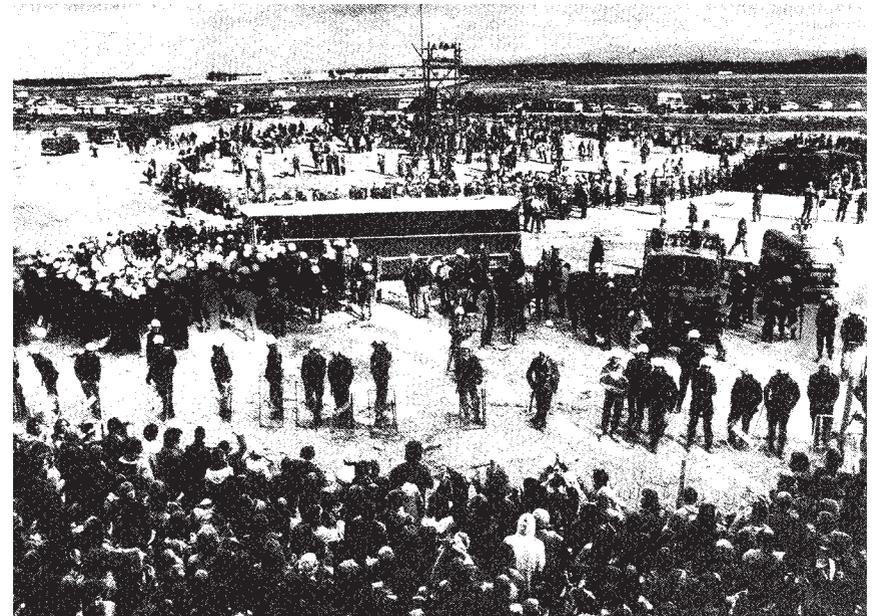William Schwartz   Airports and their Neighbors

Hamburger Papiere zur Designtheorie
und -forschung an der HFBK Hamburg

HFBK
Hamburg

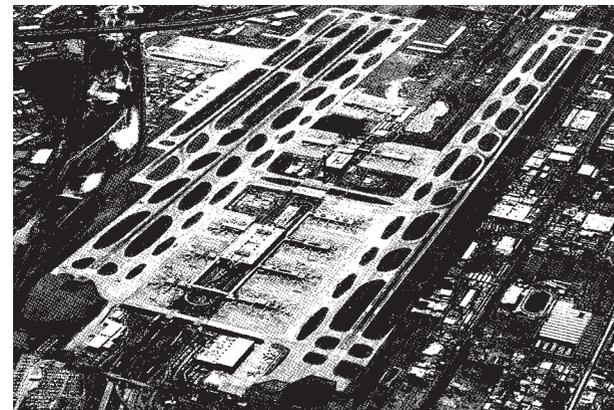# DENKEN ÜBER DESIGN

William Schwartz   Airports and their Neighbors

Hamburger Papiere zur Designtheorie
und -forschung an der HFBK Hamburg

Inhalt

Introduction

In a little more than a century, airports have taken on a multiplicity of meanings that have accompanied the transformation of simple fields into sprawling cities. First set in motion by the public's imagination with flight, over the course of two world wars, airports became further connoted as a political force, and most recently positing their role as economic engines and models for both cities and regions.

In the midst of a struggling post-reconstruction era economy, marked by rising fuel prices and inflation rates, the American aviation sector spearheaded a broad series of economic reforms which sought to resuscitate the industry through exposure to free market competition. These reforms in turn went on to dismantle federal regulations and oversights, and soon rewrote the architecture and significance of the airport in the United States and abroad.

