'Discourses on Democracy. The European Year of Citizens 2013 and the Public Sphere.'

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Abstract

The adaptation of national public spheres to a new European political level has attracted the attention of political scientists and political philosophers since the early 1990's. Research until now mostly focused on normatively theorizing the future European public sphere, and on the measurement of Europeanization of national public spheres. This thesis aims at adding to this a policy perspective. Citizenship, communication and information policies are for the European institutions a way to construct a European public sphere in a top-down way, and to increase their own democratic legitimacy. On the basis of content analysis of policy documents, and participant observation in multiple projects in the context of the European Year of Citizens 2013, this thesis analyzes the ideological aims and practices these policy domains contain, and the agency and interests of specific people involved. The research project reaches the final conclusion that the European Year of Citizens 2013 is a tool for ideological persuasion rather than a deliberative democratic attempt to construct a genuine European public sphere.

Keywords: public sphere, European Commission, citizenship, discourse, ideology, European Year of Citizens 2013, Citizens' Dialogues.

Table of contents

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1. Introduction

Since the end of the year 2012, the Citizenship department of the European Commission headed by Viviane Reding started organizing Citizens' Dialogues all over the European Union. In these Citizens' Dialogues, a Commissioner and a local politician go to a town hall and answer questions asked by a public of citizens. The dialogues are also broadcasted online via livestream so that people from outside the organizing town can follow the dialogue.[1] These Citizens' Dialogues are part of the European Year of Citizens 2013. In 2013, the European Commission aimed at informing people about their rights and citizens, and wanted to close the gap between the European institutions and European citizens.[2] As well Vivian Reding, Commissioner for Citizenship, as J.M. Barroso, president of the Commission, argue that the main aim of the European citizens' dialogues is to create a European 'public space'.[3]

From a theoretical point of view, I will argue in this thesis that the European Commission, as a federal European institution, has a high interest in the existence and 'creation' of such a European public space/sphere because it is the immaterial realm in society where subjects are socialized as citizens. Depending on the geographical scope and scale of the public sphere, people are locally, regionally, nationally or supranationally socialized as citizens. The very existence of a process of European socialization would highly increase the perceived legitimacy of federal European institutions. The issue at stake here is that a European public sphere is, until today, not fully existent. Therefore, projects such as the European citizens' dialogues aim at the top-down construction of such a public sphere in Europe.

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[1] European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/reding/citizenship/index_en.htm, last consulted on 16.01.2014.

[2] Viviane Reding on multiple events. European Commission, *EU Citizenship Report 2010. Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights*, 12 p. European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante Evaluation*, 2011, 26 p.

[3] J.M.D. Barroso, *State of the Union 2012 Address*, Plenary session of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 12 September 2012, 14 p. V. Reding, *Why we need a United State of Europe now*, Centrum für Europarecht an der University Passau, Passau, 8 November 2012, 12 p.

Scholarly debates about the genesis and structure of the public sphere have flourished since the publication in English of Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989. According to Habermas, the 'bourgeois' public sphere emerged in the 18th century salons, *Tischgesellschaften* and coffeehouses. In these places, private individuals engaged in a public debate arguing on the basis of their reason. Habermas argues that the process of emergence of such a public sphere is a bottom-up process, in which a public sphere develops in interaction, but without interference of the political/ state level.[4]

The work of Habermas had a huge influence in different fields: from early modern history, over social movement theory to debates about the social media. But scholars of the European Union in debates about the 'European democratic deficit' also applied the Habermasian concept of the public sphere while theorizing the future European public sphere. The literature in this field mainly focused on the measurement of Europeanization of public debates, and on normative theorizing about the desired future European public sphere. A first generation of scholars (Grimm, Kielmansegg) fully applied the Habermasian homogeneous ideal type.[5] Soon afterwards, some conceptual difficulties emerged: the homogeneity of the Habermasian public sphere, designed for research in the context of the nation-state, did not match with a European reality of multiple languages, democracies and citizens' identifications. Since the middle of the 1990's, scholars in the field of European Union studies started to re-conceptualize the Habermasian notion: the 'public sphere' turned to be 'spheres of public'. Main figures in this process of reconceptualization were Klaus Eder and Erik Odvar Eriksen.[6]

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[4] J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere; An Inquiry into a Cateogry of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1989, 301 p.

[5] P.G. Kielmansegg, "Integration und Demokratie", in: *Europäische Integration*, (Eds.) Jachtenfuchs, Markus, Kohler-Koch, Beate, 1996, pp. 47–71. D. Grimm, 2004, "Treaty or constitution? The legal basis of the European Union after Maastricht", in: E.O. Eriksen., J. E. Fossum et al., *Developing a Constitution for Europe*, London, Routeledge, 2004, pp. 69–87.

[6] E.O. Eriksen, "Conceptualising European public spheres. General, segmented and strong publics", in J.E. Fossum en P. Schlesinger (eds.), *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making?*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 26. K. Eder and C. Kanter, "Transnationale Resonanzdtrukturenin Europa. Eine Kritik der Rede vom Öffentlichkeitsdefizit", In: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 40 (2000), pp. 277-305

Eder argued that a public sphere is European when the same issues are discussed simultaneously in the same way in all the different national public spheres. Eriksen distinguishes general, transnational segmented and strong publics according to their position in relation with the center of power. In short, a paradigm of homogeneity changed into a paradigm of heterogeneity.

Although European communication, information and citizenship policies do already exist since the early 1990's, academics rather focused on the bottom-up process of a European public sphere in formation, or on normative debates about the future 'quality' of this European public sphere. A deeper look into why and how political institutions impact on the process of a European public sphere in formation is merely lacking. Only a few studies of the European communication policy do exist (Gramberger, Meyer), but they do not fully explain the dynamics that lead to specific projects of the European Commission to upgrade its sense of legitimacy by executing a citizenship, communication or information policy.[7]

In this thesis, I will combine a 'content analysis of discourses' and 'participant observation' in order to assess the European Year of Citizens 2013 and the Citizens' Dialogues. I will distinguish 6 levels of 'discursive production' (political speech prior to policy making, project development, inter-institutional communication, policy publication, mass political communication and implementation) depending on the actors involved, the timing in the process of policy making and degrees of implicit and explicit usage of ideological tools. For the first 5 levels, my analysis will be based on content analysis of the discourses that are produced and consumed in all kinds of written documents written during the designing of the European Year of Citizens 2013. For the analysis of the last phase, the

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[7] M. R. Gramberger, *Der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit des Europaïschen Kommission 1952-1996: PR zur Legitimation von Integration?,* Baden-Baden, Nomos, 1997, 398 p. C. Meyer, 'Political Legitimacy and the Invisibily of Politics: Exploring the European Union's Communication Deficit', in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37, 4, 1999, 617-639. 3, 7 p.

'implementation' phase, I will use the method of participant observation (online as well as in person) in multiple Citizens' Dialogues all over Europe.

My theoretical framework to analyze the interests working in, and effects of, the European Year of Citizens 2013 will consist of a combination of public sphere theory (Habermas, Arendt, Tarrow, Castells[8]), communication theory (Hall, Habermas, Shannon and Weaver[9]), discourse theory (Fairclough, Wodak[10]) and critique of ideology (Zizek, Althusser[11]). Public sphere theories will enable me to identify macro processes of public sphere formation in interaction with supranational European-state formation. These public sphere theories facilitate identifying conflicting dynamics of top-down citizenship policies and the ideally bottom-up emergence of a public sphere. I will use communication theory to determine the specific agency and structure in the process of communication happening in the Citizens' Dialogues. Finally, discourse theory and critique of ideology will help me to link a specific discursive statement to the complex process of turning 'ideology in-itself' to 'ideology for-itself'. Concretely, discourse theory and critique of ideology will enable me to show how actors in the European Commission design citizenship policies in order to make people internalize and practice Eurofederalism.

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[8] H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Cleveland, Meridian Books, 1958, 520 p.
H. Arendt*, The Human Condition*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1958, 332 p. J. Habermas, *The structural transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989, XIX, 301 p. M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012, 300 p.
[9] S. Hall, 'Encoding / Decoding', in: S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, and P. Willis (eds), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, London, Hutchinson, 1980, pp. 128–138. J. Habermas*, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1990, 225 p. H. D. Laswell*, The Structure and Function of Communication in Society*, New York, Lyman Bryson, 1948.
[10] N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The critical study of language*, Harlow, Longman, 2010, XI, 591 p. R. Wodak et al., *The discursive construction of national identity*, Edinbrugh, Edinbrugh University Press, 2009, 224 p.
[11] S. Zizek, *Mapping Ideology*, London, Verso, 1994, 341p.

2. <u>General theories on citizens and the public sphere</u>

In this chapter, I will overview the most important theories on public spheres. After having given an overview of the most important theoretical currents, I will go deeper into the most influential one: the Habermasian public sphere. I will first give an insight in the Habermasian theory and explain why it became so influential. Furthermore, I will show its relevance for the field of nationalism studies and for this particular study on the European Year of Citizens 2013.

The most comprehensive typology of public spheres is offered by the German political scientist Jürgen Gerhards.[12] Gerhards looks into normative theories of democracy and how they conceptualize the public sphere in relation to the democratic political system. He distinguishes between the liberal representative type of public sphere and the deliberative democratic type of public sphere. The model of liberal representation is rooted in the political theories of Schumpeter, Mill, Locke, Downs and Ackerman. In this model informed citizens vote during the process of elections. Consequentially, political elites have to acknowledge the outcome of elections. The role of the media in the liberal representative model is a more traditional function of mediation between voters and institutions. Mediation is essential in this case because it facilitates transparency and a better apprehension of information by citizens, two factors that are of crucial importance for a liberal representative public sphere to function well.[13]

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[12] Barbara Thomass in Iosifidis, p. 64. J. Gerhards, 'Diskursive versus liberale Öffentlichkeit. Eine empirische Auseinandersetzung mit Jurgen Habermas', in: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie', 1997, 49, p. 1-39. J. Gerhards et al., 'Four models of the Public Sphere in Modern Democracies', in: Theory and Society, 31, 3, 2002, P. 289-324. P. Iosifidis, *Reinventing public service communication: European Broadcasters and Beyond*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, p. 64

[13] J. Gerhards, op.cit., 2002, p. 290-295. For an account of this type in the European context, see: J. D. Medrano, 'The public sphere and the European Unions political identity'. In: J.T. Checkel, P.J. Katzenstein, European Identity, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 81-111

The deliberative democratic type is somehow more demanding. It requires a grade of civic participation that consists of more than only voting in elections. In a 2002 article, Gerhards, Ferree, Gamson and Rucht subdivide this deliberative democratic type in a participatory liberal type, a discursive type and a constructionist type. The participatory liberal type aims to empower citizens by making them participate in the decision making through the process of deliberation. This is what they call 'popular inclusion'.[14] The constructionist type starts from the same importance of popular inclusion, but when it comes to empowerment it offers more attention to the factor of recognition. Concerning the deliberation itself, the constructionist type offers specific attention to 'narrative creativity' above the 'rationality' of the Habermasian type (see below).[15]

Finally, the 'discursive type' is that type of public sphere that is mostly associated with Jurgen Habermas. Gerhards calls this type the 'discursive type' because the dialogue Habermas tries to grasp, is essentially a *discourse* based on rational arguments. In *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit; Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* the young Jurgen Habermas aims at conceptualizing the ideal 'bourgeois public sphere' and explaining its historical evolution in relation with the modern state.[16] Habermas clearly defines a public sphere as a realm in which private individuals, by the public use of their reason, deliberatively engage with the sphere of institutions; the public sphere is *'(...) regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them* [the institutions] *in a debate over the general rules governing relations (...)'.[17]* So, the ideal, bourgeois public sphere is essentially defined by those who participate in it (private individuals) and by its autonomous position in the processes of deliberative policy making. A public sphere is, according to Habermas, detached and independent from the private sphere as

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[14] Ibidem, p. 299.
[15] Ibidem, p. 316.
[16] Translated in English as: J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere; An Inquiry into a Cateogry of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1989, 301 p.
[17] J. Habermas, op.cit., p. 27

well as from the official sphere, to which it positions itself as a challenger. This state challenging perspective of a public sphere has, in later decades, influenced a lot of theoretical attempts to explain political change. The 'contentious politics' approach in the studies of social movements, with Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow as its main figures, is only one of them.[18] Important for the reception of the Habermasian public sphere in social movement literature is the fact that Habermas conceives of the public sphere as a bottom-up process, in which people gather as a public in interaction with the central state, but never top-down constructed by the state itself. This clash of the 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' will be essential to conceive of the paradoxes of a European public sphere and the policies that try to construct such a public sphere.

But *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* is first of all a historical work that traces the emergence of public sphere back into the 17th century salons, coffeehouses and *Tischgeselschaften* in France, England and Germany, and tries to explain its emergence in opposition and in relation to the centralizing state and the emergence of capitalism as an economical system. Habermas describes a process in which a (medieval) sphere of representation changes into an ideal, bourgeois public sphere consistent of private individuals using their ratio in debates about the official sphere. According to Habermas, this bourgeois public sphere became again a sphere of representation when it opened itself to the masses and turned to be non-bourgeois again.[19]

For Habermas, the primary function for a public sphere in a democratic system is its function as the (immaterial) place in society were subjects are socialized as citizens. Habermas uses here a conceptualization of citizenship in the 'broader sense', not only as having a passport and voting rights, but also as being part of the political community as a total

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[18] S.Tarrow, C. Tilly, D. McAdam, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 387p. S.Tarrow, D. Imig, *Contentious Europeans: Protest and Politics in a Europeanizing Polity*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, 293p.

[19] J. Habermas, op.cit., p. 181-196.

person, including active participation. This 'broader' conceptualization runs from ancient Greek political philosophy up to Robert Dahl who lists effective civic participation as one of his criteria for a democratic process.[20] Taking this into account, public spheres and their socializing functions are closely linked to questions asked in the field of nationalism studies. Through socialization in public spheres, people obtain and internalize collective social norms, rules, values and habits. These norms, values, rules and habits are what could be named 'culture' on a collective level, and 'habitus' on an individual level.[21] The term 'culture' is a real battlefield of definitions. I am aware of the peculiarity of the term, but for the rest of this thesis it would be good and practical to define cultural as 'what people obtain during the process of socialization in public spheres'. Therefore, I will not analyze socialization in other spheres part of the private sphere.

Clausen has pointed out in earlier research that socialization, and culture, is a means by which social continuity is attained.[22] But at the same time culture, and the process of socialization, are in their essence something politicized and subject to change. Cris Shore has described it quite well in his major work *Building Europe*: culture is *'(...) an ongoing process of continually negotiated meanings (...)'.*[23] He clearly borrows from the Bourdieun concept of 'field'. Culture, and the process of socialization on a higher level, are objects of struggle for political actors competing for dominance in the political field. What is interesting to point out at this instance, and what is especially valid for research on the European policies, is that the 'struggle over culture' is clearly a discursive struggle. Political elites compete with discursive means and tools to obtain influence on the process of socialization and its result: culture. The European Commission's citizenship policy, as I will argue in this thesis, and the European Year of Citizens 2013 in particular, is launched out of the Commission' interest to control

[20] R. A. Dahl, *Democracy and its critics,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 109
[21] R. Wodak et al., *The discursive cosntruction of national identiy*, Edinbrugh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 28
[22] J.A. Clausen (ed.), *Socialization and Society*, Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1968, p.5
[23] C. Shore, *Building Europe: the cultural policies of European Integration*, London, Routeledge, 2000, p. 23

citizen socialization by constructing, in a top-down way, a European public sphere. As I will outline further in the next chapters, this top-down aim is peculiar and problematic considering mainstream democratic theory that especially stresses the bottom-up emergence of public spheres.

What has remained out of focus until now, but is of primary importance for studies on European democracy is the scale, and geographical scope of public spheres. If we consider their geographical scope, public spheres can be local, regional, national or supranational. Taking this into consideration, subjects could be locally, regionally, nationally or supranationally socialized as citizens. Interesting in the Habermasian approach, but highly problematic for scholars in the field of European Studies influenced by him, is the fact that the public spheres Habermas describes and analyzes in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* are national public spheres. These bourgeois public spheres are national because they originated out of the challenge to a national state that was becoming more and more important because capital was in increasing amounts centralized on this national state level.[24] So, the emergence of national public spheres created nationally socialized citizens. This national socialization in public spheres is closer linked to 'the classics of nationalism' as it may seem to be. What Benedict Anderson has called 'imagined communities' is in many ways not so different from national public spheres, and what Michael Billig has called 'banal nationalism' could be called the result of 'national socialization'.

Benedict Anderson conceives of a national community as something imagined, limited and sovereign.[25] The 'imaginedness' of the nation consists mainly out of the fact that the nation, according to Anderson, is a category of thought and part of people's everyday mentality. Not every member of the nation knows all the other members of the nation personally, but a common ground for identification as a national is shaped by the results and

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[24] J. Habermas, op.cit., p.14-27.

[25] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Natonalism*. Londen, Verso, 2006, p. 6-7.

outcomes of what Anderson calls 'print capitalism'. Newspapers, for example, served as providers of information for a limited, national, audience. The fact that, through these newspapers, people could be nationally socialized because they were treated as a national public, is very closely linked to the Habermasian historical emergence of the public sphere. The printing press, and consequentially the circulation of news, was also for Habermas one of the most important conditions for a public sphere to originate. Newspapers in 17th and 18th century Europe served as a common ground for public debate in the bourgeois public spheres. Additionally, they reported, apart from trade conditions, mostly on national politics and policies. In this way, they confined and limited the public and its debates to something national.

