the answers of the bloggers, has fostered more integration, although this integration has been within unhappy citizens affected by the crisis. It can be the proof to demonstrate to Beus that actually even negative connections for the EU can be positive in long term as in many cases they are demands for a better EU.<sup>115</sup> In this line goes the argumentation of Statham<sup>116</sup> when the financial crisis already started to demonstrate "the politics for managing the consequences of globalization (and Europeanization) is likely to come increasingly to the fore."

The paper written by Ondarza<sup>117</sup> goes in the same line of what bloggers have pointed out at the interviews. The Euroblogosphere has evolved to be, in some cases, a source of expert information. However there is not an agreement between all bloggers interviewed about this issue. Some of them ask for more specialization in some topics, while others argue for excess of specialisation. The conclusion I arrive is that the Euroblogosphere has changed from a more familiar general public to a much specialised corner of European topics. In spite of this,

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<sup>113</sup> Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, eds., *The making of a European Public Sphere. Media discourses and political contention*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>114</sup> Beus, "The European Union and the Public Sphere. Conceptual Issues, Political Tensions, Moral Concerns and Empirical Questions..", 27

<sup>115</sup> Paul Statham, "What kind of Europeanized Public Politics?," in *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, ed. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 296

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 305

<sup>117</sup> Ondarza, "The Euroblogosphere - Advent of a social movement or source for expert information?."

comparing the Euroblogosphere with the US blogosphere, the second has much more influence and more specialization.

The experiences provided by the bloggers give a good background of the Euroblogosphere and its contribution and position inside the EPS. From the bloggers we extract that there is a real intention to build a Pan-European blogosphere/demos where people can share thoughts and expressions despite of their economic, political or religious background. Only with more engagement from the bloggers and together with other associations and groups, online and offline, it can push enough to build a real Pan-European Public Sphere, and consequently a real democratization of the European debate in all levels.

After having analysed the interviews with the bloggers, I conclude that the Euroblogosphere is a key factor in helping to fight the democratic deficit by integrating more people and more voices, not understanding the blogosphere just the citizens who write in personal basis, but all the community and sites online, among coordination with the “offline world”. Civil society can use these tools in order to reach audience. Blogging has shown to be very important for the interviewees as a way of expression, keeping an eye to the European institutions and any other company of NGO with voice at the European level.

The main challenges for the Euroblogosphere for the next years are mainly two: interactivity and the idiomatic barriers. The level of interactivity is increasing. However, the level of discussion, because of the limitations of the social media that is being used nowadays, is decreasing. How bloggers will try to engage more people to comment and debate what is being written looks the main challenge to keep the euroblogosphere, or any blogosphere alive, not only in content, but also in critics. How to pass from “lurkers”<sup>118</sup> to real engaged citizens is a question that might be addressed by the European Institutions by organising preliminary debates with citizens. However, first of all institutions must improve their communication with citizens.

The second challenge facing the Euroblogosphere is the dominance of the English bloggers. Such dominance is not good for the development of the EPS or the Euroblogosphere. As an example, we have seen it already when a unique model or type of EPS has excessive presence over the rest. And following the same case than in the typology of EPS, a balance within the

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<sup>118</sup> Nonnecke and Preece, "Lurker demographics: counting the silent."

languages is the most coherent option. Furthermore, the dominance of English in the Euroblogosphere makes feel some bloggers if they have their own autonomous Euroblogosphere, and the interactivity is only done within English speakers bloggers.

#### **VI (IV) Internet, the new dominant channel for the future.**

Kaitatzi-Whitlock argues in her article that the best way to create a pan-European public sphere was the creation of a truly European TV channel. After the research and the findings I disagree with her conclusion. Television is only “one way” channel communication. The audience gets the information –filtered- and the spectators create an opinion depending of the information received, but cannot send feedback of this opinion. However, on internet is the citizen who finds the information, and at the same time can create comments as a reaction of the information found.

Internet nowadays is already in the everyday life of the majority of population, and still, the presence and services offered are increasing very quickly<sup>119</sup>. At some point Television will be a complement of the Internet, via technical convergence. Mainstream TV is already available on the net, and web TV has become a common feature. The Euroblogosphere because of its characteristics is a tool complementing each-other. For example, access to the Euroblogosphere –or Internet- in the TV when watching a political debate on live. Or the other way around: publishing a blogpost while watching with a web TV the political debate.

In any case, traditional mass media will have an important role in the next coming years. Traditional media is the main source where citizens nourish information. A good –new- policy of communications from the European Institutions is needed in order to foment debate at the national level, and to be able to upload this discussion to European Level. Here is where the challenge is major: to pass from an Europeanization of national debates, to a trans-national European debate, and where the Internet will have an increasing role.

Furthermore the bloggers suggest that European institutions must show more transparency and accountability, to combat this democratic deficit in the institutions and the EU as a

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<sup>119</sup> Mike Hanlon, "LG Internet Refridgerator," Gizmag, accessed June 20, 2012, <http://www.gizmag.com/go/1132/>.

political project. Until now there has been some initiatives, the most recent is the EP NewsHub<sup>120</sup>, a website created by the European Parliament communications team, and that shows all the Twitter posts the parliamentarians are publishing on internet. A real time window onto digital diplomacy in action. This might be the right way to create more transparency and get in touch with citizens. First because all parliamentarians are in one site, in a database. And second because the European institutions are not only based in Brussels or Strasbourg, but they are present in each member state, and consequently better coordination within the different institutions present in the member states is needed.

Following the complaint of the Spanish bloggers about the priority of English language, the European institutions present in the member states must reinforce the communication within Brussels and the citizens, as a bridge of smooth communication, as usually is easier to find updated information at the local office than going to Brussels. A way to do it is taking into consideration not only what is being said in Brussels, but also what is being said, and translated in other member states. In that sense European Institutions might have the help of bloggers from all Europe. The Spanish group showed that their motivation for blogging is to show and to explain the EU to citizens. For this reason European Institutions and organizations can take into further consideration the bloggers. There is a huge potential for collaboration, without the bloggers losing their independence, their major draw.

## **VI (V.I) Online VS offline**

The difference between online and offline Public Sphere is getting blurry day by day. I tried to make the division between online and offline European Public Sphere because the research was focused exclusively at the online interaction and debates. However, the interviewees showed that this division is not valid anymore and consequently the two worlds might be unified. Citizens connected anywhere, and constantly uploading content in the daily life is something not strange today. At the same time what happens in the online or offline world, is transported quickly. Although the wall is falling down within the offline and online world, it is important to be very present at the Internet because it will have advantage in the future. The Institutions, corporations and individuals that nowadays are building a “branch” with the specific values and reputation they want to communicate, will play an important role in the

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<sup>120</sup> EP, "EP NewsHub," accessed June 20, 2012, <http://www.epnewshub.eu>.

future, when access of internet will increase to the level where everyone everywhere will be online.

Taking the definition of Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs, a blogosphere is the “overall community of blogs and bloggers, which is interlinked through a large number of cross-references between individual blog entries”<sup>121</sup> However, I think the definition is not quite accurate. We have to take into consideration other tools bloggers are using in order to interlink and interact. They are, for example, Twitter and Facebook. Live blogging also is taking importance, as for example the live blogging of the last EU summit celebrated 29 of June.<sup>122</sup> The research has shown that apart from personal blogs, the bloggers are using other tools. It is a symbol of how the Euroblogosphere and the blogosphere in general have developed in recent years: there is a growing movement from the specific platforms of the blogs towards a broader incorporation of social media.

In summary, the Euroblogosphere is not exclusively an online phenomenon, but also an offline. The presence of bloggers in offline meetings, as well the production of material from offline events has made blur the difference between online and offline. In addition, the repercussion of the offline events have on the Internet, and vice versa –online events having repercussion in the offline world- has made the division not valid anymore.

## Chapter VII. Conclusions and looking ahead

The innovative value of this research is two-fold. First, it focuses on the blogger as an author and not on the medium (the blog). Research to date has focused on the media, but not on the audience or the authors involved<sup>123</sup>. The main core of the research is the opinion and experiences of bloggers, listening them in their worries and problems they face when publishing articles or interacting with other people. The research about the experience of bloggers in the Euroblogosphere illuminates and complements the literature of both Public

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<sup>121</sup> Bruns and Jacobs, "Introduction.", 5

<sup>122</sup> Gideon Rachman, EU Summit: Live Blog, Financial Times, accessed May 29, 2012, <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2012/06/eu-summit-live-blog/?Authorised=false#axzz20xPfd8NP>.

<sup>123</sup> Statham, "What kind of Europeanized Public Politics?.", 299  
Sicakkan, "Diversity, Polity, and the European Public Sphere.", 105

Sphere, and blogosphere, as well it explains the role of the Euroblogosphere inside the online European Public Sphere, and how it helps to the democratization of the debate. Secondly, since blogging is one of the channels of communication for citizens, the research shows that it can be used by institutions, organizations and individuals. I have in mind the fact that 2013 will be the European year of citizens<sup>124</sup>, or the European elections in 2014, but any other event with virtual communication could also be added, as for example the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The interviews conducted to the independent bloggers answer the two research questions with the data gathered from them. From this data, I designed inductively five themes that expose the principal reflexions of the bloggers. After the analyses and discussion I underline some conclusions.

First, the bloggers give evidence of an actor-based online European transnational blogosphere by describing the existence of a community of individual citizens that share information and thoughts about European topics. They share the same practices, problems and worries when interacting and consequently there are not significant differences between the two groups analysed here. They form an identity blogging with common characteristics described at the analysis and the discussion. In addition, the bloggers in the two groups share interest and support of the EU, in a sort of European feeling.

Second, the contribution of the Euroblogosphere to the democratization of the EU is clear. The euroblogosphere congregates the three characteristics of the democratic governance seen at the literature review, and discussed in chapter six. Any citizen can participate and be active in the discussions. Nevertheless this contribution against the democratic deficit of the Euroblogosphere is limited to only one element of the democratic deficit described in the theory chapter: the citizenship participation. Regarding the democratic deficit at the Institutions, the Euroblogosphere does not contribute, yet, too much. The Euroblogosphere is still very small and niche, to contribute to combat it. The soft power is still at the very beginning, but increasing very slowly.

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<sup>124</sup> European Commission, "2013 will be the European Year of Citizens," European Commission, accessed May 13, 2012, [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/european-year-of-citizens-2013/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/european-year-of-citizens-2013/index_en.htm).



The Euroblogosphere consequently, meets the three intrinsic prerequisites of the EPS I described at the theoretical chapter –democracy, identity and EPS-. This reflexion answers the second research question: It has been very difficult to establish a difference between EPS and the Euroblogosphere. I analysed how by understanding Euroblogosphere, one easily can understand the state of the other. As I described in the first subchapter in discussion, both of them share and interlink characteristics that make very hard to produce a difference. And it is the same for the participants, when answering questions and arguing for both Euroblogosphere and EPS at the same time. The Euroblogosphere can be seen as a partial public sphere by itself –what has been described in the discussion as an Overlapping Nested Sphere-<sup>125</sup>, or a reduced size of the entire EPS.

Fourth, the major problems that face the Euroblogosphere are the idiomatic barrier and the lack of deep and productive debates. The interactivity, although limited by the lack of time within bloggers, has increased in the last years, though; the level of debate has decreased exponentially, affected by social media and its limitations. It means that the interaction and the deepness of the debates have entered in stagnation.

The second problem is idiomatic. The excessive presence and domination of the English language produce an irregular and broken Euroblogosphere, having different small blogospheres, and being the English one the bridge within them. We can visualize it with the described complain of the Spanish bloggers about the dominance of English in the Euroblogosphere, and the priority of this language within European institutions and websites.

Due to these two barriers, the trans-nationality of the Euroblogosphere is very weak – although existing-. I conclude that the Euroblogosphere's phenomenon has slowed down in its grow and influence because these two problems. These problems can be also extended to the entire EPS, as I conclude that the Euroblogosphere share characteristics that make them very hard to differentiate. As a synonym we can say that Europe has Euroblogosphere divided by languages and where the interaction is based primarily across this English-speaking blogosphere. If Europe wants to have a real Public Arena, this is a problem to be solved.

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<sup>125</sup> Sicakkan, "Diversity, Polity, and the European Public Sphere.", 10

Fifth, regarding how bloggers see an EPS, they explicitly do not have unanimity when describing the situation of the EPS. They differ in their opinions with respect to EPS, as well as the role of European Institutions and the Euroblogosphere on it. The last two themes in the analysis chapter describe this situation. Furthermore, this lack of agreement corresponds to the literature and the uncertainty of the existence of the EPS seen at the beginning of this paper. For the bloggers, and following the review of the literature, the Internet seems to be the best tool for the final development of an EPS as it facilitates the sharing of information to a new level not seen before. In the discussion I argued, in addition, that the division between the online and offline world is not valid anymore.

The Euroblogosphere can be important in the construction of an EPS. If the Euroblogosphere, continues to grow in size and influence, will be an important complement to the building of the EPS, but the research has show that will not differ from other channels or groups of communication. In any case, citizens can find in the Euroblogosphere the perfect way to express themselves without restriction or filtering. The website [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu) is one more platform together with hundreds of blogs, and hundreds of websites, projects and platforms fostering for more integration and European project. Some steps have been taken, as for example the invitation that the European Presidency –Cyprus- extended to bloggers for an official meeting.<sup>126</sup>

The research has shown the patterns of influence the Euroblogosphere can have. In spite of this, the research was limited in developing further how this influence can be used. The European elections in 2014 might be the best moment to conduct a research in how the Euroblogosphere can influence and interact with the public but also with the European parties. Here we have an opportunity too for research in how this hypothetical influence can be used – not only by individuals, but for private companies, national, international, and transnational institutions. We access here in the field of ethics in the Euroblogosphere and concepts such as liquid democracy that need deeper understanding. It has not been asked in the interview explicitly, although some participants expressed ideas in this line with the role of the blogger must have. Nevertheless I see here a huge potential for future research. Further research in the fields of ethics in the Euroblogosphere, and how to use the increasing

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<sup>126</sup> [Bloggingportal.eu](http://www.bloggingportal.eu) has been contacted by the EU representation of Cyprus in Brussels to organize a meeting. "Cyprus Presidency meeting with bloggers: Call for involvement!," [Bloggingportal.eu](http://www.bloggingportal.eu), accessed July 29, <http://www.bloggingportal.eu/blog/cyprus-presidency-meeting-with-bloggers-call-for-involvement/>.

influence for the general interest might be very important for the future understanding and development of the Euroblogosphere. In addition, further research in the Euroblogosphere might explore other languages or nationalities, not only from Europe but bloggers from other countries in order to produce a more accurate picture of the situation of the Euroblogosphere. As the research pointed out, this should contain also actors in the offline arena that are linked with the bloggers, such as associations, NGOs, parties, and events on the street.

Taking into consideration the literature written until now about this matter, and analysing their lacking of the online space, I conclude that there is a need of more definitions and concepts of the European Public Sphere<sup>127</sup>; at the same level we needed new concepts to define the European Union. The European Union was/is/ will be a new political structure not defined before by any other political structure. Not only the EU have had to be invented,<sup>128</sup> but also an EPS. Until today the research of the EPS done is still in its infancy.<sup>129</sup> The European Public Sphere, doing an exercise of parallelism with the political project of the European Union, is a complex form that in order to be understood needs more research and deeper understanding. We need, as it has been changing during the time in parallel than the political union, new concepts, definitions and theories to explain the phenomenon. In addition, the EPS is not only subordinated to the laws and reforms done in the European Institutions, but also the societies we find within Europe, as they are the ones who bring together the different public spheres. It is the civil society that builds, or not, a space of debate. As an example of this explanation, is the transition within the blur division of the online and offline world, as well as the new phase of the Euroblogosphere, interacting more in social media, and less in depth debates.

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<sup>127</sup> Heller and Rényi, "EU enlargement, identity and the public sphere.", 185

<sup>128</sup> Eriksen, "Conceptualising European public spheres: general, segmented and strong politics.", 25

<sup>129</sup> Risse and Steeg, "An Emerging European Public Sphere? Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Clarifications.", 3

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## Chapter IX. Appendices

### IX (I) Spanish Interviews

#### Interview Didac Gutierrez

<http://didacgp.blogspot.mx/>

1. **¿Cuál es tu motivación para escribir blogs, y por qué principalmente de asuntos europeos? ¿Cuál es tu contribución, y qué expectativas o qué esperas de otros blogueros?**

La motivación para escribir blogs es triple: difundir, proyectar, reflexionar. Difundir contenido e ideas, en mi caso especialmente las de otras personas o instituciones. Proyectar mi propio perfil, a través de mis ideas y mis aportaciones. Y finalmente reflexionar gracias al proceso de preparar y estructurar los posts, lo que te facilita –al menos en mi caso- que haya un esfuerzo por ser equilibrado, sincero y cuidadoso, sabiendo que lo que escribes es susceptible de ser leído por otras personas.

La motivación para hablar principalmente de asuntos europeos es doble en mi caso: personal y profesional. Personal porque la construcción europea me apasiona y porque estoy convencido de la necesidad democrática y política de hablar del tema. Profesional porque he estudiado y trabajado –en parte- sobre asuntos europeos.

2. **¿Cómo describirías la situación de la euro blogosfera? Tamaño, participación, temas, deficiencias, puntos fuertes, etc... ¿Qué crees que podría mejorar? ¿Qué te gusta más? ¿Qué te gusta menos?**



Mi opinión es que la eurosfera está relativamente delimitada, es bastante especializada, y está especialmente comprometida con 'la idea de Europa'.

3. **Se dice que la participación e interacción con blogueros es la clave para un buen funcionamiento de la blogosfera. Un sitio común donde la gente puede debatir lo que les interesa o les apasiona. ¿Cómo describes la interacción entre la euro blogosfera? ¿Y tu interacción con otros blogueros? Por Twitter, con comentarios en blogs? Cómo mantienes conversaciones en tu blog u otros blogs? ¿Y si el post o los comentarios están en otra lengua?**

Sobre la interacción de euro-blogueros: para mí la clave no reside necesariamente en intentar unificar –tanto lingüísticamente como temáticamente- lo que dicen los unos y los otros, sino que cada mini-eurosfera (normalmente organizada a través de una misma lengua) haga un esfuerzo por escuchar, citar e interactuar con las demás mini-euroesferas.

