

# Infrastructures Of Consumerism

Design Studio SoSe 2020

Prof. Dr. Philipp Misselwitz

Dr. Christian Haid

Áine Ryan

Dr. Anna Steigemann



# What are Infrastructures Of Consumerism?

The logistical infrastructures of our consumer society are not only changing our inner-city neighbourhoods and shopping streets, but also extending the footprint of Berlin's outer suburbs project by project, with political negotiations often short-cutting the forward planning processes. The Distribution Centre, for instance, is emerging as an extreme version of the big-box typology, another one is the container or big box warehouses. Devoid of any interface with its surroundings, they recede from view and betrays the deep and often exploitative dependence these infrastructures have on local labour, natural resources, and mobility structures.

This underlines how infrastructures of consumption are linked to and depend on local and global supply chains, also of what we call invisible labour.





# Invisible Labour In Infrastructures Of Consumerism

Invisible labour in the sense that people are hidden in factories overseas, the containers and warehouses, and neglected in public space as delivery workforce who somewhat magically make your orders and packages appear in your mailbox, the downstairs store, the DHL package store in the Späti around the corner, your neighbour's flat or in front of your apartment door. Invisible also because they work in factories overseas and at the outskirts of Berlin in almost resident-free logistical suburbs, or as producers in factories, workshops and organic farms and greenhouses in Brandenburg, but also at the local sea and river ports (e.g. Westhafen), along rail lines, and in the many warehouses that process the flows of commodities. We will also explore the sprawling logistics industry in Berlin and Brandenburg and livelihoods and infrastructures and enormous mobilities of these often precarious workers. Infrastructure makes worlds, while software developed in inner-city hip neighbourhoods coordinates and develops this type of labour.



# Spatial Infrastructural Settings

In this studio, we consider the most emblematic images of logistics are storage and distribution. These massive big box warehouses stacked high with boxes and the thousands of human workers labouring amid a gigantic system “of steel and silicon” as only one infrastructural spatial setting in consumer society.

An object like the container or big box warehouse are thus a symbol of logistics space and two of many iconic infrastructural spaces, a cartography defined by the local and global networks of circulation that we will trace through desktop research, autoethnographic tools and methods, mapping circulations and mobilities of goods and labour.

Another newer infrastructure of consumerism that we will map and explore are the hybrid architectures of stores that used to sell different products and now distribute digitally ordered products on the neighbourhood scale, such as Spätis.



# Our Approaches

**This studio examines these consumerism-infrastructures from the viewpoint of the receiving real-world context. Analysis methods developed by the Habitat Unit on global flows and infrastructure will be extended to investigate the city-scaled consumerism landscape from edge to centre. Actor- and practice-based approaches help us to capture the everyday life of logistical and infrastructural workers and the flow and distribution of consumption goods (ranging from organic cucumbers from Uckermark to the newest Iphone ordered via amazon and clothes from sweatshops bought via Zalando, and eventually delivered by a drone very soon).**





# Methodologies

Design-based enquiry guided by scientific literature and supported by social-science methods, e.g. autoethnographies

Expanding upon representation techniques developed at the Habitat Unit

Using scenario building to define design briefs

Abstracting case-studies into (proto)typologies and reapplying as improved proposals

Emphasis on peer to peer exchange and discursive critique and feedback



# Learning Aims

**Reveal for ourselves the extensive infrastructures that support online shopping and examine how these impact the space and the society of the city**

**Use scenario building to image these infrastructures in 2040 and back-casting to identify socio-spatial responses ( to harness or mitigate) from now onwards.**

**Expand the scope of typology thinking in design to equally factor-in the impacts on human practices, urban processes and environmental value**

