

The European Commission and European Public Spheres [DRAFT VERSION]

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Abstract

The paper performs a close and critical reading of the European Commission's "White Paper on a European Communication Policy" (COM (2006) 35). In particular it focuses on the use of the key notions "communication", "politics", "the political", "the people", and "the citizen" in order to analyse the understanding of the public sphere at work in this policy document. The motivation for the White Paper is the legitimation crises facing the EU after the rejection of the EU constitution by "the people" in Holland and France. According to the analysis in the White Paper, the EU needs to communicate better with its citizens and stakeholders, and it is deemed necessary to form a "European Public Sphere" in which European political and social issues are discussed and deliberated. In the White Paper the European Public Sphere is presented as a complement to existing public spheres, local, national and transnational, European and global. But instead of engaging with these multiple European Public Spheres and devising a strategy to empower them, the White Paper suggests the construction of a singular and uniform European Public Sphere based on a traditional understanding of politics as a matter of "public issues" and the political as a question of communication between rulers and subjects. However, in our age "the personal is political" and politics is a matter of forming identities as well as opinions. The White Paper also discusses using both traditional mass media and new digital media to communicate with EU citizens, but there is little or no understanding that in new media the separation of public and private is unclear or non-existent. These are some of the tensions and contradictions that reverberates in the Commission's White Paper.

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Introduction

It has become increasingly common over the past year to read and hear that "the European Union is facing a legitimization crisis." The first thing to note is that this statement has different meanings in different places in Europe. In some places it defines the true nature of the state of the union and is a signal to counter-act or undo the homogenizing and centralizing efforts of the past 20 years. In other places the statement is not true at all, here the EU designates a legitimate hope for social security, political democracy, economic development and prosperity. In yet other places, the legitimization crisis is true enough, but defines both a challenge and an opportunity to transform the EU and its institutions in a way that will make them legitimate in a democratic sense. It is this last view that is found in speeches, statements, policy documents, etc., coming from representatives of the European Commission since the referendums on the EU Constitution in the Netherlands and France last year. In a speech delivered at "Stakeholders' Forum" (co-organised by the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission), in Brussels on November 7, 2005, EU-commissioner Vladimir Spidla said that "there is a gap that has developed between [the political leaders] and the citizens" and that "Europe should come closer to and reconnect itself with the concerns of its citizens."¹ The speech obviously had a wider audience than those present at the meeting, addressing the people in the EU member states that have shown dissatisfaction with and are critical to the union, but also the EU institutions and admonishing them to reform and become more open and democratic. The speech was not primarily addressed to those peoples that have a strong faith in and commitment to the EU.

However, when talking about an EU legitimization crisis one is not only, or not primarily, referring to the failure (but even this word is disputed) of the EU constitution.² The talk of a legitimization crisis goes back to the very first years of the

new millennium.³ Another sign of crisis was the rejection by referendum in Sweden (which was perceived as a strong supporter of the EU) of the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 2003 by the extraordinary margin of 14 percent. But are these signs of crises really about the EU or are they rather expressions of domestic politics? It has been said that the result of the French referendum to some extent was a vote against the French president, but that is hardly sufficient to explain the rejection of the EU constitution. The French people certainly have other ways of showing their discontent with their political leadership.

What is it then that people dislike about the EU? Well, the short list would be something like this: EU bureaucracy and the legalistic culture of EU; the perceived distance to Brussels; threats to economic stability and social security; the quite limited perceived benefits for "ordinary" people; and the unwillingness and inability for people to get involved with "Europe" and to identify with it in the way they do with their own country. Whereas the last item on the list defines an apparent lack of European identity, what Fritz Scharpf would call a lack of "input" legitimacy, the other items are based on the feeling that the EU does not deliver sufficient benefits, what Scharpf calls a lack of "output" legitimacy.⁴ According to Scharpf and others, the only possible road for the EU to achieve legitimacy – at least for the moment – must be based on outputs, on efficient governance.⁵ But there are those who disagree, and in particular those who argue that legitimacy is dependent on the relationship between "inputs" and "outputs".⁶ If the EU is able to deliver long term social security and economic development (output legitimacy), it will receive popular support and (input) legitimacy. As a matter of fact there has been a long and divers discussions about the need of and conditions for forming and fostering a "European identity".⁷

