Transnational Practices Governing European Integration: Executive Autonomy and Neo-Corporatist Concertation in the Steel Sector

Many men have claimed their share in the formation of Western European integration after

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1945 as a kind of civilisational breakthrough towards supranational government in the 'common interest of all' – words used by Jean Monnet, the first President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) founded in 1951-2. One of these men was Tony Rollman from Luxembourg. After the Second World War he represented his country on international steel committees before becoming Director of the Steel Division in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. and then Director for Steel in the ECSC's Market Division when the High Authority started its work in 1952. ² Rollman has remembered his role in Western European integration as that of a federalist political entrepreneur.³ In the early 1950s, however, he was actually highly sceptical of a 'supranational' let alone federalist set-up for the steel sector. When the ECSC's institutional provisions were first discussed in informal networks in the summer of 1950, he instead proposed a Steel Board as a neo-corporatist institution with close cooperation among governments, industry and labour for running the sector. ⁴ Having worked for the secretariat of the International Steel Cartel during 1935-6, Rollman's preferences were strongly shaped by his experience of close industry cooperation before and during the Second World War. In August 1953, Max Kohnstamm, Secretary of the High Authority and himself an ardent federalist, advised Monnet: 'The difficulty with Rollman, to take an example ... is that at the end of the day he does not believe in the possibility of a revolution in the European economy. ... He is afraid of these enticing prophecies which he considers disconnected from reality.'5 Despite the initial scepticism of Rollman and others, our understanding of the origins of the

ECSC as a precursor to the present-day European Union (EU) remains strongly influenced by

the accounts of activists like Monnet.⁶ It has also been co-shaped by the EU's own narratives about integration as a decisive break with a European past of national conflict and war.⁷ The claims to the ECSC's 'revolutionary' character mainly rest on two innovations in the Paris Treaty. The first concerns the creation of a 'supranational' executive institution, the High Authority, with independent decision-making powers; the second Articles 65 and 66, which were influenced by transatlantic networks and appeared to herald a new liberal competition policy inspired by the US anti-trust tradition.⁸

These institutional innovations did have long-term impact on the evolution of the present-day EU. The predominant legal-institutional perspective on the origins of the ECSC has tended to conceal strong continuities in governing the (Western) European steel sector from the First World War through to the 1950s and beyond, however. As the case of Rollman illustrates, the end of the Second World War clearly did not mark a 'zero hour'. Recent historical literature has highlighted continuities in steel business networks across the Second World War. It has also brought out the strong Franco-German bilateralism in the ECSC Council and in the High Authority. In contrast, this article explores the very strong continuities in administrative and business communities and their governance *practices*, or ways of doing things, which persisted in the ECSC despite the innovations in its legal-institutional set-up. As the introduction to this special issue also shows, such continuities in practices as well as ideas and institutions have shaped the contemporary history of what is now the EU and can help us understand key features of its current crisis.

Two elements of these governance practices in the steel sector stand out. The first concerns the struggle for executive autonomy, which was deeply embedded in the technocratic internationalist tradition and institutional experience before the Second World War. This article discusses the particular pre-war experience in the Allied Maritime Transport Council and the League of Nations, of Monnet as an example of an influential political entrepreneur in

the formation of the ECSC.¹² Crucially, Monnet did not have a clear institutional, let alone federalist, vision. Rather, he sought to limit government and industry influence over the sector's European governance mainly drawing on the notion of 'supranationalism' to strengthen the High Authority's claims to executive autonomy.

The second element concerns close transnational industry cooperation. Steel was crucial for national industrialisation, warfare and reconstruction with limited integration of companies and markets across borders. It was also highly sensitive to the general business cycle and very capital-intensive, resulting in a strong collective preference for stable conditions for trade and investment. From the 1880s onwards steel companies sought to foster such stability through the formation of transnational cartels culminating in the interwar European and International Steel Cartels. Raw material interdependence including French interest in German coal and German dependence on French iron ore from the Lorraine region constituted an additional incentive for industry cooperation. In the ECSC, despite the industry's initial scepticism about Monnet's intentions, 4 officials in the High Authority and national governments close to the industry and its representatives in the Consultative Committee continued cartel and neocorporatist concertation practices.

Drawing on fresh research in national and international organisation archives, the article's first two sections traces the genealogy of both governance practices until 1945. The third section analyses continuities into the post-war Western European governance of the steel sector and how the two practices clashed, became amalgamated and impacted on the ECSC and Western European integration more generally, with strong repercussions for the evolution of the present-day EU.