A nivel personal: soy consciente que por escribir en castellano pertenezco a un subgrupo de la eurosfera que escribe en esa lengua. Sin embargo hago un esfuerzo significativo en conocer lo que se dice en las demás mini-eurosferas que escriben en las lenguas que conozco (francés, inglés, portugués, catalán). Enlazo con muchísima frecuencia a blogs de habla francesa e inglesa.

A mi entender el principal desafío es intentar siempre prestar atención a nivel continental (tanto culturalmente como lingüísticamente) y así tener una perspectiva global de lo que se discute en el conjunto de todas estas mini-eurosferas francesas, españolas, inglesas... Esa es para mí la clave (y es probable que no sea nunca del todo posible...).

Un comentario personal: creo que la eurosfera que peca más de mirarse el ombligo son precisamente la francesa y la inglesa. Un blogger que cita mucho, pero entre contenidos siempre del inglés al inglés no creo que sea el lugar más representativo para enterarse de lo que se cuece en lo que llamaríamos la 'eurosfera' (más allá de si tiene muchos lectores, escribe desde Bruselas, o es 'famoso'...).

A título personal la relación con los demás eurobloggers la mantengo principalmente a través del principio de enlazar y citar aquello que dicen, y que me parece más significativo. La conversación no es fluida, sino que es estática en mi caso, y se basa en frecuentes citas, recomendaciones, enlaces y aportaciones personales sobre los temas que van siendo recurrentes en varios blogs. Twitter me sirve cada vez más de 'altavoz' para avisar a aquellos bloggers/instituciones/personas a las que he enlazado, recomendado, criticado. Supongo que es lo normal pero en mi caso por cada hora que le dedico a mi blog me paso de media cuatro leyendo los feedreaders de otros blogs (verídico, no me lo invento ☺)

4. **¿Sueles interactuar con blogueros de otras lenguas, o quizá solamente con blogueros de habla española? ¿Cómo esa interacción afecta a tus puntos de vista sobre los temas? ¿Cambias de opinión? ¿Hay un debate real y coherente en algunos temas concretos? ¿Qué dificultades enfrentas a la hora de interactuar/debatir con otros blogueros? ¿Cómo lo solucionas?**

Ver respuesta anterior.

Sí, cito a todo el mundo indistintamente de la lengua aunque en general cito cuando he podido seguir a uno u otro blogger con un poquito de recurrencia (un buen post no hace el buen blogger que diría... :)

Sí, lo que me dicen los demás bloggers me influencia muchísimo. Es más, como decía, buena parte de mis posts se basan en ordenar y estructurar aquellas aportaciones que se han hecho aquí y allá y que me parecen más interesantes.

La verdad en mi caso no espero nada a cambio de cuando interactúo en general en la red, aunque está claro que me agrada cuando el interés es recíproco. Por mi parte acostumbro a contestar a todas las interacciones que recibo, aunque alguna se me escapa. Algunos bloggers les interesa más frecuentemente lo que digo, otros que menciono con frecuencia no me han mencionado en ninguna ocasión. No me molesta mucho la verdad, me gusta lo que dicen, es suficiente.

Respecto a iniciar ‘conversaciones’, en general tengo que sentirme un poco confiado, y notar que conozco suficiente lo que escribe un blogger para iniciar directamente en mi blog o en el suyo una conversación (más allá de una felicitación o un pequeño comentario). Es algo que me cuesta aunque es probable que sea un prejuicio del 1.0...

5. **Algunos temas hablados a nivel europeo afectan a varios estados miembros (por ejemplo la política de agricultura). Otros temas afectan más a un estado miembro en concreto (por ejemplo las elecciones francesas). En tu opinión ¿Cuáles son los temas más interesantes para los blogueros, independientemente de la lengua o nacionalidad? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay algunos temas que crean más debate e interactividad entre blogueros de diferentes lenguas, como podría ser el caso de la crisis económica, donde la gente quiere saber lo que los franceses, griegos o alemanes piensan? ¿Cómo podemos hacer que la gente se interese más por asuntos europeos (si es que no están ya interesados)?**

Creo que los temas-puentes más frecuentes entre las diferentes sub-eurosferas lingüísticas son los que hacen referencia a la política comunitaria, los desafíos vinculados a la construcción europea y las instituciones comunitarias. En otras palabras, aquello que pueda afectarnos a todos. Eso no excluye temas ‘nacionales’. Las elecciones francesas por ejemplo creo que afectan la evolución general de la Unión Europea, aunque sólo voten los franceses.

La última pregunta del párrafo es complicada. Hay blogs especializados (como ‘se former a la communication européenne’) que se dedican full-time a responderla.

<http://didacgp.blogspot.mx/2012/02/como-comunicar-europa.html>

6. **Una investigadora dijo que las principales barreras para la creación de una esfera pública europea son tres: lenguas diferentes, sociedades culturales y prensa nacional. En tu opinión, ¿es más coherente hablar de una europeización de los debates en cada nación, o la creación una esfera pública transnacional europea? Tenemos el ejemplo de euractiv.eu o bloggingportal.eu como ejemplo de un primer paso hacia un espacio de discusión transnacional. ¿Cómo la euro blogosfera puede construir puentes entre distintos blogosferas nacionales o idiomáticas? ¿O quizá es responsabilidad de las instituciones europeas de construir una estructura para ello?**

Los temas y la conjunción de intereses acabarían un día por ser más importantes que las barreras lingüísticas. La propia construcción europea es un buen ejemplo de ello. El problema de Europa no es su diversidad lingüística, al contrario, es probablemente uno de sus pilares más fundamentales. El desafío es tener la capacidad de escuchar en diferentes idiomas, o en detrimento, de que nos traduzcan aquello que se dice en otros lugares.

En ese sentido, de los tres problemas enunciados, el más importante es el de la prensa internacional porque sigue limitándose a ofrecernos una perspectiva nacionalista de los intereses y de los deseos de los ciudadanos. Si la prensa hablara de preocupaciones compartidas, de intereses transfronterizos o de cómo dependemos cada día más de nuestros vecinos, las barreras lingüísticas serían lo de menos. La Unión Europea se gasta una millonada en traducción e interpretación. Es una prueba más de que consideramos que nuestra riqueza lingüística es una ventaja. Yo podría bloguear en francés o en inglés. Sin embargo blogueo principalmente en castellano, a pesar de ser muy consciente que limito tal vez mi capacidad de difusión, en parte porque creo que se puede participar en los debates europeos más allá de su cobertura en francés o en inglés.

Lo que quiero decir es que el problema no es tanto si se bloguea en inglés o en rumano, sino tener la sensibilidad y capacidad de captar y escuchar más allá de la lengua que se utilice... (no sé si me he explicado bien, espero se entienda mi punto, es importante creo).

- 7. En tu opinión, ¿Cuáles son los pros y los contras de internet frente a la cobertura tradicional (TV, radio, periódicos) en términos de debate y participación? ¿Piensas que internet y la blogosfera pueden jugar un papel importante para crear una esfera pública europea (al menos online) y al mismo tiempo atraer a la gente en una especie de identidad europea?**

Los pros: flexibilidad, espontaneidad, y capacidad viral. Aunque la más importante: creatividad.

Los contra: superficialidad (aunque no siempre ni tampoco automáticamente), cierta inseguridad (algunos perfiles parecen libros abiertos en internet, se puede llegar a 'conocer' la integridad de ciertos internautas o instituciones por su presencia digital, pero en otros casos internet no permite juzgar elementos que sí pueden ser imprescindibles) y finalmente la viralidad (pues igual que puede ser un pro, también puede ser un contra muy poderoso...).

- 8. ¿Qué significa para ti "ser europeo"? ¿Podrías describirlo? ¿Cómo relacionas identidad europea con ciudadanía europea? ¿Qué valores o características comunes ves en otros blogs o en otros países (si ves alguno)? Por ejemplo el valor europeo de la democracia que puede estar representado en los blogs (si es que lo está).**

Es la pregunta imposible. Hay tantas formas de sentirse europeo como personas que se sientan europeos.

Personalmente, de los muchos elementos que podría mencionar creo que es importante reconocer la importancia del proyecto político detrás de la construcción europea. En mi opinión ser europeo es una construcción política más y por lo tanto la identidad europea es en parte una reacción de apoyo al proyecto de construcción de una entidad supranacional que toma la forma actualmente de la Unión Europea. Pero también podría dar el argumento realista ('soy pro-UE porque me interesa'), o el idealista ('soy pro-UE porque creo emocionalmente en la idea abstracta de 'Europa'), o incluso el cultural ('soy europeo porque defiendo ciertos valores comunes, históricos y reconocidos ampliamente en este momento por las sociedades europeas, como los derechos humanos, el Estado de bienestar, el capitalismo...').

Parece innegable que hay similitudes culturales, de valores o de voluntades políticas entre los diferentes Estados Miembro. Sin embargo es más importante reconocer que todas estas 'similitudes' son contextuales, circunstanciales y construcciones que pueden llegar a cambiar. Por el momento me siento europeo porque me reconozco en muchas de estas similitudes, pero es trabajo de todos que dichas similitudes sigan manteniéndose y consolidándose en el tiempo. Ser europeo tiene para mí un tercio de convicción, un tercio de voluntad, y un tercio de compromiso. Ya ves que todo constructivista, ningún elemento esencialista, ni predeterminado.

9. **Citando al libro "The European Union and the Public Sphere": "La esfera pública es una de las precondiciones para el desarrollo de la democracia. Analistas han señalado consistentemente que un importante factor del déficit democrático de la UE es la ausencia de una esfera pública europea". ¿Qué piensas de esto? ¿Crees que los blogueros piensan que pueden contribuir a una mayor democratización de la UE?**

Pueden aportar indudablemente su granito de arena. Aunque hay elementos más importantes para crear una esfera pública, como el reconocimiento mutuo entre las diferentes personas que integran dicha 'esfera pública' o la creación de canales de participación conjuntos. La legitimidad pasa por el reconocimiento mutuo (que un francés vea como igual a un español) y mediante el establecimiento de las garantías de organización democrática (con un sistema de representación continental mediante elecciones transnacionales con el fin de crear un sistema político de representatividad).

### **Interview Macarena Rodriguez**

<http://www.laorejadeeuropa.eu/>

1. **¿Cuál es tu motivación para escribir blogs, y por qué principalmente de asuntos europeos? ¿Cuál es tu contribución, y qué expectativas o qué esperas de otros blogueros?**

En realidad la pregunta podría ser cuál es mi motivación para escribir un blog sobre la UE. La web 2.0 nos ofrece a los ciudadanos la oportunidad de escribir sobre lo que nos interesa de una forma muy simple, en plataformas que no requieren conocimientos técnicos complejos. Esto sumado además a

que la UE es un tema que la mayoría de la población tiende a considerar como aburrido pero que, bien explicado, su potencial para el ciudadano es inmenso, me llevó a comenzar a escribir el blog y parece que gusta por las visitas que tengo, los seguidores en redes sociales y los premios que La Oreja de Europa lleva acumulados.

Mi contribución además de intentar crear un blog que explique de forma sencilla y clara a los ciudadanos las políticas europeas que les afectan, es ayudar a crear una especie de unión bloguera pan-europea. Por ese motivo también soy co-editora de [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu), un red de blogs sobre y de la UE. En cuanto a los otros blogueros, espero que animen a los ciudadanos a crear una plataforma de debate sobre estos temas.

**2. ¿Cómo describirías la situación de la euro blogosfera? Tamaño, participación, temas, deficiencias, puntos fuertes, etc... ¿Qué crees que podría mejorar? ¿Qué te gusta más? ¿Qué te gusta menos?**

Bueno, los eurobloggers no se pueden meter en el mismo saco. Primero, por cuestiones lingüísticas y ámbito geográfico. Los blogs que tendemos a considerar más leídos sobre la UE son en inglés y están escritos desde Bruselas. Pero ¿más leídos por quién? Por los españoles no, puesto que el público de habla hispana prefiere los escritos en español y lo mismo ocurre en francés, alemán, italiano, etc.

El problema es que la barrera lingüística nos limita no para leer otros blogs que hablen sobre la UE sino para encontrar blogs, por ejemplo, escritos en checo que hablen sobre la UE. Además, la mayoría de los documentos y notas de prensa están realizados en un primer momento solo en inglés, lo que limita el rango de participación del ciudadano como escritor y creador de blogs sobre la UE. Si a esto le añadimos que la temática no es nada atractiva y la complejidad del proceso de decisión europeo, la euroblogosfera se reduce mucho.

Cómo puntos débiles, en mi opinión, es la tendencia que tienen muchos euroblogueros de pensar que Bruselas es el ombligo del mundo. Y no me refiero a las instituciones sino al hecho de vivir en la capital belga. Si hay unos 50 millones de españoles, para mí, este será mi target (objetivo) por lo que no solo con escribir en español basta sino que además, deberé de dirigir mis posts a esta audiencia. Un ejemplo ¿afecta la última directiva sobre energía eléctrica al alumbrado local? Esto requiere un ejercicio que para un bloguero supone mucho esfuerzo (falta de tiempo para estudiar las consecuencias de la directiva) y ánimo.

Por otra parte el punto fuerte es la temática en sí. Muchos blogs tienden a dispersarse y a contar la vida de uno pero si queremos buscar una receta de cocina, buscaremos un blog sobre cocina no a fulanito que una vez hizo un post sobre cocina. Suponemos que los ciudadanos ya conocen la Oreja de Europa para saber que ahí encontrarán la información que buscan sobre la UE (o al menos eso intentaremos).

Mejorar es difícil porque hay que tener en cuenta que los blogs los hacemos como algo más además de nuestro trabajo. En mi caso es mi hobby por las ganas que tengo de informar al ciudadano sobre la UE. ¿Cómo hacer de un hobby algo más profesional? Cuando se convierte en un trabajo. Es igual que el paso de un hobby a un deporte. Si nos pudiéramos ganar la vida con ello las cosas mejorarían pero entraríamos en competencia directa con los medios online, y para que ocurra eso tienen que cambiar muchos factores: los ciudadanos tienen que confiar en los blogs como medios de información y los blogueros tener la infraestructura necesaria para llevar a cabo un trabajo como el que hace un periódico online. ¿Los medios online lo permitirían?

Otro factor en cuenta es que Internet evoluciona muy rápido. Así que hace 5 años un blog era una gran idea, ahora lo es una página en Facebook y una cuenta en Twitter.

- 3. Se dice que la participación e interacción con blogueros es la clave para un buen funcionamiento de la blogosfera. Un sitio común donde la gente puede debatir lo que les interesa o les apasiona. ¿Cómo describes la interacción entre la euro blogosfera? ¿Y tu interacción con otros blogueros? Por Twitter, con comentarios en blogs? Cómo mantienes conversaciones en tu blog u otros blogs? ¿Y si el post o los comentarios están en otra lengua?**

Ese “se dice” es muy relativo. Los blogueros en general son individualistas, no lo olvidemos. Los que promueven que los blogueros colaboren suelen estrellarse (¿acaso conocemos algún ejemplo?) Todos queremos la fama y el protagonismo, de ahí que creemos un blog y no un diario de papel cerrado bajo llave. En mi caso colaboro con Bloggingportal para que los ciudadanos puedan tener agregados todos los blogs sobre la UE en un mismo portal y para intercambiar información entre los editores pero no se puede ir más allá. Ejemplos de blogs colaborativos suelen caer en la desidia por el esfuerzo de actualización que requiere. A pesar de esto, todos los blogueros sobre temas europeos solemos estar en contacto vía mail o vía las redes sociales. More Europe, una asociación que acaba de despegar intentará demostrar que no tengo razón en mis afirmaciones anteriores.

Respecto a la interacción con otros blogueros sobre la UE, simplemente si encuentro un tema que me interesa sobre la UE lo leo. Si además, es de un bloguero al que suelo leer porque está demostrado que sabe sobre el tema y lo sabe comunicar lo sigo pero no diariamente ni en profundidad. Nuestro tiempo personal no da para tanto. Twitter beneficia mucho en este sentido. Tenemos un acceso mayor a la información, sea cual sea.

- 4. ¿Sueles interactuar con blogueros de otras lenguas, o quizá solamente con blogueros de habla española? ¿Cómo esa interacción afecta a tus puntos de vista sobre los temas? ¿Cambias de opinión? ¿Hay un debate real y coherente en algunos temas concretos? ¿Qué dificultades enfrentas a la hora de interactuar/debatir con otros blogueros? ¿Cómo lo solucionas?**

Como ya he dicho anteriormente, en otros idiomas (francés, inglés y en italiano a veces) con los editores de bloggingportal.eu. Y en español también por mail y redes sociales. Desde luego mis puntos de vista se ven afectados puesto que la información que ofrecen los blogueros suele ser muy valiosa para mi formación y sobre todo muy creíble, por lo que, del mismo modo que los medios de comunicación hacen que nos formemos una opinión también lo harán los blogs.

La verdad es que no veo muchas dificultades sino la premisa básica de toda esta conversación. ¿Es necesario interactuar con otros blogueros? En principio, se puede intercambiar información pero hay que recordar que fin último del blog es ser leídos por la mayor cantidad posible de gente y esto solo se puede conseguir escribiendo en el blog. La interacción con comentarios en otro blog, por ejemplo, un comentario mío en inglés en un blog en finlandés no va a fomentar el debate en España. Creo que el problema no es que se interactúe sino la premisa principal de si realmente eso es necesario y para qué. Otra cosa es que contactemos los unos a los otros para intercambiar información valiosa que luego publiquemos en nuestros blogs y al final, beneficien al ciudadano.

