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The European Logistics Space: On Jean Monnet and the Integration of Europe

O Espaço Logístico Europeu: Jean Monnet e a Integração Europeia

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate a different genealogical line of European integration. Through a partial use of the biography of Jean Monnet, I aim to expand the temporal borders of the path often outlined by European integration history, taking advantage of an analytical tool that is rarely used in this context: logistics. On the one hand, I propose to make the Schuman Declaration resonant with a broader "European past". On the other hand, my aim is to show that some categories of the global present also pervade the process of continental integration. All in all, this path reveals that the latter process was originally developed to build what I call the "European Logistics Space".

Keywords: Jean Monnet; logistics; European integration; logistics rationale.

JEL Classification: N40; N43; N47

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo investigar uma linha genealógica diferente do processo de integração europeia. Recorrendo à biografia de Jean Monnet, pretende-se expandir as fronteiras temporais muitas vezes delineadas pela história da integração europeia, utilizando uma ferramenta analítica raramente usada neste contexto: a logística. Por um lado, propõe-se que a Declaração de Schuman faça eco de um "passado europeu" mais amplo. Por outro lado, mostra-se que algumas das categorias globais conhecidas já estão presentes no processo de integração continental. A abordagem proposta revela afinal que o último processo foi desenvolvido originalmente para construir o que se pode designar de "Espaço Logístico Europeu".

Palavras-chave: Jean Monnet; logística; integração europeia

L'Europe n'a jamais existé.
Jean Monnet

1. Introduction

Through what we might identify as a "logistics gaze", it is possible to understand better some of the most disruptive economic, geopolitical, and social upheavals of the global present. The so-called critical logistics studies far exceed the field in which the subject was traditionally enclosed. Indeed, until 20 years ago, logistics studies were the prerogative of technical, engineering, or managing fields; however, in the last few years, it has become – along with finance, extraction, and governance – a new analytical category that is being applied to a range of disciplines, because in contemporary «supply chain capitalism» (Tsing, 2009) we know that «logistics do politics» (Neilson, 2012; Mezzadra and Nielson, 2013, 2019).

Nevertheless, the widespread usefulness of logistics today has given rise to an approach that is excessively focused on present time. Starting from this assumption, one of the aims of this article is to assess the boundaries of logistics as a field, and test its usefulness in historical analysis, something that has been underestimated even in critical logistics studies. Specifically, I will apply "the lens of logistics" to interpret the birth of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), designed by Jean Monnet, and to show how a "logistics rationality" informed Monnet's thoughts and led to the rise of the European integration process.

Today's geopolitical panorama is constantly under stress. New forms of space continuously arise outside of the traditional form of sovereignty (Brenner, 2004; Sassen, 2013), thoroughly reshaping the "geometry of globalization" (Galli, 2001). New types of borders (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013), spaces of exception (Ong, 2006; Collier, 2011; Easterling, 2014a, 2014b), transnational corridors (Grappi, 2016), and new kinds of supranational or intranational regions are only some examples of this tendency. In this article I aim to show how the European integration process could be seen in the same perspective, dismantling the thesis that categorically reads the rise of the process leading to today's European Union as a direct and linear consequence of the Schuman Plan.

The story of European integration usually takes 9 May 1950 as a breaking point, a "new beginning" in the history of Europe: «Schuman's proposal – as it says on the EU's website – is considered to be the beginning of what is now the European Union.»[1] The so-called «founding fathers» are deeply iconized in European history,[2] and among them Monnet holds an important position. But is all of this correct? In this article I will reconsider the idea that 9 May represented the beginning of European integration, and I will underline the role Monnet played even before that date. Examining more carefully his exact method and rationale, we can assert that «he transformed Europe» (Walters and Haahr, 2005: 23), which will become clear when considering his work not just from 1950 onwards, but his previous career as well.

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[1] https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/archived-europe-day_en.

[2] For example Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Paul-Henri Spaak, and Schuman and Monnet themselves. See https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en.

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In addition to Monnet's life, the history of European integration should also be examined more carefully, to avoid the limits of existing scholarship.[3] In doing so, two purposes will lead this article. First, I will retrace one of the multiple origins of the EU, building a *longue durée* history where the birth of the ECSC better represents the end of a long project or, at best, only an important passage of the "long twentieth century".[4] Second, I will demonstrate that we may find some of the aforementioned categories that emerge in the global present in the process of continental integration too. In sum, this path will allow us, first, to decode the rationale that drove European integration; second, it will prove the crucial role played by Monnet; and last but not least, it will reveal that the process was originally developed so as to build what I call the "European Logistics Space".

