

Introduction

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Introduction

Treaties and laws constitute the formal fundaments of European integration. Yet, informal activities on the European intergovernmental, supranational and transnational stage have often been a necessary precondition for concerted action leading to binding agreements and political change. National delegations met not only at official fora when drafting new Community treaties or negotiating legal texts, but made decisive bargains in informal settings. Members of supranational institutions, such as the European Court of Justice, the European Parliament (EP) and, more recently, the European Central Bank, went far beyond the framework of tasks and responsibilities initially provided for them, and thus shaped their own role as well as European politics and policies decisively. Interest groups aimed to exert influence on decision makers by way of informal strategies ranging from argumentative persuasion to political pressure. In the European sphere beyond EC/EU institutions, integration was equally framed and influenced in informal arenas and through informal action, both by actors who had an official political or administrative role, and by actors who were not formally expected to get involved in the creation of policies, networks or projects bringing European states closer together. Among them, groups of intellectuals discussed future scenarios of a united Europe.¹ Media, railroad companies and cultural organisations, amongst others, sought cross-border cooperation.² Churches aimed for a stronger coordinated involvement in European politics, and encouraged exchange, acts of solidarity and support among European countries.³

In the course of European integration, very different reasons induced actors to establish informal contacts or procedures. Not only soaring ambitions of governments, institutions or individuals caused the deviation from officially outlined paths and procedures: in the construction of a united Europe, events such as crises, catastrophes and conflicts opened up or pointed out voids in the evolving trans- and supranational structures. Hence, those concerned with finding European-level solutions had at times little choice but to seek new, effective, though not (yet) provided ways to answer needs for action. In many cases, these new ways served those pursuing them to strengthen their own institution in the

long term, although regularly leading to conflicts with other actors and vested interests.

Informal dimensions within European integration have as yet received limited academic attention despite their historical and contemporary importance. The historiography on European integration was for a long time characterised by a focus on national interests, national actors and their official archives, as well as the analysis of European institutions merely with regard to what the Treaties provided. That has resulted in the informal dimensions of European integration remaining, to a significant extent, understudied and ill-understood. Despite the rising interest in 'informal governance' in the EU from a political science perspective and recent new approaches in the historical research on European integration, such as network analysis and Europeanisation, informality has thus far rarely been a central topic of historical research on European integration. This edited volume intends to show how informality has impacted European integration history and the functioning of the EC/EU as well as other European organisations in a variety of ways. It contains case studies that discuss both successful and failed examples of informal action. A focus on informality not only allows scholars to better understand the functioning and development of the European institutions and bodies. Informality can also be used as a way to study the many interactions between actors on the European, national and regional level, civil society and the wide variety of forms and fora of international cooperation by putting the research on European integration in a stronger global historical context.

This introductory chapter sets out to offer a conceptualising frame for the analysis of informality in European integration. It begins with a brief overview of existing literature on the issue and critically discusses various concepts that scholars have used to study informal processes and dimensions in European integration. This chapter then develops its own definition of informality in the European context, and offers a range of criteria that can serve as a guide for the study of informality in European integration history. The concept of informality presented here incorporates existing concepts but goes beyond, not least in that it calls for an interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse approach, which can – and should indeed – nevertheless build upon a common understanding of informality in European integration. Following the conceptualising part, this chapter discusses one of the main challenges scholars face when studying informal processes and dimensions, namely the acquisition and analysis of a sufficient source basis. The chapter closes with an overview of the contributions to this edited volume.

Literature overview

The informal dimensions of European integration in general and policy-making in particular were for a long time neglected by historians and political scientists studying European integration. Keith Middlemas (1995) was the first historian to analytically apply the concept of 'informal politics' in order to explain the development and functioning of the EC/EU from the 1970s onwards. Notably, he used

informality as a methodological tool to take into account “all the significant players” within European integration.⁴ Historians before him had not coherently approached the informal dimensions of European integration. Although they labelled certain practices, networks or procedures informal, such informal dimensions were not conceptualised or used as a starting or focal point to explain the historical development of European integration. As a consequence, no coherent definition or methodological framework was developed by historians to study informality. A partial explanation of the lack of scholarly attention up to the 1990s may be the difficulty scientists had in defining and grasping ‘informality’. As Middlemas noted, social scientists “often reduce it to formal abstractions”, while “historians tend to avoid it altogether for a lack of proper documentation”.⁵