Executive Decision-Making in War and Peace

When the ECSC was founded in 1951-52, several factors shaped its origins. They included national experiences like Monnet's with the limits of his nationally focussed modernization plan, ¹⁵ and international influences, especially the institutional and economic policy preferences of the United States government and private American actors. ¹⁶ Technocratic internationalism had long since created a long-term trajectory for transnational practices, however, which shaped the thinking and actions of many key actors. In the case of Monnet, his work during the First World War and in the League of Nations between 1919 and 1923 was particularly important for informing his thinking about international cooperation, especially the need to control diplomats and their antagonistic definition of national 'interests' as inimical to effective executive cooperation and decision-making.

In September 1914, when the German army was threatening Paris, the young Monnet sent a memorandum to the French Prime Minister René Viviani to suggest the creation of a joint Franco-British organisation for the supply of their troops. ¹⁷ Viviani subsequently delegated Monnet to London to represent France on the newly established Inter-Allied Supplies Commission. From 1915 Monnet worked closely with the new French trade minister Etienne Clémentel. Supported by specialist experts and staff from the French embassy, he represented his country on various Allied executives formed by France and Britain. Their intensified bilateral cooperation, which soon included Italy, began with the creation of the Wheat Executive in 1916, which was eventually merged with other such executives in the Allied Food Council in 1918. Crucially, it also extended to the Allied Maritime Transport Council (AMTC) founded in London in December 1917. Its role was to coordinate the allocation of Allied shipping tonnage. Monnet was the French representative on its executive committee, together with Arthur Salter for the United Kingdom, Bernardo Attolico for Italy and George Rublee for the United States, although American involvement remained limited until the end of the war. ¹⁸

Monnet's experience in London during the First World War had major repercussions for his thinking about European cooperation. First of all, he concluded that times of crisis or war required new innovative forms of cooperation among people and countries. Such cooperation was best achieved by de-politicizing issues, taking them out of the public domain with its intense media attention, and leaving them to unelected individuals able to develop a common approach based on a rational analysis of the problem at hand. Working closely with the French trade minister during the talks and negotiations that eventually resulted in the creation of the AMTC, Monnet accepted as unavoidable the supervision by a ministerial council as the formal decision-making body. His hope was, however, that this Council would rubber-stamp proposals by an executive committee (jokingly called, in the year of the Russian Revolution, the 'Shipping Commissariat') run by unelected individuals like himself and Salter.

Crucially, this set-up transformed the foreign ministries and embassies in London into mere relays for safe information exchange with the capitals. Monnet's objective was never a particular institutional form ('supranational' or otherwise), however, but to achieve the highest possible degree of autonomy for effective informal and 'rational' cooperation.

Reflecting on Allied collaboration during the First World War in a BBC interview televised in 1971, he recollected that the French trade minister always thought 'in terms of a document, of a finished product. I didn't think in terms of a finished product because there is no such thing.' 19

Characteristically, in a memorandum for the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 Monnet highlighted the need for a set-up for the future League of Nations which would allow the analysis of an issue 'in its entirety' and not based on the 'immediate interests' of states and governments.²⁰ Monnet's preference for de-politicizing issues to facilitate their 'rational' analysis and solution also informed his subsequent work as deputy secretary general of the League of Nations between 1919 and 1923 when he resigned to save his father's Cognac

business. Thus, in 1921 he proposed to Eric Drummond, secretary general of the League of Nations between 1919 and 1933, to delegate intricate and highly contested territorial issues like the future of the Saar region or of Danzig to technical commissions with sufficient independence to propose and implement solutions. Unlike Monnet, however, Drummond strongly believed that the governments in the Council had to take direct responsibility for these issues and mediate between the countries concerned.²¹ The work of the League's various technical committees was more in line with Monnet's notion of cooperation. Their activities remained overshadowed by the sharp national conflicts over highly politicised economic, financial and foreign policy concerns, however.²²

Although he disagreed with Clémentel's strong emphasis on the need for formalisation and institutionalisation, Monnet largely shared the French trade minister's preference for new forms of economic policy and planning as a second lesson learned from his First World War experience. ²³ Clémentel fought hard to overcome the resistance of private business interests against greater state intervention and the imposition at their expense of a state cartel for purchasing goods relevant for the war effort – something that the British and French governments were effectively engaged in from 1916 onwards. The war effort induced new forms of domestic state intervention and planning as well as Allied cooperation. Monnet favoured such (in the French political context) 'radical socialist' solutions. He also sought at the time of the ceasefire in 1918 to ensure that French policy would not revert directly to the pre-war liberal political economy and that Allied cooperation would continue. ²⁴ Monnet later supported Clémentel in his proposal to the Paris Peace Conference for a new European economic order. This order would have allowed the continuation of at least some of the wartime governance institutions and practices, but it was rejected by the Allied governments in April 1919. ²⁵