- 5. Algunos temas hablados a nivel europeo afectan a varios estados miembros (por ejemplo la política de agricultura). Otros temas afectan más a un estado miembro en concreto (por ejemplo las elecciones francesas). En tu opinión ¿Cuáles son los temas más interesantes para los blogueros,**

**independientemente de la lengua o nacionalidad? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay algunos temas que crean más debate e interactividad entre blogueros de diferentes lenguas, como podría ser el caso de la crisis económica, donde la gente quiere saber lo que los franceses, griegos o alemanes piensan? ¿Cómo podemos hacer que la gente se interese más por asuntos europeos (si es que no están ya interesados)?**

En principio, los temas transversales, como la política agrícola son siempre de interés para el bloguero europeo pero también para la prensa y medios on line. También lo es la crisis. Eso no nos da una ventaja competitiva sobre los medios tradicionales. Tampoco hablar sobre las elecciones españolas pero tampoco sobre las checas. Lo que en mi opinión, y así llevo haciendo desde 2007, un bloguero europeo tiene que hacer es contar lo que no cuentan otros y sí afecta de forma importante a los europeos. Por ejemplo, la Directiva de Servicios y como afectará esta a los servicios de correos o por ejemplo, que el Banco Central Europeo tiene juegos online para mostrar la política económica europea de forma sencilla. En lugar de empezar la casa por el tejado, y hablar de prima de riesgo, mostremos al ciudadano donde encontrar la información sobre qué es la prima de riesgo y cómo afecta a los europeos.

- 6. Una investigadora dijo que las principales barreras para la creación de una esfera pública europea son tres: lenguas diferentes, sociedades culturales y prensa nacional. En tu opinión, ¿es más coherente hablar de una europeización de los debates en cada nación, o la creación una esfera pública transnacional europea? Tenemos el ejemplo de euractiv.eu o bloggingportal.eu como ejemplo de un primer paso hacia un espacio de discusión transnacional. ¿Cómo la euro blogosfera puede construir puentes entre distintos blogosferas nacionales o idiomáticas? ¿O quizá es responsabilidad de las instituciones europeas de construir una estructura para ello?**

Respecto a lo de la investigadora estoy de acuerdo en qué el idioma o la cultura es un factor a tener en cuenta y la prensa como he comentado anteriormente aún más. Pero creo que es más importante que la gente pida informarse de este tipo de cosas. La prensa juega con ventaja porque nunca hablaríamos en tertulias con amigos de la prima de riesgo si no se mencionara hasta la saciedad en la televisión. Eso también es otro factor. No somos medios visuales sino que estamos en Internet. Eso significa que primero nos tenemos que hacer notar para que nos busquen y para eso hay que crear un interés. Si ya de por sí los temas europeos no son los hits más buscados en la red, un debate público se complica mucho mucho más. Bloggingportal.eu no fomenta el debate, fomenta que el ciudadano pueda sentirse mucho más informado. No ofrece un foro de debate ni es una plataforma realizada con este fin. De hecho, Debate Europa y otras de este tipo creadas bajo presidencia española (quépiensaeuropa o algo así) han sido hasta el momento fracasos que no han sabido atraer la atención del público.

Un ejemplo que sí que funciona por el momento, aunque con el handicap del inglés, es la página de Facebook del Parlamento Europeo y la organización de chats con los eurodiputados. Gran ejemplo de fomento del debate a través de las redes sociales y además de poder preguntar a los eurodiputados sobre las políticas que nos afectan. Un sueño: que los ciudadanos se informaran en nuestros blogs para luego preguntar a los eurodiputados en estos chats. Esto no pasa actualmente.

Creo que antes de preguntar por qué no despegla la euroblogosfera es si realmente se necesita.

Respecto a si son las instituciones las que crean esta esfera pública, creo que ya lo hacen pero de forma diferente. Creo, como he ejemplificado en el caso de los chats en Facebook del Parlamento que la blogosfera (no olvidemos que los blogueros son ciudadanos que informan a otros ciudadanos;

no se ganan la vida con ello) es el complemento ideal de las instituciones. Quizás cabría aquí preguntarse, entonces ¿cual es el rol de los medios y periodistas?

- 7. En tu opinión, ¿Cuáles son los pros y los contras de internet frente a la cobertura tradicional (TV, radio, periódicos) en términos de debate y participación? ¿Piensas que internet y la blogosfera pueden jugar un papel importante para crear una esfera pública europea (al menos online) y al mismo tiempo atraer a la gente en una especie de identidad europea?**

La prensa se ha adaptado tardíamente a Internet. Ese hueco lo cubrimos hace cinco años los blogs y otros medios como youtube. Ahora la misma prensa acude a las redes sociales a buscar las noticias y todo para llegar antes que el ciudadano. Internet y en especial la web 2.0 ha convertido al ciudadano en juez de la prensa y ahora puede además elegir. Si un medio dice una cosa, el ciudadano puede inmediatamente comprobarlo en internet. Eso significa que se convierte en generador de la información al contrastar la información que la prensa le ofrecía. Las instituciones y en general todas las administraciones públicas, ya han comenzado a notar esto y utilizan las redes sociales como vehículo de comunicación con el ciudadano.

- 8. ¿Qué significa para ti “ser europeo”? ¿Podrías describirlo? ¿Cómo relacionas identidad europea con ciudadanía europea? ¿Qué valores o características comunes ves en otros blogs o en otros países (si ves alguno)? Por ejemplo el valor europeo de la democracia que puede estar representado en los blogs (si es que lo está).**

Buena pregunta. Ser europeo es formar parte de una unión para mi. Y toda unión tiene un fin. En este caso es el de la prosperidad común basada en la solidaridad. Eso es ser europeo para mi. Creo que la ciudadanía europea está aún muy lejos de ser conseguida puesto que los derechos que adquieren los europeos no está aún claros para los ciudadanos. Un ejemplo: si yo viviera en Bélgica y soy española, podría votar en las elecciones locales de este país. Actualmente, solo un 10% de la población (extranjera) vota en estas elecciones. Personalmente, me siento europea pero no ciudadana europea hasta que ese sentimiento sea el mayoritario alrededor mío y quizás, hasta que mi DNI lo exprese en este sentido.

Los valores comunes entre la blogosfera de otros países y los nuestros en España son las ganas de contar lo que ocurre en la UE.

- 9. Citando al libro “The European Union and the Public Sphere”:** “La esfera pública es una de las precondiciones para el desarrollo de la democracia. Analistas han señalado consistentemente que un importante factor del déficit democrático de la UE es la ausencia de una esfera pública europea”. ¿Qué piensas de esto? ¿Crees que los blogueros piensan que pueden contribuir a una mayor democratización de la UE?

No se lo que piensan otros blogueros pero creo que a través del blog no se va a poder conseguir que aumente la participación de los ciudadanos por ejemplo en las elecciones europeas. Todo lo contrario, esta sigue bajando. Desde luego que el debate (la esfera pública) es clave pero para que este debate tenga una “autoalimentación” primero hay que crear un interés del público. Para ello, los mismos ciudadanos deberíamos pedir primero que todo se simplificara en la UE, tanto los procesos de decisión como las multiplicidad de las instituciones europeas. No es fácil gestionar los intereses de 27 países y esto también debería quedar más claro.



Para mí los pasos están claros: informar al ciudadano mejor, hacerlo comunicador a través de canales que sean más cercanos a ellos (periódicos locales y redes sociales) y luego tratar de involucrarle en el debate. Por eso todas las plataformas de debate se estrellan continuamente.

**10. Antes de terminar ¿Quieres decir algo sobre la entrevista en sí o sobre el contenido? ¿Alguna otra idea que no has podido reflejarla anteriormente?**

Solo que generar debate sobre temas que los ciudadanos consideran aburridos. Intentarlo hacer a través de un blog, hoy en día es complicado y nunca llegaremos a tener millones de visitas sino que siempre serán los mismos los que nos lean. Además debido a Twitter y Facebook y la velocidad con la que internet cambia, es una plataforma que comienza a estar obsoleta. Por último, conseguir que los ciudadanos confíen en que los blogueros somos tan buenos informantes y comunicadores como los periodistas aún más. Sin contar a qué la prensa nunca dejará que ocupen su lugar.

Por tanto, crear debate a través de la blogosfera hoy en día no es una vía óptima para llegar al ciudadano. Las formulas del Parlamento Europeo en redes sociales van, en mi opinión, mejor encaminadas.

### **Interview Eva Peña**

<http://evaeneuropa.blogspot.se/>

**1. ¿Cuál es tu motivación para escribir blogs, y por qué principalmente de asuntos europeos? ¿Cuál es tu contribución, y qué expectativas o qué esperas de otros blogueros?**

Empecé mis estudios de doctorado hace 10 años. Desde entonces se despertó mi curiosidad por las políticas europeas, dándome cuenta de lo difícil que era acceder a información veraz y rápida sobre lo que ocurría en las instituciones comunitarias. La transparencia era nula, y parecía haber poco interés público también por el desarrollo de las políticas europeas. Me planteé como reto buscar información, hurgar, ordenar, interpretar y acercar todo aquello mediante un blog al internauta...

Inicialmente el blog tenía un enfoque más didáctico e incluso académico. En estos cuatro años se ha multiplicado exponencialmente el interés por la Unión Europea, sería esta acaso la única consecuencia algo positiva de la eurocrisis... si es cierto que aumentó mucho el número de lectores a partir de otoño de 2008, momento que aproveché para extender y profundizar la labor de la pedagogía europeísta, enfatizando los avances y beneficios que nos ha ofrecido a los ciudadanos la integración. Al principio, se comentaba, se difundía el post, había más interés.

Con el tiempo, los eurobloggers entramos en contacto y empezamos a desarrollar tareas conjuntas y más coordinadas, junto con las plataformas de las redes sociales y difundiéndonos mutuamente.

Actualmente, existe una blogosfera bastante consolidada, aunque parece que las redes sociales ganan adeptos y el ciudadano no busca tanto el análisis como la novedad. Por ello, los blogs han ido perdiendo lectores, no sólo en el ámbito europeo, sino en general.

- 2. ¿Cómo describirías la situación de la euro blogosfera? Tamaño, participación, temas, deficiencias, puntos fuertes, etc... ¿Qué crees que podría mejorar? ¿Qué te gusta más? ¿Qué te gusta menos?**

La blogosfera europea se ha desarrollado plenamente, pero con resultados irregulares, y constreñida por la limitación idiomática. Los bloggers más influyentes escriben en inglés e interactúan entre ellos retroalimentándose. En España los bloggers europeos se mueven de forma muy activa en el europeísmo, pero al final el consumo resulta bastante endogámico, y tampoco hay debate real porque no hay confrontación en líneas generales, al menos sobre la concepción de Europa y sus instituciones. Faltaría posiblemente una mayor coordinación e interacción con los eurobloggers que escriben en inglés, y también un punto de vista más crítico.

- 3. Se dice que la participación e interacción con blogueros es la clave para un buen funcionamiento de la blogosfera. Un sitio común donde la gente puede debatir lo que les interesa o les apasiona. ¿Cómo describes la interacción entre la euro blogosfera? ¿Y tu interacción con otros blogueros? Por Twitter, con comentarios en blogs? Cómo mantienes conversaciones en tu blog u otros blogs? ¿Y si el post o los comentarios están en otra lengua?**

Es cierto que al principio, cuando estalló el fenómeno blog con fuerza, había mucha interacción entre blogueros, las redes funcionaban mejor, los lectores eran asiduos y comentaban, pero ahora se ha perdido el interés por el análisis, como decía antes. Creo que la política europea ha entrado en un peligroso bucle que genera una mezcla de hartazgo y desconfianza. Justamente ese peligro se traduce en la proliferación de un euroescepticismo que puede ser virulento en algunos países, y puede contagiarse fácilmente por la Red, sembrando la semilla del populismo, tan fácil de prender en épocas de grave crisis económica, como la actual.

Creo que actualmente se interactúa mucho más a través de las redes sociales, y también he detectado mucha actividad en medios como Euractiv o Eu Observer, donde los lectores están muy informados y suelen ser muy críticos, generando un debate sano, aunque como te digo suelen comentar más los lectores que son críticos con la Unión Europea, incluso en la prensa nacional existe una generalización del recelo hacia la UE, ya sea por la austeridad (tan de moda desde el Pacto de Estabilidad que se ha firmado en recientes fechas) ya sea por su burocracia, su falta de transparencia, el exceso de información poco digerible, etc. es decir, se vuelve a la clásica crítica contra la UE, como si fuera algo lejano, anquilosado o poco democrático. Ese es un peligro que debemos combatir cuanto antes.

- 4. ¿Sueles interactuar con blogueros de otras lenguas, o quizá solamente con blogueros de habla española? ¿Cómo esa interacción afecta a tus puntos de vista sobre los temas? ¿Cambias de opinión? ¿Hay un debate real y coherente en algunos temas concretos? ¿Qué dificultades enfrentas a la hora de interactuar/debatir con otros blogueros? ¿Cómo lo solucionas?**

Creo que hay debate, por mi parte, vía twitter y también algo en facebook, y que sí existe cierta articulación por ejemplo entre los federalistas europeos. Pero el debate suele ser bastante endogámico, y suele estar planteado en términos de interés nacional. Aun así, por lo menos me consuela pensar que sí está surgiendo un espacio público europeo bastante potente y que nos

encontramos gente hablando sobre Europa, sobre la Comisión, etc. y que lo hacemos con naturalidad, como algo nuestro que podemos criticar y cuestionar. Esto era impensable diez años atrás.

Solo hay que fijarse en la que se genera en twitter cada vez que hay una reunión del Consejo, verdaderamente una oleada de twits y comentarios protagonizados por el Consejo, los rumores, los personajes, incluso chistes y chismes sobre los altos cargos de la UE, algo que se convierte en una espiral que acrecienta el interés por la europolítica.

5. **Algunos temas hablados a nivel europeo afectan a varios estados miembros (por ejemplo la política de agricultura). Otros temas afectan más a un estado miembro en concreto (por ejemplo las elecciones francesas). En tu opinión ¿Cuáles son los temas más interesantes para los blogueros, independientemente de la lengua o nacionalidad? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay algunos temas que crean más debate e interactividad entre blogueros de diferentes lenguas, como podría ser el caso de la crisis económica, donde la gente quiere saber lo que los franceses, griegos o alemanes piensan? ¿Cómo podemos hacer que la gente se interese más por asuntos europeos (si es que no están ya interesados)?**

A la gente le aburre la política europea, pero la crisis hace que algunos líderes políticos se conviertan en blanco de las críticas. La mayoría de la gente aprovecha la crisis del euro para cuestionar todo el proyecto. Sinceramente lo que preocupa en España es parecido a lo que preocupa en Alemania, sólo que en cada lugar se buscan distintos culpables. Los medios de comunicación todavía tienen la batuta en la percepción de la opinión pública.

Los blogueros intentamos que se vea a Europa como un todo, como un conjunto en que debe funcionar la cooperación y en realidad mi objetivo personal es dar a entender que los alemanes, griegos, irlandeses y nosotros compartimos los mismos intereses... así se construye el europeísmo, compartiendo metas y no enfrentando internamente.

6. **Una investigadora dijo que las principales barreras para la creación de una esfera pública europea son tres: lenguas diferentes, sociedades culturales y prensa nacional. En tu opinión, ¿es más coherente hablar de una europeanización de los debates en cada nación, o la creación una esfera pública transnacional europea?. Tenemos el ejemplo de euractiv.eu o bloggingportal.eu como ejemplo de un primer paso hacia un espacio de discusión transnacional. ¿Cómo la euro blogosfera puede construir puentes entre distintos blogosferas nacionales o idiomáticas? ¿O quizá es responsabilidad de las instituciones europeos de construir una estructura para ello?**

No, de ninguna manera eso es responsabilidad de las instituciones, porque eso sería artificial y la gente no se engancharía. Creo que el debate es espontáneo y natural y se ve así en las redes sociales. La barrera idiomática es muy potente todavía, sobre todo en países como España, Italia o Francia, donde hay mucho apego a la lengua nacional y el consumo de información es doméstico. La prensa nacional debe introducir el debate europeo, creo que es su responsabilidad. La blogosfera está muy activa, pero como te decía, está perdiendo fuelle la capacidad de influencia de los bloggers.

El espacio de discusión transnacional está creciendo de forma espontánea, eso sí que podemos seguir cultivándolo nosotros, y creo honestamente que la forma de hacerlo es potenciando el inglés como lingua franca... aunque sé que esta opinión no estará exenta de polémica ;-).

- 7. En tu opinión, ¿Cuáles son los pros y los contras de internet frente a la cobertura tradicional (TV, radio, periódicos) en términos de debate y participación? ¿Piensas que internet y la blogosfera pueden jugar un papel importante para crear una esfera pública europea (al menos online) y al mismo tiempo atraer a la gente en una especie de identidad europea?**

Sin duda, la prensa tradicional está en decadencia total, la TV pierde audiencia y los intereses de la gente se diversifican, hoy día la gente busca mucha información, con rapidez y digestión rápida, lo cual es un arma de doble filo porque se corre el riesgo de que el debate sea banal o superficial. Ahora bien, se atrae a gente nueva al debate, por fin la política europea es un tema de consumo fácil, del mismo modo que lo son las series o realities que la gente comenta en las redes sociales. Eso al final redunda en un beneficio, porque la europolítica acaba estando presente en la vida de la gente, a través de internet.

- 8. ¿Qué significa para ti “ser europeo”? ¿Podrías describirlo? ¿Cómo relacionas identidad europea con ciudadanía europea? ¿Qué valores o características comunes ves en otros blogs o en otros países (si ves alguno)? Por ejemplo el valor europeo de la democracia que puede estar representado en los blogs (si es que lo está).**

Europa es marca, es valor, es cultura, y todo el mundo se siente europeo, aunque no haya que hacer militancia expresa. Los europeos somos menos críticos con los norteamericanos con nuestros líderes políticos. Quizá somos más benévolos o conformistas, por ello la blogosfera política en Estados Unidos es enormemente influyente, mientras que aquí no consigue arrastrar. No quiere decir que seamos peores o mejores, simplemente tenemos un savoir faire distinto y nos resignamos más a las situaciones. Esa resiliencia es buena porque hará que los europeos soportemos mejor la crisis, pero a la vez dificulta que los políticos se den cuenta del malestar social en su verdadera dimensión.