Around the same time as Middlemas’ first work on informal European politics, EU scholars in political science began to include informal dimensions of politics and governance in their research. Crucial for the rising interest in informal political practices were the ‘government turn’,⁶ the ‘practice turn’ and the emergence of the new institutionalisms in the 1990s.⁷ Scholars from political science have developed a number of definitions of informal governance/informal institutions⁸ and have designed a range of typologies and systems of categorisation. The most influential ones are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 by Roos and Neuhold. Beyond their respective underlying theoretical approaches, they differ notably with regard to the emphasis on certain characteristics, tasks and consequences of informality. Those scholars who have so far attempted to conceptualise informal governance or informal institutions, rules and procedures, have focused on the non-binding nature of informality, the issue of (restricted) membership, possibilities to enforce resulting agreements and to sanction non-compliance amongst others. Perceptions of informality in EU decision-making vary from negative, seen as lacking legitimacy, transparency, accountability and reliability, to neutral and even positive, with regard to broader participation and increased efficiency.⁹

When it comes to the study of European integration beyond the 2000s and beyond EU institutions, however, the existing models and definitions of informality used in political science reveal significant limitations. First and foremost, most of them focus solely on the EU context, and within that almost exclusively on legislative and decision-making procedures. Accordingly, the actors that have been the focus of analysis are notably the European Council, the Commission and the European Parliament, as well as lobbyists and the member states/governments. Little attention has been dedicated to smaller bodies and agencies, and practically none to societal actors who are neither interest representatives nor affiliated to one of the above-mentioned institutions.

A second significant weakness of existing political science studies on informality in the EU context is their limited temporal horizon. The claims that are made with regard to informal practices may be helpful to categorise and explain contemporary practices, yet many models do not stand the test of time. If applied to historical cases from European integration, several of the generalising assumptions cannot be upheld. A notable example is the criterion that a lack of transparency

supposedly defines informal practices¹⁰ – which does, for example, not apply to the almost entirely informal strategies of the European Parliament to get involved in policy-making prior to the Single European Act (SEA). In order to increase their institution's parliamentary powers and their position amongst the other Community institutions, Members of the EP (MEPs) aimed explicitly for a high level of outreach and visibility when adopting resolutions and reports, and when asking parliamentary questions. Despite looking like the formal behaviour of a parliament, the EP's actions were indeed informal, given the very limited tasks and rights that the Treaties had provided for the European Parliament.¹¹ Another example is the active involvement of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in international committees and organisations in which the ECA “helps write and promote international audit norms, even establishing itself in areas such as performance audit in the vanguard of international audit practice”.¹² With this self-initiative and very visible engagement, the ECA goes considerably beyond its main formal task: to audit EU budgetary spending.

Third, while much political science literature identifies an increase of informality in EU governance in recent years,¹³ it largely bypasses the fact that earlier stages of European integration were in need of far-reaching informal practices of their own. A number of crises and unforeseen developments such as several mine accidents in the 1950s killing hundreds of migrant workers, the 1970s economic and financial crisis or the accelerating process of technological development from the late 1960s onwards demanded swift action for which no Treaty or agreement provided clear formal solutions. In addition, the early Treaties left much space for individual activism by supranational, national and regional actors eager to define their own role and establish a powerful position in European-level decision-making. Such activism often took place in informal arenas, and consisted of uncodified and self-initiated behaviour. It can be traced within and beyond EU institutions over the entire timespan of European integration.¹⁴ Moreover, the negotiation and implementation of Community and EU Treaties were greatly facilitated by informal networks and off-the-record talks of leading politicians, diplomats and experts. Such informal networks were often crucial for creating a solid foundation for formal integration processes, through “the creation of shared perceptions and aspirations, trust-building, and elite socialization”.¹⁵ Informal networks furthermore functioned as “alternative spaces for policymaking and policy planning”.¹⁶