After the rejection of the EU constitution in referendums in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the Commission called for a period of "reflection". During this period the Commission has published a number of policy documents calling for reform of the EU. In the report "Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate" (2005), the Commission presented an outline for how to improve "communication" in the EU and between the EU and its stakeholders.⁸ In February this year, the Commission presented the result of the reflection period in a "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", which I discuss in this paper. Before venturing further it is important to stress that these papers, just like the speech quoted above, have two principal sets of addressees: on the one hand EU institutions and Member States

governments; on the other media and civil society, including ordinary people and “European citizens”. But more generally it is addressed to those who believe that there is a EU-legitimation crisis. I will return to the question of address below.

Why “communication policy”?

How does the Commission address the perceived legitimation crisis in the “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”? How does it understand the crisis? The short answer is that it is a question of a “communication gap”.⁹ That means on the one hand that the Commission seems to believe that there is a lack of understanding of the EU, that people have yet failed to understand the nature of the EU. In other words, if people only understood the EU properly, then they would take it to their hearts.¹⁰ But whereas the Commission previously have [blamed] this “information gap” or “knowledge gap” on others, it now takes on responsibility for failing to communicate with its stakeholders. According to the White Paper, the lack of legitimacy is ultimately dependent on a communication problem:

The European Commission is therefore proposing a fundamentally new approach – a decisive move away from one-way communication to reinforced dialogue, from an institution-centred to a citizen-centred communication, from a Brussels-based to a more decentralized approach. Communication should become an EU policy in its own right, at the service of its citizens. It should be based on a genuine dialogue between the people and the policymakers and lively political discussion among citizens themselves. People from all walks of life should have the right to fair and full information about the EU, and be confident that the views and concerns they express are heard by the EU institutions.¹¹

The Commission states explicitly that without well functioning communication and dialogue, it will be impossible to build and maintain the level of confidence and trust needed in order to create “support for the European project.”¹²

On the other hand, the “communication gap” is also said to consist in an inability to communicate that is an inherent deficiency in the EU and its institutions. The failure of the EU to communicate defines a lack of openness, a lack of transparency, a lack of democracy. In other words, the EU must become “more

responsive, open, accessible” and start “listening to citizens”.¹³ While this second meaning of the “communication gap” primarily is internal to the EU as organization, the first is also about how the EU is represented and interpreted in European media and how it is presented to the general public. The White Paper deals with these two aspects of a European “communication policy” both separately and in conjunction. In my discussion in this paper I primarily deal with the first aspect of the “communication gap.”

Although the White Paper states that there are several reasons for the “communication gap”, the most important single factor is the absence of a European public sphere and the Commission deems it absolutely necessary for the future of the EU that such a sphere comes into existence.¹⁴ Hence the Commission strongly encourages and supports the creation and development of a “European public sphere.”¹⁵ What is meant by this term? In the academic and intellectual world the notion of public sphere is a contested concept, but a wide (if weak) definition would claim that a public sphere constitutes the expression of the political identity of a group. But even if there does not exist an agreement among scholars what exactly defines a public sphere, any reader of Jürgen Habermas knows that public spheres are not created top-down but bottom-up, and they have their base not in governments and public authorities but in the private sphere and in civil society.¹⁶ Further, as Hannah Arendt would have argued, public spheres emerge in the process in which people debate common and controversial issues in public, not when authorities tries to cure a legitimation crisis.¹⁷ Although the Commission in the White Paper shows itself aware of the first condition and writes that a European public sphere “cannot be shaped in Brussels,”¹⁸ it seems unaware of the second condition (that the public sphere should spring out of and be based in the private sphere and independent of public authorities).¹⁹ In fact, it could be argued that in the White Paper the Commission demonstrates an understanding of the public sphere that is directly opposite to the one found in modern political theory (as in Arendt and Habermas). Furthermore, the White Paper shows no awareness of the changing relations between the private and public both in contemporary society and in political theory since the late 1980’s.²⁰ The feminist slogan that “the personal is political” from the 1970’s has taken on new meanings in the identity politics of the 1990’s.²¹ Today politics is as much a matter of forming personal and group identities as a question of shaping public opinions. This unawareness of the shifting separation and problematic relation between private and