2. MONNET'S EARLY LIFE BETWEEN FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

To get a fuller picture of Monnet's thought we must start from the very beginning. Born on 9 November 1888, he spent the first part of his life in Cognac. Known worldwide, almost the entire village was involved in the production or trading of its homonymous beverage, and Monnet's family was no exception. As happened with other firms, the cognac of Monnet's father was sold mostly abroad, something that – according to Jean Monnet himself – led the people of Cognac towards a "natural" anti-nationalistic feeling. As Monnet said:

> *Donc les gens de Cognac s'intéressent aux conditions qui existent dans ces différents pays. Je dirais même qu'ils s'y intéressent plus qu'aux conditions qui existent en France, parce que le commerce est plus sensible à ce qui se passe à Winnipeg, au Canada, qu'à Bordeaux ou en France. Donc le gens sont tout naturellement tournés vers l'extérieur. C'est naturel.*[5]

According to Frederic J. Fransen, the citizens of Cognac could be defined as «cosmopolitan peasants» (Fransen, 2001: 6) due to their deep knowledge of world affairs. In Monnet's own writings this characteristic is outstandingly underlined; we frequently read, in his Memoirs, of an early "global gaze" that was somehow innate in him.

Responding to the needs of the family firm, at the age of 16 Monnet left school to travel. Firstly, he went to London, where he lived for two years. In London, Monnet first experienced the "global dimension" of trade as well as of politics:

> *From the days of my childhood, while French society stagnated in its own parochialism, I was taught to realize that we lived in a world of vast distances, and it was natural for me to expect to meet people who spoke other languages and had different customs. To observe and take account of these customs was our daily necessity (Monnet, 1978: 43).*

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[3] For a broad perspective on the historiography on this topic, see Kaiser and Varsori, 2010.

[4] I am referring to "the long twentieth century" both for the history of capitalism (see Arrighi, 2010) and for the history of technology, where "a new era began, an era from 1850 to 2000, that we refer to as The Long Twentieth Century" (Schot and Scranton, 2014).

[5] Interview by Alan Watson with Jean and Silvia Monnet, conducted on 15–16 November and 2–3 December 1971, in Rieben et al., 2004: 250.

In 1905 and 1906, the Empire's capital was at its apogee. In the words of Giovanni Arrighi, we can affirm that London "finance" was triumphing worldwide and, at the same time, the City of London was affirming its position as the global logistical pole from 1870 to 1913 (Arrighi, 2010), the exact period in which Monnet was living in England. It was there where he understood how important the "flows" of commodities, and "logistics" more generally, would become in the new century.

After his London experience, in July 1907 Monnet moved to Canada, where he spent the greater part of his life prior to the First World War. The Canada trip was formative, particularly for the idea of European integration he developed later on; according to the political theorist Trygve Ugland, «the journey, from the beginning to end, served as inspiration for his theory of European supranational unity» (Ugland, 2011: 20). We can trace two of his most important ideas back to this early period. First, in Canada Monnet discovered the political power of infrastructure. The historian George Glazebrook argues that, «without such a communication political union would be absurd» (Glazebrook, 1966: 201). James Careless claims that the so-called Pacific Railway represented a «solid groundwork for union» (Careless, 1963: 213), and even Harold Innis underlines the fact that, among the «varied effects», railways brought «the prosperity, the expansion and the integration» (Innis, 1923: 292-293). Railways allowed the linkage of different territories and different populations to a new, unified political body, after two centuries of Anglophones and Francophones contesting territorial leadership. When Monnet visited Canada this feeling was still very strong and easily sensed by the young French visitor, who perceived the territory as a proper "logistics space", ready to answer the necessity of the upcoming global twentieth century, in which «the basis of power had changed» (Monnet, 1978: 48). In other words, Canada became a "political model" for Monnet, as US democracy was for his fellow countryman Alexis de Tocqueville:

> *Just as Tocqueville's journey to America in 1831 convinced him that he had witnessed the future, it appears that Monnet's trip to Canada in 1907 formed the quintessential core of the inspiration for his lifelong fixation on European supranational unity. (Ugland, 2011: 10)*

The second reason for which this journey was so crucial to Monnet's life is even more directly connected to logistics. In Canada, Monnet encountered the management of the Hudson Bay Company (HBC), the primary worldwide logistics society at the time. In 1911, Monnet signed a commercial agreement with HBC, where his family's brand became «the sole supplier of brandy to HBC's vast Canadian market» (Wells, 2011: 9). As of that moment, Monnet essentially became a collaborator of HBC, which was an extremely important career move.