Es decir, que tenemos aquí una oportunidad desaprovechada. Quizá los eurobloggers no hemos sabido hasta ahora concienciar a la gente ni conectar bien con esa posibilidad de desarrollar el espacio público europeo.

Espero también que a raíz de las próximas elecciones europeas se cree un debate más transnacional, y para ello sí que sería necesaria la intervención decidida de las fuerzas políticas europeas, que en sus manos tienen ponerse de acuerdo para establecer un discurso paneuropeo, creando listas transnacionales y fomentando el debate más allá de la política estatal.

- 9. Antes de terminar ¿Quieres decir algo sobre la entrevista en sí o sobre el contenido? ¿Alguna otra idea que no has podido reflejarla anteriormente?**

## **Interview José María Castellano-Martínez**

<http://dadefinspeaking.wordpress.com/>

- 1. ¿Cuál es tu motivación para escribir blogs, y por qué principalmente de asuntos europeos? ¿Cuál es tu contribución, y qué expectativas o qué esperas de otros blogueros?**

Me considero un ciudadano europeo, hijo de mi generación, libre de guerras y heredero del período de mayor progreso y democracia que Europa haya conocido en toda su Historia. Creo que un blog es un medio fácil, barato e independiente que posibilita expresarte como estimes.

La coyuntura de Europa necesita, más que nunca, de ciudadanos comprometidos que se preocupen por ella. En este contexto, la Unión Europea es la referencia inmediata ya que, a mi juicio, es el punto de partida para una verdadera unidad europea que sobrepase las barreras nacionales y haga encontrar a toda la ciudadanía europea bajo una misma bandera.

Mi contribución es ofrecer un punto de vista desde la regeneración democrática, la unidad y la superioridad de las instituciones que tenemos en común sobre cualquier política nacional.

- 2. ¿Cómo describirías la situación de la euro blogosfera? Tamaño, participación, temas, deficiencias, puntos fuertes, etc... ¿Qué crees que podría mejorar? ¿Qué te gusta más? ¿Qué te gusta menos?**

Es considerable pero está muy atomizada. Suelen tratarse cuestiones muy recientes pero se dejan atrás otros como los relativos a la Historia y al proceso de construcción. Desde mi blog intento publicar periódicamente la biografía -con un tono distendido- de aquellos que considero indispensables en la construcción del concepto de Europa. Deberían mejorar la interrelación entre todos nosotros, evitar los excesos de protagonismo incluso y fomentar una marca o imagen única que ponga de manifiesto los puntos que compartimos como blogueros. Únicamente unidos podremos ser escuchados.

Tengo que resaltar que me encantan los diseños tan trabajados que algunos de mis compañeros muestran en sus blogs, creo que es fundamental un buen diseño y una buena imagen para atraer la atención de los lectores.

Aquello que menos me interesa es la defensa a ultranza de todo lo que provenga de la UE por el simple hecho de serlo. Como ciudadano de la Unión, yo defenderé siempre a las instituciones comunitarias, pero tengo el derecho y el deber de evaluar para bien y para mal el comportamiento de los "europolíticos", ya sean de la Comisión, del Parlamento o del cualquier otro órgano.

- 3. Se dice que la participación e interacción con blogueros es la clave para un buen funcionamiento de la blogosfera. Un sitio común donde la gente puede debatir lo que les interesa o les apasiona. ¿Cómo describes la interacción entre la euro blogosfera? ¿Y tu interacción con otros blogueros? Por Twitter, con comentarios en blogs? Cómo mantienes conversaciones en tu blog u otros blogs? ¿Y si el post o los comentarios están en otra lengua?**

En mi caso, mantengo buena relación con determinados blogueros españoles. De hecho hemos creado una Asociación, denominada Plataforma MoreEurope, que promueve un Manifiesto Fundacional publicado el pasado 9 de noviembre, en conmemoración con la caída del muro de Berlín, que establece las líneas de trabajo fundamentales a partir de las cuáles desarrollamos nuestra labor como europeos 2.0. Hacemos uso de Twitter o Facebook, pero sobre todo foros o grupos de trabajo internos creados por nosotros mismos.

- 4. ¿Sueles interactuar con blogueros de otras lenguas, o quizá solamente con blogueros de habla española? ¿Cómo esa interacción afecta a tus puntos de vista sobre los temas? ¿Cambias de opinión? ¿Hay un debate real y coherente en algunos temas concretos? ¿Qué dificultades enfrentas a la hora de interactuar/debatir con otros blogueros? ¿Cómo lo solucionas?**

En principio, mis contactos suelen ser hispanohablantes aunque es cierto que conozco a blogueros de otros países que hablan otras lenguas. Solemos comunicarnos, en mi caso, en español, inglés o francés. Mi punto de vista no suele verse afectado por mis contactos. De hecho, en muchas ocasiones pensamos diferente sobre determinadas cuestiones y en ello radica el debate sobre la construcción de Europa.

El tema por excelencia para mí es la cuestión sobre la entrada en la Unión de Turquía. Yo estoy a favor y muchos de mis contactos, principalmente de los Países Bajos o Alemania, suelen tener posturas contrarias. Cada uno expone sus razones e intentamos llegar a un acuerdo que sea satisfactorio para ambos. Por lo general, coincidimos en que este país debe seguir realizando muchos avances, pero también admitidos que ha existido trato de favor con otros países más continentales.

- 5. Algunos temas hablados a nivel europeo afectan a varios estados miembros (por ejemplo la política de agricultura). Otros temas afectan más a un estado miembro en concreto (por ejemplo las elecciones francesas). En tu opinión ¿Cuáles son los temas más interesantes para los blogueros, independientemente de la lengua o nacionalidad? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay algunos temas que crean más debate e interactividad entre blogueros de diferentes lenguas, como podría ser el caso de la crisis económica, donde la gente quiere saber lo que los franceses, griegos o alemanes piensan? ¿Cómo podemos hacer que la gente se interese más por asuntos europeos (si es que no están ya interesados)?**

Debe existir una verdadera política de comunicación e imagen institucional que haga llegar a los ciudadanos europeos que las instituciones no son sólo la cara de sus líderes nacionales en Bruselas. Ahora es cuando la Unión debe apostar por hacerse escuchar y ver en radios y televisiones, que incluso por imperativo jurídico las televisiones públicas deban emitir los anuncios que estime la Unión. La ciudadanía debe sentir cerca a sus instituciones pues han sido creadas por y para ella. Europa es el cúmulo de interrelaciones europeas, de ahí que nos interesa la economía griega o las elecciones francesas, pues ambos temas son determinantes para el resto de Europa. Nos encontramos ante el estadio primigenio de una leve consciencia europea hasta ahora nunca vista.

6. **Una investigadora dijo que las principales barreras para la creación de una esfera pública europea son tres: lenguas diferentes, sociedades culturales y prensa nacional. En tu opinión, ¿es más coherente hablar de una europeización de los debates en cada nación, o la creación una esfera pública transnacional europea? Tenemos el ejemplo de euractiv.eu o bloggingportal.eu como ejemplo de un primer paso hacia un espacio de discusión transnacional. ¿Cómo la euro blogosfera puede construir puentes entre distintos blogosferas nacionales o idiomáticas? ¿O quizá es responsabilidad de las instituciones europeas de construir una estructura para ello?**

Donde la investigadora ve barreras yo veo ventajas, puntos de partida originales y exclusivos que sólo se dan en Europa: riqueza lingüística cultural y social, un perfecto combinado de conocimiento y modos de gestionar conflictos.

Como ya he indicado, el asociacionismo puede ser una buena solución, pero también el despliegue de medios o fórmulas por parte de las instituciones comunitarias que posibiliten un mayor acercamiento ya en el marco institucional.

7. **En tu opinión, ¿Cuáles son los pros y los contras de internet frente a la cobertura tradicional (TV, radio, periódicos) en términos de debate y participación? ¿Piensas que internet y la blogosfera pueden jugar un papel importante para crear una esfera pública europea (al menos online) y al mismo tiempo atraer a la gente en una especie de identidad europea?**

Nada es imprescindible pero todo es necesario. El entorno digital es elitista, no todos tienen acceso a él a pesar de que digamos vivir en la era de la información y las nuevas tecnologías. Tan ciudadano europeo es un ganadero de la Europa del Este como un carpintero nórdico o un pescador del Mediterráneo. Quizá la cobertura digital en sus medios sea inferior, pero la radio y televisión, o la prensa escrita, son fuentes de información que aún cuentan de un peso considerable en la sociedad. Como he dicho, las instituciones deberían aprovechar esos medios para hacer llegar mejor a la ciudadanía su existencia y finalidad.

8. **¿Qué significa para ti “ser europeo”? ¿Podrías describirlo? ¿Cómo relacionas identidad europea con ciudadanía europea? ¿Qué valores o características comunes ves en otros blogs o en otros países (si ves alguno)? Por ejemplo el valor europeo de la democracia que puede estar representado en los blogs (si es que lo está).**

Ser europeo, además de provenir del Viejo Continente, implica una serie de valores humanos y universales *made in Europe*. El espíritu de las constituciones liberales y la configuración de los Estados europeos, fruto de la evolución histórica, establece un marco de referencia internacional que, impregnado de el bagaje cultural europeo, perfila un tipo de ciudadano hasta entonces nunca visto. El europeo confía en la democracia, en la defensa de los Derechos Humanos y en la unidad de todas las sociedades de Europa sin necesidad de hablar más lengua que la democracia y la libertad.

9. **Citando al libro “The European Union and the Public Sphere”: “La esfera pública es una de las precondiciones para el desarrollo de la democracia. Analistas han señalado consistentemente que un importante factor del déficit democrático de la UE es la ausencia de una esfera pública**

europea”. ¿Qué piensas de esto? ¿Crees que los blogueros piensan que pueden contribuir a una mayor democratización de la UE?

Lo blogueros son altavoces ciudadanos en ocasiones mal aprovechados por las propias instituciones. Más allá de buscar cualquier remuneración económica o contraprestación laboral, los europeos 2.0 estamos interesados en transmitir la información mascada a aquellos otros conciudadanos interesados en la temática que por diversas cuestiones no pueden acceder a ella o bien desconocen.

La labor de transmisión del conocimiento y la información realizada por nosotros permite la puesta en contacto de otros ciudadanos con la esfera institucional o pública europea, cada vez más aislada del ciudadano en tanto que la falta de relación con éste.

**10. Antes de terminar ¿Quieres decir algo sobre la entrevista en sí o sobre el contenido? ¿Alguna otra idea que no has podido reflejarla anteriormente?**

Agradecer el interés mostrado por esta cuestión y proponerte más trabajos de este tipo que posibilite nuestra expresión sobre el asunto y no sólo sobre cuestiones puramente europeas. Necesitamos ser más escuchados y leídos, criticados y considerados por la ciudadanía y por las propias instituciones europeas.

### **Interview Pau Solanilla**

<http://www.pausolanilla.com/>

**1. ¿Cuál es tu motivación para escribir blogs, y por qué principalmente de asuntos europeos? ¿Cuál es tu contribución, y qué expectativas o qué esperas de otros blogueros?**

Soy activista europeísta desde muy joven. Participé en una de las primeras asociaciones europeístas de jóvenes en España en el año 1986 (Asociación de jóvenes proEuropa de Cataluña, AJOPEC) coincidiendo con la entrada de España en la UE. Yo tenía 16 años pero gracias a Joaquim Millán (también bloguero europeísta) entré en una asociación de universitarios europeístas para desarrollar mis inquietudes. Había tenido la oportunidad de estudiar idiomas en Inglaterra, y estar en contacto con otras gentes, culturas, idiomas, etc y me enseñó que no había otro camino que el de la cooperación con los demás para construir el futuro en el viejo continente.

Desde entonces el europeísmo ha constituido una parte de mi militancia personal, profesional y política. Fui uno de los primeros bloggers españoles escribiendo sobre asuntos europeos, empecé en noviembre de 2005. Había trabajado 8 años en Bruselas y tras volver a Barcelona me di cuenta de la necesidad de seguir insuflando el virus europeísta a través de las redes sociales y los medios on-line. A pesar de ser miembros de la UE en España hau mucho desconocimiento de la UE, sus instituciones,



gentes y políticas. Europa no es solo la vaca lechera que hay que ordeñar, que es como la ven algunos.

- 2. ¿Cómo describirías la situación de la euro blogosfera? Tamaño, participación, temas, deficiencias, puntos fuertes, etc... ¿Qué crees que podría mejorar? ¿Qué te gusta más? ¿Qué te gusta menos?**

La euro-blogosfera es prácticamente en su totalidad europeísta, rica y plural. EN los últimos años gracias a las redes sociales se han multiplicado las plataformas, asociaciones e iniciativas. Eso está muy bien, pero el reto consiste en converger en temas e iniciativas para que puedan tener un mínimo impacto. No es suficiente con estar o hacer ruido en la red, sino en tener impacto real, influencia, eso que los anglosajones llaman “soft power”. Y ahí andamos flojos. Hay blogueros que forman parte de los “nuevos influencers” en la vida política, social o económica, ¿pero cuántos blogueros europeos tienen influencia en los niveles comunitarios, en la opinión pública o en las políticas y posiciones del gobierno español? Pocos, muy pocos. Se peca muchas veces de autoreferencialismo.

- 3. Se dice que la participación e interacción con blogueros es la clave para un buen funcionamiento de la blogosfera. Un sitio común donde la gente puede debatir lo que les interesa o les apasiona. ¿Cómo describes la interacción entre la euro blogosfera? ¿Y tu interacción con otros blogueros? Por Twitter, con comentarios en blogs? Cómo mantienes conversaciones en tu blog u otros blogs? ¿Y si el post o los comentarios están en otra lengua?**

La interacción es importante y necesaria. El problema de las redes sociales es que creamos redes y grupos con vínculos débiles. Algunos estudios demuestran que los grupos que se desvirtualizan tienen lazos más fuertes. Los blogueros europeístas nos hemos encontrado alguna vez y ha sido muy positivo. Yo coordino la Plataforma europeando.eu que es una de las más amplias y activas, pero hay muchas otras. Hoy sin embargo el micro-blogging de Twitter permite más dinamismo pero reduce los debates interactivos a 140 caracteres y eso no permite debates en profundidad. Tiene ventajas e inconvenientes.

- 4. ¿Sueles interactuar con blogueros de otras lenguas, o quizá solamente con blogueros de habla española? ¿Cómo esa interacción afecta a tus puntos de vista sobre los temas? ¿Cambias de opinión? ¿Hay un debate real y coherente en algunos temas concretos? ¿Qué dificultades enfrentas a la hora de interactuar/debatir con otros blogueros? ¿Cómo lo solucionas?**

Interactúo con otros blogueros en español, inglés y francés. Es enriquecedor y aporta valor a los debates. Sin embargo hay mucho recorrido para poder crear espacios compartidos. La esfera pública europea no existe todavía como tal. Somos un microcosmos con muchas opiniones públicas y publicadas desestructuradas y aisladas. Ese es uno de los retos para influir.

- 5. Algunos temas hablados a nivel europeo afectan a varios estados miembros (por ejemplo la política de agricultura). Otros temas afectan más a un estado miembro en concreto (por ejemplo las elecciones francesas). En tu opinión ¿Cuáles son los temas más interesantes para los blogueros,**

**independientemente de la lengua o nacionalidad? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay algunos temas que crean más debate e interactividad entre blogueros de diferentes lenguas, como podría ser el caso de la crisis económica, donde la gente quiere saber lo que los franceses, griegos o alemanes piensan? ¿Cómo podemos hacer que la gente se interese más por asuntos europeos (si es que no están ya interesados)?**

Creo que hay una excesiva atención de los blogueros a los temas institucionales. Pecamos de eso que criticamos a las instituciones, no hablar más de las cosas que realmente importan a la gente. Muchos blogueros han estado en instituciones, participan en debates o seminarios que caen en discusiones sobre la agenda oficial dominante, que son los grandes temas institucionales. Los temas sectoriales, atraen a más gente pero están menos dinamizados, quizás porque se necesita algo de especialización y conocimiento sobre ellos. Faltan redes o grupos temáticos.

- 6. Una investigadora dijo que las principales barreras para la creación de una esfera pública europea son tres: lenguas diferentes, sociedades culturales y prensa nacional. En tu opinión, ¿es más coherente hablar de una europeización de los debates en cada nación, o la creación una esfera pública transnacional europea? Tenemos el ejemplo de euractiv.eu o bloggingportal.eu como ejemplo de un primer paso hacia un espacio de discusión transnacional. ¿Cómo la euro blogosfera puede construir puentes entre distintas blogosferas nacionales o idiomáticas? ¿O quizá es responsabilidad de las instituciones europeas de construir una estructura para ello?**

Estoy de acuerdo solo parcialmente. La UE no es un espacio político federal o con vocación federalizante como era el objetivo de los padres fundadores. Hoy el proyecto europeo ya no se parece al original, tanto por el tamaño de la UE (27 EEMM + los que vienen) como por los objetivos. La crisis, la falta de liderazgos, y el peso de lo nacional (elecciones europeas con listas nacionales) no va a permitir construir el anhelado espacio público europeo a corto o medio plazo. Hemos de aprender a vivir con ello y diseñar estrategias que refuercen la cohesión de los actores políticos y sociales a nivel europeo, pero creer que vamos hacia un espacio público europeo es una quimera que lleva a la melancolía y el desánimo. Tenemos que hacer un análisis riguroso si queremos actuar e influir.