Allied cooperation during the First World War was fraught with difficulties from the start, however – an experience that made Monnet more determined to seek greater autonomy and independence for executive governance in the future. To begin with, the French and British governments entered into the more intensified cooperation only under the extreme pressure of external shocks. Thus, they only formed the Wheat Executive after a disastrous harvest in 1916. In 1917 cooperation in maritime transport became particularly urgent due to the renewed unlimited submarine warfare declared by the German Reich on 31 January. The resulting severe Allied net loss of shipping tonnage required, or so Clémentel and Monnet argued, the pooling of merchant fleets and integrated distribution of tonnage geared towards the joint war effort. In other words, the stalemate on the Western front was not enough to induce closer cooperation, but only the imminent threat of losing the war.

Even when intensified cooperation was agreed in the AMTC and the Food and Munitions Councils, however, it was still overshadowed by strong bureaucratic and national rivalries, which severely complicated the work of Monnet and his colleagues. To begin with, the British could rely on their huge Empire and merchant fleet for the provision of goods. As a result they were in a much stronger bargaining position than the French. In line with British public opinion, the British government was reluctant to concede equality to France in any bilateral cooperation. Thus, whereas Salter demanded the broadening of Allied cooperation to cover more commodities and John Maynard Keynes argued for a 'tightening up' of the existing institutional set-up, John Beale, the British chairman of the Wheat Executive, 'urged that the control of these Executives or committees should be placed and kept in British hands in London'. Moreover, ministerial and bureaucratic rivalries inside both governments also complicated cooperation. Having just returned to government as Minister without a Portfolio, Austen Chamberlain noted, for example, that concerning the Meats and Fats Executive 'I find

friction with the War Office, some controversy with the Board of Trade, and a total absence of that willing acceptance of the decisions by the Allies'.²⁸

Both governments also played diplomatic games over their respective demands for the allocation of food and tonnage, which made it hard for Monnet and his collaborators to identify what might conceivably be in the 'common interest of all' – defined as decisions geared towards winning and shortening the war. The British government prioritised food supplies to industrial workers, which were kept at pre-war levels, as it feared more strikes and ultimately, socialist revolution.²⁹ The French government was more concerned with the morale of its soldiers, the possibility of large-scale mutinies and the collapse of the Western Front.³⁰

Based on these priorities, both government bureaucracies produced competing figures of their food and transport needs. Equipped with detailed statistics, Clémentel and Monnet highlighted the dwindling French resources and declared AMTC-type cooperation essential in the summer and autumn of 1917 for securing 'resistance and victory' in the war.³¹ The British doubted whether these statistics – especially when produced for bilateral meetings at short notice – would stand up to closer scrutiny by their ministries and the Allied executives. As one British official put it, 'If I myself were a member of the Maritime Transport Council and [the French Armaments Minister Louis] Loucheur came in with a pocketful of figures, none of which I had seen before, I would refuse to consider them In any case, it is probable that the French figures are swollen.'³²

In fact, the British government doubted the French figures to the point of making detailed enquiries via its consulates in March 1918 about the prevailing living conditions in France. They stated that meat was 'positively abundant' and 'no shortage of butter' could be found anywhere. 'All restrictive measures adopted in France', the Food Controller's report concluded, 'are rendered to a great extent inoperative by the lax manner in which they are

administered, and by the universal collaboration of those affected to evade [them]'. 33

Administrative incompetence and corruption also hampered efficient cooperation. Thus, the British Ministry of Shipping complained to Clémentel in August 1918 that the French system of requisition and control 'does not appear to secure in every case that the vessels are wholly devoted' to the import programme. The British government would therefore begin resuming control once more of British chartered vessels. 34

Despite all of these cumbersome difficulties, cooperating with other nationals in the Shipping Commissariat was a unique experience for Monnet. It showed him both the opportunities and limits of executive governance as constrained by the formally more intergovernmental institutional set-up and governments aggressively pursuing national 'interests'. During the ten years he spent in the US from the mid-1930s onwards, moreover, he observed with great interest New Deal policies. Following the work of newly established executive agencies like the Tennessee Valley Authority founded in 1933 reinforced his own earlier experiences. ³⁵ His exposure to New Deal policies also explains why he reacted favourably when Paul Reuter suggested the English term 'Authority' for use in the Schuman Plan. ³⁶ During the Second World War his role was once more transnational when he assisted the British government with its armaments procurement in the US and advised US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which in turn allowed him to build even closer transatlantic networks.

