

THE CRISIS OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION AND THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY

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I. THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS, PLAN-D AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The Role of Academia Reconsidered

In this new epoch of rapid social change, globalization, integration and disintegration, the two terrains and mindsets (academic theory and policymaking) should not be separated from each other on the basis of Weberian rigour. The social sciences should deliver useful ideas, praxis-oriented approaches and methodologies for decision makers and those who implement policy. This is true in the case of civil society research as well. If a concept proves to be so pertinent and resistant to all kinds of attempts to denigrate, marginalize and out right burial, it deserves the attention of both theoretical and practical minds.

After discovering and rediscovering its historic roots, interpreting and reinterpreting its emergence in different times, cultural contexts and geopolitical settings, social scientists have to be able to build bridges between their historical-theoretical terrains and the practical problems, challenges and complexities of our present and rapidly changing world.

Rapid change and the new social demands that change provokes are not going to leave the conventional bastions of knowledge–production intact. Even if we are aware that universities and academic centers are among the most conservative of institutions, they should contribute to the accumulation of new types of knowledge.

But change is not restricted to just academic structures and scopes and methodologies of research. Academics, research institutes and universities need to reconsider their roles and *raison d'être* in an increasingly globalized, transnational and networking world. Politicians, the decisionmaking and implementing bureaucracies, representatives of the sphere of public governance also need to listen more carefully to the changing expectations and demands of societies, larger or smaller constituencies and their organizations, movements and networks. They also need to be able to formulate clearer messages and more accountable promises. In order to do so, they themselves must reach a deeper understanding of the changing realities and concepts they use to describe them.

Concepts used for slogans can be helpful in the short run to create illusions or can positively influence public mood temporarily but they usually backfire if substance is lacking and misperceptions are revealed.

Today in Europe civil society is preeminent among the most frequently used and misused concepts in political and public debates. It can create confusion and frustration not only among philosophers and social scientists but even more among social activists and authorities, not only at the domestic and local levels, but at the transnational, European and global levels as well.

The present crisis of the EU, related to the failure of the process of constitutionalization, is a good example. From the mid 1990s on, there was a growing concern within the leading institutions of the EU about the future of the integration and enlargement processes. Faced by a mounting pressure from globalization and from Eastern enlargement, leading politicians,

experts and think tanks looked for new concepts and solutions to replace or enrich the old methods of integration.

As a consequence, a new wave of self-reflection and self-criticism has emerged from the EU labyrinth, mostly focusing on the lack of dialogue and the importance of citizen participation in EU-matters. Civil society seemed to be a wonderful catch phrase with which to start dialogue. It began to appear in policy papers, EU-documents and speeches of politicians and commissioners. When the process of constitutionalization started it unavoidably turned to civil society to invite it into interactive and creative dialogue for and about the formulation of a European constitution. As a consequence, the concept of European civil society has not only frequently been used in the public discourse, it has also become institutionalized.

This was a great mistake. Undeniably there has been much cross-border co-operation, including movements and initiatives in post WW II Europe in the fields of human rights, the environment, culture, education and regional institution-building. Civil society has acquired popularity as an umbrella concept for many social movements and organizations from the late 1970s and early 1980s, and as a consequence it has provided a new common language and even a policy target at different levels of political and social life. The problem is, however, that a European civil society, able to articulate itself as such, does not exist neither at the associational level nor as a particular public sphere. One can speak about a European civil society in terms of an utopia, a permanent attempt at creating a “good society” or recognize elements or tracks of an emerging transnational-European network system. These have a potential to strengthen and crystallize but also to disintegrate and remain fragmented.

Researchers have good reasons to claim as some in the CiSoNet team did – that there are “...strong social and cultural trends towards the formation of a European civil society: a vast, dynamically interconnected and multi-layered European social space consisting of many thousands of non-governmental initiatives, networks, personalities, movements and organizations.”¹

On that basis, we can cautiously talk about a growing trans-governmental tendency of an emergent European civil society. Since there is no consensus about the meaning and definition of the concept of civil society – even researchers have to be cautious when trying to conceptualize European civil society. This is more true in the case of politicians, decision-makers and policy-implementers, especially when they want to make concrete claims about and for a “European civil society”, or in the case of those who want to speak in its name.

Appointing and selecting certain associations and declaring them as the representatives of European civil society is not only a methodological error but even more a political mistake. This approach obviously backfired in the French and Dutch NO-votes on the Constitution. It is also manifested in the very expressive way comments reflected this double failure.

Plan-D

But as occurs in history, open and obvious crises can invite and speed up real and profound reforms and open the path for real alternatives if there is enough courage, competence and quick reaction on the side of concerned players.

This seems to be the case with Plan D, a 2005 October Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and

¹ John Keane: *European Citizenship? Historical Foundations, New Departures, CiSoNet Perspectives*, Berlin, WZB, 2005, p. 10. See also Appendix.

the Committee of Regions (Brussels, 13.10.2005 COM(2005) 494 final). Inspired by the debate after the double failure of referenda and by Margot Wallström's bold suggestions and self-criticism, the Commission has made a remarkable attempt to contribute "to the period of reflection and beyond" when it published Plan-D to encourage democracy, debate and dialogue within the European Union.

Plan – D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate is an action plan for the immediate future and a way out from the recent deadlock. The envisioned "period of reflection" would serve to crystallize new ideas, about the future of Europe which can only be built on a clear view of citizens' needs and expectations. "This is the purpose of Plan-D."²

Wisely enough, Plan-D forecasts a long-term plan "to reinvigorate European democracy" and "help the emergence of a European public sphere."³

The Commission wants to "restore public confidence in the EU" by involving civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties", and wants to gain the engagement of the mass media, particularly television towards this goal. The main purpose of the planned series of national debates is to help the Commission "to better define its priorities." The results of the national debates will be published and sent to the Commission and Council Presidency in a synthesized form.