As both public and private airports began embracing these new market principles, in efforts to maximize profits, they began diversifying revenue streams to include retail, real-estate, and land development, at times surpassing flight-related revenues.[1] These expansions eventually led to a reimagination of the airport as a destination in its own right, illustrated in the rise of so-called airport cities, large-scale projects complete with shopping malls, hotels, golf courses, theme-parks, office spaces, convention centers, warehouses and assembly lines, all hinged on publicly funded installations whether roadways, public transit networks, bridges, gas works, security, police and fire departments, or less visibly through subsidies, tax breaks and bailouts. Amidst this race for growth, the expansion of airports has threatened, among others, the environmental health of surrounding communities, and in some cases led to the displacement of entire neighborhoods.[2,3] Steered by private interests, these recent developments have put into question the commonly perceived notion of the airport as a public good.

Initially overshadowed by the celebrity of aircrafts, and more recently dismissed as generic, peripheral, and non-places, airports have begun intrinsically influencing and shaping our cities, at times even catalyzing the construction of entirely new ones, those organized around values of speed, competition and finance capital – a trend which has fueled further city-making offshoots, each competing for the future shape of our cities.[4,5] In such a light, it has never been a better time to ask one another if we share these values, and what exactly the role of the city and our place within it is? Around the world, communities threatened by large-scale airport development projects have begun asking and seeking answers to these fundamental questions, looking beyond their neighboring airports to challenge a larger economic model behind their endless growth.
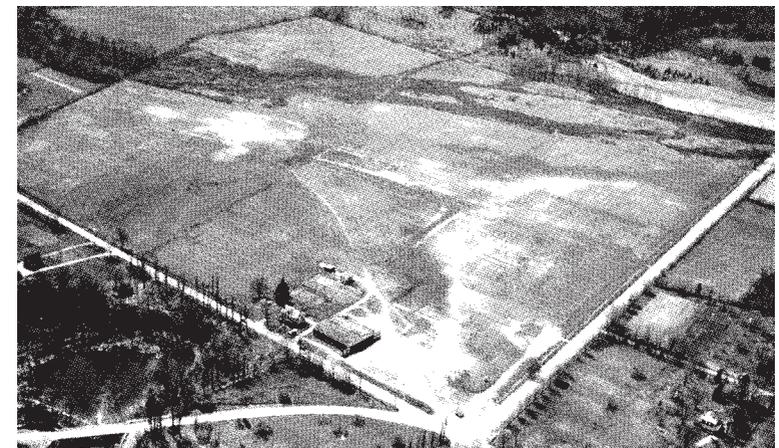
Fields

Around the turn of the century, in its earliest configuration, the airport was little more than an open field stocked with a gas can.[6] Operating solely around the aircraft, early aviation was associated with a sense of freedom from the ground below. However, in the wake of repeated and sometimes fatal accidents, this sensation was put on hold, and instead returned focus to the ground, drawing activity towards softer terrains, such as beaches and meadows.[7] Furthermore, adapting to the elements and their immediate surroundings, aviators oriented their planes to accommodate prevailing winds, outfitted them with pontoons for landing on water, and eyeballed trees and bushes demarcating the landscape below. In the years prior to national and market interventions, aviators operated from just about any open surface, racetracks, fairgrounds, and golf courses. Becoming an evermore common sight, they became popularly romanticized as daredevils, adventurers and innovators, scrapping together early automobile wheels and engines to push their makeshift planes to reach further distances, chart higher altitudes and dial greater speeds. However every one of these additional developments saw their corollary on the ground below, further entwining the act of flight with the ground operations below.

Within a few years, national and military interests began to take shape. Aviation programs began sprouting up across the US and Europe, geared towards aircraft production, pilot training, as well as the allocation of airfields scattered across the landscape. Anchored by hangars and other ancillary structures, airfields were becoming fixed points, and in turn rendering all surrounding areas as ad hoc emergency landing sites. Aircrafts were soon outfitted with telescopes for reconnaissance, and weaponized with machine guns and grenades. The architect and aviation enthusiast Le Corbusier's later remarked that "the bird can be dove or hawk" admitting that the aircraft became a "hawk."[8] The outbreak of World War I only hastened these developments, increasing the number of pilots, aircrafts and airfields. Observing the new technology in battle, military strategists began recognizing how airpower relied upon "the efficiency of its ground organization," adding to an increased focus on the ground below.[9] And though its many limitations kept it from playing a decisive role during the war, aviation cemented its position in modern warfare, signaling the decline of naval supremacy, and ushering in the age of flight.[10]