- 7. En tu opinión, ¿Cuáles son los pros y los contras de internet frente a la cobertura tradicional (TV, radio, periódicos) en términos de debate y participación? ¿Piensas que internet y la blogosfera pueden jugar un papel importante para crear una esfera pública europea (al menos online) y al mismo tiempo atraer a la gente en una especie de identidad europea?**

Internet y los medios sociales forman parte de la realidad de la gente. Hasta los medios de comunicación lo han entendido. Su modelo de negocio ha explotado y solo el Social Media parece la ventana de oportunidad (o tabla de salvación) Hace pocos días he escrito sobre eso... El periodismo ciudadano y periodismo low cost, la última esperanza de los grandes medios de comunicación. <http://www.pausolanilla.com/2012/03/el-periodismo-ciudadano-y-periodismo.html>

8. **¿Qué significa para ti “ser europeo”? ¿Podrías describirlo? ¿Cómo relacionas identidad europea con ciudadanía europea? ¿Qué valores o características comunes ves en otros blogs o en otros países (si ves alguno)? Por ejemplo el valor europeo de la democracia que puede estar representado en los blogs (si es que lo está).**

Ser europeo es la versión internacionalista de un contexto geográfico, económico y cultural determinado como es la UE. No podemos ser europeístas si no somos internacionalistas. Los valores son los mismos, lo que difiere es el contexto, los métodos y las instituciones. Sin embargo los valores civilizatorios de Europa están en declive, tanto por la propia acción e incoherencias de la UE como por los cambios que se producen en el mundo. La UE se está quedando como una potencia declarativa con menor influencia. Vamos a ser una potencia regional retórica, los valores se acreditan con acciones, y en eso los europeos andamos algo flojos.

9. **Citando al libro “The European Union and the Public Sphere”: La esfera pública es una de las precondiciones para el desarrollo de la democracia. Analistas han señalado consistentemente que un importante factor del déficit democrático de la UE es la ausencia de una esfera pública europea”. ¿Qué piensas de esto? ¿Crees que los blogueros piensan que pueden contribuir a una mayor democratización de la UE?**

Es un debate más teórico que real. ¿Qué es primero, el huevo o la gallina? Hoy no se puede construir una esfera pública sin democracia, y no hay democracia si no hay una esfera pública. Es un debate para académicos, pero no para el común de la gente

10. **Antes de terminar ¿Quieres decir algo sobre la entrevista en sí o sobre el contenido? ¿Alguna otra idea que no has podido reflejarla anteriormente?**

Muchas de mis reflexiones sobre estos temas las puedes encontrar en un libro que publiqué hace un par de años “EUROPA EN TIEMPOS DE CÓLERA”, donde desarrollo mis ideas sobre la Europa 2.0. Está colgado libre en internet por lo que puedes consultar cualquier cosa o descargarlo.

## **IX (II) English Interviews**

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### **Interview André Feldhof**

<http://mouteulympus.blogspot.se/>

1. **What is your motivation to blog and why mainly European affairs? What is your contribution and what do you expect from other bloggers?**

My education is in European Studies, but I guess I choose this subject because I have some deeper affiliation with a kind of European ideal, an ideal of multicultural togetherness that can help overcome stereotyping and lead to more efficient policy-making in some areas like environmental policy, trade or global development.

I started blogging during the 2009 European elections as a result of a video blogging project called ZEUS in which I was involved at Maastricht University, and due to my (first) bachelor thesis which focused on the role of political participation in the EU through blogs. My private conclusion was that blogs can a) help common citizens participate in policy-making and b) make European politics a tiny bit more transparent. As a result of these two aspects, I felt like I should contribute to European blogging myself.

Although blogging should be a collective and cross-referential endeavour, I have mostly used it to write about the things that I am passionate about in a more unilateral way. Nonetheless, blogging has put me in contact with a great deal of other passionate young Europeans, and reading their blogposts and Twitter updates has given me many extremely precious insights into the functioning of the European Union. Since blogging is a voluntary commitment, I cannot say that I have a lot of expectations to other bloggers – I do however cherish all of their blogposts very much.

- 2. How would you describe the situation of the current EU blogosphere? Size, participation, topics, deficiencies, strong points, etc...What would you like to improve, what you like most, what you do not like?**

Other than the American blogosphere, the EU blogosphere in my view currently suffers from a range of different factors, two of which I find particularly relevant. Firstly, European politics are highly unsexy, making it very difficult to write a pungent blogpost that could reach a wider audience. In the absence of this, the EU blogosphere remains a rather elitist talking shop between young academics and EU professionals. Secondly, and related to the first point, there are few connections between the European blogosphere and established national media which could allow blogposts to reach a wider audience in one of the member states. Other than in the United States, it rarely happens that an EU blogger's post inspires an article in a national newspaper (which, admittedly, may be partly due to the blogger's inability or unwillingness to promote his post to influential policy-makers or journalists through social media or email).

- 3. It is said participation and interaction within bloggers is the key of a good functioning, and aim of blogosphere. A common space where people can discuss what they care or are passionate about. How do you describe the interaction in the specific EU blogosphere? And your interaction with other bloggers, by twitter, by comments on blogs? How do you carry on discussion on your blog, or in other blog? And if the blogpost or comments are in another language?**

I observe that my blogging habit has changed over the last year. While I very actively surveyed EU blogposts last year and very vividly interacted with bloggers through the comment function or twitter in an effort to foster an enriching debate, I now spend less time on these two activities. This may be partly due to a change in academic focus away from the EU to international economics and – as a result of increased knowledge about, and socialization into EU affairs – due to my reduced carelessness to boldly put half-informed idea and thoughts out into the open. While this would certainly benefit readers with less knowledge about the EU than myself (I initially wrote my posts for fellow students at Maastricht University who had less time to follow the EU blogosphere), I have now started using my blog as my personal business card. As a result, a badly conceived blogpost

could put into question my academic and professional capabilities, which in turn makes me very careful with regard to the kind of posts that I write.

But to return to my blogging activity last year: when I was actively participating in the EU blogosphere, I interacted with other bloggers quite frequently, if possible through the comment function in order to make the discussion more transparent. I also read several blogs in foreign languages by help of Google Translate and sometimes commented on them in English, trusting that the person would use a translating program to understand my comment.

- 4. Do you usually interact with other bloggers writing in other languages, or perhaps just mainly with bloggers using English? How does this interaction affect your point of view of some topics? Do you change your mind? Is there a real debate in some topics? What do you think are the difficulties you mostly face when interacting/discussing with other bloggers? How would you solve it?**

I speak English, German and French fluently and read Italian and Dutch as well. Nonetheless, I have normally commented in English and, more rarely, in French (almost never in German and virtually never in the other languages). The bloggers with which I interact the most frequently speak my three prime languages (overwhelmingly English) and I would normally choose to interact with them in the language in which the blogpost was written (which is also overwhelmingly English). Interaction with another blogger over a policy issue definitely challenges my mind and encourages me to work into a topic more deeply. This is particularly the case when somebody comments on my own blog where posts normally put forward a particular argument and where I feel like I have to defend my argument. At the end of the argument, we do not necessarily agree but we have often agreed to disagree in a very friendly manner. When I comment, in particular on my own blog, I need to be careful to interact with another blogger and to encourage discussion, rather than to bluntly insist on the correctness of my argument. I have certainly killed debates on my blog because my wording was too undiplomatic to deserve an answer. What I feel has worked very well is to end your comment in a question that would challenge your interlocutor to think and to respond.

- 5. Some topics or issues spoken at European level affect people not only from one country, but all member of the EU (EU agricultural policy for example). Other issues affect mainly national policy of some EU members, but are interesting to other EU members (French elections for example). In your opinion, what are the most interesting topics for bloggers, independently of language and nationality? Why? Are some topics creating more interactivity within bloggers of different language, for example the current economic crisis, where people want to know what Spanish/Italians/Greeks think of Germans and French think? How can we make more people interested in the EU (if they are not already interested)?**

First of all, when looking at the daily output of the Bloggingportal.eu RSS feed, I have the impression that there is no lack of EU topics to talk about. I do not know the figures, but my impression is that blogposts about the economic crisis, in particular by professional bloggers like Charlemagne, the FT Brussels Blog or Social Europe are currently very popular across countries (even though they all blog in English). In my view, the issues that are likely to create the greatest discussions across different

languages are civil society issues such as the Hungarian media law or the Norwegian killings. It is easy to relate to these topics, they do not require a lot of background knowledge and it can be assumed that a) everybody has heard about the issue and b) there is a burning interest to debate the issue or learn more about it. This momentum, however, normally disappears just as fast as it has come about.

The EU has made many attempts to make people interested in EU policy-making, and the blogosphere is riddled with sarcastic posts about expensive EU communication attempts that failed. The latest one is a 30-second commercial by DG Enlargement that exhibits a very negative view of non-EU cultures, cost the European taxpayer more than 100,000 EUR and was withdrawn two hours after it had been launched on the internet.

In my view, the EU should make it much clearer what the impact of its policies is on the ground. Instead of citing the amount of money that the Commission spent on this or that program, it should focus on the people that benefitted from this or that regulation. If an EU regulation eliminates the fees between inner-EU financial transactions, then a citizen experience would be a very valuable piece of information. The account of a person pleased with the uniform EU phone charger is much more valuable than a movie about the historical importance of the Maastricht treaty. Bloggers could also help in this by asking themselves a very simply question and then writing down the answer: In what way does the EU touch my daily life?

- 6. An author said that the main barriers for developing a European Public Sphere are three: different languages, culture societies and national media. In your opinion, is more feasible an Europeanization of national public debates than the creation of a transnational European public sphere? We have for example Euractiv or bloggingportal as an example of transnational discussion fora. How the EU blogosphere could build bridges within different national blogospheres? Or maybe it is a responsibility of European institutions to build a framework?**

The transnational European public sphere will for a long time remain an elitist construction. The European Voice, Euractiv and more specialized English-language websites already allow for a lot of debate between policy professionals, but these discussions almost never reach the people on the ground (with the possible exception of the national Euractiv websites). To involve the European citizens, national public spheres and blogospheres would need to upscale and to interact with other public spheres and blogospheres. And quite honestly, I believe that this has increased as a result of the Eurocrisis. In the public spheres that I survey (predominantly German and French), there has been a bit of cross-referencing in the recent past.

I do not believe that the European Commission should take an active role in establishing a framework for a European public sphere; the mediocre performance of Euronews shows that it is difficult to impose European news in a top-down manner. On the other hand, journalism and blogging competitions could offer an incentive to bloggers and journalists to research European topics from a more bottom-up perspective and to cross-reference it with bloggers or journalists from other public spheres. At any rate, I believe that more cross-referencing across public spheres does not come naturally but requires a conscientious effort by the journalist or blogger. This could be triggered through external influences like competitions or hot transnational issues (one may think

about a EU citizen wreaking havoc in a different EU country or something more political such as current intra-EU migration flows as a result of unemployment), but it could also be triggered through pressure within the in-group of European bloggers. If one or two influential European bloggers open up a “what do national public spheres say about this”-section in all of their posts, I believe that this could have an influence on other bloggers.

- 7. In your opinion, what are the pros and contra of internet versus traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) in terms of debating and participation? Do you think internet and the blogosphere can play an important role to create a European Public Sphere (at least online) and at the same time to bring people together in a kind of European Identity?**

I believe that opinion formation for most European citizens mainly takes place in front of the TV. The internet and social networks become a more popular tool with computer-savvy citizens such as employees in the knowledge industry and young people, but it does not reach the wider parts general public yet. This is particularly true for blogs which often lack credibility vis-à-vis established media websites. While the latter can easily be found, the former require a degree of active curiosity from the reader.

As an elitist concept, I think the European public sphere already exists and brings people from different cultures together under a common umbrella. The internet definitely enhances and reinforces the shaping of European identity within this elite group. Apart from the English language, there are no barriers to entry so that citizens with an interest in European affairs can find it easy to participate and to develop their own European identity.

What is often forgotten is that the internet also provides policy-makers with feedback for their activities which would be difficult and possibly expensive to obtain in other ways. This can help them to take the opinion of the common man into consideration and to keep their feet own on the ground.

- 8. What does it mean to you “being European”? Could you describe it? How would you link European identity to European citizenship? What common characteristics or shared values do you see in other blogs or in other countries (if any)? For example the European value of democracy that is represented in blogs (if it is represented).**

Being “European” is the most important part of my identity. In the last five years of my life, there has not been a single day without a transnational or multilingual component to it. This European identity is not only a love of other European cultures and languages, it is also decidedly political and concerned with citizenship. I am happy when a new European member state joins the Euro and become worried when a referendum in a member state nullifies a European treaty. I am proud when the EU takes an ambitious stance at international climate negotiations and become angry when the United States demand European passenger name records.

Yet, I believe that the idea of shared European values is fuzzy at the edges – in my view there are more shared values between the UK, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand than between the

UK and Slovenia. Granted, there are some overarching values that are frequently articulated in European blogs, most of all the values of transparency, freedom of expression and democracy. However, I am not sure if these are exclusively European values.

9. **Quoting the book “The European Union and the Public Sphere” it says: “A viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate. Analysts have consistently stressed that an important component of the EU’s democratic deficit is the absence of a viable European Public Sphere”. What is your reaction to this? Do you think the bloggers think that they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU affairs and EU?**

Yes, in my view bloggers think they contribute to a democratization of the EU, and they frequently really do. However, bloggers alone cannot reduce the democratic deficit of the European Union. To do so, it would take a great effort by, first and foremost, the Members of the European Parliament. I believe that if every MEP had a (personal) website that listed his own activities, calendar of meetings and reports in an orderly way, there would be more space for bloggers and national journalists to engage a discussion. However, in the absence of this, bloggers and journalists can only focus on the little information that they have about European policy-making – and this information is often highly technical and unlikely to find a lot of readers.

10. **Do you have any thoughts you want to add about the interview, research or topics asked?**

No need to use a nickname, feel free to use my full name.

### **Interview Conor Slowey**

<http://theeuropeancitizen.blogspot.se/>

1. **What is your motivation to blog and why mainly European affairs? What is your contribution and what do you expect from other bloggers?**

I’ve been fascinated by the European project for a long time, and I had been following other Euroblogs for a while before I started blogging. I started blogging on European affairs because it was a topic I wanted to talk about, and it was an aspect of politics that my friends weren’t so interested in, so blogging seemed to be a good tool for discussing ideas and expressing opinions.



I'm not sure how to gauge my contribution. On my own blog I write about a mix of justice and home affairs, constitutional issues and some national politics (mostly regarding Ireland and the UK). Personally, I don't expect much from bloggers in the sense of providing a service or general social function for society as a whole – my expectations are more limited to: (1) linking to sources, (2) being open for debate if you're aware of another blog post addressing your article, (3) having a comments section they are willing to engage with, and (4) having a bloglist (which I think of as an important way of being connected to the rest of whatever blogosphere a blogger is part of).

**2. How would you describe the situation of the current EU blogosphere? Size, participation, topics, deficiencies, strong points, etc...What would you like to improve, what you like most, what you do not like?**

The Euroblogosphere has grown at a good rate, and there is a lot more specialisation with regard to subject matter. This makes the EU blogosphere more diverse and interesting than in the past, though it has lost some general appeal and readability for casual readers and perhaps even bloggers as the topics and conversations have become more niche and specialised. I feel that the quality of blog posts has increased over the last few years, and the diversity of the coverage of EU policy is a very positive aspect of the Euroblogosphere. I'm not so sure on how to "improve" the blogosphere since the blogosphere is sustained by the interests and work of the bloggers themselves, and if, as a group, they have moved into more specialised debate, then it's hard to promote a return to generalist blogging.

I think this trend is promoted by current EU politics: there is little personality in the institutions and their politics, whereas the economic crisis has "nationalised" parts of the European debate and focused it more on economics. With better coverage of the most political aspects of Europe in the national media, there may be a disincentive to repeat what bloggers feel they have read so much of (and assume that everyone they're writing for has read too). At the same time, my impression is that most Eurobloggers have a university background in politics or law or another humanity subject, and do not feel themselves equipped to add to the economic debate by delving into the economic complexities of the Eurocrisis.

My impression is that these factors have helped push bloggers into niches and that the Euroblogosphere is more likely to respond to an influx of bloggers with a generalist outlook or from developments in EU politics that promote a generalist and more institution-focussed approach, rather than by a well-meaning blogging initiative.

**3. It is said participation and interaction within bloggers is the key of a good functioning, and aim of blogosphere. A common space where people can discuss what they care or are passionate about. How do you describe the interaction in the specific EU blogosphere? And your interaction with other bloggers, by twitter, by comments on blogs? How do you carry on discussion on your blog, or in other blog? And if the blogpost or comments are in another language?**

The interaction between bloggers has decreased as the specialisation of the Euroblogosphere has increased. I am guilty of not interacting with other bloggers as well, mostly because I have less time to read blogs as I did before, and I will only write a post in response to another blogger if I have a

strong point of difference that I think I could really build a proper article around. I carry discussions on in my comments sections, and occasionally on Twitter, but I do not get many comments in practice and I find Twitter extremely time consuming to follow, and the types of discussions I want to have are more suited to the traditional blog rather than being spread over several tweets that are hard to connect and show to others if you want to recall the discussion for the purposes of linking to a new discussion. So I reserve my political debates for my actual blog, while using Twitter as a tool to communicate with my followers that I'm at a meeting with an interesting discussion (or that I'm following one online), to alert them to a new post on the blog, and for more social purposes.

Occasionally I use different languages, but I find it too time consuming to maintain it in a meaningful, long lasting way, so I only use German or Dutch for occasional Tweets and comments. The language barrier has remained a strong one in the Euroblogosphere. It's hard to measure readership across the language barrier, but there is little follow-up through linked blog posts even if it happens that multilingual readership has grown. Building links between languages was a topic for Eurobloggers at different points, however though a debate and a commitment for bloggers to increase their interaction may highlight an issue, the constraints and individual interests and incentives for bloggers will determine the main trends. (This is a practical example of why I think it's hard to actively "improve" or shape the Euroblogosphere).