The initiative is bold and all-embracing. It reminds one, however, of a double-or-nothing game. "The initiative of the Commission invites each of the European institutions and bodies to contribute and discuss the areas of co-operation and joint action" and "seeks to inspire EU-citizens to become politically active in the debate on the future of Europe... and to encourage governments, political parties and opinion formers to place the issue of Europe at the forefront of public consciousness."⁴

In order to stimulate the wider debate about the future of Europe, Commissioners will not only pay visits to member states but will also be available to national parliaments which are considered as the most appropriate tools for "scrutiny of decisions taken by National Governments on European issues."⁵ They will also be available for regular question times with citizens. The Commission's special concern is to reach out to younger generations and explore ways "for enhanced cross-border debates".⁶ Again, civil society plays a key role in Plan-D: "The Commission will work with civil society actors to establish a European Roundtable for democracy. The roundtable will gather citizens from different horizons that will act together or debate on common European issues."

Next to civil society, the citizen is also at the forefront of the new action-plan: "The European citizen is entitled to expect efficient, open and service-minded public institutions. The Commission therefore supports increased transparency at all levels in the European institutions, including through its own European Transparency Initiative."⁷

² Communication from the Commission, to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: The Commission's Contribution to the Period of Reflection and Beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate. Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 13.10.2005 COM(2005) 494 final, p. 2.

³ Plan-D, p. 2.

⁴ Plan-D, p. 7.

⁵ Plan-D, p. 7.

⁶ Plan-D, p. 8.

⁷ Plan-D, p. 9.

To guarantee the achievement of its goals, the Commission is ready to provide a complex set of tools: such as a specific *Eurobarometer* on the future of Europe which would inform both the Commission and the member states about the concerns and claims of their citizens; internet, which has already played an increasing role in public debates; targeted groups with the special concerns of youth; and inevitably an extra budget as financial guarantee for the project.

Why Civil Society Again?

From this very recent document it is clear once again that according to the Commission, civil society should and could play a decisive role in the future of European democracy. But some legitimate questions arise after the failure of the work of the Convention and debates during the process of constitutionalization which also placed civil society in the forefront: why again civil society, and what should we do differently this time? And how?

There are inseparable practical and theoretical/methodological problems here we have to face if we want to succeed. It is clear that the EU cannot turn to anyone else to find solutions to old/new problems of legitimacy, democratic deficit and citizens' participation. On the other hand it is also clear that (as most authors suggest) European civil society exists only in an embryonic form.⁸ We should rather view European civil societies or civil societies in Europe as a set of colorful, interacting and networking associations, movements and institutions which are not necessarily willing and/or able to address transnational/European issues at the moment, but who have the potential for expanding their horizons and scope of action. If the EU or any transnational institution want to consult civil society with debate and dialogue with its representatives, it should make the distinction between anticipation and reality.

Civil Society is Not a Magic Bullet

As far as Europe is concerned, especially during the last decade when the concept of civil society popped up and was used more frequently in European Union documents, a paradoxical tendency has emerged and strengthened. While new forms of trans-border co-operation and networking resulted in embryonic forms of a European – transnational – civil society, some of the national civil society groups and associations became more inward-looking, non-cooperative and in some cases even hostile or xenophobic. This can be explained by rapid globalization, growing insecurity and uncertainty and with the loss of orientation and other negative consequences and anxieties concerning the EU's eastern enlargement, the increasing illegal immigration, etc. Dialogue and debate with any kind of civil organizations is crucial but one has to see clearly that civil society is not in any form a magic bullet.

These paradoxical tendencies leave many civil society organizations and citizens in Europe in growing uncertainty with a lack of orientation. Since "European integration tends to undermine established national practices of democratic participation and accountability without replacing them with supranational practices of a corresponding nature and importance."⁹

⁸ "EU directives and regulations have affected the civil societies of member, candidate and adjacent states and even led to the emergence of an embryonic European civil society" *The Future of Democracy in Europe: Trends, Analyses and Reforms*, (eds) Philippe C. Schmitter, Alexander H. Trechsel, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publ., 2004, p. 57.

⁹ *The Future of Democracy in Europe: Trends, Analyses and Reforms*, (eds) Philippe C. Schmitter, Alexander H. Trechsel, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publ, 2004, p. 16.

Towards a More Balanced View of Civil Society

Before turning again to civil society in European political practice a more complex “integrated” definition of the concept seems to be necessary. CiSoNet has adopted a rather comprehensive definition which might be useful as a guiding principle for policy-suggestions and their implementation. Accordingly, civil society is “first a type of social action; second, as an arena or sphere connected but separate from the economy, the state and the private sphere; and third, as the core of a draft or project that still has some utopian features. As a specific type of social action, ‘civil society’ is characterized by the fact that it (1) is oriented toward conflict, discourse, compromise, and understanding in public; civil society is realized in the public sphere; (2) stresses individual independence and collective self-organization; (3) recognizes plurality, difference and tension as legitimate; (4) proceeds non-violently; and (5) is oriented toward general goals, that is, it works actively for the common good, even if different actors in civil society usually have very different conceptions of what constitutes the common good.”¹⁰

Michael Edwards in his recent book¹¹ goes even a step further, not only distinguishing three major aspects of civil society (1. a kind of a ‘good society’ or utopia; 2. part of a society as associational life; 3. a public sphere or spheres), but suggesting to policymakers to concentrate on the interaction, the interfaces of these aspects.

The significance of these new and innovative definitions of civil society transgress the boundaries of academic circles and have both practical policy implications and political consequences. They can liberate and enlighten policy-makers and practitioners to define and promote new ways of communicating with civil society and both help its further development and gain from its energies. “An integrated approach to civil society that unites elements of all three models increases the utility of this idea both as an explanatory tool and as a vehicle for action. Standing alone, associational life, the public sphere and the good society are each incomplete. Side by side, there is at least a chance that their strengths and weaknesses can be harmonized, and that all three can benefit from a positive and conscious interaction.”¹²

This complex and integrated concept of civil society might be more useful when we want to understand the changing relations and new balances between the Merchant (markets) the Prince (governments) and the Citizen (civil society).¹³

II. THE MULTIPLE CRISES OF THE EU: THE NEED FOR A NEW CONTEXT

A Giant without Charm and Charisma?

„Europe” – the EU – is in a deep and complex crisis. In fact it is rather a set of partly intertwined partly overlapping crises, including the
crisis of communication;
crisis of accountability and trust;
crisis of institutional functioning;
crisis of values (especially solidarity, tolerance and openness, the great “European values”);

¹⁰ CiSoNet, Project Dossier, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ Michael Edwards: *Civil Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004.

¹² Edwards, p. 91.

