Monika Eigmüller, Vincent Gengnagel*

Editorial note

It is hard not to sigh: Europe, once imagined as a promise on the horizon, feels increasingly distant as the political landscapes of its member states move in worrying directions. Trying to follow the daily news, a sense of hopelessness creeps in: Conflicts escalate while Europe's transformative agenda gets stuck, trust seems to erode as the media mostly mirrors the *realpolitik* of national interests.

In 2025, the EU, too seems more exhausted than ever before – and challenged to reinvent itself once more in the face of growing crises in its member states: The repeated and loud disputes over European migration and asylum policy; the continuing geopolitical instability in the shadow of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; yet again, the failure to deliver on climate ambitions; and, shadowing everything, the drift of more and more European democracies toward anti-democratic and authoritarian politics. Yet precisely in this density of crises, it is worthwhile to look more closely to understand how and where Europe is shaped beyond high politics and institutional procedures. This is what our journal is for, and the contributions to this issue do exactly that. They open up perspectives on how Europe emerges in local contexts, how crises are politically framed, and how cultural practices create new spaces even in times of structural uncertainty.

After a series of thematically focused issues, we are particularly pleased to present an open issue once again. The contributions assembled here reflect the multifaceted nature of Europe's current challenges, ranging from local mobilisation processes to geopolitical crisis analysis and transformations in digital cultural practices.

In 'Co-creating Europe-related activities', *Benjamin Gröbe et al.* focus on the local level of Europeanisation and demonstrate how citizens and civil society organisations, in cooperation with municipalities, shape Europe "from below". Especially in times of political polarisation, their contribution highlights how Europe does not only emerge in Brussels, but in the everyday interactions of local networks, sustained by normative ideas of European identity and by positive, citizen-centered narratives that counteract dominant discourses of crisis and threat.

In her article 'War as a singular crisis?', *Susann Worschech* analyses Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as both a singular crisis and an expression of longer-term political continuities. Making an important contribution to the sociology of crisis in Europe, the paper demonstrates the interplay between singularity and normality

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in this event – and the ways in which political narratives, spatial and temporal dimensions, and resilience practices shape the interpretation of the crisis.

Xiaotong Tan's cultural sociological contribution 'Reconfiguring the field of professional music' focuses on digital cultural practices in the music industry. In her paper, she shows how platforms such as Spotify and TikTok are transforming the logic of professional success, with digital metrics such as streams, visibility and algorithmic rankings becoming the standard benchmarks for career progression. Rather than creating new forms of capital, Tan argues, existing forms are reinterpreted under digital conditions, offering crucial insights into the power structures of platform capitalism in the cultural field.

In his essay 'Schengen in the suction of sovereignism', *Georg Vobruba* focuses on the Schengen system and its paradoxical effects on the relationship between European integration and state sovereignty. Using Hungary as an example, he discusses how populism and conspiracy theories are making border policy a key area of mobilisation, and how attempts to regain national control are having the opposite effect.

In their research note, *Gulsabah Palinko* and *Klarissa Lueg* conceptualize 'Danish municipalities' efforts in attracting and retaining skilled migrants' and sketch out a research agenda for a discourse analytical approach to how migrants are framed as "skilled" and how they respond to this discursive effort.

Finally, *Pauline Ahlhaus* offers a pointed review essay on the edited volume *Anti-Gender Mobilisations in Europe and the Feminist Response: Productive Resistance* (Smrdelj/Kuhar 2025). The volume shows how feminist actors in various European countries respond to the rise of anti-gender mobilisations and what forms of "productive resistance" emerge in doing so. Ahlhaus' discussion also links directly to our forthcoming special issue on gender contestation in Europe (1/2026), which will focus more deeply on conflicts around gender equality in Europe.

Before that, however, Issue 2/2025 will feature a special issue on Norbert Elias as a European sociologist: Edited by Bernd Sommer, Marta Bucholc, and André Saramago, the upcoming issue 'A Climate of (De-)Civilisation?' puts Elias figurational sociology to work in the context of environmental sociology.

And finally, a note on our editorial team: Vincent Gengnagel, co-editor of CPE alongside Monika Eigmüller and Klarissa Lueg, has stepped down from his role as Managing Editor. We are now consciously moving toward a more collaborative editorial structure and look forward to the new opportunities – may the future of CPE be brighter than the political and fiscal landscape under which it continues to operate! We would like to thank our co-editors, authors, reviewers, publisher and readers for their continued commitment. Thanks to your efforts, this journal remains a Diamond Open Access outlet for academic debate, critical analysis and diverse research perspectives on *Culture, Practice & Europeanization*.

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