public becomes even more apparent in the discussion in the White Paper of the use of new digital media to communicate with EU citizens. The Commission shows little or no understanding that in new media the separation of public and private is unclear or non-existent.

Genesis and presentation

Before proceeding further with the analysis of the content of the Commission's "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", it is necessary to say something about its genesis and presentation, as well as about the language and form of the document. In order to ensure involvement of people and input from different stakeholders, the Commission has staged open meetings and focus groups and consulted other EU institutions during the writing process. It also seems as if the Commission has consulted academic researchers. The open meetings have been well documented and on the Commission's website there are several hundred photographs available.²² The White Paper is furthermore described as a missive both to the EU institutions (with an imperative to reform) and to the European people (with a request to respond).²³ In the White Paper, the Commission explicitly asks for response on the suggested European Communication Policy and has created a special website where people can express their opinions under the six month consultation period. Although the White Paper is written in the official and formal language of an EU policy document, considerably effort seems to have been made to use a language that will communicate better with people from "all walks of life." It is, however, easy to get the impression that the whole process of putting together the White Paper has been conceived and executed by a marketing agency or consultant in planned marketing. This impression is not only due to the way the White Paper is packaged on the Commission website, but also by the language in the text itself. There are a significant number of terms and phrases that belong to the jargon of planned communication rather than to political rhetoric or academic language. To give just a few examples: "reinforced dialogue", "genuine dialogue"; "ensure a robust European debate" [...]. It may also be noted that the notion of communication as a problem sounds like an echo from popular psychology of the 1970's (when all problems in relationships stemmed from an inability to communicate). Perhaps the use of this notion not only refers to a communication gap, but also designates a generation gap? In a similar vein one could analyze the frequent uses of key terms such as "communication" (in the

first three pages of the White Paper the word is used 14 times), “the people” and “citizens”, that reek of political rhetoric. In contrast, the term ‘public sphere’ is used only eight times throughout the White Paper (and three of these are in quotation marks). These comments are not put forth as criticism of the White Paper, but rather to show what complex stylistic devices and textual structures are at work in it.

As regards address, I have already noted that the White Paper has two primary target audiences – EU institutions and EU skeptics – and more generally it is addressed to those who believe there is a genuine EU legitimization crisis. But one could also say that the Commission is attempting to connect these audiences with each other.

Scope and form of the White paper

The White Paper is divided into two major parts:

- I Putting communication at the service of citizens
- II Taking work forward

The first part is divided into two sections: first presenting the need for a communication policy “in its own right”, which I have discussed above; and the second calls for “Enhanced Debate and Dialogue – A European public sphere.” The White Paper states quite correctly that “in today’s Europe, citizens exercise their political rights mainly at national and local level.”²⁴ Although citizens have a right to participate in elections to the European parliament, they “learn about politics and political issues largely through their national education systems and via their national, regional and local media.”²⁵ This view tallies with what has been shown in a number of empirical studies (not referred to in the White paper) over the past 10 years.²⁶ To the extent that citizens take part in political discussion of European issues, it is mainly in their own communities and from the regional point of view.