¹³ See Jody Jensen, Ferenc Mészlivetz, *The Languages of Civil Society and Beyond*, Berlin, WZB, Working Paper, 2005.

crisis of identity;
crisis of constitutionalization;
etc.

Already in the second half of the 1990s when it became clear that a significant eastern enlargement of the EU was unavoidable, analysts and experts almost unanimously warned that the process of integration cannot follow the old path, that new methods, new actors and clear vision(s) are needed for further success and prosperity. This understanding, however, didn't bear much fruit in reality. Hundreds of seminars and conferences were held about "Europe at a Crossroads", and still, in 2006, Europe (the EU) is looking for direction.

Standing at the crossroads and not being able to move is itself the crisis. The longer the EU remains paralyzed and indecisive, the more painful it will be to start to make progress, the more internal and external tensions will accumulate and undermine its potentials and credentials.

The process of constitutionalization, which was supposed to conclude with not only an agreed upon text called the European Constitutional Treaty, but also in a strengthened trust in and legitimacy of European institutions and a broader identification with the EU in the 25 (soon 27) memberstates, ended up in a new crisis of constitutionalization.

The accumulated unsolved problems, the never realized promises and the growing alienation and lack of trust in EU institutions, have aggregated in a European social unease (ESU). As formulated by René Cuperus:

"The postwar honeymoon period seems to be well and truly over: the postwar European ideal, welfare state model, and tolerance of foreigners all seem to be eroding and under pressure."¹⁴

For decades during the Cold War and the "permissive consensus", thanks to the favourable political and economic constellations, a tacit consensus developed that European integration will end up in a "larger Europe" which is "just like us."

Thanks to increasingly less favourable conditions, the unpredictable outcome and scope of further integration, globalization and immigration, these illusions are gone for ever. In Cuperus' words: "Europe became a labyrinth of integration by centralized power, technocratic and juridical intervention in fragile national traditions, and a transmitter of the forces of neo-liberal globalization."¹⁵

Undoubtedly, the EU in the post Cold War period has gradually lost its attractiveness even in the eyes of potential candidates. It became "an amorphous giant without charm and charisma" with which it is increasingly difficult to fall in love.

The Origins of the Crisis: Success and the Nation State

The origins of this complex crisis can be found mostly in the decades-long success story of the European construction, the intertwined tendencies of deepening and widening the integration process. The unprecedented economic, social, political and institutional

¹⁴ René Cuperus, „European Social Unease: A Threat to the EU," *International Politics und Gesellschaft*, No. 1 (2006), p. 67.

¹⁵ René Cuperus, p. 68.

achievements suggested that Europeans should relax and need not to be mobilized concerning their future. The subsequent waves of successful enlargements included countries which during the Cold War belonged to the ‘West’, even if some of them had to go through the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. This relatively and unexpectedly smooth adjustment created the general impression that the continuation of enlargement would produce a larger but more similar kind of Europe in terms of political, civic and everyday culture, habits and social interaction than before. After half a century of smooth enlargement and integration, Europeans were not ready for unpredictability, job-uncertainties, radically changing and turbulent neighbourhoods and the further inclusion of ethnic, religious and culturally tight communities which are radically different in their social interactions and belief-systems from the European mainstream.

These tacit expectations proved incorrect. The transformations European societies have undergone and keep undergoing are more robust and much deeper than predicted. Europeans were not prepared for these radical changes. And when they arrived they started to resist, to keep their milieus intact, to defend their good life and their achievements. The economic and social impact of globalization, integration and eastern enlargement proved to be neither predictable nor controllable. As a consequence, anxiety and frustration has grown and produced a new wave of nationalism, xenophobia and inward-lookingness. This neo-nationalism is very different from its older patriotic forms of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century. It does not provide a bright perspective for the future, it does not integrate, but rather disintegrates societies. Its obvious manifestations do not present an attractive picture of an open and cooperative Europe that offers a new social model and a foreign policy based on rules and agreements of a soft power. Europe has changed so radically in the last two decades that it is hard to speak about a core European identity. The basis of the identity crisis is that Europeans do not share a common vision about who they are and what their role in the world is supposed to be. The boundaries between European and non-European identities are blurred in many ways.

The traditional self-identification with the nation state and an intact “national community” still works as an ideology, but it functions less and less in everyday praxis and is completely useless as a compass for the future.

Changing Value Systems

The last fifty years brought fundamental changes in the value system of western societies. The new wave of radical individualism did not leave Europe intact. The pervasive ideology of neo-liberalism, the everyday praxis of an increasingly ruthless competition has started to erode traditional European values such as tolerance and solidarity. The short history of eastern enlargement has already proved that the geographical scope of European solidarity is not moving automatically in tandem with the eastern borders of the Union.

The Cartoon-Scandal of early 2006 shows that many traditional European societies, or at least their so-called intellectual and political elite, have lost their often pronounced sensitivity, openness and respect for profoundly different cultures and societies. It reveals that the traditional political elite of the European nation state is unable to control and even to interpret the perplexities of the rapidly changing world. The reactions to the widespread and violent protests in the Muslim world were supposed to show strength but they revealed weakness. By emphasizing freedom of expression they undermined Europe’s reputation for empathy and its

readiness for dialogue. The voice of the EU, proved to be too weak to counterbalance the cacophonous concert of national politics and national narrowmindedness.

The Changing Context: Towards a New Paradigm?

If we want Europe to come out of the present deadlock, we need new methods, new actors and new institutional arrangements to further its construction. But we also need a new model – or a new paradigm – for the rather complex social, political, cultural and institutional, transnational European interactions. This new model can only become dynamized by a new way of thinking realized by new actors, new rules and new institutional frameworks. For this we need first of all a clear vision, political leadership and will, courage and a recognition that a fundamental change and a paradigm shift is unavoidable. Only a new constellation of the main actors and enabling institutions of the European construction can mobilize social energies, creativity and innovation. Only within such a new context can the major actors of the European construction reconsider and reinterpret their roles and fulfil their tasks.

There is No New Paradigm without New Players

Although expectations for a more dominant role in world affairs are growing both inside and outside of Europe, in its present state the EU does not show the capabilities of a responsible emerging global player. For the time being it is rather a regional power, with great global potential and even greater expectations.