Although the developments of print capitalism are Andersons' main focus to explain the emergence of national imagined communities, also his argument on the collapse of the 'dynastic logic' and the secularization of 'holy language' are Habermasian in their essential core.[26] Although Anderson conceives of a 'dynastic logic' as a way of attributing legitimacy to a particular government or governor, it is clear that the break-up of a dynastic logic is closely linked with the emergence of the modern state. The increasing accumulation of (tax)money on a central, national state level, and consequentially the increasing extent of bureaucratic control of the state on society, was a necessary condition for national imagined communities and national public spheres to emerge. The decrease of the importance of Latin as a sacred language on the other hand was, according to Anderson, as well the result of the emerging print capitalism (the vernacular market was much bigger than the Latin market) as the cause of a process of imagining the nation. Although their approaches may seem very different- Anderson could be called a historian of mentalities, while Habermas is rather a political philosopher- I would like to argue that the concepts they describe are mostly the same. Public

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[26] Ibidem, p.12-12

spheres in the Habermasian sense, and Anderson's conceptualization of nations as imagined communities are both imagined, draw upon a sense of temporal simultaneity and are internally homogeneous. The Habermasian idea of a bourgeois public sphere is also national in scale and meaning: public spheres developed along national (French, British, German) lines in interaction with processes of nation building and state building. National socialization in public spheres, is in this way also closely linked with what Michael Billig has called 'banal nationalism'. Billig considers nationality as something that is unconsciously almost always there, as being part of the modern *condition humaine*.[27] He offers a top-down mechanism in which people are unconsciously nationalized by mostly mediatic agents. The result is an unreflexive, 'banal' nationalism in which people are nationally socialized without noticing it.[28]

The way Habermas conceives of an ideal public sphere is also linked to communitarian philosophers that were interested in how a community is shaped in everyday communication. The ideal speech situation of Habermas, in which people argue while borrowing from their reason only, essentially means that the criterium of reason reduces differences in external status or power among speakers.[29] For the debates between this 'equals' to function well, a sense of mutual respect and 'civility' is demanded. [30] Or as Gutmann and Thompson put it*: "It requires a favorable attitude toward, and constructive interaction with the persons with whom one disagrees."* [31] According to Gerhards these 'shared values' make people part of the same moral community.[32] Thus, a sense of (moral) community is actually obtained through the mutual respect inherent in dialogues in a public

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[27] M.Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage, 1995, 200 p.

[28] M.Billig, 'Reflecting on the critical engagement with banal nationalism, reply to Skey', in: The Sociological Review. 2009. 57, 2, p. 347–352.

[29] J. Gerhards, op.cit., 2002, p. 302.

[30] Ibidem

[31] A. Gutmann, D. Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 43.

[32] J. Gerhards, op.cit., 2002, p. 303

sphere. The ideal speech situation as Habermas describes it here, touches also upon the focus of his later work on communicative reason. The concept of 'communicative reason' challenges notions of instrumental rationality that turned to totalitarianism in the works of Horkheimer and Adorno.[33] Habermas offers a second form of reason, 'communicative reason', that is intersubjective in its essence and aims at understanding and consensus in dialogue.[34] Thus, what the field of nationalism studies can borrow from the works of the younger Habermas is twofold. First, there is the macro-sociological approach to socialization that shows how people obtain certain 'civic cultures' during the process of socialization in the public sphere. Depending on the scope of the public sphere, people are locally, regionally, nationally or supranationally socialized as citizens. Second, there is the micro-sociological focus upon the conditions for communication between individuals that make them conform to certain values that make a public sphere a sort of 'moral community'.

Intellectual influence is difficult to grasp, therefore it is highly debated why this Habermasian idealtype became so prominent in the normative as well as empirical work on public spheres. Before the 1989 translation in English, the *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* remained a rather obscure work without real influence outside the German speaking world. But after the 1989-translation, nearly every study on the (European) public sphere starts with an examination of the work of Habermas. The reasons for this could be multiple, but the user-friendliness of the idealtype is probably the biggest reason. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* is a historical work in which the concept of the 'public sphere' is precisely operationalized for research. This operationalization makes it easy to transpose the concept to other research areas. This is somehow different for other authors.

Hannah Arendt is probably the best possible counter example. The political theoretical contributions to the field of public sphere studies made by Arendt are important, but mostly

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[33] L. Thomassen, *Habermas. A Guide for the Perplexed*, Continuum, New York, 2010, p. 21
[34] Ibidem, p. 23.

forgotten in academic research (even in the typology of Gerhards). The reasons for that are the same that made the Habermasian idealtype so influential: Arendt's conceptualization is spread over multiple books and is not so precisely operationalized as the Habermasian idealtype. Nevertheless, the younger Habermas was deeply influenced by Arendt's thinking about the public and the private.[35] In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt describes a process of the penetration of the political/official into to the private in totalitarian regimes which made a public sphere impossible the exist.[36] She elaborates on this idea in *The Human Condition* when she writes her own historical study of 'the public' in which she traces 'the public' back into Ancient Greece and equalizes it with the 'polis', which she opposes to the private. According to Arendt, this sharp distinction between public (polis) and private blurs in modern times when the economical, which was of private matter in Ancient Greece, becomes something public.[37] This is closely related to processes of proletarization and socialization in the Marxist sense.[38] What makes the penetration of the political into the private possible is essentially this process of socialization. Because the question of survival (economy) is answered on a higher level than the individual, the individual's potential for agency (which is central to Arendt's concept of freedom[39]) is diminished. The conquest of the private by the public in modern times leads to the kind of conformism that would have made human agency impossible and made 'distinction' from the societal norm a purely private matter. This ultimately leads to the impossibility of a public sphere.[40] In her later work, mainly influenced by the Eichmann controversy, Arendt turned away from theorizing about the public and

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[35] E. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World.*New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 471.

[36] H. Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism. Cleveland, Meridian Books, 1958, 520 p.

[37] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition,* Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1958, p. 32-39.

[38] Ibidem, p. 66-71

[39] P. Hansen, *Hannah Arendt. Politics, History and Citizenship*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993, p. 51-53.

[40] H. Arendt, op. cit., 2009, p. 40-51

turned to the private again. Her later works are attempts to conceive of 'thinking' as the 'inner-dialogue with oneself'.[41]

In this thesis, the works of Habermas and Arendt will play a crucial role. I will use their theoretical insights not to measure the europeanisation of public spheres, and not to theorize normatively about a public sphere in the European Union. I will rather borrow from their frameworks to enrich and inform my institutional perspective on the European public sphere. I will apply these two main theories about the functioning of a public sphere in order to evaluate policies, and their discourses, that aim at the top-down construction of a public sphere.

3. Public and private in an age of social media

The context that shaped the works of Arendt and the younger Habermas was in many ways different from the world as it is today. Considering the political context, Arendt's and Habermas' ideas are shaped by the violent 1930's and 1940's: the collapse of the Weimar republic, the rise of fascism, the Second World War, the Holocaust and the first signs of a bipolar world order. These events, that in many ways also personally shaped the authors' lives, pushed them almost automatically towards democratic theory. Today's Europe is a complete other world, the bipolar world order is no more and the horrors of the Second World War seem to be far away. But it is not only the political context that changed existensively, also the structure of communication, essential to theories about the public sphere, changed a lot. Recent developments in communication technology and the way these technologies are used and consumed essentially questioned the traditional conceptual framework of the public sphere as it emerged in the theoretical works of more than 40 years ago. In a recent book,

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[41] H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, New York, Harcourt Brace Yovanovich, 1978, 283 p.

Kees Brants and Katrin Voltmer argue that political communication is becoming more and more chaotic. The authors describe a process of mediatization (the horizontal dimension) and of decentralization (the vertical dimension). Especially this process of decentralization, in which citizens turn away from political elites and their standard forms of political communication, and from the traditional media, is important for this thesis.[42] It opens up new approaches to citizens' participation and to how institutions deal with it. What I will do in this chapter is overviewing the most important scholarly debates on the impact of the internet and social media on the public sphere. More concretely, I will focus on the quality of the debate, the distinction between political, public and private, and on new forms of civic/political action.

Jennifer Brundidge distinguishes two approaches to conceive of the impacts of social media and the internet on the public sphere.[43] The first approach conceives of the internet communication as being a bad thing for the quality of the debate because communication via internet is said to facilitate selective exposure.[44] On the internet, citizens can more accurately select to which kind of information they want to be exposed to. This leads more than ever to the fact that people come only in contact with 'likeminded others and ideologically consonant information'.[45] The second approach argues the complete opposite. According to Mutz the internet breaks down social boundaries and geographical divides and exposes people to political difference, what should contribute to deliberative democracy.[46]

Another optimist is Jurgen Gerhards, in a 2010 article, he develops a double argument. First of all, he states clearly that developments in the context of social media are good for

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[42] K.Brants, K. Voltmer, Political Communication in Postmodern Democracy, Challenging the Primacy of Politics, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 1-19

[43] J. Brundidge, 'Encountering "Difference" in the Contemporary Public Sphere: The Contribution of the Internet to the Heterogeneity of Political Discussion Networks', in: Journal of Communication, 2010, 60, p. 680-681.

[44] C. Sunstein, *Republic.com.*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, 215 p.

[45] J. Brundidge, op.cit., p. 681.

[46] D.C. Mutz, *Hearing the other side: Deliberative versus participatory democracy,* New York, Cambridge University, 2006, 171 p.

democracy because they enforce the diversity of the debate with less gatekeeping agency as it was the case in classic media systems, and require not much resources to keep the network alive.[47] Secondly, Gerhards aims at comparing the structures of the 'internet public sphere' with the classical public sphere. He argues that the structure of both public spheres is actually the same, and distinguishes an encounter public sphere, organizational public sphere and the mass media public sphere as well in the virtual world as in the non-virtual world. The first (individual) level is the 'encounter public sphere'. In the classical public sphere this level refers to moments when people meet in public spaces and talk to each other. The online counterpart is e-mailing, or what Gerhards calls 'instant messaging'. For both these levels, organizational requirements for sustaining the network are low, it is easy for people to make themselves heard by others, but the societal impact is low because not a lot of people are reached and included. This lack of interconnectedness between different little internet public spheres is also pointed at by Rasmussen, and considered to be the main burden for an online public sphere.[48] On the organizational level, Gerhards refers to blogs and websites of civil society organizations as a counterpart of the civil society level in the classic public sphere. On the highest level, the virtual counterpart of the mass media are the search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.).[49] According to Gerhards, communication on this level is victim of the same gatekeeping mechanisms as mass media communication in the classic public sphere. Search engines favor websites that show a high level interconnectedness with other websites, thereby favoring institutions with the resources to makes these connections.[50]

What Gerhards tends to overlook in his structural analysis of the internet public sphere are processes of changing power relations due to the control on communication, and the commodification of speech in social media. This issue is powerfully mentioned by Danah

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[47] J.Gerhards, M.S. Schäfer, 'Is the internet a better public sphere? Comparing old and new media in the USA and Germany', in: *New Media Society*, 12, 2010, p. 146
[48] T. Rasmussen, 'The Internet and the Differentiation in the Public Sphere', in: *Nordicom Review*, 29, 2, p. 81
[49] J. Gerhards, op.cit., 2010, p. 147.
[50] J. Gerhards, op.cit., 2010, p. 156-157.

Boyd.[51] She points at the fact that social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) are not unmediated publics, but mediated publics.[52] Online communication is mediated by communication technology, and owned by corporations that construct the means and tools of personal communication via social media. The control of corporations on online communication goes so far that all the data (including 'personal communication') are owned by these corporations. The economic value of these data lays in the possibility of more precise and personal advertising. This commodification of everyday speech ultimately blurs the distinction between public and private. In the age of social media, corporations as Facebook and Google have a created an illusionary privacy controlled by economic interests. These developments led scholars to a severe re-evaluations of Habermasian ideas of the public sphere.

Pieter Boeder made probably the most important attempt to save the Habermasian public sphere from 'extinction'. In a widely cited article from 2005, he presents the public sphere as a more dynamic idea able to show *'(...) how the theoretical concept of the public sphere is being used to work out viable options for a digital future and models for positive change.'[53]* What Boeder does is linking the Habermasian heritage to the network and media theory of Van Dijk. With Van Dijk in mind, Boeder expects three conditions of the public sphere to decline: the dependence on physical space for people to encounter, the unitary character is breaking down in several sub-spheres, and the distinction between public and private blurs.[54] Nevertheless these severe changes, Boeder argues that the main characters of the Habermasian public sphere are still alive. On the one hand, Boeder states, social media enforce more than ever bottom-up social change in which communicative action plays a central role. Secondly, he argues that virtuality of cyberspace does not necessarily have to

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[51] D. Boyd, "Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What?", in: *Knowledge Tree* 13, May 2007. http://kt.flexiblelearning.net.au/tkt2007/?page_id=28, last consulted on 15.01.2014
[52] Ibidem, p. 2
[53] Boeder (P.), Habermas' Heritage: The future of a public sphere in a network society, in: First Monday, 10, 9, 2005, http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1280/1200, last consulted on 15.01.2014.
[54] Ibidem. J. van Dijk, 1999. *The network society: Social aspects of new media.* London, Sage, 2005, 304 p.

contradict with the Habermasian public sphere, because Habermas' public sphere was essentially something abstract too.[55]

This leads us automatically to new forms of political and communicative action in 'the network society'. Recent events such as the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement and the rise of the populist right have deeply influenced scholarly literature on social movements, civic participation and communication theory. A full comprehensive review of all the literature does not suit the aim of this thesis. As for this chapter, the focus will be on new forms of political and communicative action related to changes the social media caused in the structure of the public sphere.

Habermas' main critique on the public sphere of the second half of the twentieth century was its 'refeudalization' due to the commercial interests of mass media corporations. According to Habermas, the public sphere in which communicative rationality was prevalent turned again into a public sphere of representation, as it was before the culture of 'salons', coffeehouses and *Tischgesellschaften* in the eighteenth century.[56] This lead Tatiana Mazali to an evaluation of the 'cyberspace' on the same, Habermasian criteria. She comes to the conclusion that online social network spaces are performance spaces, rather than representational spaces: *'They are constructed social and relational spaces where identity is created, and where, above all, 'we act'.'*[57]

The possibility of agency in cyberspace led scholars of social movements and social mobilization to a reconceptualization of political agency. Lance Bennet and Alexandra Segerberg differentiate the logic of collective action as we have known it for decades from the logic of 'connective action'.[58] Collective action requires high levels of organizational resources and the formation of collective identities, while connective action is based on

[55] P. Boeder, op.cit, 2005.
[56] J. Habermas, op. cit., 1989.
[57] T. Mazali, 'Social Media as a New Public Sphere.' In: Leonardo, 44, 3, 2011, P. 290-291.
[58] L. Bennett, A. Segerberg, 'The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics.', in: *Information, Communication, and Society*, 15, 5, 2012, p.739-68.

content and information sharing via media-networks.[59] Bennett and Segerberg argue that connective action is more based on personal interests and feelings, wherein the power of ideology and the creation of collective identity weakens in contemporary protest that combine collective and connective action: ' *People may still join actions in large numbers, but the identity reference is more derived through inclusive and diverse large-scale personal expression rather than through common group or ideological identification.* '[60] These processes of individualization are essentially part of what Inglehardt has called the postmodern attitude.[61]

It is this connective action and the freedom (from state institutions and ideologies) it entails, that is picked up by Manuel Castells in his last book *Networks of Outrage and Hope*.[62] What Castells does is applying a theory of power to the creation of the public in the protests in the context of the Arab Spring and the financial crisis. According to Castells power is executed by the combination of means of coercion and the instruction of meaning in peoples mind through symbolic manipulation (ideology).[63] According to Castells it is this instruction of meaning that is the most stable and most effective source of power. As a social movement theorist, and an engaged leftist, Castells sees in internet communication the potential for a counterpower emerging from an autonomous public sphere. For Castells, social meaning is produced through social communication, which is a kind of communication existent in the public realm that goes further than pure interpersonal communication. The potential of internet communication lays in mass self-communication: messages by many for many of which the production is self-decided by the sender. The sender selects the receiver, and what

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[59] Ibidem
[60] Ibidem, p. 744.
[61] R. Inglehardt, *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic, and Political change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.
[62] M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age,* Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012, 300 p.
[63] M.Castells, op.cit., p. 4-6. See also: S. Zizek, *Mapping Ideolog*y, London, Verso, 1994, 341 p.

the receivers pick from the internet is also self-decided.[64] The scale of this kind of communication is too big for a state to control and is therefore more autonomous than any form of social communication before. The great merit of Castells is that he accurately links virtual social communication to actual community building in a public sphere. When he refers to occupied buildings, Castell writes: *'By constructing a free community in a symbolic space, social movements create a public space, a space for deliberation, which ultimately becomes a political space (...)'* [65] This public space is described by Castells as a hybrid space between internet communication and the physical urban space where protests happen. In this complex interacting of virtual communication and the urban space 'community' is created.[66]

To take Habermas and Castells serious means that processes of emerging public spheres should be conceived of as bottom-up processes. Or as Clay Shirky says: *'Moreover, a public sphere is more likely to emerge in a society as a result of people's dissatisfaction with matters of economics or day-to-day governance than from their embrace of abstract political ideals.'*[67] Public spheres, in early modern times as well as in the internet age, originated in interaction/opposition with the official political level, but do exist autonomously from these institutions. Therefore, policies that aim at constructing a true public sphere in a top-down way, are actually engaged in an impossible struggle to reach their policy goals. The most they could accomplish is creating a sphere of representation in which ideology and advertising wins the battle from rationality and debate. Nevertheless, political institutions have a huge interest in the construction or emergence of public spheres because processes of citizens' socialization and community building are, as Habermas and Castells have showed, closely related to the structure of the public sphere and are in this way directly impacting the institutions' legitimacy. Therefore, these policies are worth examining not necessarily because

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[64] M. Castells, op. cit., p. 6-7
[65] Ibidem, p. 11
[66] Ibidem, p. 11
[67] C. Shirky, *The Political Power of Social Media*, Council on Foreign Relation, 2011, p. 35

of their impact on actual public spheres, but rather in order to understand how institutions define their interest and act according to these interests when it comes to problems of legitimacy.