- 4. Do you usually interact with other bloggers writing in other languages, or perhaps just mainly with bloggers using English? How does this interaction affect your point of view of some topics? Do you change your mind? Is there a real debate in some topics? What do you think are the difficulties you mostly face when interacting/discussing with other bloggers? How would you solve it?**

I mainly interact through English as I find it time consuming to use different languages, though I occasionally try German and I tweet every so often in German or basic Dutch. This time factor limits the number of real debates for me personally, and I think also for the blogosphere as a whole, though this can be overcome to some extent when the national media of the Member States take up the same topics (e.g. the constitutional changes in Hungary). My impression is that Eurobloggers can be placed on a European political scale (left to right; federalist to sovereignist) so the differences really aren't so great that reading or interacting with bloggers in other languages has really changed my mind to a degree greater than the general reading of blogs in English would do.

I could only solve it by devoting more time to reading and writing in other languages, and linking to and debating posts that are on blogs using a different language. However I have become more time poor so the real question is how the profile of the blogosphere will change to increase such links, if it will at all.

- 5. Some topics or issues spoken at European level affect people not only from one country, but all member of the EU (EU agricultural policy for example). Other issues affect mainly national policy of some EU members, but are interesting to other EU members (French elections for example). In your opinion, what are the most interesting topics for bloggers, independently of language and nationality? Why? Are some topics creating more interactivity within bloggers of different language, for example the current economic crisis, where people want to know what**

**Spanish/Italians/Greeks think of Germans and French think? How can we make more people interested in the EU (if they are not already interested)?**

Both EU and national topics can be of great interest to the Euroblogosphere and the wider public. I don't think one or the other is more interesting, though they might have different characteristics that make them more interesting. For national politics, issues such as the rise of far-right parties or the limiting of human rights are the biggest factors for interest across Europe (apart from elections) because they impact on the political and civic health of the continent. For EU affairs, treaties and legislation – usually concerning the internet or justice and home affairs – are the biggest motivators (for example ACTA and the SWIFT treaties). ACTA is a great example of general agreements/legislation provoking a reaction from the general public and the blogosphere. In contrast, most economic argument is channelled through national public spheres.

Since the range of topics dealt with by the EU are limited in scope, it will be rare that this happens. We can draw more attention and bring more transparency to the EU and its actions so it might happen more often.

- 6. An author said that the main barriers for developing a European Public Sphere are three: different languages, culture societies and national media. In your opinion, is more feasible an Europeanization of national public debates than the creation of a transnational European public sphere? We have for example Euractiv or bloggingportal as an example of transnational discussion fora. How the EU blogosphere could build bridges within different national blogospheres? Or maybe it is a responsibility of European institutions to build a framework?**

The Europeanisation of national public spheres and national media will provide a big boost to the European public sphere. There may be a time when the European public sphere has grown enough to take on a significant momentum in its growth itself, but until then national media will be the real gatekeepers and directors of the flow of interest in the EU. Bloggers can contribute to building links by promoting a culture of reading widely – reading national blogs and media, in different languages – since the more reading that is done, the more likely bloggers will interact with national blogospheres over time, and the more links will be built. The impact of the national media will still be far greater, however.

- 7. In your opinion, what are the pros and contra of internet versus traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) in terms of debating and participation? Do you think internet and the blogosphere can play an important role to create a European Public Sphere (at least online) and at the same time to bring people together in a kind of European Identity?**

The Euroblogosphere can add value by keeping track of EU developments so that developments can be fit into a truer narrative compared to the national media who do not have the resources to follow every story and place it in context, whereas a wide network of interested citizens is more able to do so. We bloggers can also uncover a news story, though this doesn't happen often due to our distance from the national media and their fractured nature. For me the best aspect of blogging is a personal one: getting involved is a great way to learn about politics and issues, and of making yourself as a citizen more active and informed.

Traditional mass media is still the best way of spreading information and debating issues on a large scale. Bloggers may be able to debate in more detail, and at times with more information and knowledge, but people will only uncover these debates when they are looking for them (which is generally when European issues are a main topic in the traditional media). The Euroblogosphere can enhance the quality of debate, but it the change needed to push for a true European Public Sphere is immense and requires a change in politics within the institutions and an Europeanisation of national media.

- 8. What does it mean to you “being European”? Could you describe it? How would you link European identity to European citizenship? What common characteristics or shared values do you see in other blogs or in other countries (if any)? For example the European value of democracy that is represented in blogs (if it is represented).**

I find that the Euroblogosphere divides in two depending on the federalist or nationalist outlooks of the blogs, and it's a hard divide to bridge because both sides tend towards repeating the same debate. The general values of the Euroblogosphere tend to be very liberal: on the “civilisational” issues such as human rights and democracy there is general agreement. Being a European for me is a process rather than a fixed identity where you learn more about the cultures and debates and you try to link them: you become more European through the desire to interact and actually interacting. There are common political elements, such as the general left-right axis is similar in European countries, and the position of welfare states in the popular political culture.

- 9. Quoting the book “The European Union and the Public Sphere” it says: “A viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate. Analysts have consistently stressed that an important component of the EU’s democratic deficit is the absence of a viable European Public Sphere”. What is your reaction to this? Do you think the bloggers think that they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU affairs and EU?**

I agree. I think the Euroblogosphere is contributing to the democratisation of EU affairs, but we face many limitations in actually breaking the barriers between national and European politics.

- 10. Do you have any thoughts you want to add about the interview, research or topics asked?**

No.

### **Interview Craig Willy**

<http://www.craigwilly.info>

- 1. What is your motivation to blog and why mainly European affairs? What is your contribution and what do you expect from other bloggers?**

I blog to develop and to share my own thoughts and political ideas. It can be a catharsis when writing about a pernicious policy or blatant falsehoods said by prominent commentators and politicians.

I turned to European affairs after a disenchantment with U.S. politics. My personal background is important to this as my father is American but I am born and raised in France. Writing about the EU was a way of writing about politics – which is of interest to me because it is human beings determining their collective destiny – that is both closer to home and seemed like more a positive force in the world, more in line with my political tendencies.

**2. How would you describe the situation of the current EU blogosphere? Size, participation, topics, deficiencies, strong points, etc...What would you like to improve, what you like most, what you do not like?**

There are popular blogs that either deal exclusively with EU politics (Jean Quatremer, Daniel Hannan) or which write them regularly (Kantoos, Olivier Berruyer, Paul Kruman). These tend to be very much **national** blogs with no systematic interaction with readers across borders. Their ideas do get around, they cross-pollinate, but not enough.

Those blogs which attempt to have a pan-European readership, normally by writing in English, fail to reach an audience beyond euro-geeks, and end up being *apatride*, niche blogs. One completely loses the potential of engaged, interactive, citizen blogging with genuine mass participation, thinking of people like Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Glenn Greenwald, Krugman or Hannan. In fact, most EU blogs are perfectly unread, which is very unrewarding, but they do allow you to interact with other people either in the Brussels bubble or who are interested by the EU. That can be interesting.

Most of the time I don't consider this a major problem. Most EU policies require big, fat majorities to exist and have no budgets anyway, so it tends to be pretty banal. Where the euroblogosphere needs to exist – or really multinational public space – is the eurozone. There we have absolutely massive power handed over the Treaties, the Franco-German couple (mostly German) and the European Central Bank. Not to mention the fact that it concerns that area which concerns most people most: Whether they will have a job, public services, a pension, etc. It's not enough that the media of "doomed" nations – Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal – talk about it, we need blogs and media for the eurozone that can criticize policymakers and rouse public opinion across borders, especially in Germany. I don't see this happening any time soon though.

**3. It is said participation and interaction within bloggers is the key of a good functioning, and aim of blogosphere. A common space where people can discuss what they care or are passionate about. How do you describe the interaction in the specific EU blogosphere? And your interaction with other bloggers, by twitter, by comments on blogs? How do you carry on discussion on your blog, or in other blog? And if the blogpost or comments are in another language?**

I talk and interact fairly regularly with other bloggers through comments, Twitter, email and joint projects (bloggingportal.eu). I don't really know how to qualify it, it's a bit cliquey but you often get

fruitful discussion and feedback. If it isn't in English or French, my mother languages, then there basically is no interaction. I imagine it's the same for most people.

- 4. Do you usually interact with other bloggers writing in other languages, or perhaps just mainly with bloggers using English? How does this interaction affect your point of view of some topics? Do you change your mind? Is there a real debate in some topics? What do you think are the difficulties you mostly face when interacting/discussing with other bloggers? How would you solve it?**

Mainly English/French. I'm rarely affected by the interaction, but I am affected by the stuff I read, on their blogs or elsewhere. I'll often revise my points of view when I get information incompatible with my existing views. There is some debate but I don't know how significant it is.

I don't think there are any major problems in interacting with others. You message them, comment, invite them for a pint... It's all good!

- 5. Some topics or issues spoken at European level affect people not only from one country, but all member of the EU (EU agricultural policy for example). Other issues affect mainly national policy of some EU members, but are interesting to other EU members (French elections for example). In your opinion, what are the most interesting topics for bloggers, independently of language and nationality? Why? Are some topics creating more interactivity within bloggers of different language, for example the current economic crisis, where people want to know what Spanish/Italians/Greeks think of Germans and French think? How can we make more people interested in the EU (if they are not already interested)?**

In terms of topics of discussion, it varies somewhat by nation. Euroskeptical blogs do very well in the UK. Quatremer has been able to write one on general EU affairs, with an implicit thread of looking for ideal French "*Europe puissance*". Topics of interest are going to be very much defined by national audiences and I don't think it's coincidence if the most popular EU bloggers (Quatremer and Hannan) are also basically often chauvinist (for Quatremer it will be rants about the decline of the French language or when someone wears a headscarf...).

I'm not particularly troubled by the fact that most of EU affairs are ignored by the public. There was a time in the early 2000s when they were all bragging about the fact there were more foreign correspondents (apparently) in Brussels than Washington D.C., as though this heralded the rise of a new, dynamic, wondrous polity (with books like Rifkin's *The European Dream* being written). But the fact is most of what EU people do – MEPs, commissioners, officials, diplomats, lobbyists, lawyers, economists... – is simply not interesting. That's why no one reads EU commissioners' blogs (with the partial of IT-focused Kroes). The typical EU actor is typically either completely powerless or answerable to 27 member states. Why would anyone be interested in them? The process itself on any policy is lengthy, bureaucratic and shrouded in diplo-political subterfuge so that, to the greatest extent possible, it can be "acceptable" (ignored) by the public of every member state. And, if there is no budget, the rules are rarely enforced (it takes years to get something to the ECJ), and it requires a big consensus to do something, how interesting is it going to be? Most of the time not, although I generalizing a bit.

Then there is the eurozone. There are popular blogs that write about European economic issues simply because the EU's economic rules, the ECB, etc, cannot be ignored.

I have no particular angst about knowing "what X nationality thinks" or "what the EU is doing". There's lots of fine, perfectly unread articles on these topics in European media and places like Cafe Babel. You get people to care when you show how it affects them, minor in most EU policy areas. For the eurozone, the effect on people can and must be shown, and there really is a need for a European public space (or, alternatively, there simply will be no democratic economic policy in the eurozone, which looks to be where we're heading actually). If you can show how it affects them, ignoring the linguistic problems, you will have interest.

6. **An author said that the main barriers for developing a European Public Sphere are three: different languages, culture societies and national media. In your opinion, is more feasible an Europeanization of national public debates than the creation of a transnational European public sphere? We have for example Euractiv or bloggingportal as an example of transnational discussion fora. How the EU blogosphere could build bridges within different national blogospheres? Or maybe it is a responsibility of European institutions to build a framework?**

I don't know what this means. What is a "Europeanized" national public debate? Sounds like academic mishmashery. I think we need a genuine European public space at least for countries in the eurozone. Arguable it's impossible and its "governance" will simply continued to be managed in the secret deliberations of the European Council, Treaties that limit the actions of political majorities, and the completely opaque and unaccountable actions of the ECB. That is a distinct possibility.

So far, the results of efforts like EurActiv and bloggingportal.eu have been pretty limited.

I honestly don't know really what role EU institutions can play. I trust them on **nothing** in matters of public debate and communication. The entire foundation of European institutions – diplomats, bureaucrats, economists, etc, catering to national governments' sensitivities – is **completely opposed** to any concept of public participation and interest. That's just the way it and I am doubtful that it can be changed. Everything, or almost, they touch in an effort to communicate turns to dust, just browse the EUtube page to get a sense of this. And costs massive amounts of money.

I overstate a little. There are some success stories with subsidies – which also poses a massive problem in terms of media independence – but it is true that Euronews and especially [Presseurop](#) are very valuable services (in my opinion). These are very much the exception though.

7. **In your opinion, what are the pros and contra of internet versus traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) in terms of debating and participation? Do you think internet and the blogosphere can play an important role to create a European Public Sphere (at least online) and at the same time to bring people together in a kind of European Identity?**

The Internet is simply superior in these respects: It allows for total citizen information, interaction, debate, etc. TV and radio still have a great advantage in terms of audience, but there's simply no comparison to the diversity of opinion, the evidence-based writing (verifiable in links), and the community-driven writing that is possible online. On a good blog, the writer will interact constantly

with his readers, getting corrections, reviews, new information, and so on. Newspapers are not even worth mentioning. They are websites with paper versions.

We do lose something in terms of the fracturing of public politically. Gone is the time when everyone was “on the same page” so to speak because they read the same newspaper and the same nightly news. The public can become more polarized and divided because of this. I think the added media diversity’s benefits are more than worth it though.

There is, I believe, a real niche there available for pan-European blogging, dealing with issues of common interest with some translation. I think there is a need for it and website on the topic is possible and that would not have been possible before the web. It doesn’t exist yet though.

- 8. What does it mean to you “being European”? Could you describe it? How would you link European identity to European citizenship? What common characteristics or shared values do you see in other blogs or in other countries (if any)? For example the European value of democracy that is represented in blogs (if it is represented).**

I could write an essay on this. I personally am not particularly interested in finding the list “values” that we supposedly have, as the Americans do, listed in their Constitution. In 1933 this continent had liberal democrats, Nazis, Communists and assorted dictatorships. Are we then saying that “Europeans” did not exist then? It’s an absurd question (Gareth Harding, a journalist, recently had a debate on the topic which he considered unfruitful because no answer was founded).

I think it is useful to talk about Europe and Europeans though:

- A shared history and civilization at least since the spread of Christendom (basically coterminous with what we call “Europe”). There are some real parallels between the Christian kings of the Middle Ages meeting together and NATO summits. (Notably for still running amok in Muslim lands.)
  - A continent with nations who are in deep economic, security and other forms of interdependence, far greater than with other nations. Effectively common interests (if not *positions*) in the face of Russia, the United States (and its wars), immigration, oil dependency, etc.
  - A lot of (mostly) common characteristics in terms of demographics, attitudes to religion and the welfare state... It’s hard to say what Europeans have in common, but it’s very obvious whenever they’re placed next to nations of North American, Latin America, Africa or Asia that they **do** have a lot in common!
- 9. Quoting the book “The European Union and the Public Sphere” it says: “A viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate. Analysts have consistently stressed that an important component of the EU’s democratic deficit is the absence of a viable European Public Sphere”. What is your reaction to this? Do you think the bloggers think that they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU affairs and EU?**

I think this is absolutely true. No democratic debate, no democracy, it’s that simple. I think euroblogosphere has the potential to contribute to the creation of that European public sphere, but



if we are honest, it's effect thus far has been incredibly modest. In fact, the most read and influential EU blogs tend to be precisely those that the most national.

**10. Do you have any thoughts you want to add about the interview, research or topics asked?**

That's it. If you have any questions please ask. Feel free to quote me with my name but please send me an email of the bits that you use. All the best!

### **Interview Protesilaos**

<http://www.protesilaos.com/>

**What is your motivation to blog and why mainly European affairs? What is your contribution and what do you expect from other bloggers?**

There are many reasons that have made me a blogger. Blogging helps me improve my writing skills and my english. Next, it allows me to elaborate on my ideas about the issues that I am mostly interested in. Moreover it offers me a channel of communication with the broader world, where I can discuss these ideas. Finally the willingness to write about something creates the need to read about it, thus it is a very fascinating way of studying and learning.

There are two reasons I write about European Union politics and political economy. The first is that these has been the subject of my studies so far. As such in writing about them I am in fact extending the scope of my studies and I do believe that this has helped me a lot, in many ways. The second is my belief that the undeniable distance among citizens and EU institutions can only be bridged when the citizens show interest in them and demand them. I do not believe that a European identity, in any way that could be defined, can be created in the bowels of some EU institution - the idea might derive from there, but it will only be fleshed out, when the people feel like it. As such I am of the view that as a European citizen myself, I should make my ancillary contribution towards that direction by participating in the broader political discussion, through my blog - ideally every single European citizen should participate in this grand debate, as only then there will be a European public sphere, which will give birth to a European identity.

Given the above-mentioned, my expectation towards myself, first and foremost is to become more knowledgeable and experienced in EU affairs, which will make me more productive and efficient in my studies and/or my work. Concerning other bloggers, I have two things to say, the first is the expectations I have from them vis a vis myself and vice versa. The second is the expectations I have for them regarding the rest of the world.

On the first issue, I must confess that I would never be interested in blogging for the sake of getting in touch with others in the blogosphere. Though this is not said to degrade or offend anyone, I never thought of other bloggers as a priority to my participation in the world of blogging. Of course the contributions and advices of others in the field can be extremely helpful, yet my ambition is to reach

a much wider audience, as frankly speaking, bloggers if seen as a group (including myself) are a rather small collective.

On the second issue about bloggers, I could just ask from them to "keep blogging", since I am fully convinced about the power of blogs and I am a firm believer in their ability to influence society. Whatever can communicate to the public is powerful and blogs are no exception. Bloggers are those who can initiate the discussion, which can bring in more people and gradually we can see the numbers of those interested in EU affairs growing exponentially.