The preferences of Monnet as a generalist decision-maker for autonomous executive governance in European cooperation were not unique, however. Instead, they were embedded in a strong tradition of technocratic internationalism which had its roots in the nineteenth century. This tradition created a crucial trajectory into the Western Europe of the 1950s.

Monnet's cooperation preferences and practices had already characterised much of the work of transnational voluntary and international organisations in the nineteenth century.

Intellectually, it had many sources including Saint-Simonism which appealed to many experts from engineers to political economists with specialist knowledge within France and beyond.³⁸ Experts who worked in and for organisations like the International Telegraph Union and the Universal Postal Union, for example, largely shared three key assumptions about how best to tackle such transnational issues. First and foremost, informed by the growth of technology and science and the experience of industrialisation and its social consequences, they advocated scientifically informed policy-making by themselves within agreed parameters of evolving knowledge about the issues at stake. Secondly, these experts also believed – like Monnet in London during the First World War – that de-politicising issues through rational deliberation in committees would allow consensual agreement on optimal policy solutions. In their view diplomats were trained to treat international negotiations as zero sum games in which one state gains at the expense of another. In contrast, they were working towards what Monnet called the 'common interest'. Consequently, experts working at international level including in the steel sector, where they often had a mixed technology and business background, regarded diplomats as adversaries in international relations. As a result, they – thirdly – sought to create the greatest possible space for policy deliberation and decision-making for themselves and to limit the influence of foreign ministries – a notion that was to become influential in post-war Western European integration starting with the ECSC.

Transnational Cartels for Progress and Peace

The well-established transnational cartel practices constitute the second element that helps explain continuities in the European governance of the steel sector across the two world wars. The cartel practices favoured informal over formalized cooperation and sought to maximize industry influence and minimize what companies regarded as interference by governments.

As reflected in the initial scepticism of steel companies towards the Schuman Plan, this tradition sat uneasily with Monnet's attempt to build a new kind of formal institution with the High Authority with strong legal powers, but both were connected through the shared belief in autonomy and rational decision-making by experts.

Tthe steel industry had actually started the European habit of cooperation in transnational cartels when companies first formed a rails cartel in 1884 in response to the rapid slow-down in the expansion of the European railway network since the 1870s. By the time of the First World War, some 100 transnational cartels were operating in various economic sectors in Europe. Some were geared towards preventing competition in domestic markets while others also divided up export markets and set sales prices.

In inter-war Europe the steel sector continued to spear-head the movement towards greater transnational cartelisation. Advocates of cartels increasingly sought to legitimise them as more than just economic policy tools for avoiding what they called 'wasteful competition'. Thus, Salter, Monnet's close collaborator in the AMTC, who headed the League's Economic and Financial Section from 1920 to 1931, argued in a 1932 book that cartels 'cut across national frontiers and help to eliminate them as factors in the world's economic life and competitive struggle. They thus create interests and forces which will tend to counteract the competitive nationalism which is the world's chief danger.'40 Moreover, cartels could draw upon informal international machineries with small secretariats usually linked to company headquarters, which also, like cooperation in expert committees, avoided intrusion by diplomats.

The political rationalisation of transnational cartels as forces for peace also influenced the cartel debate in the League of Nations during the 1927 World Economic Conference (WEC) and its aftermath.⁴¹ The 194 delegates who participated in the conference comprised politicians and civil servants. In addition, transnational organisations like the International

Chamber of Commerce (ICC) founded in 1919, trade unions and consumer organisations sent another 157 experts. In preparing the conference, Daniel Serruys, the French chairman of the League's Economic Committee, clarified early on that the 'limits of competition' and industrial agreements would feature as topics for discussion alongside tariffs. ⁴² The German Clemens Lammers, who already headed the ICC's cartel committee, coordinated several reports for the WEC, which collected international information about legal and economic aspects of cartels. ⁴³

The main conflict line in the WEC's Industrial Committee separated representatives of private companies and business associations, who were broadly supportive of cartels, and experts from the International Labour Organisation, trade unions and consumer groups, who highlighted their dangers and demanded some form of national or international regulation.

After controversial discussions even the most ardent cartel advocates nevertheless supported Lammers' proposal for a compromise resolution. It refused to take sides in the debate and argued that cartels could be 'good or bad' depending on their intentions. They had potential for a more rational organisation of companies, which could create stable conditions for industrial research, investments and production. This in turn could also foster stability for employment in the interest of workers. At the same time, the resolution drew on socialist arguments in warning that cartels could also strengthen 'monopolistic tendencies', keep prices unnaturally high, and prevent technical progress.⁴⁴

Salter coordinated the League's subsequent work on cartels. He argued that the prevalent US preference for strong competition rules to protect consumers and small businesses had very limited support in continental Europe, where the cartel movement was becoming ever more influential. In fact, when three legal reports on international cartels commissioned by the League Secretariat recommended international regulation of some kind or another, Lammers and business interests strongly lobbied for a much more positive League stance on cartels.