4. Theorizing the European Public Sphere

In this chapter, I will review the most important attempts to theorize a European public sphere. I will show how more general theories of the public sphere (mostly Habermas) influenced the 'measurement of Europeanization of debate' and normative theorizing on European publics. Finally, I will argue that an approach to institutional discourses of democracy is lacking in the field of European public sphere studies, a gap in the literature that these thesis aims at filling.

The first theoretical attempts to conceive of a European public sphere emerged rather late. In the beginning of the 1990's, political scientists, sociologists and philosophers started to think about the necessity of a Europeanwide public sphere for a European democracy to function. The reasons for this lateness are multiple, but I will select the two most important ones. First of all, the Treaty of Maastricht and its aftermath brought thinking about European democracy the center of the debate.[68] In Maastricht (1992), the leaders of the member states decided to make the European economic union a political union, taking in a common foreign policy and the monetary union. Rather than the signing of the Treaty itself, the aftermath in different referenda made the European public sphere a highly debated topic. In this case, Ireland was probably the least problematic. On the eighteenth of June 1992 68.7 percent of the Irish voted pro Treaty, although the turn-out of 57.3 percent was rather low. France was

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[68] T. Van de Putte, *De constructie van een Europese publieke sfeer als 'oplossing' voor het democratisch deficit. Een ideeënhistorische analyse van het Europees communicatiebeleid 1990-2000.* *http://www.ryckevelde.be/data/files/Thomas%20Van%20de%20Putte.pdf,* last consulted on 11.02.2014

somehow more problematic. The French Parliament had already ratified the Treaty, but President Mittérand nevertheless brought the Treaty to a referendum in a mood of self-confidence. Only 51.1 percent (turn-out 69.7 percent) of the French people voted pro Treaty, which was enough to ratify but the low number of voters pro Treaty was surprising for President Mittérand. Denmark is probably the most problematic case. Denmark held a referendum on the second of June 1992, with only 49.3 percent of the people voting pro Treaty, which made it not ratified. The Danish government was forced into renegotiating the Treaty and received some important opt-outs, of which the most import ones are non-participation in the Monetary Union and Common Defense. After receiving these opt-outs, a second referendum was held, on May the thirteenth 1993, in which 56.8 percent of the Danish voted in favor of the Treaty.

The results of these referenda caused a period of reflection on the distance between citizens and the EU and its impacts on the democratic legitimacy of the EU institutions.[69] This is what Robert Dahl in 1989 rightly predicted as the main problem of what he called 'Polyarchy III': a gap in knowledge between the governing political elites and the demos.[70] According to Dahl, in post-national constellations the overlaps between the informed, attentive publics and the demos at large would decrease, leading the 'Polyarchy III' into a democratic deficit.[71]

The institutional reflections provoked by the Maastricht referenda resulted in two political reports on 'closing the gap with the citizen'. The first one was MEP Willy De Clerq's *Reflection on Information and Communication Policy of the European Community* (1993) and European Commissioner Pinheiro's *Information, Communication, Openness* (1994).[72] Both

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[69] D. Dinan, *Europe Recast. A history of European Union.*, Hountmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 292-293
[70] R. A. Dahl, op.cit., 1989, p. 338-341.
[71] R. A. Dahl, op.cit., 1989, p. 340-341.
[72] W. De Clerq et al., *Reflection on Information and Communication Policy of the European Community.* 1993, p. III, bron: http://aei.pitt.edu/29870/1/DE_CLERCQ_REPORT_INFO._COMM._POLICY.pdf, last consulted at

documents are the first two attempts of 'citizenship policy' aiming at coping with the European 'democratic deficit' by top-down constructing a European public sphere. The aftermath of the Maastricht referenda caused a huge shock in the European institutions, ending the perceived permissive consensus of the first forty years of European integration.[73] In the citizenship documents written 15 years after the Maastricht crisis the shock still resonates. In the 2006 White Paper on Communication Policy, the European Commission still refers to the Maastricht crisis as the moment on which discussions on the European 'democratic deficit' became prevalent and the need for a European citizenship policy turned to be necessary.[74]

The notion of a European democratic deficit also invaded the political sciences after the Maastricht. It was reinforced by the translation of Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* as *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* was a rather marginal book before its translation, with only considerable influence in the German speaking intellectual and scientific spheres. But after its translation, it influenced deeply different fields of study, from the historiography of Pre Modern literary circles (Van Dixhoorn) [75] to social movement studies (Tilly, Tarrow).[76] But the Habermasian public sphere also offered an analytical tool to scholars of the European 'democratic deficit' to examine the place of a public sphere in a supranational democracy.

In short, the two main issues that brought the public sphere in the middle point of academic and political debate were discussions about the 'European democratic deficit' that

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24.04.2013. J.d.D. Pinheiro, *Information, Communication, Openness,* Office for official publications of the European Communities, Luxemburg, 1994, 96 p.

[73] Hooghe (L.), Marks (G.), 'A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: from Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus'. In: British Journal of Political Science, 39, 1, 2009, p. 1-23

[74] European Commission, White Paper on Communication Policy, 2006, p.4

[75] A. Van Dixhoorn et al., *The reach of the republic of letters: literacy and learned societies in late medieval and early modern Europe,* Leiden, Brill, 2008.

[76] D. Imig, S. Tarrow, *Contentious Europeans: Protests and Politics in an Integrating Europe*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001, 293 p. S. Tarrow, C. Tilly and D. McAdam*, The Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 387 p. C. Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004*, Boulder, Paradigm Publishers, 2004, 194 p.

erupted since the aftermath of the Maastricht ratification crisis, and the wide influence of the translation of Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* into English.

The scholarly literature on the European public sphere generally took two directions since the early 1990's: the measurement of the degree of Europeanization of the public sphere(s) and normatively theorizing on what a European public sphere actually should be in the future. The first perspective focusses mostly on the framing of European issues in the national media (Iosifidis, Trenz, Wodak) [77], the transnationalization of debates and protests, and citizens' identification with the supranational level (Bee, Harrisson, Van Brussel).[78] The conceptual struggle for all of this studies starts with the reconceptualization and the application of the Habermasian ideal public sphere on a European scale. Habermas' concept was designed to make sense of developments in the context of the nation-state, the challenge for the scholars of the European public sphere was to (re)design the concept so that it could applied to the supranational level.

De Vreese argues that these theoretical attempts could be differentiated in three types: the utopian, elitist and realist type.[79] Scholars in the utopian tradition completely apply the homogeneous Habermasian type to the European context and struggle with the lack of a pan-european identity, media system and language (Kielmansegg, Grimm).[80] The elitist type differentiates between segmented transnational public spheres in which a mass of people

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[77] P. Iosifidis, *Reinventing public service communication: European broadcasters and beyond*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMilan, 2010, 326 p. H.-J. Trenz, K. Eder, 'The Democratising Dynamics of a European Public Sphere: Towards a Theory of Democratic Functionalism', in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7, 1, 2004, p. 5-25. A. Triandafyllidou, R. Wodak and M. Krzyzanowski*, The European Public Sphere and the Media. Europe in Crises,* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 286 p.

[78] C. Bee, E. Bozzini, *Mapping the European Public Sphere: Institutions, Media and Civil society*, Farnham, Ashgate Pub., 2010, XVI, 258 p. J. Harisson, B. Wessels, *Mediating Europe: new media, mass communications and the European public sphere,* New York, Berghahn Books, 2009, VI, 332 p. A. Van Brussel, P. Huyst, 'De Europese publieke sfeer: dovemansgesprek of dialoog tussen de Europese Commissie en haar burgers?'. In: *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie*, 32, 3-4, 2011, P. 355-386.

[79] C.H., de Vreese, 'The EU as a public sphere'. In: *Living reviews in European governance*, 2, 3, 2007, p. 9

[80] P.G. Kielmansegg, "Integration und Demokratie", in: *Europäische Integration*, (Eds.) Jachtenfuchs, Markus, Kohler-Koch, Beate, 1996, pp. 47–71. D. Grimm, 2004, "Treaty or constitution? The legal basis of the European Union after Maastricht", in: E.O. Eriksen., J. E. Fossum et al., *Developing a Constitution for Europe*, London, Routeledge, 2004, pp. 69–87.

engage, and a little elite that engages in a real homogenous supranational public sphere. The realist type, according to De Vreese, consists of the Europeanization of national public spheres.[81] What I will argue in this chapter is that De Vreese's typology is too simplistic when taking into account all the theoretical work done on the European public sphere in the last two decades. I will differentiate between authors that have tried to apply the Habermasian notion of the public sphere on the European level (De Vreese's utopian type) and everything that came after the moment when scholars realized that the Habermasian type needed a serious reconceptualization for its application on a supranational political reality. What De Vreese calls the 'elitist' and 'realist' types actually do not cover all the broad and the various literature published since the mid 1990's. Instead of typologizing this vast amount of literature, I will look into the two most important authors that reconceptualized the Habermasian idealtype: Klaus Eder and Erik Odvar Eriksen.

In *Conceptualizing European Public Spheres: general, segmented and strong publics* Erik Odvar Eriksen distinguished different kinds of publics in Europe on the basis of their persistence and distance to the center of power. [82] The *overarching general publics* are the publics in the traditional, 'utopian' sense: homogenous publics with a common language and common media that are stable in their persistence. This is essentially the kind of public sphere Habermas conceives of. Secondly, Eriksen describes *the transnational segmented publics*. These are issue-related publics that arise around one particular event. According to Eriksen these transnational segmented publics are more likely to come into existence in the EU than overarching general publics. This 'transnational segmented public' is further examined by the political theorist Klaus Eder. Eder states that a European public sphere comes into existence when the same issues are discussed in the same way and at the same time in the different

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[81] de Vreese, op. cit, p.10

[82] E.O. Eriksen, *"*Conceptualising European public spheres. General, segmented and strong publics*"*, in J.E. Fossum en P. Schlesinger (eds.), *The European Union and the Public Sphere. A communicative space in the making?*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 26

national public spheres. The communication that has been shared through this process of parallel debating could, according to Eder, be considered transnational.[83] In this way he tries to cope with the problem of the accession of different *demoi*, all with their different identities and different ideas about the 'common good'[84], for a pan-European public sphere.[85] The third type of public Eriksen dinstinguished is the *strong public*. For Eriksen, these strong publics are strongly connected with the center of political power. They are legally institionalized and produce regulated discourses in order to form a collective will in a polity. Concrete examples of strong publics are the European Parliament, or the Constitutional Convention (2003) that proposed a European Constitution.[86] Eriksen states that these conventions satisfy the demands of a democratic debate as well considering representativity as differentiation.[87]

So far, Eder and Eriksen are theorizing about how to analyze the social reality: they are constructing idealtypes in order to conceive of publics in Europe. But they add also a normative dimension to their works. For Eriksen, the problem of contemporary EU democracy is not the existence of the different types of public (general, segmented and strong), but the lack of connection made in between them. According to him, we should not improve the quality of the independent public spheres, but we should improve their combination. A polity can only be democratic if issues debated by strong publics are also opened up and debated by general publics. So, not necessarily the quantity of the publics is the problem, but the lack of ability to connect them and their topics of discussion to each other.[88] Klaus Eder would rather like to find a European identity in the Habermasian sense: the development of a sense of community through mutual interaction based on communicative reason and dialogue. Essential in this case is a European public sphere in

[83] H.-J. Trenz, K. Eder, op. cit., pp. 8-9.
[84] R. A. Dahl, op.cit., 1989, p. 217-219.
[85] K. Eder and C. Kanter, "Transnationale Resonanzdtrukturenin Europa. Eine Kritik der Rede vom Öffentlichkeitsdefizit", In: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 40 (2000), pp. 277-305
[86] http://european-convention.eu.int/, last consulted on 08.02.2014
[87] E.O. Eriksen, op. cit., p. 35-37
[88] E.O. Eriksen, op. cit, p. 38

which people take each other as legitimate co-actors and take each other serious, independent from national interests.[89] In this sense, the existence of a European public sphere would offer a high contribution to the formation of a European identity. Eder also proposes three 'solutions' for the problems of European democracy. The first one is the 'Majone-like' option that consists of expanding the capacity of the supranational European state. Secondly, there is the 'Habermas-like' option in which the public 'invades' the political sphere in a model of strong deliberative democracy based on a stable network of civil society organization. Lastly, he conceives of a Arendt-like option in which a competent elite, representative for the population, interacts in a public sphere and represents the people in the process of political communication.[90]

As I have outlined here, theories on the public sphere in the last two decades aimed at measuring the Europeanization of the public sphere(s), or at normatively theorizing the future existence of European public sphere. But what is lacking in this rich field is a perspective on European institutions and their interest in the European public sphere. As I have mentioned in my first chapter, the European Commission has a great interest in the top-down construction of a European public sphere, in order to control the process of citizens' socialization and legitimize itself by creating a mass of European citizens. In the next chapter, I will borrow from the sparse work in the field of EU studies focusing on citizenship policies and the public sphere, and from the anthropology of bureaucratic elites to add this institutional perspective to the field of European public sphere studies. To the institutional perspective and the 'anthropology of elites' perspective, I will add a focus on the study of 'discourses on democracy', arguing that the European Commission's citizenship policy is discursive struggle for the authority and control over the process of citizen' socialization.

[89] K. Eder in M. Van de Steeg, 'Theoretical reflections on the public sphere in the European Union: A network of communication or a political community?' In: C. Bee, E. Bozzini (eds.), *Mapping European Public Sphere: Institutions, Media and Civil Society*. Ashgate Publishing, 2010 , p. 39-43.
[90] K. Eder, op. cit., 2007, p. 59

5. <u>What could I contribute to this?</u>

As I have outlined before, the scholarly work about the European public sphere could be divided into two perspectives: a normative perspective that aims at theorizing the future quality of a European public sphere, and an empirical perspective that aims at measuring the extent of Europeanization of national public spheres. What I will offer in this chapter is an approach centered around institutional discourses on democracy. I will argue that scholars denied institutional attempts to create a European public sphere in a top-down way mostly because of deductive, theoretical reasons: publics are defined by institutional non-intervention in their structures. Therefore, institutional attempts to create a public sphere are per definition meant to fail. This is mostly true. While examining the aims and effects of the European Year of Citizens 2013, I will argue that they do not succeed in constructing a public (see further). But nevertheless, this is no reason not to examine institutional ambitions to (discursively) control the process of socialization and to reverse the usual dynamics of the emergence of an ideal public sphere in order to increase the institutions' legitimacy. That these policies fail, or do not have the impact that bureaucrats in the European Commission want them to have, does not mean that they are not worth examining. To understand an institution means not only looking at the effects of its policies, but also looking at the interests to execute a certain policy and the discursive strategies to legitimize these policy claims.

Institutional approaches to European identity and European socialization are not new. Some political scientists tried to conceive of the European communication policy (now part of the 'citizenship policy') as a way to cope with the democratic deficits of the European Union. Gramberger, for example, offers a large narrative covering the European communication policy from 1952 until 1996 arguing for the decline of an 'information obstruction policy' of

the European Commission.[91] Others, like Bruggemann, try to find the roots of a European communication policy and find out that it was actually non-existent until 2002.[92] The problem with this research is that it is outdated regarding the new strategies in citizenship policy since 2006, or is unable to fully explain the institutional dynamics to explain why the European Commission executes a specific policy. Kurpas and Bruggemann, for example, examine the 2006 *White Paper on a European Communication Policy* and give specific policy advices instead of explaining the process that lead to the specific content of the White Paper.[93]

But a wave of anthropological literature on European institutions invaded the scholarly debate at the end of the 1990's and the beginning of the 2000's.[94] Cris Shore's book *Building Europe: the cultural politics of European integration* is probably the best known example. On the basis of classic theories of nationalism[95] and anthropological observation of the bureaucratic elites, he points at a process in which supranational elites try to impose their world-view and identity on a public through politicized culture. What Shore actually does is arguing against the broadly held assumption that cultural products are Europeanized as economical products because of a spill-over caused by the common market. Shore shows that culture is more than only an economic product, but that it offers also a way to the construction of a European imagined community. The same is true for the 'citizenship policies' I am examining in this thesis. European citizenship policies do not come into existence because of an economic spill-over, even more: they are not even producing laws or regulations. These policies, like cultural policies, are interesting for European federal institutions as the

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[91] M. R. Gramberger, *Der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit des Europaïschen Kommission 1952-1996: PR zur Legitimation von Integration?,* Baden-Baden, Nomos, 1997, 398 p.