Eventually, the London and Canada trips led Monnet to develop a global logistics way of thinking. In England he witnessed systematized global trade; in Canada he perceived how much importance should be given to infrastructures such as railways, which could build a "logistics space" on which to base a subsequent "political space". Since «biography, unlike method, is unique and untransferable» (Wolin, 2001: 87), I have dedicated this first section to a discussion of Monnet's early life. It is only through a proper understanding of the latter that we can interpret his later contributions, while taking advantage of the analytical categories of the contemporary world.

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3. The Materialization of the European Space

Infrastructures are «the nervous system» (Opitz and Tellmann, 2015) of economy and society. The role they played in the formation of the modern nation-state has been widely analysed. Books such as that of Eugen Weber, on the modernization of France in the second half of the nineteenth century (Weber, 1976), or Joe Guldi's essay on the definition of England as an «infrastructural state» (Guldi, 2012), are good examples of this line of research. Furthermore, many authors grant infrastructures a central role in modern biopolitical history: a clear example of these is the Canadian Pacific Railway mentioned above, a key mechanism «through which the health, welfare, and conditions of existence of the population have been constituted as objects of governmental management» (Collier, 2011: 205). Thus we see that infrastructures have an intrinsic political capacity, and that they anticipate political unity, building «collectivity through connectivity across a defined space» (Opitz and Tellmann, 2015: 175). Quoting a famous article of Langdon Winner «infrastructures have politics» (Winner, 1980); they first act on a state level, helping the creation of national «imagined communities» (Anderson, 2016). Next, they act, on a different scale, to «deboarder» (Sassen, 2013) the political space of modern European states, building a new idea of Europe as emancipated from historical, cultural, religious, ethnic, or moral linkages, and grounded on an infrastructural base. The creation of an "Infrastructure Europe" – from the 1850s onwards, when the so-called "hidden integration" began (Misa and Schot, 2005: 1) – prepared the way for the birth of the ECSC. Railways were the principal agent of this integration.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the European territory was characterized by a great technical and structural diversity of railways (Schot et al., 2011). Railroad construction and management were both in the hands of private companies, with little or no intention of collaborating (Heinrich-Franke, 2009: 15). However, thanks to the birth of what we would nowadays call "railway governance agencies" (notably the Verein Deutscher Eisenbahn-Verwaltungen), the variegated railways of the European panorama gradually became more and more compatible. International conventions, such as the ones held in Bern in 1878, 1881 and 1886, were increasingly defining a number of basic international standards for the building of new railways and for the mobility of commodities. «Railway Europe» (Tissot, 1998) was slowly arising.

By the beginning of the First World War, European space already benefited from an efficient railway interoperability; infrastructurally speaking, many European states – such as Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Austro–Hungarian Empire, and a few other Eastern European Countries – were already integrated. This trend accelerated after the First World War, thanks to the League of Nations (LoN) and the Union International des Chemins de fer (UDC), which substituted Verein as the principal railways governance agency on European soil. It is in this context that we meet Monnet once again.

Thanks to the role he played during the First World War, Monnet became vice-secretary of the LoN, with a mandate for technical decisions (Roussel, 1996: 84). In technical matters, the LoN operated well during the interwar period, providing a major impulse for the construction of «Iron Europe» (Anastasiadou, 2008): «[T]he League's failure in international politics contrasted with its relative success as a technical organization» (Schipper et al., 2010: 114). In those years, «infrastructures were discovered as symbols for the unification

of Europe» (Heinrich-Franke, 2009: 28), and the railway itself as «an instrument that would bring a constellation of European nation-states closer economically, politically and ideologically» (Anastasiadou, 2008: 93). Throughout this process, Monnet occupied a pivotal position, acting through the LoN for the creation «of a European space where trains could travel smoothly, avoiding natural or technical bottlenecks.