In the light of its multiple and escalating crises, national egoism and inwardlookingness proved to be stronger than any other transnational, European or global commitments, institutions and projects. And certainly, its architecture, the roots and the traditions of the nation state paradigm proved to be more durable than many had believed. But they coexist with the new manifestations of the post-national constellation, with the set of transnational and regional institutions, legal regulations and social networks, with the new world of network-society and network-governance. This *Gleichzeitigkeit*, the co-existence and confrontation of past and future structures, standards of governance, social interaction and political conflict, makes any social scientific analysis and forecast concerning Europe's future risky and precarious. One cannot predict with certainty how long the old structures will survive and when new ones will begin to dominate. As a consequence, conflicting visions about Europe and Europeanization might play a growing role in debates and deliberations in the immediate future.

Changes in a positive sense will not occur without conflicts of unprecedented magnitude and without new and dynamic players. Only new (and reinvigorated) players can fight the battle on traditional and non-conventional battlefields in the hope of success.

New players are inevitable in order to carry out further integration and construction. But new methods and new rules are necessary as well to strengthen the rather weak and embryonic European demos and polity. The top-down integration with the Europe of 25 has been exhausted. Without a bottom-up dynamism, all the efforts and new communication strategies of an enlightened Commission and a self-empowering European Parliament will abort. Without profound grassroots support, perestroika and glasnost are doomed to fail in Europe.

At the present juncture the role of a vibrant, critical, well-informed and participative, - ready for deliberation – civil society with its border-crossing networks and transnational

institutionalization is inevitable. Whether it will be developing along the mutually emergent model or remain a latent-potential player (or a phantasy product) in an elite-monologue is not yet determined. Strengthening or weakening the new players and the enabling institutions and framework is a key issue concerning the future of Europe.

III. THE NEW PLAYERS

Social Movements

The political space of the EU needs galvanization. Social movements seem to be ready to mobilize their supporters across frontiers. As Donatella della Porta has convincingly pointed out in a recent paper based on empirical research, the European social movements are rather critical Europeanists than Eurosceptics. They are not unconditional Europeanists, however. As one of the activists of Social Forum expressed: “but Europeanists conditioned to the fulfilment of the social part in which there is presently a deficit...”¹⁶

Social movements on the European and transnational level represent a new and critical yet constructive attitude which might be instrumental to the politicization of differing visions and existing but ignored conflicts.

European social movements are targeting their criticism at the negative social and political aspects of globalization and the neo-liberal economic orientation, as well as at the insufficient social responsibility of European institutions and consequently, the entire process of integration.

The first protest march against growing unemployment, insecurity and exclusion was held in 1997, in Amsterdam, as part of an “another Europe is possible” alternative rally. It was followed by a wave of European protests and counter-summits like in Genoa 2001, then in the following years in Nice, Gothenburg, Barcelona, Copenhagen, etc. Protesters also meet once a year to discuss European affairs in European Social Forums. As della Porta observed, “Attention to the European construction process has developed since the first European Social Forum in Florence in November 2002, followed by a second one in Paris and third in London in 2004.”¹⁷

The very success of these protest marches and Social Forums reveals the high level of networking capacity of an emerging European civil society with a wide range of associations and organizations being represented, from student movements to networks of retired people, from human rights activists to labour unions, womens’ groups, associations of artists and many different professionals.

With their agenda-setting, their clearly formulated criticisms of EU-policies and their obvious protest-potential combined with networking and mobilizing capacity, the European social movements are offering an alternative politics “from below” at the European level. Apart from debating certain policy-issues or protesting against neo-liberal tendencies, they act as fermenting agents to a larger discussion about a future *European polity*. As the interviews of della Porta et al. show, “social movements reveal a larger tendency to direct claims to the

¹⁶ from an interview, quoted by Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements and the European Union: Eurosceptics or critical Europeanists?* 2006, Notre Europe Policy Paper No. 22, p. 2.

¹⁷ Della Porta, op.cit., p. 6.

European level than previous analyses of the presence of civil society organizations... had shown.”¹⁸

Activists and leaders of social movements are aware of their relevance within the European construction. *Vis a vis* the European Council and the Commission, they look at the European Parliament as a potential ally. As the Italian Rete Lilliput pointed out in the interviews: “We believe in transnational networks and there are continuous relations with international activists that occasionally translate in campaigns pressuring the members of the European Parliament. The debate around the Convention is defined as an opportunity to express criticism, with the by-product of approaching our potential partners in other European states”.¹⁹

The idea of “Europe from below” is not entirely new among grassroots social movements and civil society activists. It was widely spread during the 1980s by the anti-nuclear and peace movements, the East-West Dialogue and it gained popularity among East-European dissidents and in student circles. But today the activists of the European Social Forums, and other umbrella organizations developed a higher level commitment to the European construction and as della Porta observes, even some support for a European governance.²⁰

European Social Forums together with many other social, political and cultural initiatives and organizations have started to politicize public spheres in Europe by contest and by demanding and offering alternatives.²¹

Instead of creating a single European public space, the Social Forums and their networks are creating several corresponding European “publics” by working hard on making European issues part of common everyday parlance. Their commitment went much further than mere protest; some of them correctly call themselves “Europeanization entrepreneurs”.²²

Committed citizens as social entrepreneurs of Europeanization are certainly accumulating social capital which is indispensable for the continuation of European construction and for the creation of a genuine European citizenship.

Their contestation also contributes to the vitalization of public space and the politicization of unfaced problems which are both neglected or under-discussed by mainstream politicians and the media.

Thomas Risse contends that: “Contestation is a crucial pre-condition for the emergence of a European public sphere ... If political issues are not contested, if European politics remains the business of elites, the attention level for Europe and the EU will remain low. European issues must become salient and significant in the various public debates so that a European public sphere can emerge.”²³

¹⁸ See Della Porta and Caiani, 2005.

¹⁹ Quoted by Della Porta, op. cit. p. 10.

²⁰ Op. cit. p. 14.

²¹ See more from Della Porta, p. 16.

²² Interview with Disobliidenti, quoted by Della Porta, p. 11.

²³ Risse, T. An Emerging European Public Sphere. See Della Porta bibl. p. 6.

Whatever important role social movements and their networks can play in creating public spheres, conducting public debates and pursuing the democratization of the EU, other players would also be needed to create a new context and to get rid of the present EU-paralysis.