Even though the political science literature on informality in the EU is far from comprehensive, it is considerably richer than the historical research on the matter. As stated above, historians have to a large extent avoided conceptualising the study of informality within European integration history until more recently. Inspired by various political science approaches, historical research on the European Union has only over the last decade increasingly used new methodologies to study previously underexplored themes and topics within European integration history. The network approach, sometimes combined with the political science concept of ‘governance’,¹⁷ is one of the most prominent among these methodologies. It has enabled scholars such as Kaiser, Leucht and Rasmussen to

explore “the informal politics of integration”.¹⁸ One central aim of such research is to move away from the older historiographical focus on treaty negotiations and official state-actors, and to bring “people and ideas” back into the historical research on European integration.¹⁹ Furthermore, the formal and informal roles played by European politicians and diplomats in European integration processes are being explored, such as the transnational and transatlantic network of Jean Monnet, the role of European party networks, and the existence of various informal expert networks.²⁰ Also the informal dimensions of policy-making in specific policy fields have recently received scholarly attention.²¹ Such studies provide a welcome broadening of the earlier historiography on European integration.²²

Nonetheless, as the historian Thomas Gijswijt argues, “a serious effort” still needs to be made to “uncover the work of informal actors and networks” in the process of European integration.²³ Despite the above-mentioned studies touching upon the matter, informality as such has up to this point rarely been a focus of historical research in its own right. Whereas the more recent historiography on European integration has indeed started to broaden its research focus by including a variety of hitherto understudied actors, its focus has by and large remained on the development of the core EC/EU institutions and policies. Yet, a focus on informality not only allows scholars to better understand the functioning and development of European institutions and bodies. A conceptualised approach to informality can also be used to study the many interactions between the European level, national or regional actors, and civil society. The focus on informality allows scholars to furthermore study the interactions between European integration in the narrower sense and other forms and fora of international cooperation, as various contributions to this edited volume demonstrate.

This edited volume shows how informality has impacted European integration history and the functioning of the EC/EU as well as other European organisations in a variety of ways. The contributions, first drafts of which were presented at the 2017 conference of the History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS), address the limitations of the existing literature and offer alternative and more widely applicable approaches to analyse informal processes. One crucial point the contributions to this volume make is that informality as a whole cannot be comprehensively understood and meaningfully studied by merely applying one theoretical framework. While applying different theoretical approaches, the contributions demonstrate one common feature: the study of informality in the European integration process inevitably requires a temporal component. As the chapters of this volume show, informal procedures did often not persist for more than a few years, being then either formalised, adapted to new needs, replaced by more efficient (formal or informal) procedures, or having become obsolete and being hence abolished without substitution. Since informal processes rarely remain the same over a longer period of time, the historical context is crucial to understand their origin, development and possible institutionalisation.

Defining informality

The first step of approaching informality – before any methodology can be applied – is to get an understanding of what actually defines informality. As pointed out above, that is rather complex. Indeed, in the attempt to delimit informality from formality, a definition may first seek to explain what an informal procedure, action or actor is *not*. First and foremost, it is not regulated by treaties, legislation or any other form of binding agreement. In other words, the informal is usually non-binding. Yet, informality cannot generally be defined as a sphere without rules or conventions. Particularly at the European level, informality is not without its rules, which are set by the participants of a particular sphere, forming an institution, body, or network. Entry into or continued ‘membership’ of an informal sphere is often only possible when following these informally set rules and conventions. Furthermore, a sphere of informal activities is not necessarily ‘invisible’ to the general public, although that may be preferred by some actors. Similarly, formal activities can take place behind closed doors, and at times be entirely hidden from the public eye.

The rather broad scope of these possible characteristics of informality shows that it is not always easy to establish a clear dividing line between formal and informal. Political scientists, such as Jeffrey Stacey, have tried to categorise the various levels of informality and formality in EU politics and policies, many of which contain informal as well as formal aspects.²⁴ Moreover, many formal institutions have an informal sphere, particularly institutions at the EU level. Such spheres are often a necessity for effective intra- and inter-institutional work. They go beyond what treaties provide, since treaties usually constitute compromises, often implying only lowest-common-denominator rules. Moreover, treaties regulate the status quo in which they are adopted, and may hence become insufficient and outdated in case of (unexpected) events and developments inducing change. That frequently leaves actors on the European stage no other choice but to resort to informal procedures if they want to efficiently and sufficiently solve topical issues. If the created informal rules turn out to be efficient, they may be repeated, institutionalised and eventually formalised, which can be traced in a number of cases in European integration history. Striking examples can be found in the institutional evolution of the European Parliament: its budgetary and legislative powers as well as its power of initiative are based largely on activist behaviour by the early MEPs that went far beyond what the founding Treaties of the European Communities provided.²⁵ While MEPs connected their action to EC Treaty paragraphs, they repeatedly attempted to interpret them in the broadest possible manner, in order to justify their – strictly seen – informal activism. In other words: MEPs needed the established rule system provided by the Treaties in order to be efficient in their informal activities.