Lammers coordinated four economic expert reports during 1930 which were strongly supportive of cartels. One of them was written by the Luxembourger Aloyse Meyer, who as successor of Emile Mayrisch as director of the Luxembourg steel company ARBED, had become president of the International Steel Cartel (ISC) in 1928. Building on these reports, Lammers prepared a general report that recommended cartels as fostering technical progress and the rationalisation of industry. Instead of focusing on price competition, companies could improve product quality, which would be good for consumers. These arguments gained ground in the wider debate about cartels during the world economic crisis after 1929. They also fed into the deliberations of the Study Commission for European Union in 1931, which the League had established following the 1929 Briand Plan.

The claim that transnational cartels could even foster international understanding and peace actually appeared to be borne out by the ISC. Its formation was largely motivated by the economic fallout from Luxembourg's exit from the German customs union prescribed by the Versailles Treaty. The ISC was initiated by the German steel magnate Fritz Thyssen and Mayrisch, 48 who also worked towards Franco-German reconciliation in the Franco-German Information and Documentation Committee (or Mayrisch Committee) set up in 1926. 49 In this case, transnational business and European political cooperation appeared to go hand in hand. After Hitler had usurped power in Germany in 1933, moreover, the British government even hoped (in vain) that cartels could moderate the foreign policy ambitions of Nazi Germany.

At the more practical level of managing coal and steel markets, an entire generation of decision-makers in the industry like Rollman became socialised into transnational cartels as the appropriate approach to governing the sector. Crucially, in Germany their commitment persisted after the National Socialist usurpation of power in 1933. Moreover, in Western Europe it also survived the Second World War when close cooperation continued during the occupation of France, Luxembourg and Belgium. Thus, when the Nazi-controlled state-owned

Reichswerke Hermann Göring tried to take control of ARBED, Hermann Josef Abs from the Deutsche Bank, who had close links with Ruhr magnates, bought shares to protect the Luxembourg firm. The so-called Kleine Kreis of Ruhr steel firms denounced nationalist ambitions regarding Alsace-Lorraine for the time of the war. The German trustees, who managed French foundries during the occupation of Alsace-Lorraine cultivated traditional relationships, which paid off after 1945 when local entrepreneurs and managers testified to their anti-Nazi credentials during the 'denazification' process. During the war, traditional business links, friendships and family ties buttressed networks and established patterns of cooperation. By the end of the war 'conflicts of interest, management breakdowns and different national loyalties' had not undermined 'the tradition of co-operation ... in the West European heavy industry. As a conflict of take the process of the tradition of co-operation ... in the West

Technocratic internationalism in the European Coal and Steel Community

Steel was a crucial commodity for the reconstruction of industry and infrastructures in (Western) Europe after 1945. All international organisations created steel committees to address issues such as the efficient allocation of scrap to increase overall output. ⁵⁴ The sector expanded so much, however, that it might have faced a first overproduction crisis had it not been for the massive increase in demand as a result of the start of the Korean War in 1950. The sector's basic organisation remained largely unchanged from before the war. It was characterised by predominantly regional and national markets due to high transport costs; national concentration and vertical integration with coal production, especially in Western Germany; and transnational cartel cooperation. Technological innovations came in the form of costly new process technologies, especially oxygen steel-making and continuous casting, which played an important role in Monnet's post-war modernization plan for the French

economy.⁵⁵ After the end of the reconstruction boom in Western Europe, however, the steel industry entered a protracted structural crisis in 1974.⁵⁶

After 1945 Monnet's preference for executive autonomy and the industry's practice of cartel cooperation fitted well with two strong trends: the shift towards a greater role for the state and state institutions in providing welfare for citizens – both nationally and transnationally, as in the case of the ECSC – and formal or informal neo-corporatist coordination among state institutions, businesses and trade unions. These trends enhanced the impact of the two genealogies of executive autonomy and cartel practices on the ECSC.