# Semester Schedule

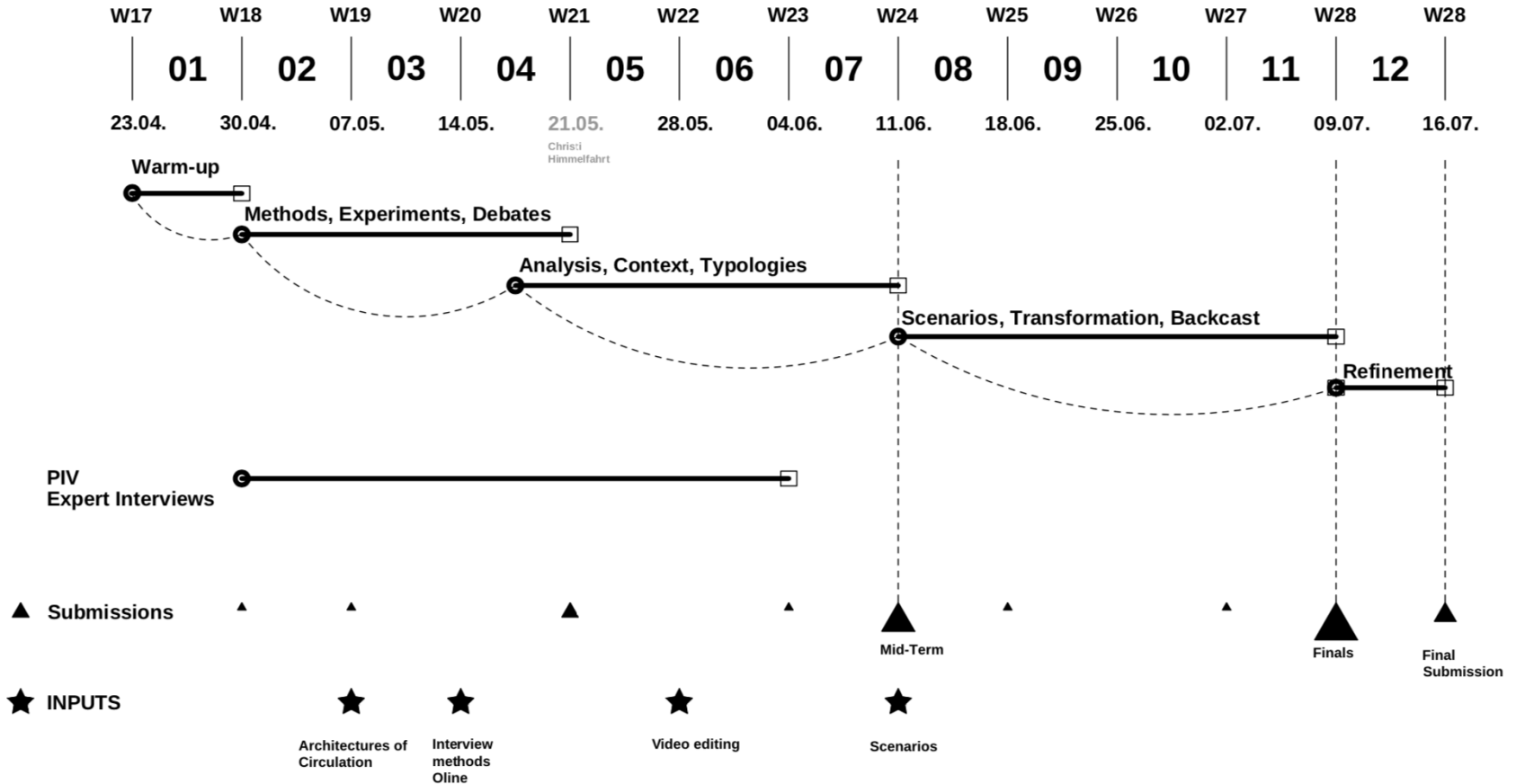










Image: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung



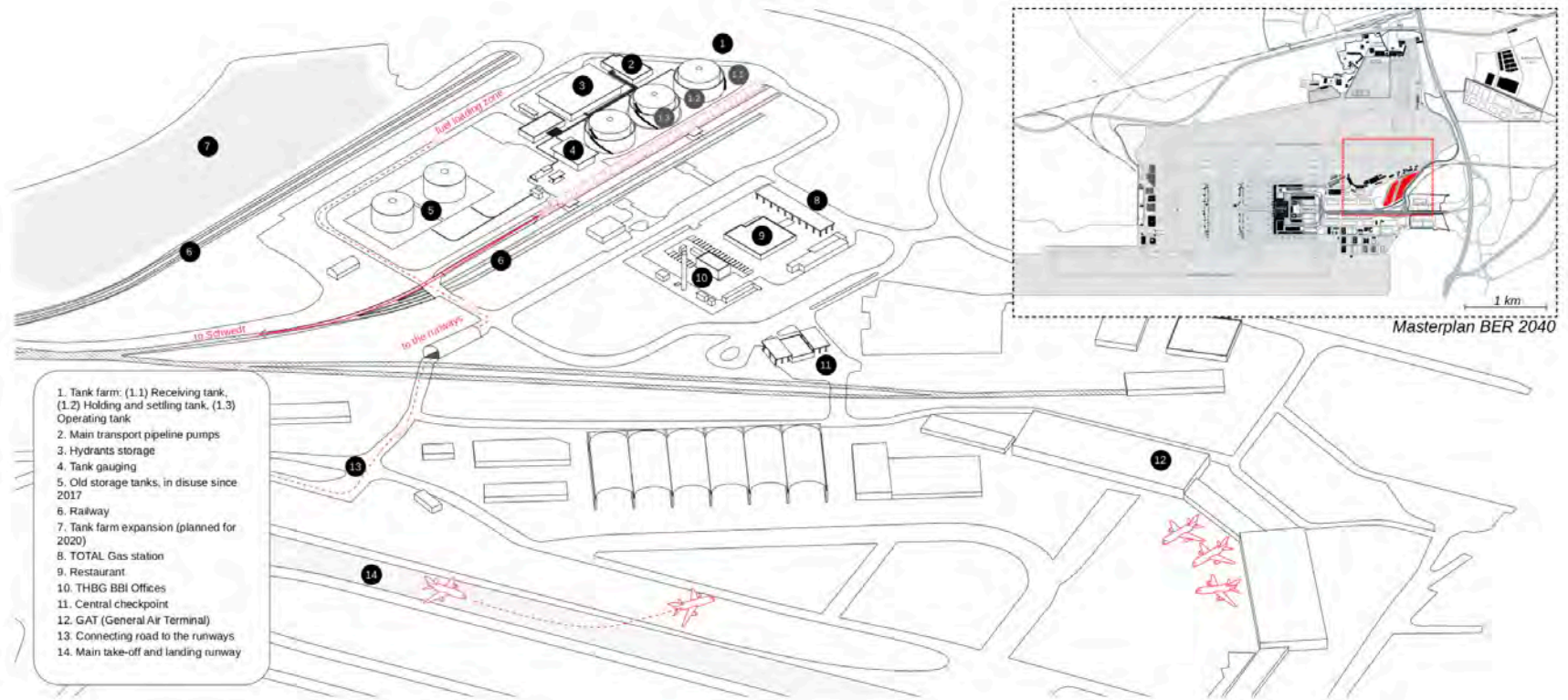






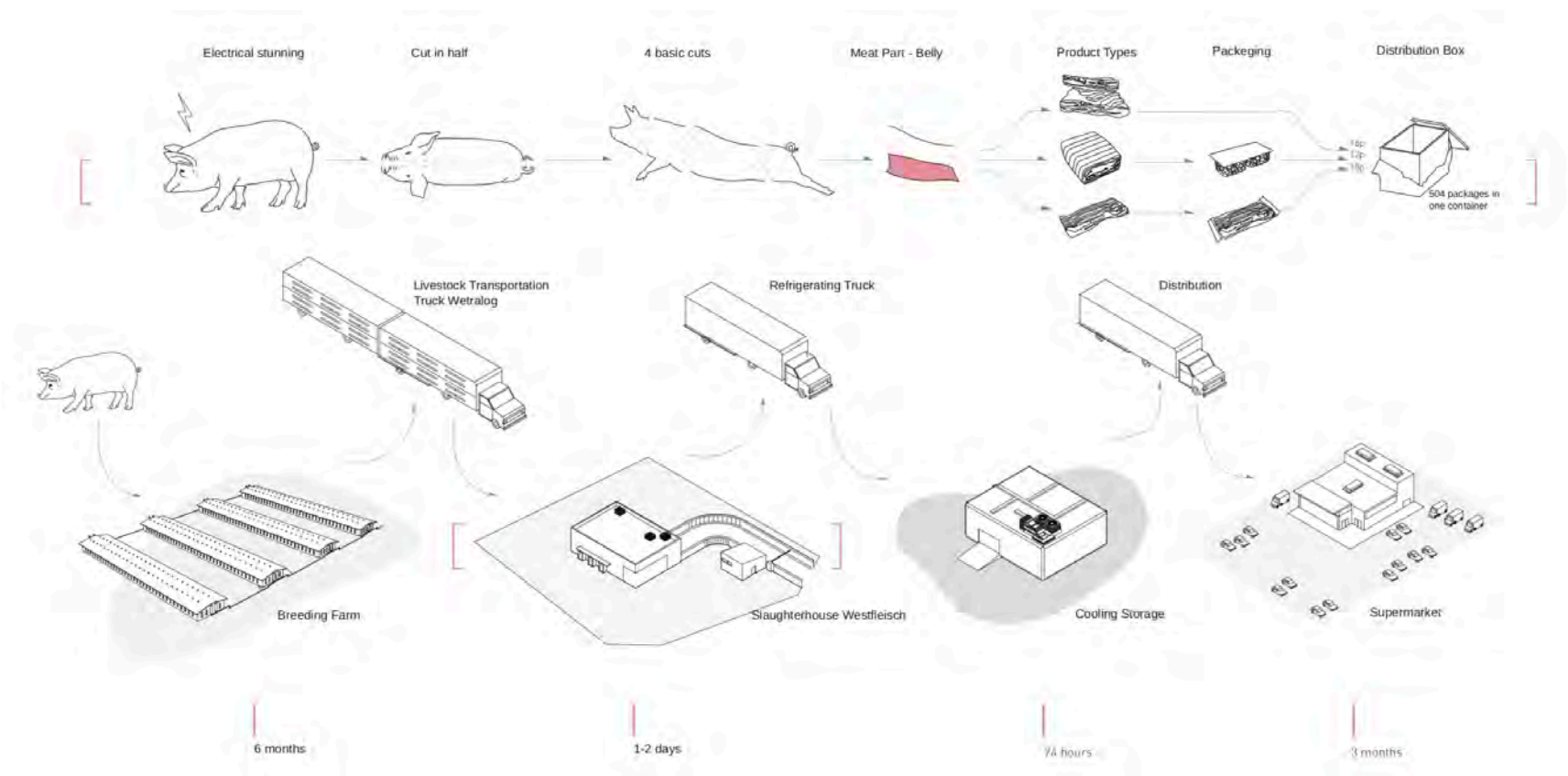
Image: Zalando (Wikipedia)





Architectures of Circulation Seminar Habitat Unit SoSe 19





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# Interested?

**We are happy to welcome you in our “virtual” studio!**

**Please sign up!**

**Places for the studio are limited but we do our best to accommodate your first choice.**