In short, the ‘public sphere’ within which political life takes place in Europe is largely a national sphere. To the extent that European issues appear on the agenda at all, they are seen by most citizens from a national perspective. The media remain largely national, partly due to language barriers, there are few

meeting places where Europeans from different Member States can get to know each other and address issues of common interest.²⁷

The Commission then notes that the fact that public spheres exist only on national and regional levels, stands in sharp contrast to the circumstance that many policy decisions that “affect daily life for people in the EU are taken at European level.”²⁸ According to the White Paper this creates a feeling of distance to and “alienation from ‘Brussels’”. Although this to some extent may reflect “the disenchantment with politics in general”, the Commission also believes that the “development of a ‘European public sphere’” is necessary in order to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens.²⁹ But it is not only imperative to develop a “pan-European political culture”, “Europe also needs to find its place in the existing national, regional, and local ‘public spheres’ and the public discussion across Member States must be deepened.”³⁰ This view is in line with the academic research of Thomas Risse, who argues that a European public sphere cannot exist separately from national public spheres.³¹ Risse has suggested the following set of criteria for a European public sphere:

1. The same (European) issues are discussed at the same time with similar levels of attention across national public spheres;
2. Similar frames of reference, meaning structures, and patterns of interpretation are used across national public spheres;
3. A transnational community of communication emerges in which speakers and listeners recognize each other as legitimate participants in a common discourse.³²

A pan-European public sphere is constructed through social and discursive practices that create a common horizon of reference and, at the same time, a transnational community of communication over issues that concern “us as Europeans” rather than as Finns, Swedes or Germans. In order to accomplish both a European public sphere and a European dimension in national (and regional) debate, the Commission writes that “national public authorities, civil society, and the EU institutions need to work together to develop Europe’s place in the public sphere.”³³

[...]

Taking work forward

The second part of the White Paper is divided into five sections:

- i. Defining common principles
- ii. Empowering Citizens
- iii. Working with the media and new technologies
- iv. Understanding public opinion
- v. Doing the job together

The first section starts from the rights to information and freedom of expression stated in the EU Treaty and in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.³⁴ Arguing from these rights, the Commission suggests the framing of a “European Charter or Code of Conduct on Communication” as a way to ensure that all citizens should have access to information in their own language about matters of public concern, to ensure diversity in the public debate, and to ensure that all citizens have “the right to express their views, be heard and have the opportunity for dialogue with decision-makers.”³⁵ This idea of a Charter or Code of Conduct for a European Public Sphere is not new, for example it has been presented by Jean-Marc Ferry in a study from 2000.³⁶ Just like the Commission, Ferry argues from the point of view of citizens’ political rights on the need to frame a charter for audiovisual media in Europe in order to ensure both that citizens get sufficient information about European issues and that the public actively can participate in the discussion of public questions. In the language of Ferry, it is a question of the necessity to “constitutionalize the fourth power” (i.e. the media).³⁷ Ferry suggests that such a charter should be written either by national governments or by elected representatives of the European people (i.e. the European Parliament).³⁸ Ferry suggests that the charter then should be signed by European television channels. In his study, he discusses at length the normative status of such a Charter and how to implement it. In contrast to Ferry, the Commission argues in the White Paper that any commitment to such a Charter or Code of Conduct should be “made on a voluntary basis.”³⁹

[...]

According to the White Paper the next step in improving communication in the EU is by “empowering citizens” through civic education, by enabling citizens to

communicate with each other, and connecting citizens and public institutions. Although the Commission argues that “civic education is a national or regional responsibility”, it argues that the EU can “help to ensure exchange of best practice and facilitate the development of common educational ‘tools’ so that the European dimension is reflected more effectively.”⁴⁰ The White Paper then suggests a number of ways that the member states could and should empower their citizens which, unfortunately, there is not enough space to discuss here. However, considering the strong trends in the past decades of several European national governments to disempower local authorities, it is interesting that the Commission in this way would seem to challenge national sovereignty.⁴¹ As I will discuss more later, one can get the impression that the Commission is enacting what could be called a Cleisthenian manouvre, that is to bypass both national governments and national public spheres in order to provide both the EU and the Commission with an independent power base and popular legitimacy.