This example shows that informality within the EU cannot be studied separately from formal rules. The political scientist Michael Brie and the sociologist Erhard Stölting have emphasised that “[i]n real life, formal and informal processes of decision-making are one. But they must be held apart analytically”.²⁶

While it is arguably neither helpful nor indeed possible to analyse them fully apart from each other, scholars should aim to distinguish informal and formal elements of the issue under consideration. As a possible research guideline, this introductory chapter proposes a number of points to be addressed when studying informality.

Categories of informality

A view into the existing literature shows that many different aspects of European integration have been labelled 'informal', ranging from networks and actors to activism and institutional procedures. Yet, what makes such categories 'informal' is not always the same for every historical circumstance, let alone for the entirety of these categories. Informal networks, for instance, have been considered informal because of the lack of any legal or institutional base, or because the contacts within such a network were informal, meaning off-the-record discussions behind closed doors that allowed for a free exchange of ideas. The above-mentioned informal procedures that the EP, on the other hand, used to improve its own position vis-a-vis other EC/EU institutions were 'informal' because the procedures were not explicated in the Treaties that the EP itself was based upon, yet they were not invisible to the public. Moreover, whereas an informal network could, for instance, allow participants to pitch ideas in a non-committal manner, the EP's informal strategies to gain power were greatly politically motivated and had a very specific target.

These two examples show that, as a starting point, research on informality must clarify what kind of informality is studied and what actually makes a particular actor, procedure, network and so on informal. That may sound very obvious, possibly even superfluous. However, a view into existing literature that conceptualises the study of informality in European integration reveals that general claims on the nature, effects and limitations of informal practices and procedures are often made based on a limited area of investigation.²⁷ If the established theoretical models and definitions are applied to different categories of informality, they swiftly reveal their weaknesses. It is hence important to be aware of the different categories of informality and their characteristics that have appeared throughout the process of European integration. This edited volume does not wish to propose a comprehensive list of categories of informality in European integration. In fact, it might be impossible to present such a list since the integration process has produced very different categories of informality over time, depending on the respective intra-European and global circumstances, and can be expected to continue to do so in the future. That would make any list incomplete in the long term.

In order to structure the contributions to this edited volume, the chapters are sorted according to three categories of informality: in the first category, three contributions look at informally developed and defended *ideas*. Second, three authors analyse the informal role played by different *actors* in otherwise codified settings. Third, three chapters examine specific *procedures* that became

important for the functioning and success of diplomacy, policies and institutions in the EEC, the EU and the Western European Union (WEU). Measuring informality based on ideas, actors and procedures – or indeed other categories, such as frameworks/arenas and outcomes, as proposed by Christiansen and Neuhold²⁸ – may prove helpful for the setup of an adequate research agenda, based on theoretical and methodological approaches developed for the study of similar categories in formal settings. For instance, the study of ideas can be based on ideational, sociological and constructivist approaches, or can be driven by new concepts such as emotives. Actors' informal behaviour may be analysed amongst others through network, institutionalist, principal-agent or intergovernmentalist approaches. Procedures can be studied based on a variety of approaches, such as governance (notably multi-level and informal governance), neofunctionalism, supranationalism, game theory, legal or normative approaches.

Causes of informality

In order to understand the evolution of informal processes, it is essential to take into consideration their respective causes. Understanding the relation of an informal process to its connected formal framework (elaborated below) may deliver a considerable part of the answer to the question of the underlying causes. Informality may come into existence for “accidental, pragmatic, intentional, interest-driven or ideological” reasons.²⁹ At times, there may also occur a combination of these; particularly if several actors are involved who differ, for instance, in terms of powers, access to resources, preferences and ideologies. The causes of a specific case of informality can, however, never be comprehensively outlined with a focus on the involved actors alone. As the contributions to this edited volume show, it is crucial to take into consideration the contemporary situation both within and beyond Europe, and thus to look at the respective global historical context.

