

The Euroblogosphere has great potential to contribute to the European public sphere, but it is currently restricted by a lack of deep debate and the dominance of English.

by Blog Admin

*The Euroblogosphere now consists of many hundreds of blogs, all commenting on different aspects of Europe, its politics and policies. But are blogs in Europe part of a European Public Sphere? Using interviews with European bloggers, **Javier Ruiz Soler** finds that despite the seeming lack of deep level debate and the over presence of English, blogging is a growing contributor to an also growing European Public Sphere, and could well be an important factor in helping people to contribute to policy debates and increase political participation in coming years.*



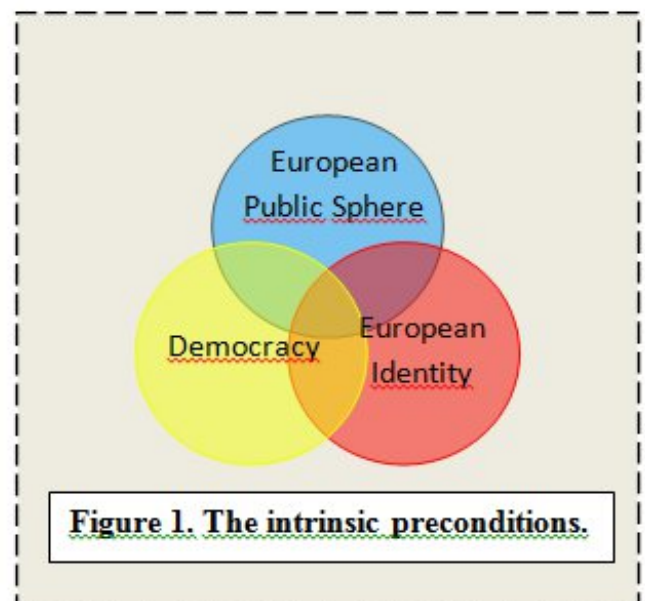
In a previous EUROPP [blogpost](#), Ronny Patz examined the current state of the Euroblogosphere, highlighting the lack of academic analysis of this area. To help to address this gap, and to research a field that has had little exploration so far, I have designed a research project to investigate academically the phenomenon of the Euroblogosphere for my [Master Thesis](#) at Lund University.

My qualitative research and analysis goes some way towards describing the current scope and situation of the Euroblogosphere. As an innovative method, I focused on the bloggers themselves, rather than the contents of their blogs, and consequently a series of semi structured online interviews were conducted with Spanish and English speaking bloggers to understand their views on the Euroblogosphere inside the context of a European Public Sphere. I looked at two different, a priori blogging styles, to give the study a broad and comparative dimension.

First of all, I must clarify that the Euroblogosphere is part of the Internet, and is consequently attached to the concept of a European Public Sphere (EPS). The EPS requires three intrinsic preconditions. It needs identity, democracy, and the EPS itself. Without any of these three elements, the remaining two cannot be developed fully.

Europe's bloggers now see evidence of an actor-based online European transnational blogosphere. However this transnationality is still very weak, and even though it has increased during in recent years, the level of complexity of the "European debate" is still very attached to nations, although it is growing at the pan-European level; bloggers [comment](#), [interlink](#), and [share content](#).

The way that comment and debate is conducted in the Euroblogosphere has undergone a transformation. In the past, it was much smaller, and most of the interactions were via the comment functions of blogs. Today this interaction has increased as there are more participants and citizens interested in European issues, or just more people online. However, the depth of the debates has decreased as the rise of new social media forms does not provide enough space for the elaboration of long arguments. Although the option of writing comments still exists, very few bloggers, according to the answers provided in interviews,



are using it in regular basis. More and more of Europe's bloggers share, or comment in short form on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

The Euroblogosphere also contributes to the democratization of debate within European topics. Every citizen can freely start a blog and publish content, and at the same time can engage in discussions without limitation of background, and not filtered by corporations. Now anyone, at some point, can express, without the need of complex skills, their point of view in one topic. It is worth mentioning an issue pointed out by the Spanish bloggers: the over presence and domination of English in the European blogosphere works against interaction and dissemination of debate. Spanish speaking bloggers understand that the excessive presence of the English language and the attention to Brussels based bloggers do not contribute to an equal and fair debate. It seems that if someone does not publishing blog posts in English, and/or from the Brussels orbit, they cannot reach a broad audience. Furthermore, most interaction goes through a kind of filter across the English language i.e. in order for a blogpost published in Spanish to reach Swedish readership, someone must comment or interact with it in English, and later, from English to Swedish. This is a 'double trip' that according to the some bloggers is not always completed.

Consequently I see the Euroblogosphere as facing two main problems. The first is the idiomatic barrier due to language differences, and the second is lack of deep debates. Yet, the Euroblogosphere may still become an important factor in European policy debates and increase popular participation. If the Euroblogosphere, continues to grow, it will, one day, become an important and complementary part of a European Public Sphere, one that is not so very different from other channels of communication (traditional media, associations, NGOs, websites, forums, etc). As an example the website [blogginportal.eu](#) is an aggregator platform of hundreds of blogs, but only one more of hundreds of websites that promote greater European debate. [Here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) are just some examples.

The Euroblogosphere itself meets the three intrinsic preconditions for European Public Sphere, and as a result, the Euroblogosphere can be seen as a Overlapping Nested Sphere. As we see as strong and weak points within the Euroblogosphere, these can also be identified as well at the level of the European Public Sphere.

The next [European elections in 2014](#) are a great opportunity to investigate the Euroblogosphere in even greater detail and might be the best moment to conduct research into how the Euroblogosphere can influence and interact with the public but also with the European parties. Here we have an opportunity too for research in how this hypothetical influence can be used – not only by individuals, but from private companies, national, international, and transnational institutions.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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Javier Ruiz Soler holds a Master Degree in European Studies from Lund University. His [dissertation](#) examines the role of the Euroblogosphere in a context of a European Public Sphere. Javier is co-editor of [bloggingportal](#), the European blogging platform with more than 1000 blogs syndicated, as well as head of Communications and P.A. at [TEDxStockholm](#). Currently Javier is collaborating in research on Global Television Discourse at Stockholm University. He blogs at [spanishwalker.eu](#) and can be followed on Twitter [@spanishwalker](#)



