

Special issue working title: **The Cultural Deliberation of Europe**

Intended journal: *Continuum. Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*

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### **Description**

The question of what and where “Europe” is, and who belongs to it, has long been a topic of discussion. This concept has a long and complex conceptual history, ranging from more or less exclusive geographical and political definitions and articulations, postcolonial redefinitions and contestations, and as a frame of reference related to but distinct from national and local identities. A comparable complexity holds for those social subjects identified as “Europeans.” In this special issue, our focus is on the multilayeredness of the concepts of “Europe” and “Europeanness” and the ambiguities inherent to definitions of these two concepts in order to conceptualize and interrogate the problems and processes of “a thousand Europes” or a “European multiplicity” (Rumford and Buhari-Gumez, 2014).

The conversations over these (self-)definitions are traditionally understood as unfolding in the public sphere. Here, citizens come together to discuss politics and negotiate matters of common concern – including the question of what it means to be a “European” and what “Europe” means. Ever since Jürgen Habermas’ seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), much attention has been paid to the “hard” forms of public deliberation by focusing on the role of the news, and later social, media, as well as institutional political bodies.

In debates responding to Habermas's proposition of “the public sphere,” the notion of a *monolithic* site where political deliberation takes place has been challenged. Alternative conceptualizations of the public debate on issues of common concern that have been proposed include counterpublics (Fraser, 1992; Warner, 2002), “dominant” and “hidden” scripts (Scott, 1992), or “capillaried networks” in which discussions are “taken up” across domains (Hamilton and Cowling, 2020). This special issue continues in this direction and aims to make visible those counterpublic or “hidden” deliberations about Europe and Europeanness notably in the so-called “off-stage” areas of the public debate.

For this special issue, we are especially interested in such counterpublic debates within the cultural domain – itself a site not always considered as part of the public sphere. Firstly, we are interested in how cultural counterpublics articulate definitions of Europe and Europeanness through the arts and culture as alternative propositions posed by political elites in the dominant public sphere. Our understanding is that within the cultural field, art, literature, and other aesthetic cultural forms should be considered as key sites of political position-taking. This position-taking becomes part of political deliberation through the mediated circulation, or passing on of these arguments, during which the arguments may transform as they pass through different media and genres (cf. Gal, 2006; and Couldry and Hepp, 2016). Secondly, we also aim to understand how these counterpublic deliberations create a public of Europeans thanks to the circulation and take-up of these cultural forms (cf. Warner, 2002).

This special issue therefore seeks to explore specifically the aesthetic and semiotic means and processes through which contemporary and historical cultural forms (think of literature, film, and the fine arts, but the list is not exhaustive) carry and mediate deliberations on and claim-making processes about Europe and Europeanness. We invite contributions from a range of

perspectives – including but not limited to that of cultural sociology and cultural critique – to trace and explore, analyse and explain how cultural texts become topics of wider social and political discussions concerning Europe and Europeanness and to explicate what these texts contribute to the public deliberation about the meaning of the concepts of “Europe” and “Europeanness.” Topics to be discussed could include, but are not limited to:

- Analysis of artistic, cultural, and textual contributions to political debates on and about Europe/Europeanness, in medium-specific or material ways;
- Transformations and interpretations of local or national identities as Europe(an)s;
- Construction and negotiations of (European) publics through and by means of the mediated circulation and “take-up” of cultural forms *as* political deliberation;
- Intertextual transformations and incorporations of cultural and textual artefacts as political debates as discussions circulate and move across borders of all kinds (national, genre, language, etc.);
- Cultural institutions and their contributions to Europeanizing public discourse;
- Art and cultural criticism as part of public deliberation (specifically concerning Europe).

### **Practical details**

Proposals including an abstract (200 words max.) and a short biographical note (100 words max.) are due on 25 August 2022. Send your abstract and biographical note to Jesse van Amelsvoort ([j.d.vanamelsvoort@uva.nl](mailto:j.d.vanamelsvoort@uva.nl)) and Margriet van der Waal ([m.c.van.der.waal@rug.nl](mailto:m.c.van.der.waal@rug.nl)).

The editors of the special issue will notify authors of acceptance or rejection by the end of August. The editorial board of *Continuum* will consider proposed special issues in September, after which we will get in touch with those whose proposals have been accepted as part of the special issue. Final drafts are due September 2023 (TBC).

Please note that *Continuum* does not accept papers longer than 6,000 words, inclusive of tables, references, figure captures, and endnotes. Please also note final acceptance is conditional upon *Continuum*'s agreement.

The special issue editors intend to organize a workshop with all participants in early 2023.