Aims of informality

The aims of a specific form of informality should not be confused with its causes. Underlying aims may very likely constitute a part of the cause, if these aims induce actors to adapt their behaviour. However, they should be analysed in their own right in order to understand their impact on the eventually evolving form and outcome of informality. The analysis of aims furthermore allows the scholar to determine whether or not a specific form of informality was or is successful in the eyes of different actors. Moreover, the study of aims can offer some answers to normative questions, such as: what motivation(s) drove actors to pursue a certain informal action? Does the outcome match the ambition? Do ‘honourable’ aims, for instance for more democratisation or transparency, indeed result in the intended effects? Do possibly also less ‘honourable’ aims lead at times to an increase of accountability and legitimacy?

Relation of informality to a formal framework

In addition to clarifying the kind, causes and aims of informality, it is crucial to outline the relation of the studied form of informality to a respective formal framework. As Brie and Stölting argue, “the empirical analysis of informal structures has to take into account formal rules as external conditions of individual actions”.³⁰ It is hence important to situate informality in a formal context, and show the interdependence of both. Informality can emerge:

- *before* a formal process: if an exchange, cooperation or agreement is planned, but no adequate formal framework exists yet, actors will meet in informal spheres and create their own informal rules and fora in order to set up the intended and needed formal structures, and to prepare agreements;
- *alongside* a formal process: if a formal process is not efficient enough, does not lead to the intended outcome, or if some actors have the impression they cannot achieve all their aims via formal channels, informal processes may be initiated that complement, accommodate, substitute or compete with a formal process;³¹
- *after* a formal process: if a formal process has been installed, but fails to deliver what it was expected to attain, or cannot cope with events and developments following its setup (which were usually not anticipated by the creators of the formal process), informal action may attempt to replace or correct the inefficient or insufficient formal process;
- *beyond* any formal framework: not all informal action in the history of European integration has been directly related to an existing, intended or past formal process. Informal networks discussed the future of Europe without a concrete idea of swift implementation, or without any formal institutional basis. People travelled from one member state to another and experienced European integration through exchanges with locals in an entirely informal way (even though it evidently required formal processes to open borders and create European transport networks – showing once more that informality cannot be studied without an eye on parallel, preceding and following formal processes). Such levels of informality in European integration deserve to be studied as well as political, legal and economic procedures.

Scale of informality

As mentioned above, Stacey has attempted to categorise various levels of informality and formality in EU politics and policies.³² This introductory chapter does not wish to present a scale to measure where informality starts or where formality ends, since it considers that there is no scale that would fit all the numerous forms of informality in European integration in the past, present and future. This chapter does, however, call for a critical reflection of the extent of formal and informal elements in any examination of informality. Informal action is rarely entirely informal: actors have formal roles that may influence the

informal action for instance through experiences, access to resources, or limitations to the actor's behaviour. Informal processes may be embedded in a formal framework that shapes them to some extent. Furthermore, when looking at informality from a historical point of view, informal processes may become formalised over time – which can happen in a very swift procedure, for instance of institutionalisation, but which can also take years of repetition and transformation. Equally, formal procedures at a European level often contain an informal dimension, emerging for instance in the process of their creation or their adjustment to changing circumstances, as discussed above. In order to reach a better understanding of how both formal and informal processes come into being, persist or change, disappear and interact, it is crucial to examine their individual scale of (in)formality.