Emerging European Parties

The Treaty on European Union declares, that “Political parties at the European level are important factors of integration in the Union. They contribute to developing a European consciousness, and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union.” (Article 191)

As many of the authors of a special issue of the journal *European View* devoted to transnational parties and European democracy claim, the fact that the so-called Euro-parties remained dependent on their respective EP-groups and their decision-making statutes, mirrors the clear supremacy of the national parties. By the 1990s, the original promise of the Euro-parties to mobilize national electorates has faded away.

As John Palmer, the former director of the Brussel-based think tank, the European Policy Center, formulates, “European elections are simply not about enough at present to capture the imagination and enthusiasm of the electorate. A vote in the European Parliament election has no executive outcome.”²⁴

Consequently the European Parliament could not play a crucial role in EU decisionmaking and as observers emphasize, it remained irrelevant for many Europeans.²⁵

From the point of view of creating new European public spheres it would be essential to making European elections relevant.

European citizens could be much more engaged in European affairs if Euro-parties would offer them real alternatives, clear policies and a candidate for commission presidency. As many experts, analysts and even politicians suggest, this would be a solution to the problems of legitimacy and democracy deficit.²⁶ This is what the Treaty on European Union suggests: how political parties would be “forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union.” (Art. 138A)

The reality, however, is far from this ideal state of affairs. Today in most cases Euro-parties are Europeans only in name, de facto they’ve remained configurations of national parties. As Ladrech aptly observes “...it is national parties, more specifically national party leaders, who hold the key to Euro-party development.”²⁷

The greatest problem that political parties willing to act on the European level have is to face the permanent and hitherto unsolvable tensions and the communication and cooperation deficit between the national and supranational levels. Most of the resources, administration and infrastructure are located on the national level, not to mention the focus of the media and,

²⁴ Palmer, John: The Future of European Union Political Parties. In: *European View*, Vol. 3. Spring 2006, p. 106. http://www.epp-eu.org/dbimages/pdf/ev_spring_2006.pdf

²⁵ See *European View*, Vol.3. Spring 2006, especially Robert Ladrech, The Promise and Reality of Euro-parties.

²⁶ One of the most consequent analyses in this regard is Simon Hix, see his latest contribution: *Possibilities for European Parties: 2004 and Beyond*, 2004. Working Paper, London School of Economics and Political Sciences.

²⁷ Robert Ladrech, *ibid.*

accordingly, the attention of the public sphere. European parties are hardly ever mentioned by the national media; national politicians on the other hand, who often blame the EU for domestic economic and financial failures, frequently hide their Euro-party engagement or activities.

The political terrain of the EU is complex and complicated. Most of the politicians active on local and national level do not possess the adequate knowledge, skills and experience to be efficient under such circumstances.

Taking responsibility at the European level also often contradicts national responsibilities, and harmonization of responsibilities does not belong to the daily routine of political life. The European dimension of disputes and decision-making are rarely considered by politicians despite the strong intertwining nature of European and national politics.

In the light of the present complex crisis of the EU, there is a growing recognition of the necessity and inevitability of European political parties on the national level as well. The manifold pressure to find solutions to the crisis and to find credible and widely accepted alternatives requires fundamental changes in the political system of the European Union. It already has become clear that European issues cannot be discussed exclusively on the national level. As a consequence, European publics, be they larger or smaller, real or virtual have started to develop and gain influence in different often unexpected corners of Europe.²⁸

To make European politics successful, one needs a wide-ranging supranational consensus. Successful politics at European level will be determined by EU-voters' economic, social and cultural demands instead of by elite-driven ideologies.²⁹

Civil Society Networks, Websites, Pressure Groups

The call for a new communication strategy by the Commission and the call for a period of reflection by the European Council have not gone unanswered. Only one month after the Dutch and French No-votes, a group of some 40 NGOs started a campaign for citizen's democracy in Europe. They believe that "only an active participation of citizens in the decision making of the European Union will ensure a true European democracy... EU funds the building of roads, bridges and similar infrastructure. Time has come to develop a »democratic infrastructure« that strengthens the participation of citizens and helps improving the work of European organizations, movements and European parties."³⁰

Their vision about establishing democracy on the European level is still inspired by the top-down elitist model: "A »democratic infrastructure« would make it possible for women and men ... to engage themselves and fellow citizens in cross border political alliances and activities."

According to this vision, the »fully fledged democratic infrastructure« is the citizens' key to Europe and is held in the hands of Margot Wallström. The European Council should simply ask her to use it.

²⁸ See Appendix, with special regard to Newropeans as an online magazine and a political movement.

²⁹ See Thomas Jansen, The Emergence of a Transnational European Party System. In: *European View*, Vol. 3. Spring 2006, pp. 45-56. http://www.epp-eu.org/dbimages/pdf/ev_spring_2006.pdf

³⁰ See: SOS Europe – wake up Campaign for a Citizen's Democracy <http://www.ifm-sei.org/en/topics/participation/77491/html>

In October 2006, *The EU Civil Society Contact Group*, an umbrella organization which represents hundreds of thousands of organizations and associations dealing with different issues such as the environment, social exclusion development, women, culture, human rights, public health etc., organized a large brainstorming conference, entitled, “The Future of Europe” for more than 90 NGOs.

Their diagnosis and conclusions were well-founded and later adapted to resolutions coming from the European Parliament, the Commission and many civil society organizations. Some of the major points of their diagnosis are:

- the EU is still perceived as an elite project, which fails to tackle the average citizen;
- the crisis is also a social crisis, as well as the consequence of global challenge;
- lack of vision, leadership and strategic oversight;
- lack of common vision within civil society;
- lack of ownership of the debate by citizens;
- citizens perceive the EU as being too much influenced by “big business”; etc.

And some of the suggested solutions:

- engage with citizens at all levels;
- creation of citizens’s platforms;
- avoid stagnation which might lead to nationalism;
- to define a real vision, a project for the EU;
- NGOs can make the difference but need to be better organized: need for flexible coalitions of the willing;
- Pushing for citizen’s initiative as a way to engage in a concrete debate;
- Using existing civil society organizations for the implementation of Plan-D;
- Create a real space for debate;
- Be positive and open to the input from civil society;
- Provide sufficient resources; etc.