To conclude, we may affirm that the «materialization of Europe» (Badenoch and Fickers, 2010) could be seen as a longue durée history. European integration, in a broader sense, is a project that is anything but new, and takes root in the middle of the nineteenth century. Put differently, we could state that, «using the lens of technology, we situate European integration (typically viewed as a political process) as an emergent outcome of a process of linking and delinking of infrastructures» (Misa and Schot, 2005: 1). In such a process, Monnet played a central role as the vice-president of the LoN, favouring the building of a European monotopia: «an organized, ordered and totalized space of zero-friction and seamless logistic flows» (Jensen and Richardson, 2014: 3). Long before 1950, Monnet was already working towards continental integration, through the "logistics rationale" that led to the idea of the ECSC.

4. Logistics Governance

What exactly do we mean by a "logistics rationale"? Giorgio Grappi recently defined logistics as the implementation of «processes that are made up both of technological innovations and of new organizational processes. It is in this sense that we can speak about a 'logistics rationale'» (Grappi, 2016: 38, my translation). "Technological innovations" and "new organizational processes": both these elements, described by Grappi with a focus on the global present, can also be observed if we develop an analysis of European integration history and of Monnet's actions. In the previous section, we have seen how technological innovations across railway sectors acted towards the material linkage of certain European states. Without this kind of "integration", no political or economic integration would have started in 1950. This was something Monnet knew well, and which incentivized European railway interoperability when he was the vice-president of the LoN. Moreover, during the two World Wars, a number of European states were already testing "new organizational processes" grounded precisely on logistics and led by Monnet.

Nowadays the political and geographical scale is constantly redefined by the needs of logistics. Most of these "new areas" are redrawing the political geometry of our global present in ways that are not just theoretical, but deeply tangible. As I have mentioned, we are seeing more and more "Special Economic Zones", trade corridors, macro-regions, supranational and intranational formations characterized by functional needs. New geographical entities are spreading as a consequence of capital's capacity to produce new spatial entities, creating what Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson have called the new «borders of Capital» (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013).

To put it more clearly, the "logistics rationale" is producing "logistics spaces" for the rapid circulation of commodities. Such an area «contrasts powerfully with the territoriality of the national state» (Cowen, 2014: 8), but nonetheless presents a general infrastructure

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homologation and a partial, common legislation. The latter does not refer to a complete coincidence of constitutional codes, but merely to a form of «graduated sovereignty» (Ong, 2006: 75) whereby states no longer retain total control of their territory. All of this, which inevitably recalls the operation of the ECSC, happened in Europe even before 1950, in the most critical period of the World Wars.

During the First World War, one of the most critical times for the Allies was when Germany initiated, in 1917, the so-called "unrestricted submarine warfare", attacking all cargo ships, including from neutral states such as the US.[6] According to Arthur Salter, «more tonnage was lost in the first ten months of 1917 than in the previous thirty months of the war» (Salter, 1921: 144). To face this dramatic situation, the Allies welcomed a plan implemented by Monnet, at that time a member of the Advisory Board of the French Trade Minister Etienne Clémentel (Piétri, 1999: 25). Formally organized by the latter, but conceived by Monnet himself,[7] the Paris Conference – held between 29 November and 1 December 1917 – created the Allied Maritime Transport Council (AMTC). According to Salter, the AMTC represented «the most advanced experiment yet made in international cooperation» (Salter, 1921: XIII). Thanks to the ships of the Hudson Bay Company, through the AMTC the UK, France, and Italy were jointly governing the «complex logistics of war supply» (Kaiser and Schot, 2014: 63), guaranteed by a common organism with executive power: the first, properly European, logistics Community.

Similar to the AMTC was the Anglo–French Coordinating Committee (AFCOC), established at the beginning of the Second World War. Organized and directed once again by Monnet, the AFCOC acted as a proper suprastate entity, as the AMTC had done. On 1 October 1939, Monnet wrote to the British Secretary of War, Edward Bridges:

> *In the main, the ideas and organization I have discussed with you and the various British Ministries to whom you were good enough to introduce me, are nothing other than the very ideas and organization that, after three years of conflict, the Allies have finally had to recognize as essential, and were successfully tested* [in the First World War].[8]

The British and French governments basically agreed to grant a portion of their sovereign power to another entity, over which they had only indirect control. It is worth quoting a letter written to Monnet by Edouard Daladier, the French Prime Minister:

> *Le Président du Comité de Coordination sera un fonctionnaire allié et que tout en n'étant en aucun sens un arbitre vous devrez employer tous vos efforts pour aplanir les divergences de vue et provoquer des décisions communes en vous plaçant à un point de vue allié et non à un point de vue national.*[9]

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[6] The US entered the First World War only on 6 April 1917.