As President of the Schuman Plan Conference, Monnet claimed that 'three essential points' would transform Western Europe. One of them was what he now called the 'supranational' character of the future Community.⁵⁷ Even at this point, however, Monnet conceived of 'supranational' integration primarily as the common practice of overcoming national viewpoints and preferences in favour of the 'common interest'. In a meeting of the ECSC Consultative Committee in April 1953, for example, he explained that the member state governments in the Council naturally represented and aggregated 'national interests'. In contrast, the High Authority would defend what it thought was in the European interest. Actually, Monnet told the members of the Consultative Committee, which had no decision-making functions at all, that it, too, was a 'supranational' institution. As a result, the institution should strictly avoid drawing on the support of biased experts from national companies, associations and trade unions for their deliberations. Such consultation already entailed the danger of mixing 'the interests of the Community and those of individual social groups'.⁵⁸

Monnet justified his chaotic working methods at the helm of the High Authority with the need to 'teach my staff to think along European instead of national lines'.⁵⁹ In February 1953 he claimed that he would only need four months for this task. Then 'a basic transformation of

European life and history will have been effected'. 60 Many High Authority officials like Rollman disagreed at least with aspects of Monnet's grand vision. Yet they mostly shared his preference and that of technocratic internationalism more generally, for direct communication and cooperation between the High Authority as an international executive institution and national ministries. In the inter-war period the League of Nations had de facto tolerated such contacts, although the League Secretariat formally had to go through the national foreign ministries. Now, in the case of the ECSC and later in the EEC, policy-making contacts as a rule were between the High Authority and the Commission and the responsible national ministries, with the foreign ministries retaining more of a supervisory role. Moreover, the High Authority had direct contacts with the steel producing and consuming industries and the trade unions through the national ministries, directly and in the Consultative Committee – a neo-corporatist set-up formally only of a consultative nature, that Monnet had already favoured for the League of Nations, not least to balance industry interests. 61

Thus, Monnet's and the High Authority's ambitions for the steel sector were broadly in line with well-established technocratic internationalist ideas and practices. Ultimately, however, Monnet did not succeed in controlling the influence of the steel producing industry. Despite the apparent US-influenced anti-trust thrust of the ECSC treaty (esp. in Article 65), the cartel tradition persisted and strongly influenced the organisation's governance practices after 1953. Unlike Salter, Monnet viewed cartels critically. He managed to avoid the appointment of obvious industry lobbyists as members of the High Authority. Heavy industry influence at national level was more pervasive, however. For a long time, for example, the ruling German Christian Democratic Union largely depended on it for its party funding.⁶²

In addition to the national route of lobbying, the steel industry secured transnational influence on ECSC policy-making in two crucial ways. First, it largely controlled the hiring of industry experts for key High Authority departments, especially the Market Division, where Rollman

had a congenial collaborator in the Director for Coal, the German Hermann Dehnen, who had worked for the domestic German coal cartel from 1933 to 1945 and had continued his career in the German coal industry after the war.⁶³ Industry concertation was also very close in the Consultative Committee. Although it had mixed membership including representatives from the trade unions and steel-consuming industries, the steel industry delegates had closer networks, enjoyed longer mandates and were able to dominate the institution.

The committee had consultative rights on paper only. In reality, relations not only between national governments, but also the High Authority and steel producing interests were very close including at the level of leading officials who regularly attended the monthly meetings of the Consultative Committee. When he took part in meetings of the Consultative Committee Monnet regularly highlighted that its members were appointed in a personal capacity; that they should never adopt a 'national viewpoint'; that the High Authority was interested in their 'knowledge and ideas'; and that as a result, they should not bother with internal regulations or voting procedures, but keep their work and cooperation with High Authority officials as informal as possible.⁶⁴

Contrary to Monnet's preferences, however, the Consultative Committee quickly began to involve experts from companies, national associations, and trade unions. It also adopted elaborate internal regulations and voting procedures and practices. Moreover, the High Authority's links with business interests were so close that it effectively delegated some decision-making to the Consultative Committee. This concerned, for example, the allocation of ECSC co-funding for research. For a long time this funding was not distributed as a result of a competitive process, but more or less proportionately to national projects of member states, associations and companies. 65

The cartel tradition, therefore, became embedded in the ECSC governance patterns through the High Authority's staff policy, with hiring of industry experts effectively controlled by coalescing national governments and industry associations; and through industry influence via the national route and the Consultative Committee. Far from implementing a more forceful competition policy, the High Authority actually fostered the re-concentration of the German and European steel industry. ⁶⁶ By 1958 the High Authority had dealt with 104 cases, 46 from Germany, and it prohibited not one of the proposed mergers and acquisitions. ⁶⁷ In fact, the High Authority argued, as transnational cartels had done before, that these concentrations were healthy because they facilitated rationalisation and modernisation. ⁶⁸ The institution's economic growth ideology of achieving productivity gains through concerted action in practice actually required close collaboration with the industry which Monnet had initially sought to avoid.