[92] M. Bruggemann, 'How the EU constructs the European Public Sphere. Seven Strategies of Information Policy', in: The Public, 12, 2, 2005, p. 65.

[93] S. Kurpas, M. Brüggeman and C. Meyer, *The Commission White Paper on Communication.Mapping a way to European Public Sphere*, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2006, 9 p.

[94] C. Shore, *Building Europe. The Cultural Politics of European Integration.* London, Routeledge, 2000, 257 p. I. Bellier, T. M. Wilson, *An Anthropology of The European Union. Building, Imagining and Experiencing the New Europe.* Oxford, Berg, 2000, 205 p.

[95] In his case mostly Benedict Anderson

European Commission because they could offer the discursive means and tools to control a process of socialization and enforce a sense of democratic legitimacy.

Discourse is central to understanding of European public spheres and European democracy for several reasons. Like Desmond Dinan has pointed out in his standard historical work on the European integration: the European democratic deficit is a 'perceived' democratic deficit. Several scholarly and institutional arguments have been made about the European 'democratic deficit' since the Treaty of Maastricht. According to different authors it is non-existent (Dinan, Moravscik), a communication deficit (Meyer), a constitutional/institutional deficit (Habermas), a cultural deficit (Shore),…[96] I take the notion of a 'perceived' democratic deficit from Dinan, not because it is non-existence as he argues, but because of the fact that the 'democratic deficit' is essentially a subjective, discursive construction. Joseph Schumpeter already understood this when writing in 1942 that we should ' (…) leave it to every populous to define itself.'[97] The European 'democratic deficit' is not objectively measurable, and subject to various definitions of democracy and accounts of socio-political reality. Therefore, it would be more interesting not to give a final answer to the question about the democratic nature of the European constellations, but to treat statements about the European democratic deficit as part of a discourse that is aiming at impacting the constellation itself. This discursive, institutional approach is lacking in the field of European public sphere studies.

Exemplary for that is the result of the EUROSPHERE project, an academic project coordinated by the University of Bergen and financed by the European Commission. This project aimed ' (…)to create innovative perspectives on the European public spheres and to

[96] D. Dinan, op. cit.. Moravcsik in P. Taylor, *Anti-Europeanism examined.* London, Routeledge, 2006, P. 95-97. C. Meyer, 'Political Legitimacy and the Invisibily of Politics: Exploring the European Union's Communication Deficit', in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37, 4, 1999, 617-639. 3, 7 p. J. Habermas, *Democracy, Solidarity and the European crisis.2013* http://www.kuleuven.be/communicatie/evenementen/evenementen/jurgen-habermas/democracy-solidarity-and-the-european-crisis, last consulted on 15.11.2013. C. Shore, op. cit.

[97] J. Schumpeter in R. A. Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*, Yale University, 1989, p. 121.

identify the conditions that enable or undermine the articulation of inclusive democratic European Public Spheres.'[98] Researchers of more than 10 universities participated in the project. Although the title of the final report, *Linking the European Union with the Citizens Evaluation of EU Policies Aiming to Create a Democratic European Public Sphere*, sounded promising, most of the research did not manage to go further than the normative and the 'measuring Europeanization' approach that I have outlined before.[99] But one exception has to be made. Acar Kutay, in his article *'European Union's Communication Strategy through "Civil Dialogue": Represented, performed and contested'*, points at discursive strategies used by the European Commission to present itself as a democratic and open institution by appealing to civil society organizations for its policies:

'"Civil dialogue", the official name for the relationship between the EU institutions and NGOs, has been developed as a form of political communication within the context of "connecting with the citizens" discourse wherein social actors act as an interlocutor of EU. The form in this case denotes a particular mode of communication through which EU manifests itself to a larger audience: that is, EU tries to render itself visible and knowable through the discourse of organised civic action.'[100]

This analytical combination of discourse analysis and institutional perspectives will be the analytical basis of this thesis. What differs in the work of Acar Kutay and Cris Shore and this thesis is not the perspective but the specific policies under examination. It is needless to say that current citizenship policies differ qua content as well as qua aim from the cultural policies that were examined by Shore. The cultural tools of the European Commission in the 1980's and 1990's, as Shore shows, were classical symbolic tools of nation building: flags, anthems,… In the European Year of Citizens 2013, the Commission strategy is different: citizens' European identification would be fueled by interactive communication in a European public sphere. The policy aims of the European Year of Citizens 2013 are also different from

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[98] http://eurosphere.uib.no/, last consulted on 08.02.2014

[99] H. Sicakkan, *Linking the European Union with Citizens. Evaluation of EU Policies aiming to Create a Democratic European Public Sphere*, Eurosphere, 2013, 266 p.

[100] A. Kutay, 'European Union's Communication Strategy through "Civil Dialogue": Represented, Performed and Contested', in: H; Sicakkan, op.cit., p. 62

the more recent citizenship policies under examination in Acar Kutay's work. While Acar Kutay deals with citizenship policies from the first decade of the 21st century in which the Commission tried to incorporated civil society organizations as a communicative broker between the EU and its citizens, the Commission skips civil society organizations in the European Year of Citizens 2013.[101] By organizing online Citizens' Dialogues and Townhall meetings, the European Commission presents itself directly to the citizens, without mediator.

In short, I will use this institutional discursive approach to the European Year of Citizens 2013 to show how discourses on European federalism and a future dream of a European public sphere are linked to citizenship policies. When thinking deductively, from the theoretical perspective of Habermas, Arendt and Castells, the citizenship policies aiming at creating a European public sphere are predestined to fail. On the other hand, what is important and interesting in these policies is that show a clear aim of an institution to control the process in which subjects are socialized as citizens. European federal institutions have a huge interest in the supranationally socialized citizens, because a widely held identification of people as 'European citizens' could contribute to these institutions' legitimacy. The struggle over the control on socialization is essentially a discursive struggle: a struggle for the dominant role in the process of the attribution of meaning.

6. The European Year of Citizens 2013: A Model of Discursive production.

As I have outlined before, I will treat the 'European Year of Citizens 2013' as part of a discursive aim of the European Commission to control the process of citizens' socialization. I will examine discourses on different levels and in different contexts to understand why the European Commission executes projects such as the 'European Year of Citizens 2013' and
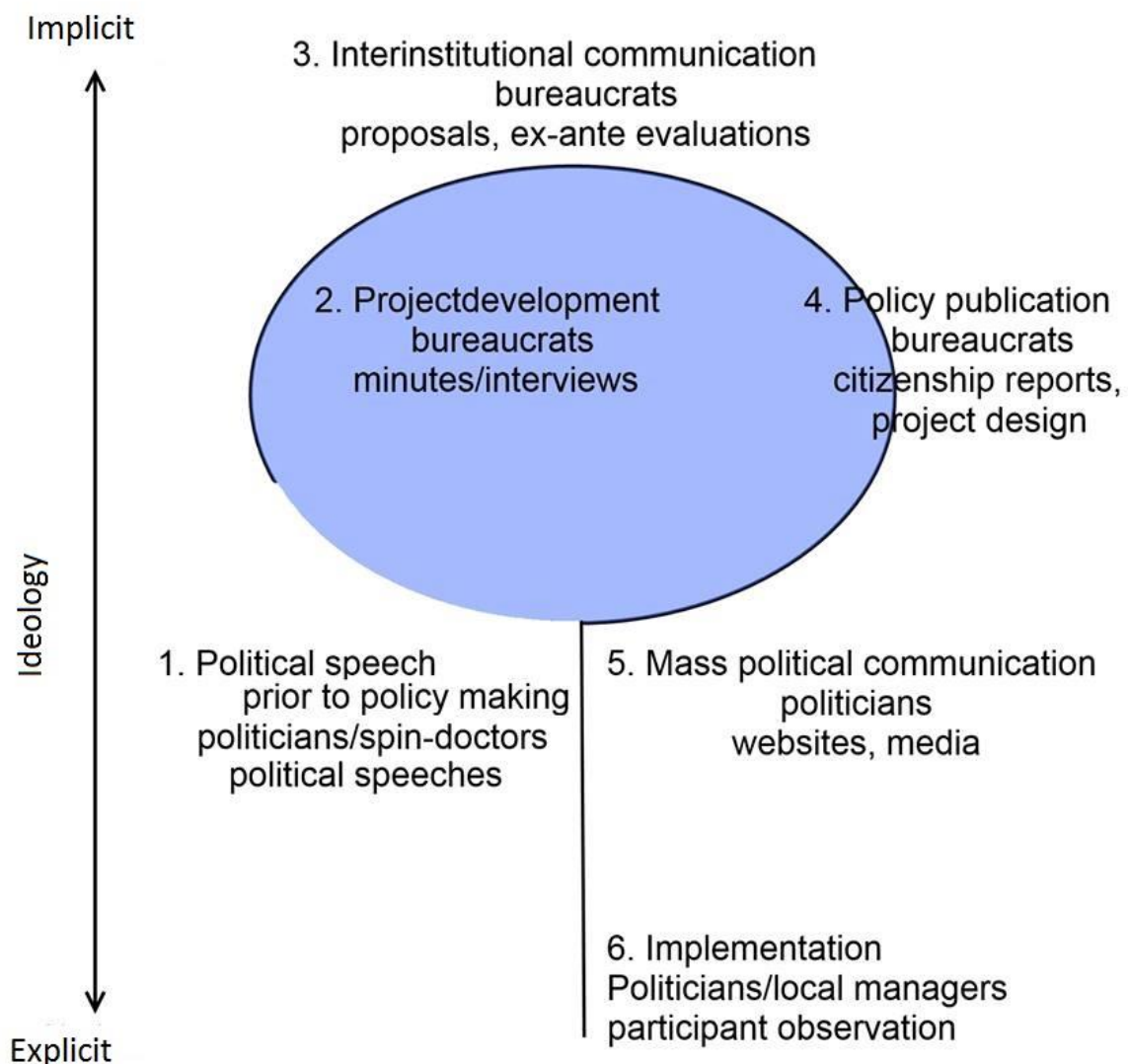
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[101] Ibidem, p. 68

how ideas of 'citizenship' and 'public sphere' are conceptualized and acted out on different levels. My methodological perspective will consist of a content analysis of discourses. The ideas and statements I will examine are discursive constructions: speech acts of a particular group on a particular societal level by which this groups structures the social reality and determines a particular truth.[102] Content analysis of discourses is critically aware of the fact that statements under examination function as a discourse, but does not examine the linguistic and rhetorical means and tools that constitute the discourse. Rather, it looks into the specific content of the discourse, the arguments that are formulated, links them in a comprehensive framework to arguments offered in discourses on other societal levels and shows links between a set of discourses and a specific interest.

What does that specifically mean for the European Year of Citizens 2013? My analysis of the European Year of Citizens 2013 will consist of an analysis of the 'model of discursive production' inherent in the process of policy making in the EU, and more specifically for the European Year of Citizens 2013. This model of discursive production consists of 6 discursive levels dependent on the context and moment in the process of policy making: 1) ideology prior to policy making, 2) project development, 3) inter-institutional communication, 4) policy documents, 5) mass political communication, 6) implementation. The actors involved in the construction of these discourse is also dependent on the process of policy making. Political speeches, for example, are written by politicians and their spin-doctors, inter-institutional communication is executed by bureaucrats. Each of these groups have a shifting and dynamic power to influence the discursive production. The amount of power both politicians and bureaucrats have at a particular moment will determine the place of the discourse on the implicit/explicit ideology axis (see below).

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[102] For this definition I borrow from a whole serie of authours: Lacan, Habermas, Foucault, Fairclough, Wodak,… The scope of this thesis does not suit an in dept account of these scholars, but their ideas are implicitely present in my study.

The empirical part of this thesis will be structured around the analysis of these 6 discursive levels, carefully linking them and referring to their impact on a constructed social reality. In the next paragraphs I will go deeper into the 6 levels specifically and linking them to the primary sources that open up possibilities for researchers to examine them.

European year of citizens 2013: Model of Discursive Production

Implicit

3. Interinstitutional communication
bureaucrats
proposals, ex-ante evaluations

2. Projectdevelopment
bureaucrats
minutes/interviews

4. Policy publication
bureaucrats
citizenship reports,
project design

1. Political speech
prior to policy making
politicians/spin-doctors
political speeches

5. Mass political communication
politicians
websites, media

6. Implementation
Politicians/local managers
participant observation

Ideology

Explicit

The first level is the level of explicit ideology prior to policy making.[103] Discourses on this level are produced on instances when politicians talk about their views on Europe in public, or write them down and disseminate them on a large scale. I will analyze two speeches: President of the Commission J.M.D. Barroso's State of the Union Speech from 2012 and Viviane Reding's speech on Passau University on the 'United States of Europe'.[104] These speeches will be used to examine the ideological roots of the European Year of Citizens 2013. Arguing from a Christian-democratic based Eurofederalism, both politicians set the formation of a common 'European public space' as one of their main policy objectives.

The second discursive level is the level of 'political project development'. This is the process in which ideological ideas are made concrete in the drafts of a project. In the case of the European Year of Citizens 2013, on the basis of a Eurofederalist logic and the need for European citizens, bureaucrats inside the Commission start designing a project that could contribute to a solution of their own constructed problem. This is the moment in the policy making process that is the most informal. To examine this level, a problem of sources occurs: minutes and reports of meetings of the Commission's officials are not available for the public. Therefore, we do not know which actors ('experts', civil society organizations, academics,…) are consulted for drafting the European Year of Citizens 2013 and the Citizens' Dialogues.

But traces of the second discursive level could be found when looking into the third level of analysis: the inter-institutional communication. Because of the fact that the European Parliament has to agree upon the budget of the European Year of Citizens 2013, the Commission has to produce documents in which it defends its project for the Parliament. Interesting in reference to the second level and the fourth level of analysis is that the people working on these proposals are the same bureaucrats as in the other levels. For this third level

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[103] For a good account of the functioning of ideology, see: S. Zizek, *Mapping Ideology,* London, Routeledge, 1997.

[104] J.M.D. Barroso, *State of the Union 2012 Address*, Plenary session of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 12 September 2012, 14 p V. Reding, *Why we need a United State of Europe now*, Centrum für Europarecht an der University Passau, Passau, 8 November 2012, 12 p.

of analysis I will use a '*European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante Evaluation*' by the European Commission Staff and the '*Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013)*'[105] by the European Commission. These documents could learn us how the Commission had to legitimize and defend its project, and consequentially its conceptualizations of 'citizenship' and 'public sphere' to another supranational institution with a shared interest.

The fourth discursive level is the level of the policy documents themselves. After the approval of the European Parliament, the European Commission is able to publish the founding policy documents of a certain citizenship policy project. These publications are accessible for everyone in Europe, but are mostly meant for a little elite public of readers that know a lot about the EU and read policy documents. To examine this discursive level, I will look into the various 'Citizenship Reports'[106] published by the Citizenship office of the European Commission, and more precisely into the position of the 'European Year of Citizens 2013' in the general citizenship policy.

The fifth discursive level is the European Commission's mass political communication with the people, the 'general public'. For this level, I will analyze the European Commission's website of the European Year of Citizens 2013 and Viviane Reding's personal 'citizenship webpage' on the website of the European Commission.[107] On this discursive level, explicit ideology enters the picture again and refers directly to the first discursive level of analysis.

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[105] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante Evaluation*, 2011, 26 p. European Commission, *Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013)*, 2011, 18 p.

[106] European Commission, *2010 Citizenship Report. 25 key actions to improve citizens' lives*, 4 p. European Commission*, EU Citizenship Report 2010. Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights*, 12 p. European Commission, *The EU Citizens' Agenda. European have their say*, 2012, 48 p. European Commission, *Factsheet Citizenship Report 2013*, 2013, 1 p. European Commission*, EU Citizenship Report 2013. EU Citizens: your rights, your future*, 2013, 60 p.

[107] European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/reding/citizenship/index_en.htm, last consulted on 16.01.2014.

The sixth level of analysis is the level of implementation: ideological ideas, policy plans and their discourses find their way from a written, bureaucratic reality to a concrete project in which these discourses aim at societal impact. For the study of this sixth level of analysis, I will rely on participant observation (online as well as in real life) in Citizens' Dialogues all over Europe in which European Commissioners go in debate with engaged citizens. These Citizen' Dialogues are structures set up by independent management companies appointed by the Commission and holding the power to structure the space, the context, the content and the frames for politicians to act out ideology.