[7] In two letters stored in the Departmental Archive of Puy-de-Dôme dated 20 and 24 November 1917, Monnet gives Clementèl details for the creation of the new European Common Logistics Unit, suggesting that it should be called the Allied Maritime Transport Council. Archive file: 5 J 35.

[8] Letter by Monnet to Edward Bridges, 1 October 1939. Archive of the Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe (FJME). File number: AME 2/2/5.

[9] Letter by Edouard Daladier to Monnet, 2 December 1939, FJME. File number: AME 2/8/15.

Significantly, in his Memoires Monnet commented on this letter as follows: "For 'Allied' read 'Community', and there is no better definition for the role to be played later on by the President of the European Coal and Steel Community's High Authority – which is doubtless no coincidence" (Monnet, 1978: 128).

During both the First and Second World Wars, Monnet was profoundly involved in the logistical organization of the Allies, by promoting initiatives that had an important common feature: an element of "graduated sovereignty" for European states. Despite the «state of exception» (Agamben, 2005) of both wars, the AMTC and the AFCOC were true governance agents with a clear "executive power", whereby a small portion of European territory became what we could call – using contemporary analytical categories – a "logistics space": a super-state area interconnected with uniformed infrastructures and partially governed by an extra-state power.[10] Monnet wanted to continue this common supply (logistics) management even after the end of each war. In a telegram written to Raymond Fillioux (the French representative for supply affairs in London) at the end of the First World War, Monnet wrote:

> *Au moment où la guerre finit le maintien des arrangements interalliés devient vital pour la France.*
> *Il est évident que la consolidation des mécaniques existantes s'impose et que nous devons éviter toutes*
> *modifications des attributions essentielles des organisations existantes.*[11]

Although his hope apparently vanished in 1918, after the Second World War Monnet finally achieved his longtime goal: a truly supranational European Logistics Space.

5. THE EUROPEAN LOGISTICS SPACE

«The methods of the French Planning Commissariat were readily adaptable both to European problems and to the Europeans involved» (Monnet 1978: 329).[12] These words by Monnet explain the importance of the years between 1945 and 1950 for the development of his action plan after the birth of the ESCS. It is not possible here to examine in depth this period of Monnet's life, nor can we delve into the contingent circumstances that led to the Schuman Declaration. Many factors contributed to the birth of the ESCS: a) the US-initiated European Recovery Program pushing Western European states towards political and economic integration; b) the birth of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland on 24 May 1949 (and the threat of a recomposed German Army); c) the necessity of a common management of steel production as it emerged in a report by Tony Rollman (Director of the Steel Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), who «predicted overproduction of up to eight million tons of steel in Europe by 1953» (Kaiser and Schot, 2014: 225). All this and more contributed to the signature of the Schuman Plan. The last section of this article will highlight how the first European Community, too, comprised what I have called the European Logistics Space.

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[10] For a general overview of what "logistics space" means, see Waldheim and Berger, 2008; Cowen, 2014: 4-11; Easterling 2014a; Grappi, 2016: 1-10; Into the Black Box, Matteucci (2019).

[11] Telegram by Monnet to Raymond Fillioux, 25 November 1918, FJME. File number: AMB 1/1/97.

[12] For a proper analysis of Monnet's role in the French Modernization Plan, see Walters and Haahr (2005: 1-54).

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Since antiquity, "Europe" has been a nebulous concept. However, since the birth of the ECSC, in everyday parlance "Europe" has often overlapped with the European Community. This in spite of the fact that neither of these have ever had a predetermined border:

> *Six pays ont commencé: la France, l'Allemagne, les pays de Benelux et l'Italie. Mais la réalisation des États-Unis d'Europe est ouverte à la participation de tous les pays qui voudront s'y joindre en acceptant l'autorité de leurs institutions et de leurs règles communes.*[13]

Far from being linked only by a geographical or territorial perspective, Monnet's Europe was a dynamic concept. More broadly speaking, Monnet's idea was linked, on the one hand, to its "representation", and on the other, to its "function".

