

Agora: To create an information and debate newspaper on the Web? (project)

*Attac Rhône (R. Joumard, J.F. Escuit, S. Schweikert, M. Christian et H. Paraton),
Attac Romans (Annie Vital), Pascal Paquin (Attac 89),
Attac Berlin (Carla Krüger)*

12 July 2007

Europe is divided between those who can speak and be heard and the multitude which can only be silent ;between those who are informed because they obtain information from various sources and the multitude which receives partial, one-sided and convergent news. For Europe to become that of the citizens rather than that of the oligarchy, a European public space is necessary. It should offer a true common European public debate, showing the contradictions as well as the agreements between people and between citizens.

Such a public space, the ancient Greeks « Agora », should be an integral part of popular education, giving it the means to be really popular. This public space does not exist. The European meetings from ATTAC militants show its necessity and could set a precedent.

What would be its objectives ?

Objectives

This space should have at least four objectives :

1/ To enable European citizens to give their opinions and ask questions. This objective has the following practical consequences :

- every European language should be accepted ;
- every paper should be accepted ;
- every reaction to an article should be accepted ;
- to do this implies the backing of a network of European organisations and above all that of the European ATTAC.

2/ To enable information to reach the citizens, with the following consequences :

- to translate the items into as many European languages as possible ;
- to privilege quality articles (background and presentation) ;
- to privilege short articles ;
- to facilitate access to the articles.

3/ To deal with European questions, with the following consequences :

- to deal with questions which concern citizens from several member states and therefore deal with strictly national or local questions only briefly or as an example of a larger subject ;
- to privilege diversity of texts with regard to their geographical origin, subject or author.

4/ To limit costs, with the following consequences :

- to translate only the most interesting articles ;
- to rely mainly on militants and active readers;
- to work only with the web ;
- to limit the quantity of paper used to print the articles.

The project

As can be deduced from the above strategical objectives the characteristics of such a space which , are partially contradictory. This is therefore a compromise in the form of a newspaper along to the following lines :

A multipolar web site

This newspaper would take the form of a web site lodged and managed by a network of European organisations, mainly by ATTAC and initially by a group of ATTAC national and local committees

A three level space

The first level is the entry where every citizen can publish an article, react to a published one, without any control but respecting the law. The articles would be published at this level only for a limited period, two weeks for example.

The second level would be a selection of first level articles (together with a selection of the comments on it). The selection would be made done by an editorial committee based on the quality of content and form. This second level would be published every week and remain on the site indefinitely.

The third level would be the archives of the second level.

A multilingual space

Everyone could write here in one or several European languages of his choice, including Esperanto and any form of language enabling understanding within a linguistic family. Authors should be encouraged to translate their articles into other European languages. At least the title or a summary could be translated. The editorial committee would have the most interesting second level articles translated or at least a summary of them.

The articles should be short, concise and written so as to make them easy to read for those of a different mother tongue : well developed arguments together with references.

A European space

The articles should concern citizens from various countries and thereafter privilege panEuropean subjects. Geographical diversity of authors and subjects will be a second level selection criteria.

An easily accessible space

In addition to the multipolar character of the site, the newspaper should be organised with columns such as those generally seen in the Press. In parallel, a content search system (similar to Google) would enable the reader to list the articles dealing with one particular subject. A key word index of texts on a specific and multilingual list would enable any text to be indexed whatever the language in which it was written.

Article length should be limited, except for high quality ones. Printable versions of articles should be optimised so as to limit paper consumption.

Financing

This project could be partially subsidised by the European Commission programme « L'Europe pour les citoyens » (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/guide/index_en.htm) for the years 2007 to 2013. We could also ask readers to make a modest contribution after 3 visits to the second level within two months from the same email address (0.50 euro per visit, 10 euros per year).