Note that I am not asking for "pro-Europeans", but for anyone, regardless of ideology, to have a clear understanding of what is happening, ultimately for the sake of making this place better for all of us. And yes in that sense I expect from every single euro-blogger, including myself, to respect their duty, which is to produce the kind of posts that will attract other people to the grand debate. Let me stress that my principle is to have a European public sphere and bloggers can be those crazy enough to kickstart it.

**How would you describe the situation of the current EU blogosphere? Size, participation, topics, deficiencies, strong points, etc...What would you like to improve, what you like most, what you do not like?**

Firstly, as a libertarian that I am, I cannot say that I, within my own capacity, could or would change the blogosphere in any way I may consider best. I do not believe in coercion, involuntary intervention or manipulation of any sort. This is a dynamic process where every single participant has a role to play and makes an impact on the broader whole.

With that said I have to add that I would not like to improve or change anything since this is not what I am here for. All I can say towards that end, is that if those individuals who constitute the blogosphere are good enough then the blogosphere will eventually reflect it and will at some point grow stronger and better. If we cannot do that, then we will simply get what we deserve, and I am including myself in this - I am no better a blogger than anyone else.

Now concerning the situation as such, not much can really be said about the robustness of the euro-blogosphere, or its interconnections, since these are rather weak. There is a great variety of posts though, which is interesting. Of course I do not want to sound nihilistic. Instead I would like to be with the side of the optimists on this issue.

Let be explain: First of all it is hard to be an EU-oriented blogger (like myself, among many others), for the mere reason that unfortunately the topic is not that popular. The vast majority of people think of the EU as something quite detached from their lives, while they see all these EU institutions as yet another set of organizations who take care of the "big issues" that concern inter-state relations in Europe.

The reason for that distance is that we, either as individuals, or as established media, or as national administrations or even as European authorities, treat EU issues as a branch of "foreign affairs" or something similar to that. And nobody really cares about such "arcane" stuff apart from a very limited number of people - EU blogging is sort of a niche blogging after all.

And here of course one can identify the silver lining of the economic crisis, in the sense that everyone has suddenly realized that we are interconnected and we on this corner of the Union need to care about what the others on the other corner are doing - the crisis has created a lot of interest in EU affairs and has called for a prototype form of cross-state politics. For example, when was the last time Germans really cared about the elections in Greece?

Because of these dynamics, bloggers like myself, have had the chance to exploit this increased interest, to raise awareness about these and related issues. As such I do believe that there is great potential for the European blogosphere to improve in all respects, either that be size or exposure or variety of topics or whatever else might be considered as a feature of it.

The point is that the European blogosphere, allow me to call it Eurosphere henceforth to distinguish it from national blogospheres, is always dependent on the ups and downs of broader society. Now that society asks for more Europe, they will come our way. Again I repeat that the eurosphere will be better when every single one of us "eurologgers" (instead of "eurobloggers"), becomes better and attracts readers. We as bloggers cannot create the necessary demand for EU-related information, but we can ensure that when that comes, we will be prepared for it. So again my advice to fellow bloggers, is relax and just keep blogging.

**It is said participation and interaction within bloggers is the key of a good functioning, and aim of blogosphere. A common space where people can discuss what they care or are passionate about. How do you describe the interaction in the specific EU blogosphere? And your interaction with other bloggers, by twitter, by comments on blogs? How do you carry on discussion on your blog, or in other blog? And if the blogpost or comments are in another language?**

Allow me to start from the last point: language. I never thought that language is a real obstacle. We as human beings have always found ways to communicate when we really needed to do so. But on a more practical level, I do think that english is the unofficial lingua franca of the eurosphere already, even though there are many eurologs in other languages.

Now concerning participation and interaction between bloggers. Perhaps it is the case that such a situation is beneficial, though I would not like to argue along these lines, since this is mere speculation. Instead I would suggest that the interaction between bloggers and readers (who might be bloggers themselves, although the concept is much broader) is definitely a very fruitful process, as it ultimately enriches the discussion. It brings in new insights, perspectives, ideas. This can only be beneficial, both in terms of quality and quantity.

Now if we were to speak about a space for discussions, I would not like to narrow it down to bloggers and/or their readers. Instead I would suggest that this includes every single participant of society either directly or indirectly. The direct impact is understandably between bloggers/readers in any combination you might like, either that be bloggers who are readers or who interact with other bloggers, or who only get readers that are not involved in blogging. This type of interaction is quite clear and it is in fact the type of space you mentioned, whereby people speak about their passions and interests.

However I do believe that the indirect impact is the most important one. What is that? Someone might be a reader or a blogger, who knows other people who are for whatever reason not aware of the eurosphere and its debates. The fact that the first person knows about it though, is enough to pass certain ideas or any hint of knowledge on to the one who knows nothing around the issue. Thus the ignorant is indirectly part of the discussion. In addition I as a blogger might listen to something outside the eurosphere and find it good enough to incorporate in the discussion. Again the original source of that "something" is indirectly involved. The reason I make mention to this is that in truth the world of blogging, is nothing more than another aspect of the real world - the two are inseparable and thus one can influence the other.

As far as my practices in the eurosphere are concerned, I would say that I do not really interact with other bloggers, at least not at a satisfactory level. This has nothing to do with any prejudice, but only with the fact that the kind of stuff I write about is more institutions/policies/regulations -oriented. Then of course it is a matter of available time. If I need time to write about my interests and perhaps answer to comments or read more on closely related material, then unfortunately I have little time remaining for community-building. Don't get me wrong I am not at all biased against it, it just is the case that my priorities are somewhat different.

Finally concerning overall interconnections in the eurosphere, I have not seen many of those, though I am not sure about the exact origin of such a phenomenon. Perhaps it has to do with a mere cautiousness from all sides, or maybe it just is a normal process of a still young collection of blogs. At any rate the fact is that interconnections are limited. Of course the story is different when it comes to comments or tweets, where I can see a lot of activity, which is quite a positive sign.

**Do you usually interact with other bloggers writing in other languages, or perhaps just mainly with bloggers using English? How does this interaction affect your point of view of some topics? Do you change your mind? Is there a real debate in some topics? What do you think are the difficulties you mostly face when interacting/discussing with other bloggers? How would you solve it?**

I have never read a blog in another language other than Greek, English and French. I mainly read blogs written in english and here I may say that most of them are US-based, for the simple reason that the people there are much more active when it comes to niche blogging - for example blogs on economic theory. There aren't enough European blogs out there offering the kind of information I am personally interested in, or if they are I am not aware of them.

If I was to say about the impact of this on my judgement I would argue that it is rather negligible, in the sense that the diversity of views is what really makes the difference, not the language in which these are communicated. Of course if some great discussion is held in let's say Swedish, I will unfortunately miss it, since I do not know the language. But in the end though, if it really is that interesting, it might as well reverberate in english, at least in part - you never really know how far a post can go on the internet.

Yes I do change my mind as I read and learn more things. This is what ultimately distinguishes humans from drones - the ability to pick parts of something and incorporate it in our own set of

beliefs. What really makes the difference is the arguments that the writer provides. If those are persuasive, it would be unwise to reject them, without reflecting on them.

I think that there isn't really any problem in the communication between bloggers. The "problems" are exogenous in my view. And these are the ones I mentioned earlier about the general lack of interest in EU affairs, which consequently has a negative impact on the eurosphere.

My impression about other eurologgers is that they are in fact quite open-minded and always eager to exchange views. This is a great "asset" of the eurosphere since it provides the ideal framework for a generalized discussion on all things European, whenever that may come. Open-mindedness has allowed for progress, as such one can only be optimistic about the prospect of our eurosphere, for as long as it is populated by such individuals.

As for solutions, these will derive from those who experience the problem on a very personal level and thus have every interest to solve it in the best possible way. There really is no need to plan this centrally or preemptively. Never forget that we are speaking about individual human beings - and humans are unpredictable. They might well find much more effective ways to serve their own good, than what we could have ever possibly imagined. Therefore again I say "keep blogging" and the rest will come, just make sure you do it well.

**Some topics or issues spoken at European level affect people not only from one country, but all member of the EU (EU agricultural policy for example). Other issues affect mainly national policy of some EU members, but are interesting to other EU members (French elections for example). In your opinion, what are the most interesting topics for bloggers, independently of language and nationality? Why? Are some topics creating more interactivity within bloggers of different language, for example the current economic crisis, where people want to know what Spanish/Italians/Greeks think of Germans and French think? How can we make more people interested in the EU (if they are not already interested)?**

Allow me answer the first part of your question by reminding or informing you about the Bostonian principle of "No taxation without representation". It was the slogan the Americans adapted before fighting against the British for their independence. What did it really mean? That you are taxing us, but you are not allowing us to have a voice on how you use that money. If this is reversed it simply means that taxes create an interest in the way they are used - thus taxes create an interest in the state. Now bring this to the EU - does the EU, "the European state" though indeed it is not a state, tax its citizens directly? The answer is no, hence there is no pressing call for "Representation", thus no real interest in EU affairs.

The gist of this short syllogism, is that direct taxation, from an EU level, will immediately create a greater interest in the EU itself. People care about their money, since they work hard for it and thus they have many good reasons to scrutinize and put pressure on those who make use of it. Note though that I am not advocating for greater tax burdens on society. On the contrary taxes should be as low as possible. I am only speaking of the psychological connection people have with the tax collector - the state. So if this state is at the European level, then have no doubt that everyone will

more or less want to be informed about it - and once they know enough about, they will ask for improvements in all areas that are now seriously flawed.

If we get that, then you can imagine individuals typing on their search engine several keywords or phrases related to the EU, meaning that sooner or later they will stumble upon the material of the eurosphere. Once again the issue is about the society and the interest it shows in EU affairs.

Though I am always cautious and skeptical of generalizations, I would say that there are three main categories of interest among eurologgers. First is the ongoing economic crisis and the issues that are related to it. Second is the way the EU operates. And the third is the discussion on everyday issues that are in one way or another important to European political life.

Of course the trending issues like the economic crisis, or the Arab Spring some time ago, are indeed the ones that attract most of the attention. I think this is normal since bloggers are also part of this society and cannot remain completely detached from the general sentiments and interests.

**An author said that the main barriers for developing a European Public Sphere are three: different languages, culture societies and national media. In your opinion, is more feasible an Europeanization of national public debates than the creation of a transnational European public sphere? We have for example Euractiv or bloggingportal as an example of transnational discussion fora. How the EU blogosphere could build bridges within different national blogospheres? Or maybe it is a responsibility of European institutions to build a framework?**

As I mentioned in the previous question, the primary reason we do not have enough interest in European affairs has to do with the fact that we really do not have a proper political union. Let us be clear and completely honest on this: no one will ever feel any affiliation to a Commissioner, since that is the personification of cold, empty bureaucracy and no one really likes that. People will care about the EU when they know that they are directly affected by it - and a very good way for that to be realized is through direct taxation, though I repeat what we need is less total taxes, I am only speaking of redesigning the issue of "own resources". Once you get European-level taxation, you will get European-level discussions on how to reform the executive and legislative branches of the EU, how to decisively address the democratic deficit, how to make everything more approachable, understandable, transparent and human. Yes human, since now everyone is acting like an emotionless drone, thanks to the kind of "super-official" status EU institutions have.

The fundamental obstacle to a European public sphere is the perverse and ill-shaped institutional structure of the EU. As simple and as clear as that. No language barrier, no cultural diversity, no national medium can be a greater obstacle than this. So if we really want to see a European public sphere out there, we need to be aware that we must ultimately ask for thoroughgoing reform in the way things are done in Europe. I know of course that this is easy to say, but hard to do, but still this does not change the fact that the main obstacle is the current EU design.

Now concerning transnational media, such as Euractiv and Bloggingportal that you mentioned: I know that the people there do a great job and am happy that they are around to strengthen the eurosphere's dynamism. But let us not forget that these, just like all others who produce EU-

oriented material are suppliers of a particular good/service. The point is that few are willing to "buy" that good/service right now - and this is not really our fault, but rather it is the problem of the EU as a whole, which eventually affects us.

So who has responsibility and for what? There really are no definite answers along these lines, though in the end it doesn't really matter, for as long as we can all agree that there will never be a genuine European public sphere, when the EU is more or less a technocratic bureaucracy in Brussels. Whether this much-needed reform comes from citizens or politicians at a national level or even EU officials, it really does not concern me as much, as it is of secondary importance. In the end it might be the eurologgers, but again I repeat that the point is change the current order of things. Though to be more pragmatic, this process will ultimately involve everyone, since we are speaking about a defining moment in European integration.

**In your opinion, what are the pros and contra of internet versus traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) in terms of debating and participation? Do you think internet and the blogosphere can play an important role to create a European Public Sphere (at least online) and at the same time to bring people together in a kind of European Identity?**

Blogs are by far superior to traditional media, in the sense that they allow the individual to offer a different approach to an issue. Established media are filters of information, whereas blogs are creators of information and there clearly is a profound distinction between the two. Though one might say that traditional media are much more reliable and credible; a disputable assertion I may say, since I personally have seen many ignorant "experts" having a vociferous voice on their subject. At least with blogs you know that you are reading something that might not be 100% accurate, hence you are already less likely to be misled - in traditional media, you do not have that level of cautiousness and thus you end up digesting anything they publish, even though it might prove to be non-sense.

Blogs are in fact democratizing the web. Given that a public sphere is all about public communication, blogs can definitely play a very important role in both shaping and dominating the general debate. And allow me to say that we will soon have to abandon this distinction between the "online" and "offline" world, since their dividing line is blurred and will at some point cease to exist. And what I really mean by that is that blogs or social media in general are not really "media". They are 100% social, but they are "reality"/"community", since they are gradually replacing the way we as societies used to communicate in the past. This is nonetheless a process in the making, but still the point is that it really does not make any difference whether the public sphere is "online" or not. The key is to have it, regardless of form.

As for the issue of identity, we need to bear in mind that the kind of identity Europeans can construct, should not resemble the process we had in the 18th/19th/20th centuries of nation-state building. Back then people were identified on the grounds of language or territory or attachment to a state. Today these tools seem rather outdated, since people are now brought together, because they share common principles, because they are conscious that cooperation is much better than confrontation. A european identity need not be a "national" identity, but rather the epitome of mutual respect, collaboration and unprejudiced communication at the individual level. This time the

identity will pretty much derive from the way we see the world "united in diversity" in that is the case - I really see no contradiction here.

Towards that end I really do not think that blogs alone are enough. We need mass participation to that. But we must always be fully aware that this must be the end-result of a process of integration. If we do it the other way round, we might fall into a trap of our own making.

**What does it mean to you “being European”? Could you describe it? How would you link European identity to European citizenship? What common characteristics or shared values do you see in other blogs or in other countries (if any)? For example the European value of democracy that is represented in blogs (if it is represented).**

To me being European means being cosmopolitan, believing in democracy, individual liberty, mutual respect, cultural diversity, openness in new ideas and methods. But most importantly I feel European when I come from Cyprus, to work in Brussels, to speak English or French with people coming from all over Europe, to drink belgian beer and eat spaghetti. It is such everyday moments in life that really matter even though we tend to think of the mythical and historical images that bind us. Yes such general magnitudes are also part of it, but in truth when people from completely diverse backgrounds meet at the same table because they enjoy it, there you have a community. This is identity building. And the more we expand on the channels of our communication the more identity-building we will get. It is as simple as that.

I would not link European identity to European citizenship for the mere reason that citizenship is practically a Community directive that offers us the freedom of establishment and participation in local elections or European Parliament elections. Though these are indeed steps towards the right direction, they still are very limited in scope. Identity is much broader, it is about the "how we feel about ourselves" and no piece of legislation can do that. Only we can, through the conscious decision to live, work and have fun together.

On the issue of blog characteristics, I may not say much since I am not really aware of the grand picture and thus my opinion might be completely in random. I do not want that, so all I can acknowledge is that from what I have seen, Europeans do not disagree on fundamental principles. They only are at odds when it comes to ideas, practices and theories, which however is a healthy aspect of a vibrant democratic environment. It is desirable to have conflicting views, to broaden the pool of ideas. For as long as we all abide by the same principles, we are on the right path.

**Quoting the book “The European Union and the Public Sphere” it says: “A viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate. Analysts have consistently stressed that an important component of the EU’s democratic deficit is the absence of a viable European Public Sphere”. What is your reaction to this? Do you think the bloggers think that they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU affairs and EU?**

I absolutely agree with this quote. However allow me to add one more dimension to it. You cannot have democracy without any particular authority. Who is really the "state" in the EU? Is it the Commission or the European Council or both? Is it the European Parliament or the Council of



Ministers? Is the legislative process "co-decision" or "co-indecision"? I submit to you that not even the people working in these institutions can tell you, first for the reasons I mentioned earlier and second due to over-complexity, over-regulation, bad institutional design, overlapping national interests etc. There simply is no democracy without a definite authority and there is no authority without direct connection to its citizens and there is no democracy without a public sphere. Everything is interconnected. If we lack one we miss them all and for as long as the EU is a "political UFO" we will continue to witness such bizarre phenomena.

I am not sure that bloggers think they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU in its broader sense, though I am pretty much convinced that when the voices of the citizens/bloggers increase and when they reach out to broader society, then we do eventually have a generalized dialogue, which in fact is what democracy is all about. Thus even if there is no conscious driving force behind the eurosphere, at least as far as the democratization process is concerned, eurologgers do help towards that direction. Note though that bloggers alone cannot do this, but they can definitely be part of a wind of change in EU affairs.

**Do you have any thoughts you want to add about the interview, research or topics asked?**

I believe that this interview was a truly unique experience, since it masterfully blends together the core issue of a European public sphere, with the modern trend of blogging and internet social networking. I really believe in the power of blogs, since I personally have had great luck with my blog so far. Moreover it is a way of sending a clear message to people who do not follow blogs that "I care about the EU". If at some point we can all do that, then we will get everything we have discussed within the context of this well-structured interview.

