Editorial

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It is customary to launch new journals in political science and international relations — of which there have been many in recent years — either by staking a claim for a genuinely new terrain or by identifying the need for a new approach to the analysis of familiar themes. In the pages that follow we resist both temptations. In so doing, and in the spirit of *Comparative European Politics*, we put to one side any partisan theoretical or empirical preferences we may have as editors. We aim not to map out a new vision for the analysis of comparative European politics, nor even to establish a research agenda for this most dynamic field of study. Rather, our aim is to be clear about the role, as we see it, of this new journal and to set out, in some detail, the editorial principles upon which it is founded.

We have devoted our energies to the founding and editing of this journal not out of any particular frustration with the existing literature in this area, nor out of any desire to refashion the analysis of comparative European politics in the image of the theoretical perspectives and analytical traditions with which we, as editors, might be associated. Indeed, if *Comparative European Politics* becomes a vessel for the promotion of the work with which we, as editors, are most closely associated, it will have failed in its task to develop a genuinely non-sectarian arena for debate, theoretical development and empirical elaboration. Our motivation is altogether more simple. A new journal is needed to fill what we perceive to be a significant and increasingly widely acknowledged gap in the market. For while the sub-field of comparative European politics has grown considerably in recent years, there remain few specialist journals in this area. Although the most prominent American journals *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Politics and Society*, *World Politics* and *International Organization* do publish work in the area of comparative European politics, significantly less than half of the articles that appear each year fall within the subject area of comparative European politics.

Our central ambition, then, and our motivation for founding *Comparative European Politics*, is to create a journal which, over time, will establish a reputation on a par with these less specialized journals but with a more distinctive European focus. The enthusiasm with which the journal's announcement has been greeted, the quality of the manuscripts we have reviewed to date, and both the stature and dedication of the international

editorial board that we have assembled confirms, for us, the importance of the ambitious task we have set for ourselves. At the time of writing we have already called into action over 70 referees and have accepted for publication a series of what we regard to be exceptional and path-breaking contributions to the development of comparative European politics.

Comparative European Politics is a peer-reviewed international journal of European political science, interpreted broadly to include political economy (comparative and international), public policy and administration, electoral politics, political sociology and international relations. Substantively, it will focus on the comparative politics and political economy of contemporary Europe within and beyond the European Union, the processes of European integration and enlargement, and the place of Europe and European states within international/global political and economic dynamics.

As the most regionally integrated political and economic space within the global system, Europe presents a particular opportunity to political scientists to explore the dynamic relation between global, transnational, international and national political and economic processes and practices. We welcome original theoretical, empirical and theoretically informed pieces that deal with these relations.

Although, as already stated, it is not our intention to seek to set the agenda for comparative European politics, we encourage in particular the submission of articles that address themselves to the following issues:

- (1) the politics of domestic adaptation and/or resistance to transnational processes;
- (2) the politics and political economy of domestic constraint in a context characterized by the increasing salience of international and transnational dynamics;
- (3) the implications of such developments for questions of convergence, diversity and national distinctiveness;
- (4) the development and institutionalization of mechanisms and processes of regional governance;
- (5) the implications of such developments for the conduct and democratic character of political processes domestically and internationally; and
- (6) the interaction between national, international and transnational processes over time.

This list is, of course, by no means exhaustive.

In keeping with the comparative ethos of the journal, the editors welcome pieces that do not confine their analysis exclusively to the European context but which draw insights from parallel processes of regional integration and domestic adaptation to transnational processes.

Such issues require the adoption of a distinctly interdisciplinary perspective and a willingness to pose awkward questions about the limitations of existing disciplinary-bounded approaches to social, political and economic analysis. Moreover, such debates are not just matters of academic introspection. They are also emphatically policy relevant since claims made about the relation between the domestic, the international and the transnational clearly inform the deliberations of policy-makers across Europe. It is our view that Europe represents a particularly fertile empirical reference for such debates.

As this perhaps already serves to indicate, our interpretation of the field of comparative European politics is broad and inclusive. Yet this should not be misinterpreted as inviting a lack of rigour in the work that we encourage. It is not our intention to impose upon authors either a particular conception of the parameters or limits of comparative European politics or to impose a particular understanding of the methodologies appropriate to its analysis. Nonetheless, our exacting refereeing process is designed to ensure internal consistency and rigour. In other words, while resisting any temptation to impose upon submitted work common theoretical, methodological or empirical standards, we will seek out referees to evaluate work systematically in terms of the methodological, theoretical and empirical standards it sets for itself. In this respect, above all, *Comparative European Politics* is a journal that is decidedly non-sectarian in its editorial policy and practice.

This has important implications for the conception of 'comparative analysis' that informs our editorial rationale. We are resistant to attempts to narrow the range of studies that might potentially be labelled 'comparative'. Nonetheless, we have considerable sympathy with those, like Theda Skocpol, who argue that far too much contemporary comparative analysis contains no distinct element of comparison. North American political scientists, for instance, do not become comparativists just by virtue of writing about the politics of states (or, indeed, a single state) in Europe. As such, and without wishing to impose a common standard of comparison, we will insist that all authors are capable of defending the contribution their work makes to the existing literature *as comparative*. Once again the approach is one that seeks not universal standards of rigour, but rigour nonetheless — a rigour sensitive to theoretical and methodological diversity. We are also keen to encourage a focused discussion and on-going debate on the meaning of comparative analysis and the methodologies, particularly in a context of complex interdependence, appropriate for its practice and development.

All submitted work, whether solicited or unsolicited, will be rigorously peer-reviewed. *Comparative European Politics* will neither reflect nor represent any particular school or approach, nor will it restrict itself to particular methodologies or theoretical perspectives. Rather, while promoting inter-disciplinarity and a greater dialogue between the various sub-disciplines of

European political analysis, our aim is to publish the best and most original work in the field. It will publish substantial articles marking either core empirical developments, theoretical innovation or, preferably, both. The journal particularly encourages pieces that seek to develop the link between substantive empirical investigations and theoretical elaboration on the one hand and those which transcend the artificial separation of domestic, comparative and international analysis on the other. The journal will publish a limited number of debate pieces and review articles related to issues of contemporary theoretical and empirical controversy. We actively encourage contributors to respond to published articles, although we are keen to ensure that all pieces that we publish make a substantive contribution to the literature and can be read as stand-alone pieces. All review articles and contributions to debates will be exposed to the same exacting process of peer review.

Each manuscript will be reviewed anonymously by at least two, and in almost all cases three, referees. The executive editors will make the final decision on publication. The editors will not consider for publication articles that have already been published, have been committed elsewhere or are currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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