How to trace and prove the informal

Studying the informal dimensions of European integration poses a range of specific challenges to scholars, notably with regard to the source basis of the analysis. Such research may imply accepting softer evidence, lowering the otherwise common standards of proof based on 'hard' evidence, studying a greater number and variety of sources, and arguing based on assumptions that may be impossible to prove with absolute certainty, although the connection of sources may suggest that a certain assumption makes sense. Yet, that does not necessarily weaken the analysis. Indeed, any scholar of European integration processes – be they formal or informal – faces the challenge of demonstrating causal links and offering proof in the analysis of a multi-level and complex European context. Yet, there are differences in approaching formal and informal processes. Importantly, the study of informality may demand a higher level of creativity in the acquisition of source material, as many informal dimensions of European integration produce no publicly accessible records or traces in official documentation. In this regard, Gijswijt recommends to look beyond state and EU archives, and to consult archives of NGOs, trade unions and parties. Some members of institutions and networks also kept private archives that may contain valuable source material, such as private correspondences, diaries, or other forms of autobiographical material.³³ A crucial source of information are furthermore interviews, even though they usually offer – just like diaries – biased and incomplete insights. The European integration scholar Desmond Dinan, for instance, argues that “contemporary, confidential records of meetings and conversations generally hold the key to figuring out why the main players acted as they did”.³⁴ Consequently, interviews and other forms of autobiographical material are highly valuable in uncovering procedures that happened outside of formal and visible spheres. They can provide new perspectives on and an extra contextualisation of formal events as well as the sources that portray them. Moreover, oral history research, starting with the seminal work *The voice of the past: Oral history*³⁵ by Paul Thompson, has over the last decades been able to address the doubts raised about the subjectivity of oral sources. The growing corpus of literature on oral

history also provides methodological frameworks to guide researchers away from potential pitfalls.³⁶ In this volume, the chapters of Avril and Schade show the importance of interviews for uncovering informal dimensions of European integration that failed to leave a clear footprint in the standard archival sources of states and EC/EU institutions, on which historians as well as political scientists in the field largely rely.³⁷

It has been emphasised above, however, that not all informality happened behind closed doors and in hidden spaces. Particularly at the European level, informal action often took place out in the open, be it, for instance, because some actors intended their informal action to become formalised over time and hence preferred it to be visible, or because those conducting informal activities felt no need to hide since there was no noteworthy European 'audience' who would have sanctioned informality. These cases of open informality can to some extent be studied based on resulting official documents, many of which can indeed be found in state and EU archives. The informal activism of European institutions, for example, appears very openly in publicly available documents such as decisions, recommendations or resolutions. The scholar merely needs to put these documents next to the respective treaties stipulating the institutions' powers, and then examine the evolution of the institutions' behaviour and the success of its activism, for instance via growing, unchanging or decreasing influence over time.

This edited volume addresses the source-related difficulties in studying informality both from a theoretical and an empirical point of view. Through its case studies and its more theoretical chapters, the book aims to show that even limited source material can constitute a sufficient basis for in-depth studies of informality (see, for instance, the chapter by Schade). Moreover, some chapters provide insights into cases in which informal action was far from invisible, but was instead known at least to inter-institutional circles, partly even the public (see, for instance, Lehman, Shehu, and Avril). The book brings together scholars from history, political science and international relations, who base their analyses on source collections ranging from official documents to internal files and interviews. In order to be able to present reliable results, the authors in this edited volume apply a variety of methodological tools, coming amongst others from institutional and legal history, social network studies, the concept of emotives, and informal governance. Through the variety of approaches and topics that are covered, this edited volume aims to provide a better understanding of the importance of informality in the history of European integration over the last 70 years.

Structure and contents of the edited volume

This edited volume approaches informal processes in European integration from different thematic angles. First and foremost, the contributions in this volume are not limited to the EC/EU. This book understands European integration as more than merely the history of what is today the European Union. It thus joins

the increasing trend not to strictly separate EU history from the history of other European and international organisations, or from intergovernmental, multi- and bilateral and even national events and developments that had a significant impact on European countries and actors. Various chapters in this volume situate the EC/EU within a broader historical context. The contributions use the concept of informality as outlined above in order to widen the research on European integration and explore the (global) context in which it took place. Such research highlights the many connections to other forms and fora of international cooperation, and thereby allow – in the words of the historian Kiran Klaus Patel – to “provincialise” the EU.³⁸

Moreover, the contributions to the edited volume are not limited to political decision makers, but also cover other groups of actors with an impact on European integration, notably lawyers (Avril), industrial stakeholders (Venditti), representatives from the higher education sector (Lehmann), NGOs (Zamburlini), and Protestant intellectuals (Steehouder and Van den Berg). Such actors tried to influence the development of European integration, policies and institutions by using informal strategies ranging from argumentative persuasion to political pressure. The respective contributions complement those chapters that look at informality in decision-making procedures and preceding negotiations (e.g. Shehu and Schade), which show that also in processes for which a formal structure exists, actors may choose additional informal action – such as vote-trading and informal agreements – in order to reach their aims.

