

Idea: Standardisation enables thoughtlessness

Idea: The ease of scaling up encourages scaling up

Idea: The easier it is to use, the more invisible it is/becomes.

Idea: The story of invention is complicated.

How has our idea of a container changed over time? What meanings do we attach to containers? What are the different histories of containers?

Mythological

source: The Container Principle, by LAlexander Klose.Chapter 4.

"Malcom Purcell McLean (November 14, 1913– May 25, 2001) was an American businessman. He was a transport entrepreneur who developed the modern intermodal shipping container, which revolutionized transport and international trade in the second half of the twentieth century."

unexpected uses

- housing
- data centers
- trash collecting
- temporary offices
- bobbing in oceans
- military transportation

what does standardisation do?

- reliable
- consistent
- similarity
- simplicity
- anonymity
- equality
- commensurable
- quality checks
- cooperation within a group
- path dependency
- lower transaction cost



standardisation

source: Standards, by Lawrence Busch

containers

invention

adoption

How was this standard negotiated? Why did it win out over other technologies (the wooden crates)? What path dependencies played into this, and were created out of it?

efficiency

- speed
- cheap
- automations
- scalability
- replaceable

pull economy

How labor and manufacturing were replaced by the "collecting and distributing" of goods to become central to the economy. Transportation made the economy a "pull economy" from a "push economy" — and was fueled by rationalization through ideals of "cost reduction".

economics

data

The importance of data in a pull economy where logistics become vital. How data informed the invention of containers, how it sustains the continued use of containers, how it is transported in containers.

labor



The loss of jobs for longshoreman -> The way ports used to work before -> The way containers were introduced -> The operation of modern ports (Rotterdam)

Sources: "The Longshoreman", "Trucks & Trains - 1950's Road-Rail Piggyback Trains of the Pennsylvania RailRoad", "The Seaport", "Port Of Rotterdam Documentary"

material

what materials are used in their production?

how do they affect the environment?



containers allow for seamless transition between modes of transportation.

Sources: "Trucks & Trains - 1950's Road-Rail Piggyback Trains of the Pennsylvania RailRoad"