Architectures of Circulation

Urban infrastructures of global commodity production

The production and distribution of all sorts of goods is increasingly organized within global networks. Complex infrastructural arrangements connect dispersed logistics areas and production locations within cities and urban hinterlands worldwide, enabling the circulation of commodities and the exploitation of spatial difference from the urban to the planetary scale. These infrastructure systems have massive impacts on urbanization processes and the urban form by creating splintered landscapes of connectivity, altering or reinforcing patterns of socio-spatial inequality.

This seminar explores the spatiality and architecture of physical infrastructures enabling commodity flows, their operating modes, local and translocal urban impacts. It offers an introduction to key theoretical debates on infrastructures of connectivity and urbanization through a series of readings in architecture and urban studies, political economy, human geography and anthropology, covering different geographical contexts in the Global South and North. Students will also develop individual case studies on specific infrastructure buildings/spaces, commodity circuits and their (trans-)local interplay with urban development in small group research and mapping projects.

Through the engagement with the case studies and scholarly literature rooted in different strands of critical theory the seminar aims to build a sensitivity regarding the socio-economic relations and power structures embodied in the built infrastructures of commodity production and circulation. The seminar will be conducted with close links to the research projects “Transnational Production Spaces” (2016-2019) and “Infrastructures of Global Production” (forthcoming) at the Habitat Unit.

Participants may choose to develop
– a case study as a group project with regular interim presentations and a case study report (6 ECTS)
– individual term papers and present key readings (3 ECTS)
April 8   1. Infrastructure and Urban Commodity Flows

Common readings


Further reading suggestions
These texts will be picked up for discussion and presentations in the final seminar sessions in July, but reading some of them in the course of term will be helpful for developing your arguments.


April 29   2. Commodity Chains

Common readings


Further reading suggestions


May 6 3. Uneven Development: Infrastructures and Urbanization

Common readings

Further reading suggestions

May 13 4. (Post)Colonial Infrastructures

Common readings

Further reading suggestions

May 20 5. Logistics Revolution: Moving Materials and Infrastructures

Common readings

Further reading suggestions
May 27 6. Landscapes and Logistics

Common reading

Further reading suggestions

June 3 7. Cities: Circulation and Chokepoints

Common readings

Further reading suggestions

June 17 8. Architecture and Logistics

Common reading

Further reading suggestions
June 26 9. Planning and Governing (Global) Infrastructures

Common reading

Further reading suggestions

July 1 & July 8 10. & 11. Positions on Infrastructures

Selected readings from:
Case studies are being developed as group projects (3-5 participants per group). It might be helpful if groups include participants with different backgrounds and competencies in research, drawing and writing.

The final output of case studies consists of five A3 posters and a case study report (2500 words plus references for text, maps and drawings). We aim to produce a booklet with final reports for download/print.

In developing case studies, seminar participants are invited to address a double research question:

**How do specific buildings/built forms function as physical infrastructures enabling the production and circulation of specific commodities? In which ways do these architectures and commodity circuits interact with urbanization processes?**

The starting point for designing your research project is a commodity type.

**Five scales of investigation** are to be considered as a basic structure around which to build your case study:

- Product
- Production Network
- Infrastructure Network
- Architecture
- Urban

At least on one scale of investigation, the project should identify what links the case study to Berlin.

Developing a precise focus on concrete research objects for each scale is a crucial part of the research design.

Each scale requires different approaches of mapping or architectural drawing to visualize research findings and arguments.

These visualizations are to be developed on a sequence of five A3 posters during the term, for regular interim presentations on different stages or scales of research.

A template (IDML) for the five A3 posters is provided on the seminar cloud as a working document for the case studies. (Also for the final poster presentation and case study reports, some layout guidelines will be provided.)
Phase 1

April 15  Developing your research design
First flashlight: Working title and visual exploration.
For each scale investigation, select 1-3 images.
(3-5 min presentation of all group projects with 5 posters)

April 29 Define your case study.
For each scale of investigation, select concrete research objects.
Identify relevant sources of information and research literature.
(3-5 min presentation of all group projects with 5 posters)

May 6 Cartography Input by Anke Hagemann

By May 10 Submit abstracts (300 words), structure outline and 5 key references for case study reports.

May 13 Develop your research hypothesis.
Present sketches (hand or digital) for each scale of investigation.
(3-5 min presentations of all group projects with 5 posters)

Phase 2

Case study analysis step by step
Short presentations by all group focusing on one scale of investigation (with 5 posters)

May 20 Products

May 27 Production Networks

June 3 Infrastructure Networks

June 17 Architecture

June 24 Urban Context, Urbanization Process

July 1 Reserve

July 8 Final Poster Presentations (with guests)
Submission of Case Study Reports
Guidelines for Term Papers (3 ECTS)

Seminar participants may choose to write an individual term paper (2500-4000 words excluding references) and to present a key text in the seminar (5-10 minutes), in order to get 3 ECTS (in addition to regular active participation in weekly discussion sessions).