So far, I ordered the discursive levels along the lines of their temporal place in the process of policy making: explicit ideology prior to policy making comes first, and the concrete implementation comes last. As the graph shows: the six discursive levels could also be ranked on an ideological axis. This axis is essentially a continuum without zero-point: there is no realm or discourse that is non-ideological. Consequentially, the produced discourses are not ranked on the basis on their 'degree' or 'amount' of ideology, but on the basis of the implicity or explicity of the discourse. Taking this into account, the implementation level is the most explicitly ideological, while the level of inter-institutional communication is the most implicit when it comes to ideology. As I will argue further on, the criterion of ideology consists of more than pure 'amounts' or 'degrees' of ideology. I will show in the next chapters that there is also a 'qualitative' ideological aspect related, again, to the level of discursive production in the process of policy making. I will argue that what the European Commission is doing is structuring the evolution from 'ideology in-itself' (on the first level) to 'ideology for itself' (on the sixth level). The notion of 'ideology in-itself' is designed by Slavoj Zizek and means: *the immanent notion of ideology, as a doctrine, a composite of ideas, beliefs, concepts, and so on, destined to convince us of its 'truth', yet*

actually serving some unavowed particular power interest.'[108] In this stage, ideology is a system that aims at explaining past, present and future. I will claim that the Eurofederalism proclaimed by Barroso and Reding in their speeches prior to policy making is essentially such an 'ideology in-itself'. What does not make it an ideology for-itself is the lack of a policy that converts ideology in-itself to ideology for-itself. Ideology for-itself *is 'the material existence of ideology in ideological practices, rituals and institutions.'*[109] The Citizens' Dialogues that are part of the European Year of Citizens 2013, aim really concretely at creating a kind of collective ritual in which ideology in-itself is turned into ideology for-itself. The acting out of ideology for-itself should serve a discursive dominance on the process of socialization inherent in the structures of a public sphere. But, and here comes the paradox, in the case of the Citizens' Dialogue the stage of ideology for-itself is never reached, because the structures and frames (a 'European public sphere') the European Commission aims at creating are structures that can only emerge as the result of the bottom-up process as it is designed by Habermas and Castells, and not as the result of a top-down process of policy making. Consequentially, what we see at these instances is an ideology that never becomes more than an system of explanation.

7. Ideological processing: Eurofederalism from an ideology-in-itself to an ideology-for-itself

7.1. Ideology in itself: Eurofederalism and the need for a European public 'space'

To outline the intellectual foundations of the ideological logic inherent in the European Year of Citizens 2013, and the Citizens' Dialogues more specifically, two accounts will be examined. On the one hand, there is Commissioner for Citizenship, Fundamental Rights and

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[108] S. Zizek, op. cit., p. 10
[109] S. Zizek, op. cit., p. 12

Justice Viviane Reding's speech at Passau University on the 8th of November 2012.[110] This speech is important because it is the most cited source dealing with 'explicit ideology prior to policy making' that is referred to in other documents in the process of policy making (see later). The fact that the speech is written for Viviane Reding, direct political responsible for the European Year of Citizens 2013, makes the text even more important. Secondly, José Manuel Barroso's State of the Union of the 12th of September 2012 is analyzed.[111] This key speech of the political year, is given for the European Parliament and problematizes democracy and public spheres in Europe after the financial and economic crisis.

Both text served later on the European Commissions' websites as references for accounts of the problem the European Year of Citizens 2013 tries to cope with.[112] Barroso's State of the Union is presented as the key text outlining the necessity of a European public sphere, Reding's speech is referred to in order to embed this necessity in a Eurofederalist discourse. Although both speeches were given after the introduction of the idea of a 'European Year of Citizens 2013' in the European Commission, they serve as good sources for the 'ideology in-itself' because they outline the broader ideological Eurofederalist idea of the policy makers, rather than explaining specific policy plans.

Barroso's speech is well structured around an 'analysis of the situation', a 'challenge', a 'response' focusing on broader political ideas, and a specific policy perspective with the title 'Treaty change, 17/27 dimension and expanding public debate'.[113] Barroso starts with describing the continuous crisis on multiple levels caused by 'irresponsible practices in the financial sector', an 'unsustainable public debt', 'a lack of competitiveness in some Member states' and the Euro facing 'structural problems'.[114] Viviane Redings traces these structural

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[110] V. Reding, op. cit., 2012
[111] J.M. Barroso, op.cit., 2012
[112] European Commission, *Citizenship*, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/reding/citizenship/index_en.htm, last consulted on 29/03/2014
[113] J.M. Barroso, op.cit., 2012
[114] J. M. Barroso, op. cit., p. 1-2

problems of the Euro back to the Maastricht Treaty when, according to her, the fear to lose national sovereignty and the neo-liberal ideas about market force that should have stabilized a currency were united and made an 'incomplete Union' in which politicians found it almost taboo to be Eurofederalist.[115] According to Barroso, this has made citizens 'anxious' and not 'convinced'. Barroso states that these problems of legitimacy are not merely caused by the European institutions themselves, but by national actors portraying European deliberations as a 'boxing events' instead of a cooperation.[116]

Solutions provided by Reding and Barroso are first of all further economic integration. Reding refers to a banking union, a fiscal union and an economic union.[117] Barroso mentions the need for a new Single Market Act and a bigger European budget in order to increase investment in the economy.[118] Barroso and Reding would not be Eurofederalists if this economic integration was not accompanied by ongoing political integration in a European federal state. Barroso refers to this 'federation of nation-states' as 'our political horizon'.[119] Interestingly, Barroso never really precisely conceptualized his idea about a future European federation, he only states that it should not be 'a superstate', and that a Treaty Change, after a period of thinking and public consultation, is the way to go.[120] Reasons for Barroso's vagueness are multiple, the fact that he in his State of the Union is speaking for the European Parliament, that is not homogeneously Eurofederalist, is probably the most important one. But also Reding's 'United States of Europe' is a rather vague future dream, without clear plan to reach the desired aim. What Reding outlines is that the future 'United States of Europe' will not be a 'European Switzerland' (because it will a global power, not neutral and no confederation in name), and not a 'Federal Republic of Europe' because that would seem to

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[115] V.Reding, op. cit., 2012, p. 1-2, 5-7
[116] J.M. Barroso, op. cit., 2012, p. 2
[117] V. Reding, op.cit., 2012, p. 9
[118] J.M. Barroso, op. cit., 2012, p. 5-6
[119] Ibidem, p. 11
[120] Ibidem, p. 10-11

resemble too much the German federation: '*Anyone giving the impression that the German spirit will once again restore the world to health ('am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen'), even if only in constitutional terms, is not going to win many friends in the other countries of the EU.*'.[121] Reding comes up with the 'United States of Europe' because the plural form would refer to Europe's heterogeneity, while it refers clearly to the constitutional model of the US that should be the example for Europe: a two chamber system and 'perhaps' a direct elected president.[122] Reding does not outline how, and through which means, this European federation should be reached.

The vagueness of Eurofederalist ideology is probably one of the reasons of its rather little success. Unlike other ideological constructs, what the ultimate 'utopia' of Eurofederalism is going to look like, is rather unclear. And the way to reach that 'utopia' is never concretely outlined.

Important for the aim of this thesis, is the place of a European public sphere in Reding's and Barroso's ideological constructs. Conceptualizations of 'public sphere' in phase 1, prior to the 'policy designing' phase, could give us a look into how the most important political engineers thought about the ultimate aim of the citizenship policy. Barroso stated clearly in his state of the union: ' *I would like to see the development of a European public space, where European issues are discussed and debated from a European standpoint.*'[123] In this way, Barroso points at the two main features of his future European public sphere: a vivid debate about European issues that remained rather marginal when seen in comparison with domestic topics, and the engagement with these topics for debate from a European, not national, standpoint. According to Barroso, this should be done in 'our societies among our citizens', underlining the plurality of the European Union.[124] Barroso asked in his 2012 State

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[121] V. Reding, op.cit., 2012, p. 11
[122] Ibidem, p. 11
[123] J.M.Barroso, op.cit., 2012, p 9.
[124] Ibidem, p. 9

of the Union speech the intellectual elite to start the debate on a European level. He points at academics and artists to design a new 'narrative for Europe'.[125] Apart from these hopes for a 'bottom-up' process, Barroso also hopes to enstrengthen the European public sphere by reinforcing the European political parties. The idea to make every party appoint a candidate for the presidency of the Commission is probably the best known example of this.[126] On the first hand sight, this conceptualization is not so far removed from Habermas' 'structure' of a bottom-up emerging public sphere in interaction with the ongoing centralizing state. But as I will explain later in this chapter, things are more complex and ambiguous when it comes to bottom-up and top-down ideas of public sphere. Interestingly, Viviane Reding never mentions a European public sphere in what is considered to be her 'ideological outline'. Probably Reding decided to keep an institutional focus in her speech while speaking for a faculty of law in Passau.

The Eurofederalist idea is, in these two cases, also less technocratic and complex as generally believed. Both Barroso and Reding apply an ideological discourse in which an all-inclusive 'we' rooted in European 'value-talk' takes the upper hand. According to Barroso the 'we' is defined by a shared interest, destiny and democratic values.[127] When looking into the amount of times the European 'we' is used in both texts, Reding mentions the European 'we' 52 times, as opposed to 9 times the 'we as politicians' and 1 time the 'we as Luxemburgers' in a text of 12 pages. The meaning of Barroso's 'we' is different than the one Reding is using, because Barroso in his State of the Union for the European Parliament addresses most of the time the public of 'we the politicians', by pointing at a sense of collective political responsibility. But Barroso uses also the 'we are all in the same boat' metaphor to point at the European togetherness, thereby highlighting the necessity of absolute loyalty to the European

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125 European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/new-narrative/index_en.htm, last consulted on 19.04.2014
126 J. M. Barroso, op. cit., 2012, p. 9
127 Ibidem, p. 11-14

cause: *'Because when you are on a boat in the middle of the storm, absolute loyalty is the minimum you demand from your fellow crew members.'*[128] The 'absolute loyalty' to the European cause is obviously contradicting the plurality of opinions inherent in a democratic and inclusive public sphere, which makes Barroso's public sphere less democratic, pluralistic, and consequentially less Habermasian than it seemed to be on the first hand sight. This idea 'absolute loyalty' is also not so much different from the desired 'active consent' among citizens circulation in information, communication and citizenship policies of the European Commission in the 1990's and early 2000's.[129] Anthropologist Cris Shore also referred to this as the European Commission's discourse of power according to which educating and informing the people will necessarily make them 'believe Europe'. Consequentially, according to Shore, dissent is framed by the Commission as ignorance.[130] For Barrosso, this absolute loyalty demands a common sense of responsibility and solidarity. Therefore, the concept of a 'public sphere' seems to play a purely discursive role in Barroso's rhetoric. It is used because of its assumed connotation with democracy, that should support a discourse of openness and democracy when it comes to the European institutions, rather than referring to a really existing public sphere or a process of public sphere formation. What we see here is the instrumentalization of the normative meaning and implied positive connotation of the 'public sphere' concept, rather than its functions as referent to a certain socio-political reality.

The 'we' of both Barroso and Reding is certainly also a moral community. Reding and Barroso both apply a discourse on 'European values' in which the European 'we' is linked to certain values. Barroso states clearly: *'And values make the difference. That is why Europe's message must be one of freedom, democracy, of rule of law and of solidarity. In short, our values. European values.'*[131] Barroso's moralizing language is even more enforced by the

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[128] Ibidem, p. 3
[129] T. Van de Putte, op.cit., 2013.
[130] C. Shore, op. cit., 2000, p. 226-227.
[131] J.M. Barrosso, op. cit., 2012, p. 10

extensive usage of the word 'should', used for 10 times on his 14 page long speech. He even

adds to this by saying that *'Europe I believe has a soul. This soul can give us the strength and*

the determination to do what we must do'.[132] This, almost religious, discourse on European

values is shared by Reding. She, in the context of her 'United States of Europe' construct,

points at the fact this set of values make the European moral community a different one than

the American: *'The United States of Europe – that will also allow us Europeans to highlight*

very clearly those aspects that distinguish us from the USA; and why we in Europe want to

adopt the constitutional structure, but not every aspect of the constitutional reality of the USA.

Owing to our history, we in Europe often have a different sense of values and fundamental

rights than the USA'.[133]

What I have outlined in this chapter is Eurofederalism as an ideology in-itself, an

intellectual construct of discourses that aims at convincing someone of a certain truth. In this

case, both Barroso and Reding argue that ongoing European integration, economically as well

as politically, will serve the common good. But when it comes to the end stage of that process,

the opinions diverge and become vague. According to both Reding and Barroso a European

federation is the end point, but what the future federal system is going to look like is rather

unclear. The place of the public sphere in this is crucial, Barroso describes the need for a

public 'space' in Europe in which issues of European politics are debated from a European

position. Essential in this case is the 'absolute loyalty' to the European cause of the actors in

this public sphere. The widely shared argument about the inherent technocracy and

complexity of the Eurofederalism, is untrue when it comes to these two actors and their

speeches. They actively revoke a sense of 'moral community' by pointing at 'our', shared

European values, diverting from commonly applied rhetoric of 'rationality' when it comes to

Eurofederalism. I will analyze in the next chapter how these ideological ideas are

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[132] Ibidem, p. 13
[133] V. Reding, op.cit., 2012, p. 11

operationalized by the European Commission's officials in a concrete policy project that should contribute to the internalization and practice of the ideology in-itself, so that it becomes an ideology for itself.

7.2. Processing ideology: bureaucrats and institutions

In the previous chapter, I described and analyzed the main ideological roots of the European Year of Citizens 2013: a value-based Eurofederalism. As I have showed in my analysis of José Manuel Barroso's State of the Union, the top-down creation of a European public sphere is essential to this ideological vision. Barroso openly called for intellectuals and artists to debate the future of Europe and come up with a new narrative. The debate Barroso had in mind was active, but based on a sense of absolute loyalty to the European project. I will show in this chapter how officials in the bureaucratic context of the European Commission have operationalized the aims of this Eurofederalist ideology in-itself in a concrete policy projects that aim at turning the ideology in-itself in an ideology for-itself: an ideology in practice. My analysis will proceed in three phases indicated in the model of discursive production: the phase of project development, interinstitutional communication and policy publication.

7.2.1. The European Commission's bureaucratic elite: power and legitimacy

Analyzing this 'ideological processing' by bureaucrats raises questions about the very nature of the European Commission as an institution populated by 'supranational' officials. What are the interests, motives and agency of European bureaucrats to cooperate in this process of processing ideology? I will borrow from the results of sociological and anthropological research of the European bureaucratic elites to answer these questions. Research of anthropologists of elites on the European institutions was mostly executed in the

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1990s and early 2000s, but as I will show in my own analysis, insights from this field of research are still valid until now.

Theorists of elite and power always pointed at the persistence of its elite status as the main aim of an elite. Questions of legitimacy are essential to this. Cohen points at the fact that an elite must convince the masses that its sectional interests represent the wider public, or national interest.[134] It has to discursively and performatively universalize its own interests and function. The specific interests of the Commission's bureaucrats to contribute to the concretization of the Eurofederalist ideology-in-itself in specific projects is not an unitary interest but a complex of intersecting interests. First of all, officials in the European Commission want to keep their job. Therefore, they have to design what has been decided on a higher level. But the seemingly 'Eurofederalist' convictions of bureaucrats working in the European Commission, and in the Citizenship department of Viviane Reding more concretely, is not only this kind of instrumentalization of a Eurofederalist discourse for self-interest. As Cris Shore has showed in his book *Building Europe*, officials in the European Commission have also internalized to a large extent ideas of supranationalism, 'engrenage' and neo-functionalism, leading to a high level of identification with their employer.[135] This is highly reflected in the process of recruitment of officials by the European Commission which is not only based on competence, but also on a certain allegiance to the European ideal.[136] So, these officials' ideological beliefs seem to go further than pure instrumental reason.

If these beliefs constitute the norm in the institutional context of the Commission, this means that peer pressure probably even more unifies the set of commonly held norms: if Eurofederalism is the norm, than the only way to increase once symbolic capital in this bureaucratic field is adhering that Eurofederalist norm. The problem here is, as Shore outlines

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[134] A. Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society*, Berkely, University of California Press, 1981, 257 p.
[135] C. Shore, op. cit, 2000, p. 140-142
[136] C. Shore, op. cit., 2000, p. 139

in another book, is that the 'imagined community' of these supranationally socialized bureaucratic elites of the European Commission is not the same is the imagined community of the nationally socialized public(s) that defines the institution. Consequentially, Shore argues that European bureaucratic elites launches specific nation-building projects. The goals of these policies are clear: to create a 'people's Europe' by invention a European public through European citizenship and identity.[137] Where Shore looks into cultural policies to analyze this ideologically loaded process of identity politics, my analysis focusses on citizenship policies.

Shore's *Building Europe* not only looks into the Commission's self-perceptions of identity, but also outlines patterns of self-perception when it comes to agency and power in the process of European policy making. Shore states that the officials working in the European Commission see themselves as policy makers rather than administrators.[138] In the case of the European Year of citizens 2013 and its Citizens' Dialogues, I argue that the decisive power of bureaucrats is decisive for the processing of an ideology in-itself into an ideology for-itself. As I will outline in the next paragraphs, the considerable weight of those officials who design is not necessarily less important for the final outcome of the policy project than the weight of those politicians who decide.