A new element of civil society rhetoric emerging in the debates and deliberations about the future of Europe is self-reflection and self-criticism. Participants of the conference pointed out the problematic definition of civil society and called NGOs, including the Civil Society Contact Group, “to be clearer about whom they represent.”³¹

The reaction from other players to cooperate and communicate was positive. The European Parliament decided to collaborate with civil society by approving the *Duff-Voggenhuber Report* in January 2006.³²

The Report, which became an official document entitled: “European Parliament resolution on the period of reflection: the structure, subjects and context for an assessment of the debate on the European Union”³³, urges using the period of reflection for relaunching a broad public debate about the constitutional project, arguing that “the political problems and institutional

³¹ The conference report was drafted by Elodie Fazi, a Civil Society Contact Group coordinator. See: www.act4europe.org

³² The Duff-Voggenhuber Report on the Union of European Federalist’ homepage: <http://www.federaleurope.org/index.php?id=4138>

³³ <http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade>

weakness that the convention was set up to address will persist ... unless and until the reforms enshrined in the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe are brought into force.”³⁴

The new dialogue is forecast to promote European democracy, if the public debate is engaged on both European and national levels. The resolution warns, that “narrowly focused national debates will do little to change national stereotypes, and ... that an imposed dialogue without political goals would become nebulous, even ..., thereby giving rise to increased dissatisfaction on the part of European citizens.”³⁵

Based on the assumption that the European Parliament should play a more proactive and decisive role in the future, it envisions a set of joint parliamentary forums with national parliaments. It expects Citizens’ Forums at national, regional and local levels to address the salient issues and organize media debates; the political parties “to give much more prominence to the European dimension in both their internal debates and electoral campaigns.”³⁶

It also turns to the other players as potential partners: it expects that the Commission not only adopt a new communication strategy, but also *delivers*, and shows “decisive political commitment to help the Union emerge from its current constitutional difficulties.”³⁷ And it turns to civil society organizations to take the Constitution as a priority of their debates.

The European Commission’s reaction was positive to the Duff-Voggenhuber Report. Margot Wallström, in her speech given at the European Parliament, again stressed the importance of the *context* vis a vis the text of the constitution:

“That is why the dialogue has to focus on the European project rather than on institutional reform, on the ultimate objective rather than on the instruments to deliver it.”³⁸

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

We have seen what civil society is not. It is not a magic bullet and certainly not a substitute for democracy. In its more complex and controversial existence, however, it can to a significant degree contribute to establishing and enhancing democratic procedure, decision-making, transparency, openness and legitimacy on all levels of governance and decision-making. Taking the present political crisis within the EU into account, the introduction of new forms of democracy are inconceivable without a lively and vibrant civil society.

Without its added values such as reflectivity, solidarity, capability to initiate and implement change, its entrepreneurial spirit and its permanent drive to control and confine authorities and hold them accountable, democracy could be seriously undermined and further deteriorate both at the EU and at member state levels.

Given the present state of affairs within the EU – new and non-conventional forms of democracy, such as *deliberative democracy* and *e-democracy* as well as the often neglected forms of *direct democracy*, need to be reinforced and institutionalized. Only a vibrant,

³⁴ TA A6 – 0414/2006, p.3

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do>

networking, well-informed and well-equipped civil society will be able to carry out or at least foster such changes.

In order to be effective in implementing its new policies vis-à-vis an emerging European civil society, the Commission, as suggested above, should adopt a more comprehensive and complex understanding of civil society. This extended and expanded interpretation would help in fulfilling the ambitious aim of Plan-D and would galvanize hitherto inactive players in the civil society domain and actively involve them in the planned dialogue.

General Recommendations

The aim of the new dialogue is to form a broad consensus, among European citizens, around the concept of a *European Common Good* (not monopolized by the transnational and EU institutions and economic interest groups).

This presupposes the strengthening of the European dimension of both political and social life (actors, institutions, public space).

The Europeanization of National Politics

National elections should be held in the context of European comparison. Voters should be given the chance to see the potential results of their decisions in a European dimension. Understanding national, regional and local issues, reforms etc. in a broader European context would help voters to make more responsible and foresighted decisions and bring them closer to European/transnational complexities and interdependencies. Deciding about radical reforms in the field of social security, taxation, health and education systems, for example, would be much easier in the light of the European constellation.

The introduction of the European dimension in national election campaigns and political debates would have a strong educational impact on citizens' voting habits and dedication to public issues. At the same time, it would decrease the democratic deficit on both national and European levels by linking them to (rather than detaching them from) each other. It would demonstrate that there are no "individual" political divisions possible on the national level without having a serious impact on the EU-level and vice versa.³⁹

The demonstration of interdependencies among national and European policy-issues would make voters more responsible and would create more trust between politicians and citizens on both the national and European level.

The introduction of a European dimension into national public discourses naturally cannot be restricted to election campaigns. European citizens need to be involved in a continuous process of education and deliberation about the interconnectedness of national and European affairs.

The European Public sphere: towards new, emerging European publics

Few would disagree that in order to "bring the EU closer to its citizens" or to build more trust in European institutions and decisionmaking or simply making citizens more interested,

³⁹ See more in Ludger Kühnhardt, *Quo vadis Europa?* In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (APuZ 36/2005).

informed and involved in European matters, one would need more of a *European public space where people could interact, debate, initiate and set up coalitions and campaigns*.

At present, quite the opposite picture dominates the European stage:
lack of transparency of political decisionmaking;
deficient intensity of interactive communication;
lack of public interest and deliberation about European affairs. etc.

Experts and analysts are justified when speaking about a “European public opinion deficit”. Trezn’s observation that the European public space is restricted by taboos, conflict avoidance strategies and unaddressed issues is justified⁴⁰ He is also right by stressing the importance of controversy and conflict in the public space and that the EU has avoided politicization of conflicts until now.

The permissive consent which for a few decades provided adequate legitimation for a far-reaching economic integration project is today rather a hindrance to driving the integration process further. Political conflicts on European issues, on the other hand, could play an integrative role and “bring the EU closer” to its citizens. But political conflicts can only play an integrative role if those who are involved are informed and competent. *A massive and widespread introduction of new civic education programs* and new forms of adult and higher education modules on citizenship, human rights and democracy issues would contribute to the emergence of more competent, confident and informed European citizens ready to deliberate and to participate in decisionmaking.

