Introduction

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This open issue of the *Journal of European Integration History* provides us with no less than eight articles based on fresh historical and archival research, each addressing a different subject matter, and each having its own distinctive approach. The Journal issue offers a good illustration of the profusion of the present-day historical research agenda. It also shows us that many of the topics addressed here have strong interlinks with current developments in the European Union. To really understand today's problems in the EU – migration movements, Euroscepticism, regional diversity, citizenship, protectionism, etc. – it is indispensable to know where we come from, how we have arrived at where we stand now, and what can be distilled from past experiences when confronted with the questions we are facing.

The first contribution, by Guido Thiemeyer, focuses on the origins of European integration, which should be situated not in the early post-1945 era, as is generally done, but in the period running from the early 19th century to the mid-20th century. It was the Prussian philosopher/diplomat Wilhelm von Humboldt who, at the Vienna Congress of 1815, referred to a "Volonté Générale", which transcended the level of the national state in international relations. To promote navigation and commerce on the river Rhine a central international authority was needed to make decisions in the general interest of the national actors involved. Likewise, Thiemeyer argues that the idea of supranationality – including provisions for majoritarian decision-making and commonly accepted legal procedures – existed already in the 19th century, albeit under different names. Different from today is that 19th century manifestations of integration were limited to economic, commercial and infrastructural issues: European political unity was not on the agenda at that stage. This was the novelty of the 1950 Schuman Plan, which for the first time linked economic integration to a comprehensive political agenda.

Nicolas Verschueren, in the second article of this issue, looks at the housing policies of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in the 1950s and 1960s. At the time, the High Authority was the instigator of elaborate discussions on the ways how to reduce the costs of housing for workers and how to solve the housing shortage. Verschueren focuses in his contribution on various architectural designs provided by experts to solve the housing shortage for workers. The High Authority's reliance on external funding for these projects implied that the institution was not in the position to control the entire architectural process from the original design to the building site. Yet, it is surprising to see how an institutional body set up for the proper functioning of a common market for coal and steel became so heavily involved in debates on the social and economic implications of architecture and urban planning for the working class. Were high-rise tower projects to be preferred to working-class communities represented by the classical garden city? Ques-

tions like these were discussed extensively during meetings of the High Authority, thereby exceeding the frame of the latter's official competences.

The next article, by Claudia Hiepel, addresses the important topic of cross-border regional cooperation, focusing on experiences with the EUREGIO. Since the end of the 1950s, dismantling of borders as dividing lines between states, societies and economies was a major driving force for local and regional actors within the European Community to organize themselves. The idea was that joint spatial planning would help to remove the economic disadvantages resulting from a peripheral location at the outskirts of the national state. Recently, scholars have pointed to the emergence of a new form of "post-sovereign territoriality beyond the nation-state" for which the cross-border region serves as a telling example. In this respect, the EUREGIO is the most eye-catching development amongst other cross-border initiatives, because it has realized the strongest form of institutionalization and is based on a relatively small-scale geographic dimension and a stable legal position. Despite some administrative obstacles and the lack of supranational instruments, the EUREGIO has managed to gradually move ahead and to adopt a sound regional governance structure.

The border issue also plays a prominent role in the subsequent contribution, by Simone Paoli, who discusses the state of historiography with regard to migration issues in the European Community. His survey covers the period ranging from the origins of the free movement of workers in the ECSC (1950s) to the creation of the Schengen area in the 1980s. With the gradual abolition of internal border controls from the mid-1980s onwards, the EC became increasingly involved in managing external borders, which entailed cooperation in asylum and migration policies. Paoli shows how important migration movements over time have been for the wider development of European integration. Methodologically, he makes a plea for interdisciplinary research when studying migration: apart from historical-political and institutional factors attention needs to be given to economic, social, cultural and demographic dynamics, which requires collaboration with scholars from other disciplinary backgrounds. Lastly, Paoli holds that historical migration studies tend to be too Eurocentric. In his view future research should include the contributions and input by non-Community countries and other international organizations (than the EC).

The fifth article in this issue is written by Daniele Pasquinucci, who addresses the origins of Euroscepticism in Italy. Pasquinucci makes the argument that Euroscepticism is seen too often as a present-day phenomenon, neglecting its longer existing roots. After the war, Italy had the most powerful Communist party in the Western world (PCI) which was an early opponent of European integration (until its gradual conversion in the late 1960s). Moreover, the idea, widespread in today's Italy (particularly in a political party like the Northern League), that European integration is an instrument through which Germany pursues its hegemonic ambitions in Europe, dates back to the beginning of European integration. In the words of Pasquinucci, "Italian opposition to Europe is based to a considerable extent on a rejection of an 'external constraint' which can nudge the country into virtuous behaviour".

References to Euroscepticism also feature prominently in the next contribution, written by Anjo Harryvan and Jan van der Harst. In their *exposé* on the debate on European citizenship in the Netherlands, they argue that Dutch politicians' traditional reticence to involve themselves in the discussion on European citizenship should be partly explained by the current rise of Eurosceptic notions in the country. In such a climate an undisguisedly supranational topic like European citizenship is unlikely to appear high on the national Europe agenda. This reticence also has deeper historical roots. Dutch politicians generally are known for their pragmatic, "bread-and-butter" approach of European integration, focusing on economic and material benefits of the process. In their way of thinking, European citizenship is primarily an ideational concept – it lacks instant relevance for the here-and-now and is certainly not an issue for electoral gain.

Subsequently, Sigfrido Ramírez-Pérez deals with an entirely different subject matter: the role played by multinational corporations in European integration in the early 1960s. He thereby focuses on the input of the automobile industry and its wider implications for Europe. Ramírez-Pérez argues that although the common market was meant to put an end to trade obstacles between member countries, these obstacles did not entirely disappear. Within the EEC new forms of protectionism limited the impact of a successful abolition of internal quotas and tariffs. The Treaty of Rome was flexible enough to be used in a neo-protectionist manner and American pressures to change this remained largely unsuccessful. In such a climate, companies like Renault and FIAT enjoyed a nearly monopolistic position on their domestic markets, heavily supported by their national governments. The latter gave priority to building the welfare state with the help of boosting the position of state-owned companies ("national champions").

The eighth and final contribution comes from Lorenza Sebesta, dealing with the rationale behind "Italy's choice for Europe" in the early post-war period. Contrary to conventional wisdom (Romero, Ginsborg), Sebesta argues that the prospect of Italian participation in moves towards European integration (ECSC, EEC, etc.) was not driven by any conscious act of "national will". Italian governments were aware that their country's rhetoric of a classless and universal "nation-state" was tainted and they felt duty-bound to disentangle the fascist regime's single organic structure. Europe was a mosaic of different social, economic, and political components, each with its own, often contradictory, interests and attitudes. The European option forced Italian political leaders to come to terms with the need to reinterpret the classic "national interest" in the light of the new challenges of post-war democratization and modernization.

All taken together, the eight articles assembled in this issue are proof of the thematic and methodological richness of current research on European integration history. They also demonstrate the importance of the work that is invested in thoroughly studying and analysing the European past. In present times of debt crisis, migration problems, rising Euroscepticism and Brexit, it becomes all the more important to try

and understand the rationale behind early attempts at European integration – no matter whether they turned out to be successful or not.