Making reference to Henry Lefebvre, Ole Jensen and Tim Richardson underline the fact that «analysis of space requires analysis of discourse if we are to understand how spaces come to be as they are» (Jensen and Richardson, 2014: 43). Although the ESCS (and subsequently, the European Economic Community) merely reflected the territories of six states, from that moment onwards it was identified as "Europe" in public discourse. After all, as Monnet wrote to Georges Bidault in a letter, only a few days before 9 May 1950, «L'Europe n'a jamais existé […]. Il faut véritablement créer l'Europe, qu'elle se manifesta à elle-même et à l'opinion américaine, et qu'elle ait confiance en son propre avenir».[14] After the birth of Europe, which occurred through the creation of the ECSC, the next step was the birth of the European citizen:

> *I want to underline this fundamental point – Monnet said in the 1950s – henceforth, no Frenchman, no German or Italian or Belgian or Dutchman or Luxembourger welcomed here in Washington will come simply as a representative of his own country. Each will become more and more what he has hitherto been only in a cultural sense – a European. (Monnet, 1978: 428)*

In addition to the representation of a territory, there are functional aspects of what "Europe" might mean. To quote Jensen and Richardson once more, globalization means

> *a dialectical struggle between two incompatible "spatial logic" or rationalities […]. The essence of this conceptualization is a dialectical tension between the historically rooted local spatial organization of human experience (the space of places) versus the global flow of goods, signs, people and electronic impulses (the space of flows).* (Jensen and Richardson, 2014: 217)

As is well known, by "space of places" Manuel Castells means «a place as the local whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of territorial contiguity» (Castells, 1999: 296). The other side of the coin is the "space of flows", which implies «that the material arrangements allow for simultaneity of social practices without territorial contiguity» (Castells, 1999: 295). In light of these considerations, it seems that the real contribution of Monnet and the ECSC could be described as placing on the historical "space of place" of the European nation-states a European "space of flows".

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[13] J. Monnet. "Note". FJME. File number: AMK 2/2/12.

[14] Letter from Monnet to Georges Bidault, 3 May 1950. FJME. File number: AMG 1/1/5.

Does this mean that the ECSC was nothing more than a free-trade zone? Not at all; within the Space of the Community, close attention must be paid to the "non-tariff barriers", among which «technical standards […] but also health and safety regulations or detailed rules for the individuals to work in a particular profession» (Kaiser and Schot, 2014: 276). In other words, we may consider "non-tariff barriers" as the "bottlenecks" that a logistics space has to overcome so as to gain the seamless space for its purposes. This is one of the primary achievements of the ECSC.

All in all, we could claim that in a period when globalization was about to enter its most advanced phase, where «flows of capital and people challenge the sovereignty of bounded nation-states and call for new forms of politics and regulation» (Walters and Haahr, 2005: 2), Europe – and Monnet – replicated through the ECSC project, which was the first step of what Martin Hajer calls the present-day «Europe of flows» (Hajer, 2000: 138). Thanks to the ECSC, the six states that adhered to the project were ready for a "new global world" that was knocking on their doors. However, they were also accepting a new governance entity on European soil, which fully realized a European Logistics Space without unmaking the continental history built on a territory divided into a multitude of sovereign states.

6. Conclusion

The main aim of this article has been to consider the European integration process as a sort of paradoxical narrative, inasmuch as the birth of the ECSC has been considered not as the starting point of that path, but rather as the final step of a longstanding process, in which Jean Monnet played a pivotal role. Indeed, as I have tried to explain throughout the article, both the building and standardization procedures of infrastructures, such as the railways on European soil, and the logistics cooperation experiences that took place during the two World Wars, have to be considered crucial steps towards the first European Community. Highlighting these decisive moments allows us to develop a discourse on the European integration process out of its immanency. In other words, through what I have called a "logistics gaze" – which starts from the assumption that sees «logistics as a power» (Neilson, 2012) – we can interpret the ECSC experience not as a radical "new beginning" of European history, but as an important step in a longer process, and on a broader path.

«Since 9 May 1950, we have been grappling with history» (Monnet, 1978: 336), Monnet wrote in his Memoirs. In this article I have partially sought to argue the converse. Indeed, considering the Schuman Plan as part of the "long twentieth century" allows us to emphasize a sort of structural continuity in a long European history. To do this, I have placed side by side two types of literature. On the one hand, I have paid considerable attention to the many works concerning Monnet's life and European integration historiography. On the other, I have considered other sources of interpretation, such as those pertaining to critical logistics studies. In sum, I have aimed to build neither a teleological history of European integration, nor one of Jean Monnet's political thought. Rather, I have tried to offer a novel contribution to the spectrum of interpretations of this important event by underlining its main essence: the building of the European Logistics Space.

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