The third section discusses how the EU should work “with the media and new technologies” in order enhance communication in Europe. One would imagine that in an ambition to support the formation of a European public sphere, the Commission would put strong emphasis on the role of media, and in particular news media. And indeed, the Commission states that “media are key players in any European communication policy.”⁴² The Commission notes first that “all European institutions have made considerable efforts to improve the way they interact with the media,” but that despite this “media coverage of European issues remains limited and fragmented.”⁴³ The latter observation concurs with most (if not all) findings by academic research.⁴⁴ The Commission argues that even more should be done in this vein and suggests the creation of a “European Programme for Training in Public Communication” for EU and national officials (in other words to provide opportunity for media training) as well as cooperating with “a wide range of media players how to better provide the media [...] with material.”⁴⁵ The Commission then notes that in certain sectors the situation is not improving but actually is deteriorating. This is particularly the case in television and radio where the coverage of serious and political news has been “squeezed still further.” To improve the situation the Commission suggests the launching of pan-European television channel and to make extensive use of new media technologies, in particular the Internet (Europe by

Satellite).⁴⁶ In short, the Commission chastises the media for not paying attention and not taking their full responsibility for creating a European public sphere.

In this section of the White Paper, the Commission also makes reference to the initiative made in “Plan D” to close the digital divide and in this way work for increasing communication and democracy in Europe. This sounds all very nice and is in line with the ambition to close the “communication gap.” However, and as any media historian knows, with the introduction of ‘new’ media the separation and relationship between public and private changes radically. Although the introduction of writing in human society is not sufficient to explain why laws were made public and available to the people, or that deliberative rhetoric in any sense explains the rise of democracy in Athens, but a democratic society cannot do without written and public laws and public political discussion. Likewise, the invention and spread of printing in Europe in the 15th century was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the rise of the modern nation state, with or without a constitution, with or without a parliament, democratic or not democratic. At the same time as all these media inventions acted as agents of social change, they also redrew the boundaries between and functions of private and public, often in perplexing ways. For instance, the personal diary becomes a cultural practice only in reformation Europe, but as its role was to be a bridge between the individual soul and the religious community, it was not really private at all. Similarly, silent reading becomes a ‘common’ practice in Europe only in the 17th century, thereby making way for the exploration of the soul in the modern novel. The history of the newspaper, from its beginnings in the 16th century to its maturity in the 19th and 20th centuries and crucial the development of modern society, is also the history of the changing relations between private and public. And during the 20th century, the extent to which radio and television are considered as active agents of social change in Western society is connected to their effect on the delimitation of the private and public spheres.

It may well be that massive use of modern information and communication technology (ICT) is necessary for the future both of Europe and the EU. However, it is important to understand that with ICT the material separation of private media and public media collapses. Many of the devices the we use today to communicate with each other – cellular telephones, computers, game consoles, television sets – are simultaneously personal and public media platforms. Before the advent of the cellular

telephone, a telephone conversation was in general taking place in private, but that is no longer something that one can take for granted (hence the almost automatic opening question: “where are you, can you talk?”). Although in contemporary society the printed book or magazine is almost by definition understood as a public media, and a personal diary (written on paper in a book) is understood as private, a blogg (webb-logg) is something of a hybrid. Therefore, when public officials, leading politicians and other public figures communicate with the public through an official blogg, it is hard to say whether it is question of private or public communication. In the academic community and in the business world one talks about ‘converging media’, but it is unclear what – if anything – they are converging towards. Perhaps it is better to talk of ‘hybrid media’? In any case, the contemporary media landscape is characterized by indeterminacy and de-limitation of the distinction between private and public. Although it is too early to say how this will affect society and the relation between media and politics, one can be certain that the changes will depend on how we decide to use the ‘new’ media. Although inherent technical properties of media are important, they are not decisive factors for media use and media culture. It is also important to remember that ICT is not only about communication media, it also refers to administration and logistics, to storing and managing information, both personal and public.