I really thank you for offering me the chance to share my views on the subject and good luck with your master's thesis.

### **Interview James**

<http://www.jcm.org.uk/blog/>

**1) What is your motivation to blog and why mainly European affairs? What is your contribution and what do you expect from other bloggers?**

- It was originally a combination of wanting a mental challenge and because I was bored with the blanket coverage of the build-up to the invasion of Iraq in early 2003. The EU had little to do with Iraq (no common foreign policy!), the differing approaches to Iraq were altering intra-EU relations in an interesting way, and the EU is the most complex and difficult to understand political system ever devised - so certainly worked on the challenge front. An added intention was to give myself writing practice - I was freelancing at the time, and looking for a full-time job in publishing. I needed to improve my writing flexibility, and figured that if I could write interestingly about something as boring as the EU I could write interestingly about anything.

Back then I was blogging purely for myself, with no expectation of an audience. But then I found out people were reading my stuff, so started writing for an audience as well. For several years there was quite a bit of pressure to keep writing regularly to satisfy this fairly small but loyal readership, as there were very few EU-focused blogs out there and mine was one of the few approaching the subject without knee-jerk anti-EU bias.

Now there's less need for me to blog regularly, as there are more bloggers out there covering the same ground. By the time I get around to starting to post, I find someone's already written what I wanted to say - and if you can't contribute something original, what's the point? There are more expert bloggers from within the Brussels bubble now as well, which means that my entirely self-taught EU knowledge is nowhere near as extensive as many of the newer EU bloggers. So I can safely sit back as "the grandfather of Euroblogging" (as someone once called me) and watch the newcomers do the hard work instead. I'm certainly one of the longest-running individual Eurobloggers out there, though some group blogs like A Fistful of Euros have been going longer, and a number of EU bloggers have said that they were in part inspired to start writing themselves by my blog, so I guess my major contribution has been to show people that blogging about the EU in a moderately interesting way is possible.

**2) How would you describe the situation of the current EU blogosphere? Size, participation, topics, deficiencies, strong points, etc...What would you like to improve, what you like most, what you do not like?**

Still small, still few active participants. Bloggingportal.eu may list around 1000 EU-focused blogs, but most aren't regularly updated (my own included), and the vast, vast majority would struggle to get daily readership numbers in triple digits. It's now become a closer-knit community (partially through Bloggingportal, as there's now a core of c.25 Eurobloggers who are all (theoretically) editors on that site who all email each other fairly regularly. But the readership is still tiny. There's little cross-over with national blogospheres (I doubt many big national political bloggers would even be able to name any of their country's leading EU-focused bloggers). Despite chatting away behind the scenes via email and on Twitter, there's little inter-linking of cross-blog conversation going on. There are very few comment discussions on the blogs themselves, and little indication of engagement from the wider public - most people reading and commenting on EU-related blogs are other EU bloggers or Brussels-based wonks.

What would I like to improve? Ambition. More professionalisation. Attempts to achieve syndication in EU-related publications, or newspapers. Some vague attempts along this line have gone on, but never got anywhere. But until EU blogs can reach a wider audience, they're going nowhere fast. This has been the case for the whole of 9 years I've been blogging - and although the base number of EU blogs may be bigger now than it was in 2003, it's still tiny by national political blogosphere standards. This is understandable (no one's interested in the EU), but if anything can overcome the perennial complaints about the EU's lack of a demos, it's the internet. EU bloggers should be exploring every possible avenue to overcome these difficulties and working together to build the first truly pan-continental blogosphere/demos. So far, their ambitions mostly seem to be very limited - they're still pleased to get noticed; they're not ready to direct the debate.

**3) It is said participation and interaction within bloggers is the key of a good functioning, and aim of blogosphere. A common space where people can discuss what they care or are passionate about. How do you describe the interaction in the specific EU blogosphere? And your interaction with other bloggers, by twitter, by comments on blogs? How do you carry on discussion on your blog, or in other blog? And if the blogpost or comments are in another language?**

Most EU blog-related discussion seems to happen on Twitter these days. This is where I have most of my interactions with EU bloggers, functionaries and politicians, at any rate. Little discussion happens on EU blogs themselves, with the exception of a few that have solid communities (e.g. European Tribune, EU Referendum) - but members of these communities rarely if ever interact with anyone on other sites. Some EU bloggers also email each other behind the scenes to discuss ideas for projects - but nothing ever much seems to come of these.

On my own blog, I try to respond to all (reasonable) comments, if I have time, and to treat all opinions as equally valid even when I disagree. The key thing is to be civil to everyone and treat each comment as a valuable contribution to the debate, even if the person writing it is evidently a moron or a troll. It's time-consuming and requires a lot of patience, but it is possible to turn even trolls into constructive participants in a debate with a bit of effort. Sadly, though, I no longer have the time for this.

If the comments are in another language, I'll run through Google/Bing/Babelfish and try to reply if I can - via an auto-translate in the poster's own language if the reply is short, or in English if longer. Most of the comments I get are English, though - one of the advantages of working in the EU's major language.

**4) Do you usually interact with other bloggers writing in other languages, or perhaps just mainly with bloggers using English? How does this interaction affect your point of view of some topics? Do you change your mind? Is there a real debate in some topics? What do you think are the difficulties you mostly face when interacting/discussing with other bloggers? How would you solve it?**

Primarily English-language, but sometimes I've dipped into French (the only other EU language I can vaguely read). It can be extremely useful for gaining different perspectives, but with my poor language skills I can't do it often. I have grand plans for setting up a pan-European site that will translate as much strong political commentary and debate into as many languages as possible, which I'm still working on, but it's extremely hard to find ways to monetize that kind of project - and without money, building a consistent-enough service via volunteers is very hard indeed.

**5) Some topics or issues spoken at European level affect people not only from one country, but all member of the EU (EU agricultural policy for example). Other issues affect mainly national policy of some EU members, but are interesting to other EU members (French elections for example). In your opinion, what are the most interesting topics for bloggers, independently of language and nationality? Why? Are some topics creating more interactivity within**

**bloggers of different language, for example the current economic crisis, where people want to know what Spanish/Italians/Greeks think of Germans and French think? How can we make more people interested in the EU (if they are not already interested)?**

That's a \*huge\* question. Every blogger's interests are different - I've yet to find any issue that has interested all EU bloggers. Hell, even the Eurozone crisis hasn't got everyone talking - in fact, quite the opposite. There's been remarkably little discussion of this among EU bloggers, probably because it involves significant understanding of finance/economics, and most EU bloggers are more solidly political/policy-based in focus.

As for how to make more people interested in the EU? I'm not sure if self-selected EU bloggers are the right people to do it. By definition we're not representative, as we're interested in the EU - the vast, vast majority of people simply aren't. Why? Because pretty much everything the EU works on is mundane, boring, minute details of trade regulations. People aren't interested in the details, they don't understand what the EU does, and they don't really care. And EU bloggers tend to get bogged down in details - because often the details are the only way to explain how the EU works, and why it's important. If you go for the big picture with the EU, you either run out of things to say or end up saying the same thing over and over again - I've written posts on the cost-efficiency of EU-level regulation over national literally dozens of times over the years, and will probably write dozens more. And what's more, many readers won't believe your big picture overview of the EU if it contradicts their preconceptions - at which point you have to dig down into the details to answer all of their questions. And you need to do this with every single reader as an individual to help them understand it all. Otherwise you'll end up with an EU FAQ post that would run into tens if not hundreds of thousands of words. (And yes, I have thought about writing this stupidly long post as a book - but no one would buy it, because no one's interested in the EU...)

**6) An author said<sup>1</sup> that the main barriers for developing a European Public Sphere are three: different languages, culture societies and national media. In your opinion, is more feasible an Europeanization of national public debates than the creation of a transnational European public sphere? We have for example Euractiv or bloggingportal as an example of transnational discussion fora. How the EU blogosphere could build bridges within different national blogospheres? Or maybe it is a responsibility of European institutions to build a framework?**

Until machine translation gets better, a pan-European public sphere simply isn't going to happen. At the moment, machine translation is just about OK to and from English, French, Spanish and possibly Dutch, but for most other European languages it's pretty poor. And for many EU discussions, machine translation will never be good enough - there are too many technical terms when discussing policy and procedure that would require a bespoke EU auto-translation tool. Considering even Google and Microsoft haven't managed to develop a decent machine translator yet, I have zero faith that the EU would be able to develop anything workable by itself.

As for building connections with national blogospheres - it's up to the individual EU bloggers to connect with national counterparts on relevant issues and network to hell to get a profile in the

national blogospheres. In the UK, Jon Worth and I both have good relations with a chunk of the national-level bloggers, mostly because we've been going a long time and have met lots of them. But as so many EU bloggers seem to be based in Brussels, meeting national-level bloggers in the flesh can be a lot harder. And it takes time to be taken seriously. Most EU bloggers have only been going 2-3 years. This is rarely long enough to have built up a decent online network to help spread your work, even with the likes of Twitter making networking easier than ever before.

**7) In your opinion, what are the pros and contra of internet versus traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) in terms of debating and participation? Do you think internet and the blogosphere can play an important role to create a European Public Sphere (at least online) and at the same time to bring people together in a kind of European Identity?**

This is a massive question. Short answer - the internet is theoretically the best tool for political debate ever, allowing easy sourcing/referencing to factual information to demonstrate the truth/flasehood of claims, and instant discussion between more people than ever before. But it lacks the focus of traditional media. It's too easy for the sensible points to get lost in a mass of noise, anger, lies and distortions. Yes, it could help to create a European Public Sphere that could be a massive benefit to European democracy, but it can also - far more easily - help to facilitate the spread untruths that distort public perception, acting in a completely negative way on European democracy. The increase in support for far right groups across Europe can in part be attributed to this - it's now far, far easier for them to spread their paranoia and distortions. And the internet - due to the short attention spans it encourages - loves extremes. Nationalist anti-immigration rhetoric is perfect for the online world - it's short, easy to explain, and appeals to base instincts in the same way that porn does. Liberal centrism, on the other hand, is almost always more nuanced and detailed - people don't have the time or inclination to wade through long articles explaining why immigration can actually be a positive thing, with statistics and studies to back this up.

**8) What does it mean to you "being European"? Could you describe it? How would you link European identity to European citizenship? What common characteristics or shared values do you see in other blogs or in other countries (if any)? For example the European value of democracy that is represented in blogs (if it is represented).**

Nothing at all. Europe's just where I happen to have been born. There's a certain shared cultural identity across European countries, but this is more due to a common Christian heritage and shared historical experience than anything. I feel more "Western" than I do European - these are almost, but not quite, synonymous. I don't see the need for a European identity. I simply am European - it doesn't \*mean\* anything.

**9) Quoting the book "The European Union and the Public Sphere"<sup>2</sup> it says: "A viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate. Analysts have consistently stressed that an important component of the EU's democratic deficit is the absence of a viable European Public Sphere". What is your reaction to this? Do you think the bloggers think that they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU affairs and EU?**

It's been an ongoing argument ever since I've been writing about the EU, and long before that. And yes, you do need a demos and pan-European debate for the EU to work as a pan-European democratic political entity. The question really is this what the EU should be?

Bloggers certainly do think that they're contributing towards this in a small way, but realistically they're reaching such a tiny proportion of the European public that we're still a very, very long way away from achieving this.

**10) Do you have any thoughts you want to add about the interview, research or topics asked?**

### **Interview Jon Worth**

<http://www.jonworth.eu/>

- 1. What is your motivation to blog and why mainly European affairs? What is your contribution and what do you expect from other bloggers?**

I'm fascinated by EU politics, it has been something that I've been following closely for more than a decade. When my term as President of the Young European Federalists came to an end in 2005 I knew people would not be asking me to conferences any more to discuss politics, but yet I still had ideas – I used the blog to express those. That motivation is still strong, as is the need to put forward an alternative view of the EU not typically found in the UK newspapers.

My blog is the second longest running, in English at least, dedicated to the EU (only Nosemonkey has been going longer), so above all I have contributed a lot of content and ideas to the EU blogosphere over more than 6 years. I was, together with Stefan Happer and Andreas Müllerleile, one of the founders of BloggingPortal – the discussions to start it commenced around my dining table!

My expectation from other bloggers is much the same as I try to provide to other bloggers – thoughtful critique and exchange of ideas, although increasingly this is done through Twitter rather than on blogs directly.

- 2. How would you describe the situation of the current EU blogosphere? Size, participation, topics, deficiencies, strong points, etc...What would you like to improve, what you like most, what you do not like?**

EU blogging remains patchy. We do not have the people or the capacity to cover everything that's going on in the EU. There are plenty of people discussing the everyday politics in Brussels and how the EU institutions (don't) work. There are also a fair few journalists who have taken to blogging. We are however lacking good blogging politicians (MEPs or Commissioners), and there are few blogs with a solid policy or economics focus.

Above all I value the knowledge and friendliness of the EU blogosphere – it is much more civilised than the UK political blogosphere, and more egalitarian too!

- 3. It is said participation and interaction within bloggers is the key of a good functioning, and aim of blogosphere. A common space where people can discuss what they care or are passionate about. How do you describe the interaction in the specific EU blogosphere? And your interaction with other bloggers, by twitter, by comments on blogs? How do you carry on discussion on your blog, or in other blog? And if the blogpost or comments are in another language?**

I do not often comment on other blogs – I am more likely to raise an issue on Twitter. Also, particularly in the last 12 months, my blog has taken on more of a UK-EU relations focus, and there are very few blogs in that area. So there are less opportunities to build networks of bloggers around a particular topic. I know a lot of bloggers offline, so we meet to talk politics quite often, and keep the conversation going on Twitter.

- 4. Do you usually interact with other bloggers writing in other languages, or perhaps just mainly with bloggers using English? How does this interaction affect your point of view of some topics? Do you change your mind? Is there a real debate in some topics? What do you think are the difficulties you mostly face when interacting/discussing with other bloggers? How would you solve it?**

I can read German and French as well as English. I hence follow a few blogs in French, but there are few or no good EU politics blogs in German. I do debate German politics – in German and in English – on Twitter though, mostly with political people I know from Berlin. I am also fascinated by Nordic politics, so try to keep an eye on what political bloggers and politicians are writing there, although I cannot speak any Nordic language properly.

I am not sure how much reading blogs from other countries gives me an alternative perspective. I have always been a rather reluctant Brit, someone ill at ease with the politics of the country where I grew up. So I am always seeking alternative views in whatever I do – including but not exclusively on blogs.

- 5. Some topics or issues spoken at European level affect people not only from one country, but all member of the EU (EU agricultural policy for example). Other issues affect mainly national policy of some EU members, but are interesting to other EU members (French elections for example). In your opinion, what are the most interesting topics for bloggers, independently of language and nationality? Why? Are some topics creating more interactivity within bloggers of different language, for example the current economic crisis, where people want to know what Spanish/Italians/Greeks think of Germans and French think? How can we make more people interested in the EU (if they are not already interested)?**

This ties in with the point above about the deficiencies of the blogosphere – we do not have bloggers or coverage that completely reflect the major political issues of the day. For me the

important things to blog about are ones that are not adequately covered in the mainstream media, give a radically different perspective (all the things I write about political framing for example), and then beyond that I try to tell stories about how the EU works, making it digestible for people who otherwise would find it dull.

6. **An author said<sup>130</sup> that the main barriers for developing a European Public Sphere are three: different languages, culture societies and national media. In your opinion, is more feasible an Europeanization of national public debates than the creation of a transnational European public sphere? We have for example Euractiv or bloggingportal as an example of transnational discussion fora. How the EU blogosphere could build bridges within different national blogospheres? Or maybe it is a responsibility of European institutions to build a framework?**

I'm rather a sceptic about all of this Habermas / public sphere debate. I've written a blog touching on this: <http://www.jonworth.eu/my-father-and-the-european-demos/> If people see how they can play a role in EU politics, control it, then they will participate. That's the way to build things, not to build the sphere first and the politics second.

7. **In your opinion, what are the pros and contra of internet versus traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) in terms of debating and participation? Do you think internet and the blogosphere can play an important role to create a European Public Sphere (at least online) and at the same time to bring people together in a kind of European Identity?**

See answer to Q7. The mainstream media does the this happened, so that happened kind of coverage. It's important, and the factual accuracy of it could be improved. But online discussion is vital as well, as a place for new ideas to flourish and debate to take place.

However the EU blogosphere cannot ever become a mass communications medium – it is too narrow and nerdy in its coverage.

8. **What does it mean to you “being European”? Could you describe it? How would you link European identity to European citizenship? What common characteristics or shared values do you see in other blogs or in other countries (if any)? For example the European value of democracy that is represented in blogs (if it is represented).**

I can't define it, but I can feel it, not least when I am outside the European Union. There are common values that hold us together in the EU, and Europeans have a more complex and nuanced idea of the quality of life than any other part of the world I have ever visited. Europe is not just about how much money you can make, and how quickly you can make it.

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<sup>130</sup> Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "The Missing European Public Sphere and the Absence of Imagined European Citizenship," *European Societies* 9, no. 5 (2007).



9. Quoting the book “The European Union and the Public Sphere” it says: “A viable public sphere is a central precondition for democracy because it enables widespread public debate. Analysts have consistently stressed that an important component of the EU’s democratic deficit is the absence of a viable European Public Sphere”. What is your reaction to this? Do you think the bloggers think that they are contributing towards the democratization of the EU affairs and EU?

You can debate all you like, but if the political beast is impossible to change then what’s the point? I suppose China has a public sphere, but for what *purpose*? All citizens are capable of multiple levels of identity and engagement – local, regional, national, European. The problem is that the EU has institutional issues that prevent even active citizens being able to have any control over what’s happening. That’s much more important to fix than the communications aspects. Make the EU a properly democratic, federal system and the comms will sort themselves out.

10. Do you have any thoughts you want to add about the interview, research or topics asked?