Education for democratic citizenship

After the often hectic economic, political and social transitions in East and Central Europe, and as a consequence of growing anxiety and fear in European societies a negative consequence of Eastern enlargement and globalization, the negative images of neighbours and “strangers” has been reinforced throughout Europe. In many of the new member-states civic education, human rights, democracy and civics are still missing from the entire spectrum of education from kindergarden to Ph.D. programs.

It would, therefore, be greatly important to encourage national, regional and local authorities to introduce those missing elements of education into the educational institutions in their competency.

Conscious efforts should also be made to encourage the introduction of more comprehensive and complex transnational, regional and European history teaching from elementary school to postgraduate university programs.

Education for democratic citizenship coupled with a comprehensive knowledge of European and world history and comparative cultural studies would enormously contribute to the development of a more open, tolerant and self-reflective European consciousness and identity. A deeper understanding of the cross-fertilization of cultures and world religions and their significant role in European history would contribute to the deconstruction of exclusive, xenophobic and racist attitudes and patterns of thinking.

⁴⁰ Hans-Jörg Trezn, *Europäische Öffentlichkeit und die verspätet Politisierung der EU*, IPG, I/2006. (pp 117-119.)

Launching *European Citizenship Education* along with *European Cultural and History Studies* might be seen as a new hitherto missing European policy, contributing in the longer run to the development of *Union – citizenship*.

Direct Policy Areas

1) Consultations. The Commission should set up consultations without delay with an extended group of civil society actors and representatives. Direct communication should exclude political or governmental manipulation.

2) Monitoring. The Commission should monitor and award best practices at the cross-border, regional and European levels. Best practices should be made public and serve as encouragement for civil society activities.

3) Promoting education. Civic education including human rights, environmental rights, etc. should be introduced in elementary and secondary schools. The Commission should highly recommend that member-states introduce necessary curricula reforms.

4) Universities. The Commission should encourage universities to engage in the introduction of civil society related courses and training programs. Students are the Ambassadors of the Future. The Jean Monnet Project and other higher education support schemes such as Erasmus Mundus should include new “civil society components”. Generally, the emphasis should shift from the more technical part of EU-studies towards the social construction of Europe within the emerging European higher educational area. Emerging and promoting increasingly effective university-networking and student and faculty exchange would in itself strengthen European civil society. Financial and technical contribution in this area should be multiplied.

5) Research. Similarly, more research networks should be established in the social sciences, with a special emphasis on civil society and related issues (social movements, citizenship, human rights, immigration, network-society, forms and institutions of democracy, globalization, corporate social responsibility, minority studies, regional studies etc.).

6) Dissemination. Summaries, syntheses of research results should be published together with policy recommendations and reform suggestions. Academic research supported by the Commission should include practical components and research teams should present their results and recommendations in annual conferences to the Commission and the Parliament. Research results and recommendations should feed further public debates about the future of Europe. In that way the Commission could integrate the academic community further into the process of deliberation.

7) Transparency and ethical codes. The Commission should become a model for transparency (as is suggested in Plan-D) in order to require and promote transparency on all other levels of governance. To help civil society players to apply the transparency-principle, it should promote a series of conferences or an assembly where civil society activists, protagonists and critiques can discuss rights, obligations and tasks of civil society players. This might lead to an ethical code or a non-binding “constitution” of civil organizations, but more importantly would facilitate a crystallization of common values among them.

8) Networking/Capacity-building. Networking is part of postmodern democracies. Traditional or national societies are becoming increasingly networked societies. The networks of market players and governments are still stronger and more effective than networks of civil society.

Some authors call the European Union “network governance”.

In real civil societies many actors and participants don't possess the necessary technical means, technical and language skills and financial capacities to be equal partners or to play a significant role in networking. Some of them have never experienced the power of social networks. Many of them are financially or otherwise dependent on national authorities/governments and that hinders the widening of their scope of activities and inhibits their engagement in cross-border co-operation.

The Commission should target the networking and capacity-building of local and regional NGOs and CSOs with special attention to those who act in border regions or Euro-regions with training programs, technical tools and financial assistance. In return CSOs should demonstrate their enhanced networking capacities in any way they choose (building interactive websites, publishing newsletters, organizing a set of fora, elaborating joint projects, getting engaged in interactive, cross-border broadcasting, campaigning for issues of common concern, etc.). The output of networking and the dissemination of new information or common knowledge should be part of their projects.

In sum: EU institutions should become real partners with real civil society organizations instead of appointing certain NGOs as representatives of “European civil society” and leaving the rest “waiting for Godot”.

In order to achieve these goals, the EU should encourage member states to create and guarantee appropriate conditions for the “good society” and help to facilitate “positive interactions between institutions in government, the market and the voluntary sector around common goals such as poverty reduction, human rights and deep democracy and collective strategies to reach them.”⁴¹ A more accommodating legal and institutional framework would encourage civil societies to develop and utilize positive social energies and reform-potential;

enterprises, especially multinational and big corporations, to act according to the principles of transparency and corporate social responsibility. In order to avoid CSR becoming another unfulfilled promise or empty slogan, all best practices should be published and a corporate social responsibility competition among companies should be launched in Europe, giving results high publicity;

EU-policies should encourage all of the major players to form coalitions and create partnerships among themselves. These would include hitherto unprecedented dialogue and co-operation schemes among players who previously had not considered each other “partners”.

The present state of affairs in politics and society dictate that only new kinds of partnerships and new synergies will culminate in a genuine European social model. Only a complex policy-approach aiming at new and equal partnerships will lead Europe out of its present political deadlock and convince the apathetic and skeptical public to become engaged in non-local, e.g. trans-national, supra-national, regional or European affairs.

⁴¹ Edwards, op. cit. p. 94.

3. Deliberative Democracy and New Public Spheres:

Towards a European Civil Society Agora?

Without more extensive and in-depth debates, new dialogues with new partners, and a continuous deliberation about present and future responsibilities, citizens won't be effectively involved in complex and often contradictory European issues like enlargement, constitutionalization or regionalization. Without new public fora devoted to these non-conventional issues, they could remain easy targets of one-sided or biased political influence or simply remain uninterested and frustrated citizens with a declining trust in EU-institutions. Present EU-affairs are not only far from the everyday citizen, they are also rather complex and complicated. Therefore citizens need not only "information" but also interpretation and debate to digest them.