This introduction is followed by two general chapters which provide a frame not only for the other contributions to this volume, but for any study on informality in European integration. More particularly, the chapter by Roos and Neuhold discusses the existing landscape of methodological and theoretical approaches from which informality has been analysed, notably in the area of political science, and provides a research guide for future studies. In a historical overview, Ludlow’s chapter then identifies a range of key moments in the development of the EC/EU in which the notion of ‘informality’ may help to understand and assess processes in European integration.

This introductory part to the study of informality is followed by nine case studies, which are divided in three thematic parts. As briefly discussed above, the editors decided to sort the contributions according to categories of examined informality. The first three case studies analyse specific *ideas* of (further) integration in Europe, which were discussed in elite circles not belonging to the institutions and bodies of the EC/EU. The chapter by Jorrit Steehouder and Clemens van den Berg analyses the *Freiburger Bonhoeffer-Kreis*’ 1943 memorandum on a political common order based on Christian ethics as a ‘blueprint’ for Europe, serving as a basis for discussion at the 1948 Amsterdam Conference, where the World Council of Churches was established. Lars Lehmann studies in his chapter the role played by university rectors and vice-chancellors in the controversial debates around the idea of a European supranational university in the 1950s and early 1960s. Lennaert van Heumen discusses transatlantic debates on the future relation between European integration and the Atlantic Community

during the late 1940s and 1950s, with a focus on the understudied idea of Atlantic Union as an alternative for European integration during the early Cold War period.

The second triad of case studies brings together three chapters on specific *actors* who became informally involved in specific developments of European integration. Carlos López Gómez examines the informal attempts of the European Union of Federalists to establish a section in Spain, with the aim to get involved in the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy and, eventually, Spain's accession to the European Community. Ilaria Zamburlini's chapter discusses the impact of three NGOs – namely the Anti-Slavery Society, the European Movement and Amnesty International – on the evolution of the EC's foreign-aid and human-rights policies during the 1970s. Andi Shehu analyses in his chapter the institutionalisation of the first G7 summits in the second half of the same decade.

The three case studies in the third part analyse informal *procedures* through which actors on the European stage attempted to promote certain policy areas. Lola Avril studies the – initially informal, though gradually formalised – practices competition lawyers developed in Brussels during the 1960s to 1980s, turning themselves into brokers between the EU administration and private companies. Sara Venditti's chapter sheds light on the as yet understudied role of the Western European Union's aerospace cooperation in European integration, and more specifically on the repeated attempts to establish a common European defence policy. In the final case study, Daniel Schade outlines the difficult construction of formal and informal policy coordination frameworks in the EU's emerging foreign policy over the last decade, with a focus on EU relations to Latin American countries.

The concluding chapter by Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol situates the contributions to this volume in the broader context of existing literature, and argues that whereas much scholarly work already touches upon informal processes in European integration, a more conscious, explicit and systematic approach to the study of such processes is required. Together, the chapters in this volume cover the entire period from the end of the Second World War until today. Researching informal dimensions of the EU's institutions, and situating such dimensions in existing knowledge on European integration processes is still considered “one of the major challenges” both within political science and history, and is “perhaps the most important area where further work needs to be undertaken” in the field.³⁹ This edited volume contributes to the theoretical, methodological and empirical understanding of the role that informality played in the construction of a united Europe since the 1940s. It aims to offer a variety of innovative insights and approaches, as well as inspiration to future scholars of informality in the European integration process.

Notes

- 1 See amongst others the chapter by Steehouder and Van den Berg in this edited volume, and also the extensive literature on intellectuals and the European idea, such as Hewitson and D'Auria: *Europe in Crisis*; Conze: *Das Europa der Deutschen*.