Starting point for the term paper should be a commodity type.

As an orientation for developing the term paper, you could address a similar double research question as group case studies: How do specific buildings/built forms function as physical infrastructures enabling the production and circulation of specific commodities? In which ways do these architectures and commodity circuits interact with urbanization processes?

Individually chosen topics for research or theoretical reflection are also welcome, but need to be discussed in advance with the seminar coordinators.

In the paper you are expected to relate reading from the course to the topic you have chosen. We encourage you to include photographs or other graphical elements into the paper that support your arguments.

In all cases, clearly identify the sources for the information and arguments you present (Author Year: Page). A list of all references you have used or quoted must be added at the end of the paper (not included in the word count).

A layout template for the term paper will be provided. We aim to produce a booklet with final reports for download/print.

By May 10 Submit abstracts (300 words), structure outline and 5 key references.

Please get in touch with seminar coordinators for scheduling an individual appointment to discuss and confirm your abstract.

July 8 Submission of Term Paper
Case Study Topics

Commodity Types for Case Studies

- Fashion (clothes, shoes)
- Gasoline, Oil
- Cement
- Fresh Fruit, Flowers
- Meat, Livestock
- Christmas Decorations (or other plastic items)

Further Options for Term Papers

- Bottled Water
- Coal
- Coffee
- Consumer Electronics
- Delivered Meals
- Furniture (self-assembly)
- Grains
- Milk, Dairy Products
- Parcel Shipping
- Streaming Services
- Wood and By-Products (paper, pulp)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Common Readings</th>
<th>Presentations</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Introductory session</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>1. Infrastructure and Urban Commodity Flows</td>
<td>Lyster 2016, Carse 2017, Spohler 2015</td>
<td>Working title and visual exploration</td>
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<td>April 22</td>
<td>Public holiday, no class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Input by Anke Hagemann:</td>
<td>Cartographic representation of space and methods of visualization</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Submission of abstracts for study reports and term papers</td>
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<td>May 13</td>
<td>4. (Post)Colonial Infrastructures</td>
<td>Scotto 2018</td>
<td>Research hypothesis and sketches</td>
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<td>May 20</td>
<td>5. Logistics Revolution</td>
<td>Chua 2016, Martin 2016</td>
<td>Products</td>
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<td>May 27</td>
<td>6. Landscapes and Logistics</td>
<td>Waldheim/ Berger 2008</td>
<td>Production networks</td>
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<td>June 3</td>
<td>7. Cities: Circulation and Chokepoints</td>
<td>Cowen 2014, Carse et al 2018 (one article of your choice)</td>
<td>Infrastructure networks</td>
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<td>Guest: Michael Zinganel</td>
<td>Evening lecture by Michael Zinganel. Stop and Go. Nodes of transition and transformation</td>
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<td>June 4</td>
<td>Field trip to logistics park and factory outlet center in Wustermark and railyard in Elstal, 9:00-15:00, with bikes</td>
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<td>June 10</td>
<td>Public holiday, no class</td>
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<td>June 17</td>
<td>8. Architectures and Logistics</td>
<td>LeCavalier 2016</td>
<td>Architectures</td>
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<td>June 24</td>
<td>9. Planning and Governing (Global) Infrastructures</td>
<td>Kanai/Schindler 2018</td>
<td>Urban contexts and urbanization processes</td>
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<td>July 8</td>
<td>11. Positions on Infrastructures II</td>
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<td>Final poster presentation</td>
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Submission of case study reports and term papers
Additional Resources

Mapping examples


Academic writing and reading


Theme issues and collected volumes on infrastructure and logistics

Selection of books and articles on infrastructure and logistics


**Selection of books and articles on commodity chains**


**Podcasts on Infrastructure and Logistics**

**Cargoland**

Cargoland is a podcast mini-series about the technological changes that transform the waterfronts of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and about the effects these changes have on the dockworkers and their livelihoods.

**Containers**

Containers is an 8-part radio documentary about how global trade has transformed the economy and everyday lives.

**Cultures of Energy, Episode 84, Ashley Carse**

Ashley Carse talks about infrastructures and his research on the Panama Canal.

**The Dissonance of Things, Episode 6: Logistics – Violence, Empire and Resistance**

Charmaine Chua, Laleh Khalili and Deborah Cowen discuss the increasing ubiquity and prominence of logistics as a mode for organizing social and spatial life.