The EU should be engaged in creating new public spheres for informed deliberations or equip old ones with new means and methods. These can be real, non-virtual spaces such as regions, micro-regions, Euro-regions, a coalition of different geographical or material units such as cities, municipalities, think-tanks or minorities; or they can be virtual such as interactive websites, regular broadcasting programs or any other form of cross-border co-operation. In ideal cases they will emerge as an interaction and combination of the real and the virtual, old and new forms and frameworks.

What Makes these Agoras New?

These new European agoras should be equipped with information technology and expertise and their accumulated knowledge should be made public.

In order to disseminate the new, self-generating knowledge about European societies, the EU should introduce/finance further European TV-channels, support regional, multilingual newspapers and weeklies, cross-border broadcasting of local Radio and TV programs.

Without an enhanced and new role for the traditional media these new and ambitious goals cannot be realized.

Support should be given for the establishment and maintenance of interactive websites and new forms of deliberative democracy and civil society dialogue.

Regional civil society kiosks should be established where conventional and new ways of communication would be combined. One of the biggest technical obstacles to communication, the language barrier, should be over-bridged by translation-services provided by the civil society kiosk.

In a regional civil society kiosk local citizens would get information about European and regional affairs and they would provide their comments, questions and criticisms to a larger public, including to EU-institutions. In other words, the kiosks would be the *de facto* places for interactive communication, and at the same time would serve as traditional meeting places for local civil society. These should be made available in, for example, cultural centers, "tele-houses" or cafés where people chat, drink coffee and deliberate about public affairs.

The novelty would not only be that people would have access to IT and get current information about European and global affairs, but also that the EU and its institutions would become part of their everyday life experience. And they would learn to communicate about

“far distanced” issues not only by expressing their fears or frustrations, but also by formulating questions, proposals and petitions.

Generally speaking, one of the most profound policy implications of the present political deadlock is that Europeans should to learn how to communicate with each other in a more open, direct and efficient way. Transparency and openness should be the general rules from the top of the EU down to the smallest local municipality or social group. But this new way of communication needs not so much to be preached as facilitated equipped and realized by all of the players and potential partners: governments, business, civil society actors, and supranational organizations.

Civil society kiosks should be built on real social needs, on proper and digestible information and on the bottom-up self-organizational energies of local civil societies combined with the top-down “enabling” EU-policies. In other words, if local and transnational efforts can create new synergies they might contribute to diminishing the growing communication gap between the EU and its citizens. These multifunctional and interactive centers could become the New European Agoras debating, questioning, denying, anticipating European issues and policies, ultimately making European society “thinkable”.

Civil Society and New Forms of Democracy

European democracies are facing a steady tendency towards disenchantment in representative democracy. Voter turnout has decreased since 1980 from 88% to 70% in 2004. If this tendency continues, it will be around 65% by 2020.⁴² These numbers are even less encouraging in the case of East Central Europe: electoral participation might decline there to 45% by 2020.

Although civil society cannot and should not be responsible for solving the crisis of representative democracy, its initiatives might introduce more democracy as well as new forms of democracy into the old system of representation.

Direct democracy and civil society

The referendum and the popular initiative are the two most wide spread forms of direct democracy, which proved to be effective in empowering citizens and their organizations to make their representatives more accountable. As Schmitter et al. in The Future of Democracy observe, they “also tend to increase citizen’s interest and expertise in political issues and, therefore, complement other reform efforts aimed at improving levels of civic competence in politics.”⁴³

As a consequence, these non-conventional and less wide-spread forms of democratic procedures could contribute to an increase in the legitimacy of political decisions and that of the functioning institutions.

Therefore, methods of direct democracy should be combined with the conventional methods of representative democracy at all levels of governance. The introduction of the European initiative and the binding European referendum might result in diminishing criticism and apathy concerning European affairs and increase voter turnout.

⁴² See *The Future of Democracy*, op. cit. pp. 22-25.

⁴³ Op. cit. p. 123.

Direct democratic methods, are well known in certain EU member states, and their popularity is on the rise in some others but the wider European public has no comprehensive view about their results and efficiency. Therefore the publication and translation to official EU languages and widespread dissemination of a yearbook on referenda and citizens' initiatives would be highly recommended.

Further recommendations...

Electronic monitoring and online deliberation systems would help citizens to continuously evaluate the actual political behaviour of their elected representatives and consequently diminish the gap between electors and elected.

“Smart voting” (electronic support for candidates and parliamentarians) already exists in some member states, although not widely known.⁴⁴ Civil society kiosks as suggested above should serve as centers of “e-deliberation”

Remote and electric voting would make voting more citizen-friendly and would provide more for decision-making.

A civil society handbook should be constructed, translated and properly disseminated concerning the best practices available for different polities and communities. A code of good practices could serve as a model which could be voluntarily subscribed to and followed by civil associations.

Renewing the role of the media: Media in Europe has not played a constructive or convincing role since 1989 in support of civil society and new forms of democracy and participation. Therefore the different players of the democratic game as well as the actors of civil society should encourage broadcasting best practices and ongoing debates and deliberations on the present and the future of Europe.

V. Towards a New European Social Contract?

Some Concluding remarks

The future of European civil society is strongly connected with the future of European citizenship and democracy.

There is a growing and increasingly visible interdependence among the new actors of an emerging European public space and the EU policies and strategies directed towards empowering them by providing political and financial support or institutionalized frameworks.

By strengthening the networking capabilities of European societies, the EU can significantly contribute to the deepening and widening of European identity. But without a firm establishment of European citizenship the process of identification will remain constrained within the circles of political and economic elites, and some professional and intellectual groups.

⁴⁴ See *The Future of Democracy* in detail, op. cit. p. 124.

As the French and Dutch referendums and many other signals of EU-criticism prove, there is a growing need among European citizens to understand and influence European affairs.

Organizing public fora and fostering feedback and networking capacities is certainly a timely and useful way to bring the EU closer to its citizens. But none of the existing and suggested new forms of deliberation, debate and opinion formation can be really effective without media support.

Media in Europe and the European media has notoriously missed the opportunity to play an invigorating role in the emerging European civil society and in making Europeans interested in European affairs. Therefore the establishment of independent and grassroots/alternative media is an inevitable task for the immediate future.

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