A Third Logistical Regime: The Ecological Succession of Industrial Ruins

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The City of Chicago is foremost a logistical node. Incorporated in 1837 at the confluence of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, the City boomed with the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal that linked the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes. This first regime saw raw materials, grain and other agricultural goods shipped from Chicago, seat of the rich midwestern farmland, to hungry eastern markets. The second regime was the introduction and development of the railroad. Chicago was the nexus where railroads from the east and west met. Warehouses and factories were built adjacent to the railroad yards and Chicago emerged as a transportation and manufacturing colossus. The Midland Warehouses are one such example. Built on what is now a Union Pacific railroad yard, the Midland Warehouses allowed rail cars to enter the building and unload their cargo.

During World War I, the nearby Montgomery Ward warehouses–mail order giants second only to Sears and Roebuck–were coveted by the military as a means to store goods on their way to the fight in Europe. Thus, the logistical genome or DNA of the enterprise came full circle and returned to its military roots.

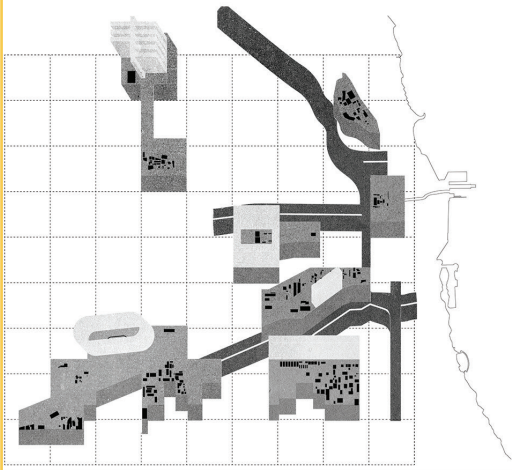
As Susan Nigra Snyder and Alex Wall pointed out in their seminal essay "Emerging Landscapes of Movement and Logistics," these nineteenth century distribution centers are being supplanted by new, much larger ones at the outskirts of urban areas. Amazon, UPS and Federal Express have emerged as giants of the twenty-first century order. They have built large state-of-the-art distribution nodes centering around moving shipping containers. Far-flung Romeoville is the new 15th Street and Western Avenue.

Their inter-city forebears are too small to handle the volume of traffic necessary today. Thus, the question is what to do with nineteenth century distribution nodes like the Midland Warehouse and its railroad yard?

Rather than just create more urban infill–housing and strip malls–we endeavor to create a new kind of Urbanism that heals and cultivates rather than colors in more of the grid. These nodes function like Roman precedents in that sit forward on the grid.

We propose a twenty-first century network. A server farm fills the top 98,000 sf floor of the warehouse. Waste heat is used to heat a rooftop greenhouse in winter to grow produce for restaurants and those who desire a fresh, sustainable high-end product. The railroad yards can be farmed with asparagus and tomatoes, two crops that have rate of financial return, or planted with bamboo to sequester carbon and create raw material for furniture and flooring manufacture on one of the warehouse floors.

Bicycling replaces trains–not in a "Rails to Trails" way–but as a distribution system for same day delivery that is central to the Third Logistical Regime and a twenty-first century way of life.



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The City of Chicago is foremost a logistical node. Incorporated in 1837 at the confluence of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan,[1] the City boomed with the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal that linked the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes.[2] This first regime saw raw materials, grain and other agricultural goods shipped from Chicago, seat of the rich Midwestern breadbasket, to hungry eastern markets. The second regime was the introduction and development of the railroad. Twenty years later Chicago was the nexus where railroads from the east and west met.[3] Warehouses and factories were built adjacent to the railroad yards and Chicago emerged as a transportation and manufacturing colossus far wealthier than the river town from which it sprang. The Midland Warehouses are one such example. Built on what is now a Union Pacific railroad yard, the Midland Warehouses allowed rail cars to enter the building and unload their cargo.[4]

During World War I, the nearby Montgomery Ward warehouses–mail order giants second only to Sears and Roebuck–were coveted by the military as a means to store goods on their way to the fight in Europe.[5] Thus, the logistical genome or DNA of the enterprise came full circle and returned to its military roots.

As Susan Nigra Snyder and Alex Wall pointed out in their seminal essay "Emerging Landscapes of Movement and Logistics," these nineteenth century distribution centers are being supplanted by new, much larger ones at the outskirts of urban areas.[6] Amazon, UPS and Federal Express have emerged as giants of the twenty-first century order. They have built large state-of-the-art distribution nodes centering around moving shipping containers. Far-flung Romeoville is the new 15th Street and Western Avenue.

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Rather than just create more urban infill–housing and strip malls–we endeavor to create a new kind of Urbanism that heals, layers and cultivates rather than colors in more of the grid. These nodes function more like Roman precedents in that their cultivated nature sets them off against a non-hierarchical, geometric background. The four types proposed (second from bottom, from left to right) are the Striped Field, the Porous Perimeter, the Loose Perimeter and the Mat.

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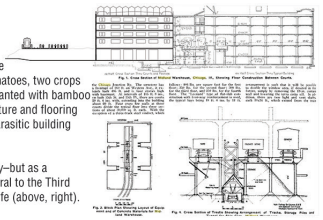

Bicycling replaces trains–not in a "Rails to Trails" way–but as a distribution system for same day delivery that is central to the Third Logistical Regime and a twenty-first century way of life (above, right).

1 A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago* (Chicago, 1890)133.
2 Ibid., 172
3 Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) 96-97.
4 Staff, "Design and Construction of Midland Warehouse, Chicago, Ill." *Engineering and Contracting* XLIV, no. 10, (1916): 182.
5 Mary D. Schopp, *50 Golden Years: An Historical Account of The Central Manufacturing District's First 50 Years, November, 1905–November, 1955* (Chicago: The District, 1955).
6 Susan Nigra Snyder and Alex Wall, "Emerging Landscapes of Movement and Logistics," *Architectural Design Profile*, 1998, no. 134: 16-21.