7.2.2. Project development and inter-institutional communication

In phase two, the phase of project development, different actors and interests converge in a first step in the operationalization of the ideology in-itself: concrete projects are designed in several meetings and brainstorm sessions among politicians, officials, experts and interest groups in the European Commission. This is what is generally referred to as 'comitology'.[139]

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[137] C. Shore, S. Nugent, *Elite Cultures. Anthropological Perspectives*, London, Routeledge, 2002, p. 8.
[138] C. Shore, op. cit., 2000, p. 145
[139] European Commission, *Glossary:* Comitology, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/comitology_en.htm, last consulted on 21/04/2014. A. Hardacre, M. Kaeding, 'Delegated and Implementing Acts: The New Worlds of Comitology - Implications for European and National Public Administrations', in: *EIPAScope*, 1, 2011, pp. 29-32

Primary sources to enquire phase two are not yet publically available: the minutes and reports from the informal meetings in the European Commission are secret, and officials in function are hesitant in interviews to leak information about this informal phase in the process of policy making. Consequentially, it is difficult to make claims about the dynamics of persuasion, brainstorming, bargaining and intellectual influence in this phase of the policy process. Further research could fill this shortcoming when the European Year of Citizens 2013 is finished, or the concept of the Citizens' Dialogues is changed, and officials are consequentially more eager to talk about this initial phase of the policy making process.

Nevertheless the inaccessibility of the source material for phase 2, the discourses produced in this more informal phase of project development resonates in the phase of inter-institutional communication: phase 3. The proposal for the European Parliament mentions a public consultation under the name "EU citizens rights – the way forward", concluded on the 15th of June 2010, and a Conference on the 1st and 2nd of July with the same theme. Additionally, the civil society is said to be 'strongly supporting' the initiative.[140] Furthermore, the Commission in this proposal also refers to the role of the *Inter-institutional Group on Information* as an actor in approving the idea for a European Year of Citizens 2013.[141] These consultations are generally presented as consensual and in harmony with the proposals of the European Commission.

The European Commission is the most important institutional actor when it comes to the European Year of Citizens 2013. But also the European Parliament has a say in the process of policy making. Before the European Year of Citizens 2013 could be executed, the European Parliament had to approve the project and its budget. Therefore, the European Commission produced a working paper outlining the political problems that had to be dealt with, the main

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[140] European Commission, *Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013)*, COM (2011) 489, p. 5
[141] Ibidem, p. 3

aims of the policy project and the expected results.[142] Additionally, the Commission also submitted a concrete proposal to the European Parliament.[143] These texts are the least ideologically explicit of all sources in the process of policy making. This is not necessarily because the authors, officials working in the Commission, are non-ideological beings – the opposite is true, as I demonstrated above-, but because the consumers of these texts are specific audiences of officials in other European institutions, not the wider public. The European Commission, as the author of these texts, had to convince the majority of MEP's not on the basis of an explicit ideological Eurofederalist discourse, but through discursively constructing the necessity of the European Year of Citizens 2013. Therefore, the arguments used in these texts are policy specific, avoiding general ideological speech.

In these policy documents, dating back from 2011, the Citizens' Dialogues are not yet mentioned, probably because they were not yet designed. Later on, after the European Parliament had approved the European Year of Citizens 2013, the European Commission had the opportunity and responsibility to design specific projects that fell between the borders of the proposal approved by the Parliament. Therefore, my analysis will mostly focus on the parts of the policy documents that outline the policy framework in which the Citizens' Dialogues could take place.

The ex-ante evaluation and the proposal for the European Parliament date back from the eleventh of August 2011. The ex-ante evaluation problematizes the 'lack of concrete knowledge about citizens' rights', quoting a 2010 Eurobarometer survey saying that only 43 % of the participants knew the meaning of the term 'European citizen', and 48% thought they were bad informed.[144] According to the Commission, this is lack of information is one of the

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[142] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489, 25 p.

[143] European Commission, *Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013)* , COM(2011) 489, 17 p.

[144]European *Commission, Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489, p. 6.

most important reasons why people don't use their right to move freely across Europe.[145] The proposal to the Parliament adds to this lack of information the big amount of legal and administrative obstacles for people to use their right to free movement.[146] What we encounter here is the classical understanding of freedom of movement as the way to enhance awareness about European citizenship, or as the European Commission wrote in its ex-ante evaluation: *'The exercise of the right to free movement and residence contributes therefore in making Union citizenship a tangible reality in the daily life of citizens.'*[147] The aim here is clearly focused on a level of institutional legitimacy: the ultimate goal is not offering people more civil rights, but to make them positively aware of their European citizenship through the opportunities specific civil rights contain. This is what Rogers Brubaker would call the politics of a 'nationalizing state'**.**[148] The problem here is the perceived lack of awareness of the people's European civil rights, which obviously leads to delegitimization of the institutions that grants and facilitates these rights: the European Commission. Therefore, the European Commission states that: '*The effective use of Union citizens' rights by people is also a way to enhance the legitimacy of the EU as a guarantor of democracy, social cohesion and economic growth. Insofar, a European Year is also a means to strengthen the sense of belonging of citizens to the EU.'*[149]

By framing and defining the problem as a lack of information about civil rights, and the right to move freely in particular, the European Commission constructs fully its dominant position in the communication process that the European Year of Citizens 2013 is. The European Commission is the knowledgeable actor, providing information to an audience that,

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[145] Ibidem, p. 7-8, p. 10.

[146] European Commission, *Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013)*, COM(2011) 489, p.2

[147] European Commission*, Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489, p. 3.

[148] R. Brubaker, 'National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External Homelands in the New Europe', in: *Daedalus*, 124, 2, 1995, p. 107-132.

[149] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489, p. 10.

hopefully, decodes the information as it was encoded by the European Commission.[150] A feedback mechanism is not designed or taken into account. The Commission's constructed dominant agency in the process of communication has, as I will outline later, strong implications for the Citizens' Dialogues. These events will prove to be the ideal contexts for this top-down model of providing information, in which the citizens will find difficulties to turn the roles and take the dominance in the communication.

After having constructed the problem, the Commission outlines the solution to the problem: a European Year of Citizens. The 'European Year approach' was chosen above a 'status quo approach', 'a sectorial approach' and a 'Member States based approach'.[151] The strengths of a 'European Year approach' are identified as having a 'high outreach', delivering 'coherent messages' and mobilizing stakeholders at both EU and national level.[152] The broader goals of the European Year of Citizens 2013, according to the proposal for the European Parliament, are raising awareness of both the existence of European citizenship rights and of 'the tangible benefit' of these rights for people living in another Member State. And secondly, the European Year of Citizens 2013 should stimulate *'a debate about the impact and potential of the right to free movement, as an inalienable aspect of Union citizenship, in particular in terms of strengthening societal cohesion and mutual understanding between Union citizens and the bond between citizens and the Union.'*[153] The Citizens' Dialogues, as I will show later, fit into both objectives. But these two objectives are still vague and general. Therefore, the European Commission distinguishes operationalized objectives: a media-based campaign, horizontal communication targeting specific groups, presence on the internet and social media, supplying information materials, and the

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[150] S. Hall, op.cit., 1973, p. 507–17.

[151] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489 , p. 14-16.

[152] Ibidem, p. 15

[153] European Commission, Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013), COM(2011) 489, p. 3

organization of conferences and events.[154]   These conferences and events are subdivided in two categories. The first category embraces opening and closing ceremonies of the European Year of Citizens 2013. The Citizens' Dialogues fit into the second category: *'Events targeted at local authorities in charge of implementing EU citizens' rights and practitioners or other stakeholders active in this field.'*[155]

Interestingly, the ex-ante evaluation written by the European Commission has also a chapter on the 'risks and assumptions' of the European Year of Citizens 2013.[156] In this 'risks and assumptions' part, the tone and content of the discourse shifts from actively and confidently convincing the European Parliament, to some sort of critique prevention. The main assumptions challenged in this chapter are about the expectations of the effects of the European Year of Citizens 2013. The European Commission lists '*Civil society will react positively to this Year and will actively take part in it*', and '*Awareness-raising through the European Year will enhance the identification of citizens with the EU which will lead to more civic commitment and participation (including a higher voter turnout in the 2014 European elections)*' as possibly wrong assumptions of its own.[157] These assumptions are challenged by the statement that there could be too high expectations of the participation of the civil society, and the possibility of an ungoing decrease in civic commitment and participation. However, this instance of self-reflexivity is directly challenged with the statement that the European Year of Citizens 2013 is only one among many initiatives of the Commission to increase civic participation, and that *'it can be expected that this new approach increases the satisfaction of citizens with the EU in general'*.[158] The illusion of critical self-reflection is also uncovered when it comes to the involvement of the media in the European Year of Citizens 2013. It is

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[154] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489, p. 13.
[155] Ibidem, p. 13
[156] Ibidem, p. 19-20
[157] Ibidem, p. 19-20
[158] Ibidem, p. 20

stated as a risk that the media would consider this project to be a 'marketing action' rather than 'an efficient tool to facilitate the exercise of citizens' rights'.[159] This will, according to the Commission, be overcome by the focus in the communication and information on concrete topics and benefits. Therefore, *'The media campaign will be embedded in a positive public debate which is based on feedback from the grassroots level.'*[160] In short, the risks of the European Year of Citizens 2013 are considerably little and the effect will be generally positive. But what do we learn from this part of the ex-ante evaluation? Rather than an insight in the weaknesses of the project, this part of the ex-ante evaluation seems to function as preventing too obvious critiques from other actors. This deconstructing-the-other-before-he-has-made-the-point-himself seems to function rather as a discursive strategy contributing to the Commission's dominance in the process of communication than as a counter-discourse of self-reflection.

7.2.3. Policy publication: Citizenship Reports

Finally, on the 23th of October 2012, the European Parliament approved the proposal for the European Year of Citizens 2013. With the project being approved, the 4th phase of discursive production starts: the phase of policy publication. In this phase, the Citizenship department of the European Commission publishes their specific policy plans. This happens in the 'Citizenship Report 2013' in which 12 'key actions' are listed.[161] The audience the European Commission has in mind while publishing these policy documents is a rather little elite of engaged and well informed citizens, and the specialized press. The 'mass' of European citizens is not yet targeted. It is only in phase 5 that the European Commission starts with its mass political communication.

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[159] Ibidem, p. 20
[160] Ibidem, p. 20
[161] European Commission, *EU Citizenship Report 2013. EU citizens: your rights, your future,* 2013, 60 p.

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The 12 key actions of the EU Citizenship Report 2013 are subdivided in 6 categories: 'Removing the obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU', 'Cutting red tape in the Member States', 'Protecting the more vulnerable in the EU', 'Eliminating barriers to shopping in the EU', 'Targeted and accessible information in the EU', and finally 'Participation the democratic life of the EU'.[162] All of the measures proposed by the key actions in these categories aim at facilitating the free movement of citizens. In some cases new legal frameworks are proposed, in other cases additional projects are launched. I will first analyze and outline the general discourse of the Citizenship report, and then later on focus specifically on the policy context of the Citizens' Dialogues.

The front page of the Citizenship Report 2013 (see below)[163], is interesting both on a discursive/linguistic and a visual/symbolic level. The extensive usage of 'us' and 'we Europeans' in the phase of 'explicit ideology prior to policy making' turns into a 'you' and 'your' in the phases 4 and 5. The stress on these words, both in the title of the Citizenship Report 2013 ('EU citizens: your rights, your future') and in the slogan of the European Year of Citizens 2013 ('It's about Europe. It's about you. Join the debate.'), indicate that the European Commission wanted to make clear that the European Year of Citizens 2013 was organized in the interest of the people (the 'you'), and not in the interest of the European institutions (the unmentioned 'us/we'?). Clearly indicating a distance between these two, rather than referring to a larger 'us', seems to enstrengthen even more the perceived gap between European institutions and its citizens. Secondly, when looking into the symbolic/visual level, the European Commission uses a blackboard to symbolize the aim of the European Year of Citizens 2013. The choice for the ultimate teaching related object, reinforces the image of the European Year of Citizens 2013 as a top-down flow of information than a pluralistic dialogue.

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162 Ibidem, p. II
163 Ibidem, p. I

In the introduction to the Citizenship Report, the links with Reding's broader political ideas from phase 1 of discursive production are made again. Reding is quoted when pointing at the importance of popular support for a political union: '*European Citizenship is the cornerstone of European integration. It should be to the Political Union what the euro is to Economic and Monetary Union.*'[164] Placing citizens 'at the heart of Europe' is essential to the 'democratic legitimacy' of the European Economic and Monetary Union, and the 'Political Union on the horizon'.[165] Therefore, the Commission says to launch this project to make 'citizens' lives easier' and to engage them in a 'debate'.[166] Again free movement is the main object of this project, because '*Free movement increases social and cultural interactions within the EU and creates closer bonds between Europeans.*' Finally, the European Commission also stresses the economic benefits the mobility of citizens could create.[167]

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[164] Ibidem, p. 1
[165] Ibidem, p. 3
[166] Ibidem, p. 3
[167] Ibidem, p. 3

In the Citizenship report 2013, the Citizens' Dialogues are mentioned for the first time officially in the policy making process. But the Commission only spends 2 sentences on the Citizens' Dialogues. Once in the beginning of the document, on page 5, where is stated that the dialogues are meant to provide *'further insight into citizens' concerns and suggestions'*.[168] In this conceptualization, the Commission presents itself as the 'receiver' in the communication process. This could be seen as a conceptualization of a real, two sided dialogue in which the European Commission would listen to the sender in the communication process, the citizens in this case. But the second time the Citizens' Dialogues are mentioned, at the end of the document on page 41, the Citizens' Dialogues are linked to a *'genuine debate on the way forward to a stronger and ever closer Union with the citizen at the core of its action'*.[169] This definition of the dialogues is in its very core different than the first one. The difference is the increase in ideological assumptions: the theme of the debate should be a stronger Union. The citizens should be the core of this stronger Union. The presupposition that the European citizens are those who will be at the core of that stronger Europe, is a pure ideological one, that is completely different from the 'all-ears' perspective when the Citizens' Dialogues were mentioned the first time in this Citizenship Report 2013.

Nevertheless the relative scarce attention paid to the Citizens' Dialogues, the European Commission devoted a big amount of its attention to the European public sphere to which these debates/dialogues should contribute. In 'action 12', the Commission offers a combination of a classic representative model of democracy, and a deliberative model of democracy, to 'enhance citizens' full participation in the democratic life of the EU'.[170] On the one hand the Commission wants to expand people's voting rights, for example by making it possible for everyone to vote in their home country's national elections while residing abroad. Furthermore, the Commission wants to make resident voting on the national and regional

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[168] Ibidem, p. 5
[169] Ibidem, p. 41
[170] Ibidem, p.35

level possible in all EU Member States, thereby giving EU citizens' the choice to vote in their national/regional elections in their home country or in their country of residence.[171] Apart from voting rights, the European Commission also stresses the importance of a European 'public space' to end 'current fragmentation of public opinion along national borders'.[172] By stressing this, the European Commission adds a deliberative aspect to the legal steps necessary to further develop a European representative democracy sketched above. According to the Commission, the mechanism to build this European 'public space' is, again, information: *'Providing citizens with information about European issues from a European point of view, but also from a range of national perspective from other Member State, could increase the European public space and contribute to a more informed democratic debate.'[173]* In short, the European Commission wants to Europeanize the public sphere by introducing diversity in existing national public spheres, both by introducing European news frames but also by introducing frames existing in other member states.

What I have outlined in this chapter is the processing of Eurofederalism from an ideology-in-itself into a concrete policy project in which this ideology-in-itself could become an ideology-for-itself. These phases in the process of policy making are the least explicit when it comes to the ideological content of the discourses. This has much to do with the authors of these texts, and the audience for which they are produced. The actors in this phase are the European Commission's officials whose job it is to design policy projects, make these projects approved by other institutions and publish the necessary policy documents. The European Commission officials do not write these texts for a broader public. Rather than the European citizens in general, the officials and politicians in other institutions, and an elite of experts and journalists have to be convinced during this phase of the policy making process. Concretely, the European Commission has developed two different strategies in the European

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[171] Ibidem, p. 35-38
[172] Ibidem, p. 39
[173] Ibidem, p. 39

Year of Citizens 2013 to enforce the creation of European citizens. First and foremost, the right to the freedom of movement is stressed and facilitated through new legal and policy project constructions. Stimulating people to move between member states, is seen as a way to socialize people trans- and supranationally, what should make them feel more European. Secondly, the European Commission wanted to create a European public 'space' by launching debates (the 'Citizens Dialogues') and providing information to the citizens about the rights attached to their European citizenship. Conceptualizations of these debates, as I have showed, vary from an 'all ears' position of the Commission in one case, to a pre-structured debate about a future stronger political union in the other. In the next chapter, I will analyze the structures of, and discourses produced in the actual Citizens' Dialogues and explain how they are the result of a policy aim to turn Eurofederalism from an intellectual construct into a practiced and internalized ideology.

7.3. Ideology for itself: Citizens' Dialogues

In this chapter, the focus narrows down to the non-legal part of the European Year of Citizens 2013: the Citizens' Dialogues. I will turn to these events specifically because they are the ideal instances to look at when analyzing the processing of an Eurofederalist ideology. These dialogues are a sort of collective ritual in which the European Commission aims at the supranational socialization of subjects as citizens. I will focus first on the phase of 'political communication' in which politicians communicate their policy projects (the Citizens' Dialogues in this case) to the a broader audience. In the second phase, the sixth phase in the model of discursive production, the policy aims at effecting. I will analyze how communication is structured in these dialogues, and how different discourses and different actors engage with each other on both the micro level of the Citizens' Dialogues as the macro-structural level of interaction between the state-in-the-making and the public.

