

Materialflow: Transport, Distribution and the Rise of Logistics (1850-2000)

The project argues that a complex bundle of social, economic, scientific, technical and political practices arose since mid 19th century leading to logistics as a core concept of modern societies. We draw attention to the evolution and change of planning, storing, shipping and transporting activities for materials handling and information flows on a global scale. Tracing the material and information flows we study the cultural principles and social outcomes of logistics. We are also interested in the jams and leaks, the nightmares of modern logistics-based societies. We follow a methodological approach that combines local, national and global perspectives. The projet focuses on the national and international forces shaping the development of infrastructures, standards, buildings, technologies and knowledge as well as local particularities. The premise of analyzing logistics as «heterogenous engineering» (John Law) informs all our projects: They investigate the rise of practices for the handling of time and space in different contexts shaped by nature, politics, technology, science, economy and geographical topographies.