The High Authority also made no effort to stamp out the cartel tradition more thoroughly. In 1953, the first year of the ECSC's existence, the steel producers immediately formed a transnational export cartel that agreed prices for the export of steel to third markets like Sweden. When the High Authority got wind of this arrangement, Monnet announced that it would have to check its compatibility with the treaty, only to conclude that it did not seem to rule out such export cartels.⁶⁹

From the 1960s onwards, ordo-liberal notions of competition gained ground in the European Economic Community created in 1957-8 where they were far less opposed in more internationalised and export-oriented sectors. In contrast, the High Authority actually tolerated a domestic ECSC steel cartel in 1966, which was obviously illegal under the treaty. Just after the 'empty chair' crisis, when the French government had boycotted Council of Ministers meetings for six months, the political atmosphere in the EEC was so heated that the High Authority did not dare to draw on its own powers to address the problems of the steel industry, which at that stage still seemed to be of a cyclical nature only. When the severe steel crisis started in 1974, the European Commission eventually took recourse to Article 58

and enforced production quotas and imposed import restrictions. Both of these were well-established cartel practices only now imposed by the Community's executive institution. These measures were agreed in a neo-corporatist negotiation system now dominated by the even greater collusion of government and company interests after most member states had nationalised individual steel companies or, as in the case of the United Kingdom in 1967, the entire sector. It was only in 1981 that the Community, as part of a larger informal package deal, finally began to tackle the issue of state aid, starting a tedious restructuring process which took well into the 1990s.

Conclusion

Narratives of post-war European integration as 'supranational' institution building leading to 'ever closer union' as stipulated in the EEC treaty have deliberately created the notion of a decisive break with the past – a notion taken for granted in much of the historiography which has focused on the 'courte durée' of post-war integration.⁷² This article has argued that such talk about 'supranational' European government and governance should be taken for what it actually was: a fairly systematic and quite successful way of talking about Western European cooperation after two world wars geared towards achieving results in the future. After his experience in the AMTC during the First World War Monnet cannot really have believed that he would single-handedly ensure that the High Authority's members and officials would focus on the 'general interest' (whatever this may have been) after only four months of working with him. The 'supranational' narrative's relative consistency nevertheless had the power to promote a particular institutional identity and pride that only the High Authority and the European Commission were able to act in the 'European' interest as opposed to national

or sector interests – a rhetorical strategy that the Commission continued to use to legitimise its role in the institutionally integrated EC after 1967.

Some ECSC features had potential for long-term impact by way of strengthening the present-day EU's economic and legal integration especially the creation of a customs union and the abolition of dual pricing as well as the institutionalisation of the High Authority and the Court. Many older governance patterns persisted across the wars, however. The article has shown that Monnet's 'supranational' narrative has masked strong continuities. Some of Monnet's aides in the French administration may have recommended related features such as executive autonomy and neo-corporatist concertation as part of their 'communitarian' ideas developed in Vichy France, as Antonin Cohen argues in his article in this special issue. More importantly, the experience with technocratic internationalist governing practices of various kinds actually reached back much longer.

The steel sector had no track-record of its *international* (inter-state) organisation as in the League of Nations, for example, so that learning from past practice of such organisations was not an option after 1945. The predominant mechanism that secured continuity in the steel sector nonetheless was personal experience. Many officials in ECSC integration had their own experience (or drew on that of others) with technocratic governance in steel, in other sectors or in different institutional contexts as in the case of Monnet and the AMTC. The preferences of steel policy-makers like Rollman and Dehnen were also shaped by what they regarded as by and large successful cooperation in the *transnational* (inter-industry) setting of cartels, which they took as the almost natural state of the sector's organisation. Many officials in the High Authority and members of the Consultative Committee had worked for transnational or national cartels or had been involved indirectly as company managers or representatives of business associations.

These trajectories largely explain the continuity in two crucial dimensions of technocratic internationalism: the search for autonomy for an executive institution freed from 'national interests' and sector interests and able to identify and agree solutions in the 'general interest'; and the governance of markets by transnational cartels in largely informal networks. Both traditions formed an uneasy relationship in the ECSC and shaped the emerging hybrid practices in the new formal institutional setting. Monnet and others succeeded in fostering a strong technocratic ethos in the High Authority, which was copied by, and also transferred to, the European Commission. They were entirely focused on an efficient policy-making process and its results, which would gain legitimacy almost automatically by being in the 'general interest'. It turned out however that the actors who dominated ECSC policy-making contrary to Monnet's intentions remained closely associated with industry interests in the tradition of transnational cartel cooperation.

