

Johnny Laursen (ed.), The Institutions and Dynamics of the European Community, 1973–83, Baden-Baden (Nomos) 2013, 312 S. (Veröffentlichungen der Historiker-Verbindungsgruppe bei der Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, 14), ISBN 978-3-8329-6963-9, EUR 82,00.

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In the political and historical exploration of the European integration, the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s has long been considered a lost decade between the bright dynamics of the founding period and the relaunch of the Delors-Mitterrand-Kohl era. With reference to the crisis of the Common Agricultural Policy, the blockade by the British budgetary question, the crippling decision-making process as well as the European economic malaise descriptions such as »Eurosclerosis«¹, »dark ages«² or »deadlock«³ prevailed. New research, however, breaks up these one-sided interpretations and focuses on the progress of integration policy in this period, which would have laid the foundations for the third *relance européenne* from the mid-1980s⁴.

The anthology to be considered here is the result of the 13th conference of the European Union Liaison Committee of Historians in Århus from 11–12 December 2010 and confirms this research line. Through »a new look based on fresh archival research«, the book seeks to contribute to a multi-dimensional reinterpretation of the years from 1973 to 1983. Furthermore, by drawing on approaches and methods of political and social science research, it meets the demand for an analytical-methodological enhancement of European integration historiography. The eleven profound contributions by twelve leading international experts are based primarily on the meticulous analysis of specialist literature, their own preliminary studies, and partly the analysis of newly available archival material. The rather heterogeneous contributions are loosely connected by the main topic, there is no categorisation based on specific questions. Nevertheless, they can be arranged according to certain criteria:

The contributions of Johnny Laursen, Anne Deighton, Wolfram Kaiser and Piers Ludlow focus primarily on conceptual-methodological

¹ Herbert Giersch, Eurosclerosis, in: Kieler Diskussionsbeiträge 112, Kiel 1985.

² Robert O. Keohane, Stanley Hoffmann, Institutional Change in Europe in the 1980s, in: idem (ed.), The New European Community. Decisionmaking and Institutional Change, Boulder 1991, p. 1–39, here p. 9.

³ N. Piers Ludlow, From Deadlock to Dynamism. The European Community in the 1980s, in: Desmond Dinan (ed.), Origins and Evolution of the European Union, Oxford 2006, p. 218–232.

⁴ See e. g. Claudia Hiepel (ed.), Europe in a Globalising World. Global Challenges and European Responses in the »long« 1970s, Baden-Baden 2014; Franz Knipping, Matthias Schönwald (ed.), Aufbruch zum Europa der zweiten Generation. Die europäische Einigung 1969–1984, Trier 2004; Laurent Warlouzet, Governing Europe in a Globalizing World. Neoliberalism and its Alternatives following the 1973 Oil Crisis, London, New York 2018.



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considerations. In his introductory essay Laursen vividly outlines the central questions as well as the conceptual-methodological framework of the anthology. He calls for a departure from the teleological view of European unification as an «epic, gradual and irreversible process towards ever closer union» and advocates an interpretation as »unitary, long term phenomenon« (p. 14). At the same time, he highlights the importance of European and global contexts of European unification. The well informed author embeds the time frame from 1973 to 1983 into the longer lines of European integration history while defining it as a significant transitional period regarding important institutional developments such as the founding of the European Monetary System or the European Council, which would have laid the foundation for the subsequent milestones of the Internal Market and European Monetary Union.

Deighton calls for a closer look at the importance of the Cold War for the development of European integration and recommends softening the boundaries towards research in transnational history and political science. Taking up these considerations, Ludlow addresses the methodological and empirical challenges of a stronger link between the history of the Cold War and European integration history while naming concrete research desiderata. Kaiser focuses on transnational networks and explores the methodological opportunities of the transnational extension of historiography in the field, in particular by abandoning the dominance of state-centred approaches and contributing to a general European history. In future research, the influence of both globalisation and social, non-state actors should be examined more closely to better meet the complexity of integration processes.

From different perspectives, Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol and Guido Thiemeyer analyse the genesis of the European Monetary System (EMS). In his very inspiring essay, Mourlon-Druol dissects the longer-term EMS lines since 1973 by examining the influence of non-state actors. Contrary to previous research, according to the author, the establishing of the EMS was not solely due to the fixed idea of the »three big men« Helmut Schmidt, Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing and Roy Jenkins. Rather he highlights as decisive factors the transnational learning and confidence-building processes of an increasingly interconnected currency elite, the creation of the European Council in 1974 as well as non-material interests.

By contrast, Thiemeyer follows a more traditional approach focussing on the political actors Schmidt, Giscard and Jenkins. He attributes the establishment of the EMS to the unwillingness of the United States to assume responsibility for currency stability in Western Europe after the fall of the Bretton Woods system. Moreover, he outlines the importance of the D-Mark's monetary dominance, which France sought to break through the EMS, and the political willingness of Schmidt to push the project forward with Giscard, primarily by setting up the German stability model.

Three further contributions are devoted to institutional developments. Ann-Christina Knudsen, using prosopographical datasets, examines political careers of British MEPs from 1973 to 1979. She points out, quite surprisingly, that the European Parliament enjoyed a good reputation in British parties at that time and that the parties were therefore willing to send politicians with managerial potential to the EC. In contrast, Bill Davies and Morten Rasmussen are dedicated to the long neglected field of the history of European legal integration. They deliver an important contribution to a »re-telling of the history of the EU's legal evolution« (p.



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100) while also working out its significance for political-economic integration. Jan-Hendrik Meyer analyses the path to a common EC environmental policy by means of two case studies. His thoughts on the benefits of using the sociological concept of *agenda-setting* for European integration history are stimulating.

The important topic of external perceptions of the EC by non-EC member states is addressed by Antonio Varsori and Michael Gehler. Varsori vividly investigates the long-term political and economic background of the Greek accession negotiations based on a multi-perspective approach. Gehler uses a biographical access including the example of the Austrian Bruno Kreisky to analyse influence and attraction of the Community on non-EC states.

One may criticise the low degree of coherence of the anthology, the selective choice of topics or the lack of Eastern European perspectives. But altogether, the volume, due to its variety of topics, fully lives up to its twofold goal: by opening up to non-state perspectives and European and global contexts, it contributes to a multi-layered interpretation of EC development during the years 1973 to 1983 and provides new stimulating insights; at the same time, the consistently and carefully researched contributions, due to their high degree of methodological reflection and their willingness to integrate interdisciplinary methods, meet the requirements of a modern history of European integration. This volume is another step of the discipline on the way out of its much-cited isolation.



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