We have nothing to lose but our supply chains

Mapping along Amazon

Around Berlin, but also in the city itself, the Internet-based shipping service provider Amazon is steadily expanding its network of delivery centers. In the south, BER8 was recently opened, right next to the Schönefeld motorway junction between the airport, Cottbus, Poland and Potsdam, but so far difficult to reach via village roads. A large, fenced-in logistics hall stands in the middle of a field, secured with a kind of moat like a castle fortress. Waiting in the motorway service area or improvised at the roadside are truck cabs with Polish and Baltic license plates ready to deliver their blue Amazon-Prime trailers with Krefeld license plates for unloading, or to pick up newly loaded trailers.

A young Ukrainian driver who arrived the evening before, now cooks his lunch on the side of the road, and waits until the evening to transport goods to Paris, Mannheim and Krefeld. Plans of deployment and route changes are communicated to him by e-mail and cell phone by the Lithuanian company, where he also has a bank account in Euros.

Another contractor from Amazon is currently setting up a technical checkpoint at the exit. He says would himself never buy from Amazon and prefers small stores. He also does not understand the routes the goods take all over Europe with drivers contracted from afar. A signboard advertises three more logistics hubs that are due to be built on the overgrown field. In the distance, an Ikea sign marking it Waltersdorf branch towers above the fields.

These logistic landscapes are interlinked. In a cramped industrial area in Marienfelde, trucks squeeze through the narrow road between allotment gardens and parking garages and unload their goods into a large and obscure box. Close by and ant-like, hundreds of white, mostly privately rented delivery trucks and cars are loaded by men with a migrational background with goods, before swarming into Berlin on delivery runs.

In the Krausehöfe in the centre of Berlin, a tiny sign indicates that Amazon Berlin is located here. A newspaper article reports that about 500 people are to work in this massive building. A security guard controls the entrance, a camera eye is mounted next to the bell.

Digital goes concrete gold

Under the keyword ‚tech-urbanism‘, the exploitation context of tech and the city is recorded. This is materialized in the form of buildings, displacement, business models, data hoovers or "bullshit jobs" (David Graeber).

First, online shopping drives the stores into ruin, then they take over the buildings: An Amazon Prime warehouse for hourly delivery was set up in a former electronics supermarket on the Ku'Damm, and in the USA, Amazon takes over so-called dead malls in order to convert these shopping areas, which have become superfluous, into conveniently located ‚fulfillment centers‘ for the delivery of goods ordered online. In Karstadt at Hermannplatz, seen as a historical icon, the department store is to be converted into a hybrid of shop-in-shop, Amazon logistics warehouse, co-working, re-use center and living space against fierce resistance from the local residents. At the same time, the Amazon group is founding a chain of stores where it will be possible to buy groceries „seamlessly" (easy and without cash registers) without personnel and with the most accurate digital tracking of the goods withdrawal: The user perceives no interruption in the flow of a technically mediated experience.

Tech-Lash

There is increasing resistance against the tech industry, for example the successful protest against the second headquarters in New York called *Amazon-HQ2* or in Berlin against the ‚Google Campus‘, the Zalando branch in Kreuzberg or the ‚Amazon Tower‘ as part of the ‚Mediaspree‘ concept. Berlin's protest refers to the urban divisions in the Bay Area around San Francisco and Silicon Valley, where many residents of the technopolis were forced onto the streets, in both senses of the term. The recent protest *Berlin vs. Amazon* against the Amazon-Tower at the Warschauer Brücke in Berlin-Friedrichshain not only tries to prevent the construction of the ‚Amazon-Tower‘ here, but also tries to unite and politicize the struggles of the techworkers. The *Techworkers' Coalition* gathers all classes of techies, from programmers to pickers in a ‚Fulfillment Center‘ on the outskirts of the metropolises, including bicycle delivery services. Within the *Berlin vs. Amazon* campaign, many of them work in the IT sector themselves and thus argue with their knowledge from the inside. Through *Make Amazon Pay*, the initiative has established connections to Amazon workers in storage hubs all the way from Leipzig and Bad Hersfeld to Poznan. Especially in Poland, about 20,000 people work at Amazon, mostly on precarious, temporary employment contracts; however, in Poland you cannot order goods with Amazon at all. These workers are used to supply the German market, avoiding German strikes or traffic jams.

Sneaking around

There are two of us on the road, via WhatsApp in voice mail contact. After the stories and descriptions the drawings are made in a home office in Mecklenburg. A ‚Mapping along Amazon‘ is created from sound files, photographs, mapping and memories.