Notions of 'supranational' government by the High Authority as a contemporary variant of the Shipping Commissariat also proved illusory. Technocratic internationalists sought optimal policy solutions through rational deliberation and consensual decision-making. In the ECSC, however, consensus was usually the outcome of a strong Franco-German bilateralism, which characterised the work not just of the Council of Ministers, but also of the High Authority itself, at the political and official levels. On paper the High Authority was more powerful than the European Commission. In reality the neo-corporatist negotiation structures in the sector massively limited its room for independent decision-making. Even the severe steel crisis after 1974 did not create the same pressures for 'supranational' technocratic action as the military near collapse of France in 1917, which greatly facilitated the creation of the AMTC and the Shipping Commissariat's de facto decision-making role.

Crucially, however, technocratic internationalists made progress with the formation of the ECSC and the EEC in marginalizing foreign ministries in decision-making processes. The

creation of the EEC's General Affairs Council with oversight functions and of the specialist councils for policy areas allowed the High Authority and then the European Commission to establish direct working contacts with national ministries with specialised knowledge. The slow evolution of the Community's external relations of course brought foreign ministries and diplomats back in. Moreover, blockages in the Council led to the creation of the European Council which sought to re-establish political oversight at the highest level of heads of State and government.

Finally, the two dimensions of technocratic internationalism also strongly influenced the spatial scope of Western European integration after 1945, with long-term consequences for the present-day EU and 'latecomers'. Most importantly, any enthusiasm for executive autonomy and neo-corporatist concertation remained much more limited in the United Kingdom than in continental Western Europe. Already during the First World War the British government made it abundantly clear that decision-making by somewhat autonomous institutions like the Shipping Commissariat would be limited to the duration of the war; and while British companies acceded to the inter-war ISC, political enthusiasm for cartels remained more limited in Britain. From this perspective, too, the formation of the ECSC and the EEC around France and Germany followed a strong inter-war trajectory.

The closer look at continuities in administrative and business communities and their working practices across the world wars shows, then, that the ECSC's governance practices were at best 'supranational' in Monnet's general definition of transnational collaboration in the search of some kind of European approach to addressing policy challenges. It was not 'supranational' in the sense of hierarchical decision-making by the High Authority as a new truly autonomous executive institution – one reason alongside lack of support from the French government for Monnet's resignation from the High Authority in 1955. The ECSC's governance practices also had strong neo-corporatist traits. The High Authority in fact worked

closely with industry to the point where it even tolerated the blatantly illegal domestic ECSC cartel in 1966.

From a pluralist democratic perspective, finally, Monnet's vision had a pronounced antidemocratic streak. 'Rational' analysis and decision-making by unelected individuals in a formally autonomous institution may or may not produce good legislation and regulation (or 'output') with resulting increases in the welfare and happiness of citizens. Crucially, however, Monnet's approach created a technocratic trajectory that made it more difficult to enhance the democratic quality (or 'input') of the European Community's decision-making process when concerns about its institutional structure and legitimacy grew in the 1970s.

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¹ See e.g. 'Jean Monnet, father of Europe'. Film (12 min) including interview with Jean Monnet, available at http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I000321 (last visited 6 December 2017).

² See also Josef Brandt, 'Der Stahleuropäer Tony Rollman', in Charles Barthel and Josée Kirps, eds., *Terres rouges. Histoire de la sidérurgie luxembourgeoise*, vol. 2 (Luxembourg: Centre d'études et de recherches européennes, 2010), 10-34.

³ Delphine Kiefer, *Tony Rollman* (Dudelange: Centre national de l'audiovisuel, n.d.).

⁴ Schuman Authority. Proposed action on the Schuman Plan, no date, ARR 14/1360, Box 67, Folder 1/3/3, United Nations Office Geneva Archives.

⁵ Max Kohnstamm to Jean Monnet, AMH 6/4/14, Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe Lausanne.

⁶ Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 1976). Biographical accounts of Monnet include Klaus Schwabe, *Jean Monnet, Frankreich, die Deutschen und die Einigung Europas* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016), Sherill Brown Wells, *Jean Monnet. Unconventional Statesman* (Boulder/Col.: Lynne Rienner, 2011), Frederic J. Fransen, *The Supranational Politics of Jean*

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⁷ On the EU's own narrative see especially the European Parliament's attempt at putting the history of Europe and of European integration into a dedicated museum: Wolfram Kaiser, Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History Project, *Journal of Common Market Studies* vol. 55, no. 3 (2017), 518-534.. ⁸ See Brigitte Leucht, 'Transatlantic Policy Networks in the Creation of the First European Anti-Trust Law: Mediating Between American Anti-trust and German Ordo-liberalism', in Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht and Morten Rasmussen, eds., *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Polity 1950-72* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 56-73. On the creation of the ECSC see also Dirk Spierenburg and Raymond Poidevin, *The History of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community: Supranationality in Operation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994), co-authored by a former member of the High Authority.

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