The fourth section is devoted to “understanding European public opinion”, which here primarily means conducting opinion polls and media surveys and then analysing the results. The White Paper stresses that European public opinion is complex and diverse, and that understanding it poses a “particular challenge.” The use of surveys is said to have become increasingly important with the “tendency for citizens to withdraw from traditional politics (joining political parties, voting in elections, etc.).”⁴⁷ For this reason the Commission created a research institute for study of public opinion (Eurobarometer) already in the 1970’s.⁴⁸ However, it is stated that a “re-assessment of the methodology is currently under way with a view to responding to the pressing need to have a broader and deeper understanding of trends in European public opinion.”⁴⁹ This would certainly be needed since the past Eurobarometer polls have failed to understand the public opinion on the European constitution.⁵⁰ The “post-referendum” polls have been more directly targeted to national public audiences and their specific opinions.⁵¹

[...]

The fifth section begins by stating that a “working European ‘public sphere’ cannot be shaped in Brussels”, but “can only emerge if the objective is backed by all the key actors and taken forward at every level.”⁵² As has already been noted, the Commission appears to have a rather peculiar understanding of what constitutes a public sphere. This becomes very striking when they list the “key actors”: (1) Member States; (2) EU institutions; (3) Regional and local authorities; (4) Political parties; and (5) Civil society organizations.⁵³ If this had been an answer in a university examination, the student would not have got any points. Although it certainly would be possible to include both parliament and political parties in the notion of a public sphere, public (and executive) authorities are by definition excluded. It is the role, exactly, of any public sphere to act independently of public authority. Otherwise it would not be possible for it to keep a check on political powers, to deliberate freely on political questions and to be the space where political opinion takes shape. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the order in which the Commission lists the “key players.” The fact that it puts itself and other EU institutions on second place is not only a courtesy, but reflects that it considers the national level as “the primary entry point into any political debate, and Member States’ governments and other national actors have a responsibility to use national channels to ensure a robust European debate.”⁵⁴ Likewise, it is very significant that it puts “civil society organizations” at the bottom of the list. In any other context civil society not only would come first, but often serves as synonym for the public sphere. Now, the Commission’s White Paper on a European communication policy is not an exam paper and it might be considered idle to attempt to correct or criticize its use and understanding of the notion of a public sphere. At the same time, the White Paper is a very interesting and important document, not only in outlining a EU communication policy and doing its best to live up to the policy it puts forward, but in attempting to push the European project ahead and further towards the idea of an integrated EU. One may not like this idea or agree with the conception of a European public sphere that the Commission is using, but that is challenge that should not remain unanswered.

It should also be noted, that in other contexts the Commission and their representatives have expressed views of the public sphere that are more in line with how it is used in political science. For instance, in a talk given at the second day of the

“Stakeholder’s Forum” mentioned in the introduction to this paper, EU commissioner Margot Wallström strongly emphasized the role of civil society in constructing a European public sphere.⁵⁵ [...]

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Another question that could be raised in this context concerns the implicit and explicit understanding of the notion of ‘the political’ in the White Paper. An often used definition of ‘the political’ today is a discussion of issues that concerns the community and (especially) discussions of the goals and objectives of a community. The everyday interest of Europeans are probably quite similar to those of other countries: social security, education, health care, work and employment, law and justice. But at the moment these are not perceived as European questions. If the EU took a more active role in discussing and regulating any of these issues, for example social security and the labour market, these would certainly become pan-European political issues. So far the EU has not strongly moved in that direction. Another question that one may want to reflect on is what kind of space a European public sphere might define. Should a European public sphere refer to a way of discussing and solving shared economical political problems, in other words a political European public sphere; or should it rather be something else. Perhaps a ‘cultural’ public sphere, where ‘culture’ refers to everything from the Eurovision Song Contest and football to agriculture and horticulture?