- 2 See amongst others Badenoch *et al.*: *Airy Curtains*; Badenoch and Fickers: *Materializing Europe*; Ambrosius *et al.*: *Standardisierung und Integration europäischer Verkehrsinfrastruktur*.
- 3 See amongst others Byrnes and Katzenstein: *Religion in an Expanding Europe*; Barnett: *A Theology for Europe*; Madeley: 'E unum pluribus'.
- 4 Middlemas: *Orchestrating Europe*, xiv.
- 5 *Ibid.*, xix.
- 6 Paterson *et al.*: 'Hastening Slowly', 407. See also Koch-Kohler and Rittberger: 'The "Governance Turn" in EU Studies' for an overview of research inspired by the governance turn.
- 7 Kleine: *Informal Governance*; Van Tatenhove *et al.*: 'The Inter-play between Formal and Informal Practices'; Christiansen and Neuhold: 'Informal Politics in the EU'.
- 8 Institutions being understood as sets of rules, as defined by North: *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*.
- 9 See Chapter 2 by Roos and Neuhold.
- 10 A number of works emphasising the lack of transparency in informal governance is discussed by Christiansen and Neuhold: 'Informal Politics in the EU', 1202.
- 11 Roos: 'Far Beyond the Treaties' Clauses'.
- 12 Stephenson: 'Norms, Legitimacy and Institutional Independence', 1145.
- 13 See amongst others Peters: 'Forms of Informality'; Farrell and Héritier: 'Formal and Informal Institutions under Codecision'; Reh *et al.*: 'The Informal Politics of Legislation'.
- 14 A number of case studies can be found in the Special Issue 'Pushing the Boundaries. New Research on the Activism of EU Supranational Institutions', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 13, 2 (2017).
- 15 Gijswijt: 'Informal Governance and the Rome Treaties', 413.
- 16 Weisbrode: *The Atlantic Century*, 168.
- 17 On the combination of network analysis and governance from a political science perspective, see for instance Börzel and Heard-Lauréote: 'Networks in EU Multi-level Governance'. From a historical perspective, see for instance Gehler *et al.*: 'Networks in Informal European Governance'.
- 18 Kaiser: 'Transnational Networks in European Governance'.
- 19 Kaiser: 'Bringing People and Ideas Back in'.
- 20 On the transatlantic network of Jean Monnet, see for instance Chira-Pascanut: 'Discreet Players'. Kaiser's 2007 monograph *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* provides a good example of the importance of European party networks in European integration history. For a study on the importance of expert networks, see for instance Cohen: 'Constitutionalism without Constitution'.
- 21 See for example Meyer: 'Green Activism'.
- 22 For more examples, see Chapter 13 by Murlon-Druol, in which he discusses a variety of studies that analyse informal dimensions of European integration history.
- 23 Gijswijt: 'Informal Governance and the Rome Treaties', 427.
- 24 Stacey: *Integrating Europe*.
- 25 Roos: 'Far Beyond the Treaties' Clauses'.
- 26 Brie and Stöltig: 'Formal Institutions and Informal Institutional Arrangements'.
- 27 A noteworthy exception is Reh: 'Informal Politics'. Reh points out that she only looks at a limited area of informal politics, namely within EU decision-making processes.
- 28 Christiansen and Neuhold propose a distinction between three separate usages of informality: the framework or arena, the process or procedure, and the classification of the outcome of informal policy-making. See Christiansen and Neuhold: 'Informal Politics in the EU', 1197.
- 29 Van Tatenhove *et al.*: 'The Inter-Play between Formal and Informal Practices', 15.
- 30 Brie and Stöltig: 'Formal Institutions and Informal Institutional Arrangements', 27.
- 31 Helmke and Levitsky: 'Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics', 728ff.

- 32 Stacey: *Integrating Europe*.
- 33 Gijswijt: 'Informal Governance and the Rome Treaties', 426ff.
- 34 Dinan: *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, 5.
- 35 Thompson: *The Voice of the Past*.
- 36 See for instance Perks and Thomson: *The Oral History Reader*; Janesick: *Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher*; Kurkowska-Budzan and Zamorski: *Oral History*. For an overview of recent important developments in oral history, see Thomson: 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History'.
- 37 Interviews are more often used as a source to uncover more contemporary informal dimensions of the EU, and in particular its relationships with a variety of social actors. See for instance Shapovalova: 'The Power of Informality'.
- 38 Patel: 'Provincialising European Union'.
- 39 Nugent and Paterson, 'The European Union's Institutions', 76.

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