7.3.1. Mass political communication on the internet

When it comes to discursive dominance in the policy making process, those dominating the discursive production in the previous phases, the Commission's officials, change places with the politicians and citizens in the phases of mass political communication and implementation. This 'change of agency', away from the institutional context into the public sphere, makes the discourse again more ideologically explicit. The turn to explicit ideology, as well indirectly as directly as I will show later, has much to do with the fact that it is not other European institutions, but the mass of European subjects/citizens that have to be convinced during these phases of mass political communication and implementation.

In the case of the Citizens' Dialogues mass political communication is closely linked to mobilization. Making people know about the events and convincing them to go there or to follow them online is the main aim of the Commission's communication. This political communication, and consequentially the mobilization, happens mainly online: on the general webpage of the European Commission and on the Facebook pages of the European Commission and the multiple representations of the Commission in the member states.[174] In a short webtext on her personal webpage[175] European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Viviane Reding (or those who have written the text for Viviane Reding) shortly introduces the European Year of Citizens. She links the European Year of Citizens 2013 to the twentieth birthday of the legal foundation of European citizenship in the Treaty of Maastricht. The aim, according to Reding, is double: make people know about their rights as European citizens and offering people the chance to express their views about the future of Europe for European Commissioners. Reding goes on pointing at the link between

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[174] Interview with a European Commission's official in London, 10.02.2014.
[175] European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/reding/citizenship/index_en.htm, last consulted on 11/04/2014

the Citizens' Dialogues and the European public sphere: *'The aim of these Dialogues is to boost the creation of a true European public space which President Barroso called for in his State of the Union Speech of September 2012. European issues have to be discussed from a European point of view, as they cannot be solved with purely national actions'.* The Citizens' Dialogues are presented as structures, platforms that should highly contribute ('boost') the European public sphere in the making, which mere existence is normatively loaded. Additionally, Reding's choice of words is not descriptive, but rather pejorative: issues *have to be* discussed from a European point of view.[176]

Interesting is also the reference made to José Manuel Barroso's State of the Union speech (see above) in which he discusses the necessity of a Political Union. Reding in her webtext not only references Barroso's State of the Union but also her own speech at the Passau University (see above) in which she outlined her vision on a United States of Europe. These references to the 'explicit ideology prior to policy making' (phase 1), are less innocent as they may seem, it is quite clear that they are used to set the agenda for the upcoming Citizens' Dialogues. The theme of the Citizens' Dialogues is chosen, and diverting from the pre-decided topic is rather difficult: *'I have already outlined my vision for the future of the Union - that of a United States of Europe: a strong political union with the Commission as government and two chambers – the European Parliament and a "Senate" of Member States. If you want to discuss this or other issues with other Commissioners or myself, make sure you check the schedule and see if we will be coming to your town.'*[177]

The direct strategy of nomination used by the European Commission in the Citizenship Report 2013 is also taken into the webtext. Reding uses the direct and appealing 'you' when it comes to mobilizing the citizens, quite similar to the 'It's about Europe, it's about you' slogan launched in the Citizenship Report. But when it comes to explicit

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[176] Ibidem
[177] Ibidem

ideological stances, Reding names specific actors: 'I' and 'Jose Manuel Barroso'. Collective actors are named on less ideologically explicit points: 'Europeans' as the ones owning the rights that the Commission wants to promote, and 'the Commission' to name the responsible organizer for the European Year of Citizens.[178]

In short, the phase of mass political communication is strongly determined by direct intertextuality. The webtexts actively engage with earlier explicit ideological speeches of the key political actors and nominations strategies launched in the 'bureaucratic' part of the policy making process. Furthermore, the mobilization strategy, mainly happening on the internet, uses these explicit ideological discourses and direct strategies of mobilization in order to appeal directly to the citizens. But at the same time, this ideologically explicit strategy also pre-decides the content of message delivered by the European Commission to its citizens in the Citizens' Dialogues. This, consequentially, makes a position of 'all ears' by the European Commission in the actual Citizens' Dialogues impossible. I will analyze in the next chapters how the accumulation of all these discourses of power result in a concrete structure of the Citizens' Dialogues.

7.3.2. The structure of the Citizens' Dialogues

The Citizens' Dialogues are usually town hall meetings organized in the major cities and towns of every member state. In these meetings, a Commissioner and a local politician join a group of 50 to 500 citizens for the Dialogue, moderated by a 'independent person', mostly a journalist. The Citizens' Dialogues in little towns were mostly frequented by the Commissioner of the specific member state, Viviane Reding was in charge for most of the capitals. Quantitative data about the participants are not accessible, but the structure of the mobilization process can offer some information about the profile of who is participating.

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[178] Ibidem

The European Commission mobilizes people via the website of the Citizens' Dialogues[179] and via the Facebook page of the Representation of the European Commission in the member state where the dialogue is held. Through these channels, the Commission tries to mobilize the 'ordinary people'. Basing on relative overweight of Europhile questions and comments that did not question the mere existence of the European integration during these Dialogues, these mobilized people seem to be the well informed pro-Europeans.[180] The mobilization of especially well-informed pro-Europeans is due the self-election inherent in the structure of mobilization. Only the well-informed and interested read posts on the Commission's website and 'like' the European Commission's representation in their country. The disconnected and eurosceptics are left out from the start.

Problematic in the case of most of the Citizens' Dialogues is the general lack of interest among the citizens: the town halls never seem to reach their maximum capacity.[181] A local manager of the JMC communication management office responsible for the Citizens' Dialogue in Eisenstadt (29.11.2013) told me in an interview that this is due to the fact that the Dialogues are not a priority for the Commissioners and are consequentially planned on moments that the Commissioner finds a gap in his or her agenda, a moment when normal people are usually at work. Secondly, the same local manager told me that there is a seemingly general disinterest: *'The people seem to like a Schlagerconcert more.'[182]* Some dialogues, the one in Innsbruck (06.03.2013) and Wavre (19.12.2013), had to be cancelled because of this reason. A Commission's official told me in an interview in London (10.02.2014) that the Citizens' Dialogues are usually meant for ordinary people, but 'as you can see, ' (*pointing at the audience in the Citizens' Dialogue in London*), 'we end up

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[179] European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/citizens-dialogues/index_en.htm, last consulted on 22.04.2014

[180] Only in 1 out of 7 case observed, the Eurosceptic questions outnumbered the Europhile question.

[181] In the Citizens' Dialogue in London (10.02.2014), maximum 203 participant voters answered the poll question while the room was prepared for 410 voters.

[182] Interview with JMC Manager responsible for the Citizens' Dialogue in Eisenstadt, 29.11.2013

mobilizing our stake-holders'.[183] By 'stake-holders' he means civil society organisations, lobbies and think-tanks linked to the European Commission. This is confirmed by the local manager in Eisenstadt who, after finding not enough participants, phoned up schools, NGO's and political parties.[184] But the lack of participants is not only linked to disinterest among the 'normal people', but also due to the short registration process. For most of the Citizens' Dialogues, registration online was only possible 3 to 7 days before the event, what makes it difficult for citizens to plan their participation in a Citizens' Dialogue. In short, when it comes to the participants, processes of self-selection and short term registration, lead to the mobilization of an elite of interested, well informed pro-Europeans.

The Citizens' Dialogues are usually pre-structured events. Normally, the Commissioner and a local politician each start with a short speech of 5 minutes. Afterwards, the event is organized around 3 rounds of poll questions answered by the participants. Such poll questions are about rather broad themes: if the participants feel 'heard' by the European institutions (usually the first question of the debate), if Europe will come stronger out of the crisis, if more Europe means more solidarity, … After each poll question, the floor is opened to the participants to ask questions to the politicians. This takes normally 20 minutes for every round. Questions are asked to be short and concrete, the answers of the Commissioner and/or the local politicians take some minutes. In most of the Citizens' Dialogues, Commissioners are unprepared for the questions of the citizens, but on some occasions (f.e. London 10.02.2014,Paris 27.02.2014), the majority of the questions are preselected and the answers prepared by the Commissioner.

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[183] Interview with a European Commission' official, 10.02.2014
[184] Interview with JMC Manager responsible for the Citizens' Dialogue in Eisenstadt, 29.11.2013. The context of Eisenstadt, as a little town in Eastern Austria does not facilitate the mobilization of 'stake-holders' of the European Commission.

The Citizens' Dialogues are also broadcasted via livestream on the website of the European Commission.[185] Permanent interpretation is offered in the most important EU languages for people watching from outside the organizing member state. Online participants are not able to answer the poll questions, but can submit questions to the Commissioner via social media (Twitter and Facebook). The moderator usually mentions the possibility of this kind of interaction in the beginning of the event, but in most cases online questions are not taken into account. In the 9 cases I have observed, on 3 occasions questions from social media were mentioned and answered, 2 times they were mentioned but not answered, and 4 times they were not taken into account. But the online followers are offered a chat forum during the dialogue. Usually only 3 to 5 contributions to the forum are made. Although the absolute number of the online followers are not made official, this rather low number could be telling. Technical problems with the livestream are rare.[186]

In most of the dialogues, the space of the event hall is structured as a classic theatre setting: the public facing a horizontal, higher stage with the politicians. This obviously contributes to the dominant position of the European Commission in the event. An AFP photographer, hired by the European Commission to take photos of the Citizens' Dialogues in Eisenstadt, said to me in an interview that this setting 'does not suit the kind of pictures the Commission wants me to take'.[187] By this, he meant photos that should show the image of a Commissioner who is in direct contact with the citizens. In all my observations, only the Dialogues in Paris (27.02.2014) and Vilnius (13.12.2013) used a circular setting, in which the citizens group around the Commissioner who was positioned in the center.

When looking into the symbolic level, the usage of the European flag and hymn is interesting. Usually, the European flag is widely used in all the dialogues, often in

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[185] http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/citizens-dialogues/index_en.htm, last consulted on 22.04.2014
[186] During my 7 online observations, there was only a 45-minute technical problem with the livestream of the Citizens' Dialogue in Limassol, 28.11.2013.
[187] Interview with an AFP photographer in Eisenstadt, 29.11.2013.

combination with a national flag, a regional flag, or both national and regional flags. The European flag is obviously also present on the promotion and information materials (booklets, pens, USB Sticks) offered to the participants. In some cases, the European anthem was played at the end of the event. In the cases I observed, this happened in Ghent (12.04.2013) to which people reacted indifferent, and in Eisenstadt (29.11.2013) to which people stood up, showing respect and silence. These cases could be seen as a kind of banal, unconscious nationalism in the first case, and a more conscious national ideological ritual in the second.[188] But in most of the observed cases, the hymn was not played, probably because the European Commission was hesitant and unconfident when it came to the reactions on this 'national ritual' of the participating citizens.   On some particular occasions, the structure of the Citizens' Dialogues was fundamentally different than the concept of town hall meetings. On the 7th of January 2014 and the 16th of January 2014, the European Commission organized an online dialogue with 5 preselected bloggers and 10 preselected citizens.[189] The questions were asked to Viviane Reding, who answered them from the television studio of Euronews. The questions and participants were selected and known beforehand. The Online Citizens' Dialogue was problematized due to problems with the transmission of the images and sound coming from the Euronews studio. Therefore, the scenario designed for the Online Citizens' Dialogue could not be followed during the event.

On the 27th of March 2014 the European Commission also organized a 'Pan-European' dialogue, in which 2 participants of each Citizens' Dialogues were invited to the Visitors Centre of the European Commission in Brussels.[190] On that day, participants could chose for a

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[188] For this distinction I rely on the work of Michael Billig: M.Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage Publications, 1995, 200 p.

[189] http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/citizens-dialogues/online/index_en.htm, last consulted on 22.04.2014. Youtube link to the Bloggers' Dialogue, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7qKlqDsKa8, last consulted on 22.04.2014. Youtube-link to the Online Citizens' Dialogue, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4BX4FAjWKo, last consulted on 22.04.2014.

[190] http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/citizens-dialogues/belgium/brussels3/index_en.htm, last consulted on 22.04.2014

selection of dialogues with different Commissioners, and came back together at the end of the day for a dialogue with Jose Manuel Barroso. This dialogue followed a similar structure as a usual dialogue, but without poll questions. Important to note is that this was not an open event, the participants were selected by the particular Representations of the European Commission in the member states. The criteria for selection are not known. But the self-selections by the European Commission of the participants makes the public obviously even less representative for the European public.

In the next paragraphs, I will analyze these Citizens' Dialogues first from a micro-perspective, looking into the power relations inherent in the communication process and the role the Eurofederalist ideology plays in this process. Secondly, I will go into a macro-analysis looking at the changing dynamics of state and public sphere in relation to the European Year of Citizens 2013 and the Citizens' Dialogues in particular. My analysis will be methodologically based on participant observation in 3 dialogues: in Ghent (12.04.2013), Eisenstadt (29.11.2013) and London (10/02/2014). Furthermore, I will include the results of online observation of 7 Citizens' Dialogues and interviews with key officials in the organization of the Citizens' Dialogues.

7.3.3. The micro context: power in speech during Citizens' Dialogues

In this chapter, I would like to move away from a macro-structural level of state-public interaction and look into the micro-level of the dialogues themselves. According to Viviane Reding, the dialogues are meant 'not for politicians to speech, but to listen' to the citizens as in a real, ideal 'Habermasian' public sphere.[191] In this way, citizens could feel less alienated from, and more heard by the institutions. I would like to analyze the 'quality' of these Citizens' Dialogues by borrowing from two theoretical perspectives. I will apply classic

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[191] V. Reding in multiple Citizens' Dialogues.

communication theory combined with Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model to point at certain dynamics in the communication process. Classic communication theory will help me to define agents in the process of communication, Hall's distinction between dominant, negotiated and oppositional positions adds to this a 'reception' side. These approaches offer me a framework to explain the processes and dynamics inherent in the attribution of meaning, mediation and reception that ultimately lead to the constitution of power relations in the Citizens' Dialogues. After getting hold of the communication process in the Citizens' Dialogues, I will turn to early Habermasian theory ('ideal speech', 'communicative action', 'discourse ethics') and dialogue theory to evaluate the normative 'quality' of the citizens' dialogues. At this point, it has to be clear that I will treat Habermas' concepts as idealtypes that, although they never fully exist as the ideal in the social reality, could be used as analytical tools. Finally, I will argue that the European Citizens' Dialogues are not dialogues when they are evaluated along the lines of ideal speech and dialogue theory. Rather, they serve two goals: increasing the European Commission's visibility as an open and legitimate political institution, and offering the European Commission the dominant position in the process of communication in order to disseminate specific ideological information.

- <u>Defining actors and power in speech: communication theory</u>

In their 1948 book, Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver have developed a communication model that formed the basis for half a century of deep influence and criticism.[192]   Shannon and Weaver distinguish two principal agents: a sender and a receiver. In their model, the sender constructs the message that is being transmitted through a 'channel'

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[192] C. Shannon, 'A mathematical theory of communication', in: *Bell System Technical Journal*, 27, 1948, p. 379–423, 623–656.

and received by the receiver. After the reception, the receiver communicates his or her feedback to the sender again. The Shannon and Weaver model has been criticized a lot for its simplicity. The sender-receiver axis almost never truly exists in a real life situation. Especially in today's world of virtual communication in which multiple senders and multiple receivers are involved. Additionally, the medium ('channel' in Shannon and Weaver) is less neutral than it seems to be in the Shannon and Weaver model. Recent literature on the difference between mediated and unmediated communication and publics is exemplary for this.[193] Nevertheless, I would like to argue that for the Citizens' Dialogues I am analyzing, the model of Shannon and Weaver is still applicable because it is a situation in which two agents (the Commissioner and the public) engage in an unmediated process of face-to-face communication in which roles of sender and receiver shift constantly. But I would like to add complexity to the model of Shannon and Weaver when it comes to the construction of the message and the reception of this message by the receiver. Therefore, I will rely on the insights of cultural theorist Stuart Hall.

Hall disagrees with Shannon and Weaver on two important points: the implicit linearity of the communication model and the assumed passivity of the collective of senders. Both critiques are overcome by Hall in his encoding/decoding model.[194] In his model, during the stage of 'production' a message is encoded, and meaning is introduced through the application of the dominant ideologies in society. The second stage is the stage of circulation, in which the medium plays a crucial role. The third phase is the moment at which people start 'decoding' the message. Hall makes clear that the way people decode a message is strongly depending on their own subjectivity: their past, context and motives. A message is seldomly decoded in the way the encoder ('sender' in Shannon and Weaver) wants it to be decoded. This subjective, independent decoding leads Hall directly to the phase of reproduction in

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[193] D. Boyd, op.cit.
[194] S. Hall, op.cit.

which people take action. On the basis of stage three and four, Hall distinguishes a dominant, negotiated and oppositional position. In a dominant position the message is being decoded as it is encoded: there is no misunderstanding and the message is perfectly understood. In this case, the encoder is obviously dominating the decoder. In an oppositional position, the reader decodes or interprets the message completely different from how it was encoded, thereby rejecting the initial meaning of the message. The negotiated position takes the middle way between the dominant and oppositional position. The dominant code is recognized, but no fully excepted by the encoder. These positions of dominance between encoder and decoder are, as I will show, applicable to the context of the European Citizens' Dialogues.