In conclusion I would like to make the following remark: Although the Commission in the White Paper talks about the lack of a European public sphere, it talks about “European citizens” as if they already existed.⁵⁶ Is this an interpellation? Is this perchance a performative speech act? Are we now, by token of this rhetorical address, to consider ourselves “European citizens? And what does that mean? Just to be sure I took out my passport, and yes, there it is: “European Union. Sweden. Passport.” Do I sound European to you? Am I addressing you as Europeans? Are we perchance in a European public space at this very moment? Answering the call from Commission?

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³ Daniel Wincott, "The Governance White Paper, the Commission and the Search for Legitimacy", in A. Arnall & D. Wincott (eds.), *Accountability and Legitimacy in the European Union* (Oxford, Oxford U.P. 2002), pp. 379-398; Craig Calhoun, "The Democratic Integration of Europe. Interests, identity, and the public sphere", in *Eurozine* (<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-06-21-calhoun-en.html>); Leif Dahlberg, "'All makt utgår från folket.' Retoriska strategier för legitimering i rätt och litteratur", *Retfaerd* 104 (2004, No. 1), pp. 22-45.

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⁶ Wincott, "The Governance White Paper, the Commission and the Search for Legitimacy", p. 382.

⁷ Sture Linnér, *Europas födelse* (Stockholm, Natur & kultur, (1991) 1994).

⁸ European Commission (2005). "Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate" (COM (2005) 494).

⁹ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy" (COM (2006) 35), p. 4. I will base my discussion on the English language version of this document. [On occasion I have compared the text to Danish, French, German, and Swedish language versions.]

¹⁰ Peter Strandbrink, *Förnuftets entoniga röst. Om EU-kampanjens demokratiska rum och medborgarskapets villkor* (Huddinge, Södertörns högskola, 2003).

¹¹ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", p. 4.

¹² European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", p. 4.

¹³ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", p. 7.

¹⁴ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", p. 5.

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), trans. T. Burger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, (1989) 1991).

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958)

¹⁸ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", p. 11.

¹⁹ It can be noted that EU commissioner Margot Wallström, in a speech delivered at Stakeholders' Forum (co-organised by the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission) in Brussels, November 8, 2005, seemed to give stronger emphasis to the role of civil society in the creation of a European public sphere. See Margot Wallström, "Bridging the Gap: How to bring Europe and its citizens closer together?" (available at www.eesc.europa.eu/stakeholders_forum/08_11_2005/speech_Wallström_en.pdf).

²⁰ On the restructuring of public/private in 'new' media, see e.g. Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place* (New York, Oxford U.P. 1985), and James Slevin, *The Internet and Society* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000). On public/private and the 'political', see e.g. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109-142; Seyla Benhabib, "Models of Public Space", in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 73-98; Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London, Verso, (1993) 2005); Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London, Routledge, 2005). See also

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²³ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 3.

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²⁵ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 4.

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²⁷ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 4.

²⁸ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 4.

²⁹ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 4.

³⁰ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 5.

³¹ Thomas Risse, “An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators”, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), Nashville TN, March 27-30, 2003.

³² Risse, “An Emerging European Public Sphere?”

³³ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 5.

³⁴ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union States, article 11.

³⁵ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 6.

³⁶ Jean-Marc Ferry, *La Question de l'État européen* (Paris, Gallimard, 2000), p. 255f.

³⁷ Ferry, *La Question de l'État européen*, p. 246 [“consitutionnaliser le quatrième pouvoir”].

³⁸ Ferry, *La Question de l'État européen*, p. 257.

³⁹ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 6.

⁴⁰ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 8.

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⁴² European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 8.

⁴³ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Risse, “An Emerging European Public Sphere?”.

⁴⁵ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 9.

⁴⁶ See <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs>.

⁴⁷ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 10.

⁴⁸ See http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm.

⁴⁹ European Commission, “White Paper on a European Communication Policy”, p. 10.

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⁵³ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", pp. 11-12.

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⁵⁵ Wallström, "Bridging the Gap".

⁵⁶ European Commission, "White Paper on a European Communication Policy", p. 4.