

Representations of European Citizenship
since 1951

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palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-1-137-51146-1 ISBN 978-1-137-51147-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51147-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016936773

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Printed on acid-free paper

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For Jackie

PREFACE

The European Commission is not usually associated with anything sentimental, consisting as it does of well-educated elite bureaucrats and technocrats. However, it is possible and certainly plausible to describe the account I offer of the European Commission's attempts to communicate the meaning and significance of European citizenship as a story of wishful thinking. It is important wishful thinking because it is in essence the history of the European Commission's ideals and hopes for a Civil Europe or, more forthrightly, what the European Commission would have wanted Europeans to be like. This history is also a story of unrequited hopes—since, quite simply, what the European Commission dreamt of bore little relationship to how most Europeans felt. For those who take a realistic line and have a bias towards results, the European Commission's communicative efforts in representing the European citizen in a compelling manner and in such a way as to persuade us all to adopt the mantle of urbane, cosmopolitan Europeans enjoying the benefits of European integration can count amongst its more extravagant undertakings. However, wishful thinking and unrequited hopes form a historical judgement that I think is worth understanding via the detail of the European Commission's communicative efforts with the European peoples. Although the detail is in the story of what some think is from the start a ridiculous idea: European citizenship. Representing European citizens, giving them their place in the European integration process, informing them of the benefits they might derive from being European, creating their European civil identity and encouraging a civil consciousness of belonging to Europe has been a core activity in the public communication policy of the European Commission

since the early 1950s. In order to tell this story of wishful thinking and unrequited hopes, it is necessary to interpret the European Commission's discourse concerning European citizens, the stories it told about them and the ideals it articulated in brochures and speeches as deeply meaningful. In short, one needs to regard this discourse as an uninterrupted (since 1951), serious and considered attempt to bring about a Civil Europe.

In this book, I unashamedly take the European Commission's discourse regarding European citizens at face value. This is not to say that we should not avail ourselves of a critical attitude but rather that only by analysing and interpreting this discourse in its various historical, political and institutional contexts of European integration can historically sensitive meaning-making be undertaken. There is nothing new in this idea. Indeed, the Cambridge School of Historiography believe in the importance of the performative nature of what was said and in which context it was said—no matter how silly, contradictory, inconsistent or naïve these discourses might appear. Making sense of discourse is not a matter of intuition but of a detailed historical analysis of what was said in which context and why, how these messages were publicly communicated, how consistently they were expressed and the reasons for change. The discourse on European citizenship that I examine in this book can be found in a combination of three sources. First, the European treaties—Treaty of Paris (1951), Treaty of Rome establishing the European Community (1957), Single European Act (1986), Treaty of Maastricht (1992), Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), Treaty of Nice (2001), Constitutional Treaty (2004, not ratified) and the Treaty of Lisbon (2009)—are important because each of them reflects a different stage and focus of European integration and as such, provides the framing context for the Commission's understanding of European citizenship at a certain period in the European integration process. Second, my analysis includes three kinds of documents: (a) public communication policy papers which determine the scope of information programmes, note communication priorities and define the understanding and value of public communication, and (b) EU citizenship reports. I also used reports that are (c) related to the identity of the European Community in relation to European citizens and their civil identity, to the relevance of the European Community for European citizens in their daily lives, to the relationship between the European Community and European citizens and to the value of public communication for this relationship. The third source is public communication outputs such as public communication brochures and speeches given by European Commission and

High Authority officials. Both enabled the European Commission, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, to publicly communicate to a broad European public despite its then very limited civil competences. Official speeches have remained a crucial source for analysis because they are helpful in understanding the nuances and subtleties of the representations of European citizenship.

One important caveat needs mentioning: Although I focus on the European Commission as the main protagonist in the representations of European citizenship and their public communication, it is relevant and critical (and therefore) justified to include reports from the European Parliament and other EU institutions. The reason for including non-European Commission authored reports is twofold: first, the European Commission's public communication strategies have often been the result of inter-institutional cooperation and negotiations from the beginning of the ECSC, and second, the over 30 interviews I have conducted with past and present senior European Commission officials revealed that reports such as the Tindemans Report (1975) and the Adonnino Reports (1985) are vital to the understanding of the meaning of European citizenship and have been used by the European Commission. As such, they are included in my analysis.

The result of the analysis of the European Commission's discourse shows that the European Commission has depicted European citizenship in five different but related ways. I call these representations *Homo Oeconomicus* (1951–1972), *A People's Europe* (1973–1992), *Europe of Transparency* (1993–2004), *Europe of Agorai* (2005–2009) and *Europe of Rights* (2010–2014). Their names capture the essence and focus of each version of European citizenship.

One further point needs to be made. I use European integration history only for the purpose of being able to provide some context to each representation. The choice of what counted as critical context was informed by and discussed in interviews with past and present European Commission officials who had key roles in the formulation and execution of European citizenship and public communication policies. Their positions range from Director General for Information and Communication policy to spokespersons and Commissioners. They include key Commission officials involved in European citizenship and public communication policies, such as J.R. Rabier, J. Lastenouse, P. Adonnino, A. Vitorino, J. Santer and M. Wallström. Recent or current key Commission officials came from Directorate-General (DG), Communication (COMM) and DG Justice

(JUS). Interviewing these key officials enabled me to fill historical gaps, to verify and obtain historical detail and importantly, to test the theoretical analysis against the practical experience of these interviewees. In this way I try to combine a formal historical approach (events, policy developments, etc.) with an informal and personal historical approach (the insights obtained from my interviewees).

As for my wishful thinking, I hope that this combination enables some new insights into the history of the European Commission's changing understandings of European citizenship and that this history, in turn, casts a little light on one aspect of the history of an idea that has been spoken about with varying degrees of enthusiasm since 1951. In summary, I wish to bring to my readers' attention the European Commission's consistent civil aspirations and concomitantly its tireless and myriad attempts to bring about a Civil Europe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family, friends and colleagues for being there when it was important, and my interviewees for their time and valuable insights which, I hope, made the story this book tells come alive. I have also had the great good fortune to benefit from N. Piers Ludlow's intellectual guidance, personal kindness and encouragement to publish, and from Sven Carnel's patience and generosity—Sven was my companion in the archives who answered any question, found documents I had asked for and brought to my attention those I didn't know existed. As a source of inspiration, historical knowledge and unique insight, I extend my warmest gratitude to my wonderful friend and mentor Jacques-René Rabier, who with charm and grace gave me so much of his time and advice, shared personal anecdotes and insights and more than anyone imbued in me a sense of the European adventure. Finally, and most of all, my deepest debt is to Jackie, who in so many ways made everything possible. I dedicate this book to her.

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