The European Commissions' arguments and motives for the start-up of the Citizens' Dialogues are, as analyzed before, multiple. Arguments and motives named at Citizens' Dialogues themselves differ to some extent from the ones made in the preparing bureaucratic phase (see above). On the basis of the ex-ante evaluation made by the European Commission, the Citizens' Dialogues are organized to promote EU citizenship by raising awareness about the rights and benefits that are connected to EU citizenship, so that European citizens are stimulated to feel more attached to their EU citizenship.[195] Another, rather vague argument, is the launch of a debate 'about the impact and potential of the right to free movement, as an inalienable aspect of Union citizenship, on societal cohesion and mutual understanding and the bond between citizens and the EU.'[196] On different occasions, Viviane Reding also made a more ideological claim, stating that the Citizens' Dialogues are organized 'to make people know what it is to feel European'.[197] At this point, Reding mostly refers to a survey executed by the European Commission showing that 2/3 of the European feel European, but only 1/3 knows what being European is. Finally, the European Commission is more and more

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[195] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. European Year of Citizens 2013- Ex-ante evaluation*, COM (2011) 489, 26 p.
[196] Ibidem, p. 13
[197] Viviane Reding on multiple Citizens' Dialogues

confronted with the decline in support for the European project, reflected both in Eurobarometer results and in the rise of protest movements on the right as well as on the left. [198]

Having this in mind, the European Commission mainly operates as 'sender'. It wants to inform people, and it therefore aims at creating a 'dominant position' in which people decode the message in the same way as it is encoded, thereby internalizing the information provided. The link Hall makes between the process of encoding and ideological discourses is in this case especially interesting and applicable. In the phase of production, the encoder (in this case the officials of the European Commission) base their code on dominant ideologies and discourses in the socio-political world to construct meaning in their message. It is clear in this case that the Commission draws from a Eurofederalist ideology to base their citizenship policies on. Viviane Reding and José Manuel Barroso have referred to their Eurofederalist beliefs multiple times when talking about the necessity of a European public sphere and a European Year of Citizens (see above).[199] In this way, the ideology becomes part of the message that will be decoded. Depending on the 'subjectivity' of the audience, it will be directly decoded as it was encoded, or it will encounter resistance. The aim at a dominant position is also reflected, as described earlier, in the concrete setting of the Citizens' Dialogues. As said before, the European Commission decides beforehand upon the poll questions participating citizens could vote for, and sometimes even decides beforehand which citizens are going to ask which questions to the Commissioner. The dominance of the 'sender/encoder' is also reflected in the structure of space and the amount of time citizens and commissioner speak. Also when it comes to the amount of speech, it turns out that the Commissioner is speaking most of time, leaving the audience only time to ask a one or two sentence question. The role of the moderator is refined to only pointing at the people that can

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[198] European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 79*, May 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_en.htm, last consulted on 23.04.2014

[199] J.M. Barroso, op.cit. V. Reding, op.cit.

ask their question and introduces the Commissioner and the accompanying local politician in the beginning of the dialogue.

So, when it comes to the reception and the decoding of the message, the dominant position of the European Commission is completely assured. The self-selection in the mobilization process, and the fact that a high amount of the participants are 'stake-holders' of the European Commission contributes even more to this dominant position. Therefore, the message that had to be decoded is in most cases already known by the public and was tolerated, to the extent that also the symbolic message was decoded as in a complete dominant, hegemonic position. The fact that the European anthem could be played at the end of events in Ghent (12/04/2014) and Eisenstadt (29/11/2014) without any resistance of the audience against this almost prototypical national collective ritual, illustrates perfectly the direct flow of information that is perfectly decoded by the participants.

Generally seen, the dominant position in the process of communication is easily achieved by the Commission: the message is decoded as it was encoded setting in a top-down flow of ideological information. But a few remarks have to be made. The dialogue in Limassol (28/11/2013) is a good example of a Citizens' Dialogue in which the domination position was not achieved. In this case people reacted violently to the speeches and answers of Commissioner Vassiliou, even openly comparing her to a Nazi. The reaction of Commissioner Vassiliou was also offensive, portraying the participants as ignorant. Participants used a repertoire of arguments to delegitimate the position of the Commissioner. Mostly comparisons with fascist Germany were made, in which Fascist Germany served as the symbolic 'ultimate evil' the European Commission was compared with.[200] A few factors could explain the peculiarity of the situation in Limassol. The dialogue in Limassol was one of the few occasions in which the participants were mostly 'normal citizens', not 'stakeholders'. This

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[200] Online observation of the Citizens' Dialogue in Limassol (28/11/2013)

means they did not have any interest in accepting the Commission's dominant position in the process of communication. On the other hand, Cyprus was fiercely hid by the financial and economic crisis, because of which 'Europe' imposed austerity measurees. The angriness of the participants could be also explained by this factor.

But what makes a whole audience actively revolting against the dominant position of the European Commission in these Citizens' Dialogues? The Comparison with the Citizens' Dialogue in London (10/02/2014) is interesting. In London, one Eurosceptic participant tried to dominate the dialogue by imposing his views in multiple ways: interrupting more Europhile questions, and asking multiple questions himself. But his aim to dominate the dialogue was challenged by a dismissive reaction of the rest of the audience, and ignorance of both the moderator as Viviane Reding after a few questions. In short, he did not gather enough symbolic capital to turn the roles.[201] This is different in Limassol, where the whole audience, as a collective, managed to turn the roles and changed the prescheduled structure and tone of the event.

But situations as in the Citizens' Dialogue in Limassol are rather rare. In general, the European Commission easily achieved its dominant position on these instances. Reasons for that are, as stated above, the self-selected audience and the structure of the events. I am using deliberately the word 'audience' here, because the collective of citizens seems to function on these occasion rather as a passive mass than as a critical and autonomous 'public'.

- <u>Ideal speech and 'dialogue': A normative evaluation of the Citizens' Dialogues</u>

In the previous paragraphs, I analyzed the Citizens' Dialogues from a communication theory perspective, defining actors and looking into processes of attribution and reception of

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[201] Participant observation, Citizens' Dialogue London (10/02/2014).

meaning. I have conceived of the Citizens' Dialogues as a structure in which the European Commission, as the sender or encoder, is in a more dominant position than the audience of citizens (the decoder). In the next paragraph, I will evaluate these Citizens' Dialogues from a normative point of view. Therefore, I will use models of ideal speech and structured dialogue as idealtypes to analyze the relative 'quality' of the Citizens' Dialogues.

In his *Structural transformation of the public sphere* and *Theory of communicative action*, Jurgen Habermas developed a model of ideal speech in the public sphere.[202] In the first book, Habermas describes and ideal situation in the spheres of salons, coffeehouses and *Tischgesellschaften* of 18th century Europe in which private individuals debated freely about politics through the public use of their reason. Consequentially, the usage of the criterion of reason reduces differences in external status or power among speakers. As I described above, Habermas' ideas are on this instance closely linked with communitarian philosophers that approach the building of a community through everyday speech and language. For the debates between this 'equals' to function well, a sense of mutual respect and 'civility' is demanded. According to Gerhards (cited above) these 'shared values' make people part of the same moral community.[203] In the *Theory of communicative action*, Habermas further developed the functioning of ideal speech by distinguishing communicative reason from instrumental reason. Communicative rationality, for Habermas, is a kind of rationality happening through language and argumentation, that is objective, subjective and inter-subjective at the same time. It involves a sense of self-reflexiveness and enables people to go engage in a dialogue.[204] For Habermas, this was a philosophical reaction to the first generation of the Frankfurter Schule (mainly Adorno and Horkheimer) that had identified the destructive capacities of instrumentalist reason.[205]

[202] J. Habermas, op.cit., 1989. J. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1984.
[203] J. Gerhards et al, op.cit., 2002, p. 303.
[204] J. Habermas, op.cit., 1984, p. vi
[205] L. Thomassen, *Habermas. A Guide for the Perplexed*, Continuum, New York, 2010, p. 21

Habermas' ideal speech theory is closely related to all kinds of theories of dialogue. Linguist Michael Bakthin, for example, defined a dialogue as something in which 'the power of discourse' brought people to the understanding of mutual perspectives.[206] Another influential model is the 'Bowm-dialogue', named after David Bowm. Bown defines a dialogue as a situation without pre-decided aim or purpose, in which people 'suspend judgment', are as honest and transparent as possible, make no group-level decisions and try to learn from, and build on other participants' ideas.[207] These definitions of dialogue are mostly emerging bottom-up and are unstructured. But in certain specific policy contexts, political scientists normatively theorized about more 'structured dialogues'. These kinds of dialogues are mostly structured from above in order to reach a particular consensus in a specific policy domain. Structured dialogues happen in all kinds of deliberative democratic attempts to incorporate NGO's, lobbies and experts in policy making.[208]

Taking this literature into account, it seems that there is a contradiction between the European Commission' dominant position in the process of communication in the Citizens' Dialogues and the aim of building a genuine Europe public sphere in which institutions and citizens would be able to engage in a dialogue. I have described above the informational perspective of the Commission when it comes to the dialogues. These citizens' dialogues are meant to 'make people know what it means to feel European'. Consequentially, the Commission functions as an encoder willing to make the message being decoded by the public as it was encoded. This obviously leads to a situation that is structurally different from the ideal speech situation designed by Habermas in which people take distance from their differences in status, and engage and judge on the basis of their reason. Consequentially, the

[206] M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: four essays*, Austin, Texas University Press, 1992, 443 p.
[207] D. Bohm, *On Dialogue*, London, Routeledge, 1996, p. 18-22
[208] A. Christakis, *Connected : the surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives*, New York, Little, Brown and Co., 2009, 338 p. J.N. Warfield, *A Science of Generic Design: Managing Complexity through Systems Design*, Ames, Iowa State University Press, 1990.

organization of Citizens' Dialogues in this format does not lead to the ideal debates in a public sphere as described by Habermas.

Apart from the ideal speech criterion, that is almost never reached in any public debate, also the dialogue criterion is not reached. The listening aspect, inherent in any concept of dialogue as described above, is absent. Since the aim of the Citizens' Dialogues is based on a top-down dissemination of (ideological) information, the multi-perspective listening and learning is essentially absent. Could structured dialogue as a label be a way out? Yes, the Citizens' Dialogues are structured from above. The mobilization of participants, the possibility to vote on polling questions, asked questions from the public and structure of space are decided upon by the European Commission. But the aim to reach a consensus on a particular policy change or issue is absent. The Citizens' Dialogues deal with non-specific topics such as 'European solidarity', 'the future of Europe', 'being heard by the European institutions'. The broadness of these pre-decided topics is too big to deliberatively reach a specific consensus for policy change. In short, when starting from a Habermasian public sphere/dialogue perspective, we are confronted with a socio-political reality that is impossible to analyze with the idealtypes outlined before. In the next chapter, I will move away from Habermas' micro perspective, and will take on a macro structural analysis of state-public interaction.

- <u>A macro-structural perspective: state-public interaction in contemporary Europe</u>

But how can we theoretically conceive of these citizenship policies when looking into the structural level of state-public interaction? As I have outlined before, both for Habermas, Arendt and Castells, the autonomy from the official sphere is what makes a public a public. For Castells, this autonomy enables the existence of protests of citizens against a political

establishment or a specific policy.[209] For Arendt, on the other hand, the implicit autonomy of *the public* as opposed to *the official* is what facilitates a definition of the totalitarian: a regime is totalitarian when the official sphere penetrates the private sphere, making the existence of an autonomous public sphere impossible.[210] This stress on autonomy is mostly an aspect and consequence of normative democratic thinking, but it is also linked to dynamic interaction between private, public and official that make an analysis of the 'structural transformation' of the public possible.

Habermas offers in his early work a historical, context specific, framework of how, in 18th century Western Europe, private individuals (non-feudal subjects) populated an autonomous public sphere, that was challenging the central (national) state. For Habermas, the process of national state formation, identified as the increasing centralization of capital on the national state level, was crucial to the emergence of national public spheres, as well because of its rising impact on citizens as in its unifying aspects (creating national subjects of law, the emergence national news as a common basis of knowledge for debate, etc.). As I have stated before, the *bourgeois* public sphere Habermas describes as the result of this modern development, is very closely connected to a historical context. The literary salons, coffeehouses and *Tischgesellschaften* are really specific to 18th century London, Paris and Berlin. But that obviously does not mean that the structural dynamics of interaction between private, public and official are untransposable to the contemporary supranational European level.

Taking Habermas' structural transformation into account, the future of a European public sphere will mostly depend on the process of supranational, European state formation. State formation in this case means the centralization of (tax) capital on a European state level, and consequentially, the increasing execution of European policies. Ideas about the transposition

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209 M. Castells, op.cit.
210 H. Arendt, op.cit., 1958

of the *Sozialstat* from the nation-state to the supranational/global state, in order to cope with the ongoing proliferation of capitalism, are closely linked to this process of supranational state formation.[211] The transposition of capital to a supranational state level also increases the relative impact of the supranational state on the private individual. This would then make these private individuals, as citizens, turn more and more to the supranational state in their public debates on politics, and consequentially also for their claim-making. The supranational, European socialization as citizens would happen specifically in this public realm of debate and claim-making. In short, when arguing from a *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* perspective, the process of European democratic state formation is the most essential factor to the future development of an autonomous European public sphere.

What makes students and scholars of the European state turn to an early Habermasian theoretical framework, rather than to an Arendtian framework, is this crucial importance of the process of European state formation. Habermas provides a clearer framework when it comes to state-public interactions than Arendt, who is more concerned with the existence and persistence of the 'private individual'. For the contemporary European public sphere, the precondition of state formation seems to be more insecure than the ongoing existence of the private individual.

The problem here is the place of the citizenship, information and communication policies I have analyzed in the structural dynamics of private, public and official: how can we conceive of these top-down attempts to create and structure the European public sphere? It is clear that the autonomy from the official sphere, inherent in a democratic public sphere, is absent from the ideal Jose Manuel Barroso and Viviane Reding propose. The 'public sphere' they have in mind is not a 'public sphere' in definition, but a mass of active, visible and

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[211] J. Habermas, 'Nation-state or global state?', in: B.E. Brown, *Comparative Politics. Notes and Readings*, Thomson, Belmont, California, 2006, p. 115-116. J. P. McCormick, *Weber, Habermas , and Transformations of the European State. Constitutional, Social, and Supranational Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 4

'absolute loyal' people, that is designed an structured from above. It is an audience rather than a public. Instances such as the Citizens' Dialogues interestingly resemble what Habermas would call 'a sphere of representation' in which governors, as power holders, present themselves in multiple events before the people. These kind of Early Modern events functioned as collective rituals, symbolically reinforcing the power of the governor. Habermas sharply describes this as governing 'before' the people, not governing 'for' the people. At these instances, the people function as subjects rather than as critical citizens.[212] I would argue that the Citizens' Dialogues function structurally the same, especially when it comes to the intent of power holders. They function as a theatre play of power, a collective ritual pre-structured from above in which ideological discourses (Eurofederalism) function as the legitimizing set of intellectual statements that should be internalized and practiced by the participants. The role the 'public sphere' plays in these discourses is a role that is referring to the positive, normative connotation linked to the concept itself, rather than to the socio-political reality the concept refers to. The link of the implicit meaning of the 'public sphere' concept with openness, diversity and inclusiveness is discursively instrumentalized by the European Commission, without a self-reflexive examination of the citizenship policies on the basis of the politico-philosophical meaning the concept is referring to.

8. Conclusion and further research

As I have showed in my literature review: the field of study of the European public is mostly dominated by the measurement of Europeanization of public spheres by political scientists, and normative theorizing on the future public sphere by philosophers. By focusing on the European policies and institutions that aim at constructing such a European public sphere, I have tried to open doors to sociology, anthropology, and even history as lenses

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[212] J. Habermas, op. cit., 1989, p. 7-9.

through which the European citizenship, communication and information policies could be examined. On the first hand sight, these policies seem to be clear aims to partly solve the European democratic deficit and bridge the gap between European citizens and the European institutions. The construction of a 'public sphere', and consequentially the European socialization of citizens, is the way to go. But, as my analysis of policy documents and participant observation in the Citizens' Dialogues have showed, the 'public sphere' concept as it is applied by policy makers does not function in the same way as it does for social scientists. Rather than explaining a specific socially constructed reality, the 'public sphere' in the ideological discourses of European Commissioners and officials mostly revokes the normatively positive connotation of the concept. The notion of a 'public sphere' is strongly tied to concepts of democracy, understanding, inclusiveness,… In this way, the usage of the concept of 'public sphere' facilitates an ideological discourse (earlier defined as Eurofederalism) that copes with the lack of support among citizens for the European project. The Citizens' Dialogues I have analyzed are the results of a process of policy making that operationalizes this ideological discourse in a concrete ritual in which people could internalize and practice 'Europe'.

Further multi-disciplinary research of the European citizenship, information and communication policies could fill the gaps this thesis left. Once the European Year of Citizens 2013 is fully finished and evaluated, and when the responsible officials are working on new projects after the European elections in May 2014, they will be probably much more eager to talk about the phase of 'project design' in the policy making process. This could enable researchers to dig more deeply into the bureaucratic context and agency in projects as the European Year of Citizens 2013. The complete closure of the event, after the European elections, will make it not only easier for the officials to talk and think about their involvement, but it will offer social scientists also a research object that is clearly delineated

and not permanently subjected to change. In short, once the European Year of Citizens 2013 is part of the past, the distance between object and the researching subject will facilitate further and better critical engagement with the abundant source materials.

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