Transitioning into peacetime, nations set out repurposing their new surpluses with ventures into the delivery of airmail. Besides proving widely popular, it created a great demand for additional landing sites throughout the US. The lack of airfields led to precarious landings, especially in more densely populated areas, and although at the time aircrafts were deemed "abundantly safe," pilots pressured engineers to help provide safer landing sites.[11] Dedicated airfields were sparse and disorganized, with little to no funding, they were either leftover from wartimes, or would come into existence through the will and enthusiasm of citizens and their municipalities. As airmail grew in popularity, so did the talk of civil aviation, bolstered by the advent of more powerful engines which allowed for the addition of passenger cabins. However experiments in civil aviation proved to be a costly endeavor, as well as unaffordable to the average consumer. Its cost, and the general anxiety of fyling at the time were just a few reasons only some five-thousand passengers took to the skies by the mid-1920's.[12]

Airports

As flight networks broadened and their associated infrastructures intensified, so did their financial burdens. In efforts to divest, the US government began auctioning off their most profitable delivery routes to private contractors under the terms that they continue the less profitable passenger service.[13] Under new management, airfields were updated into airports, becoming specialized facilities "dedicated not just to takeoffs and landings but also to the efficient transfer of people and goods from air to ground, from one geographic area to another."[14] In Europe the futuristic airports built on the city's edge were readily contrasted with the inner-city train stations of old, instead evoking the imagery of progress and a new era in the sky. In the US, they were not so much the domain of architects, as of engineers, giving way to large facilities reminiscent of the aircraft's "clearness of function."[15] Nevertheless on both sides of the Atlantic they all tended to give way to grand entrance halls with a restaurant or cafe to feed hungry travelers and locals who would come out to watch new planes take flight.

As these new aircrafts increased in weight and size, no longer able to land on the ubiquitous dirt and grass fields, they began necessitating paved runways and landing strips. The addition of lighting systems extended flight operations into the night, and rudimentary radios helped facilitate navigation and later establishing the first communication between the pilot and the crew below. Pressured to conform to these continual technological advancements, not all airports could afford to modernize, lacking any national support or regulation, flight networks for modern planes were distributed unevenly.

Amid the Great Depression throughout the 1920's and 30's, in part due to the demanding infrastructural costs, the aviation industry was succumbing to a monopoly takeover, prompting local business representatives, policymakers and trade associations to collectively push for state intervention to regulate the industry similar to as had been done with the railroads and banks in the years prior. Acknowledging its growing importance spanning military, logistic and commercial sectors, the federal government pledged its support.

Besides generous subsidies, the government negotiated fares and divided up flight routes, intending to create an even-handed climate for what was later termed "regulated competition."[16] These measures effectively deemed aviation a public good, and helped facilitate a federal aviation program to better standardize and coordinate, what were until then, uneven and decentralized networks of airfields and airports, understanding that "what makes an airport valuable was the fact that there were many others."[17]

By this time Germany had already introduced flight routes stretching from Berlin to Kabul to Hong Kong, as well as making extensive inroads throughout South America. England and France honed their programs towards linking their far-flung territories, establishing networks throughout Eastern Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands. Unlike shipping routes which had traced the contours of continents, flight paths cut straight into their interiors. On a grid determined by the ever-changing capacity of engines, which at the time was some several-hundred kilometers, the earth's surface became dotted with airports, airfields and stage stops. Tucked away in hinterlands, stage stops were improvised landing sites stockpiled with kerosene and fresh water, sometimes unreachable by car or train, making air travel such areas main mode of transportation.[18]

Air-Age

Just as the radio had brought news into the home, film images from far away places in the cinema, and telephone communication across far reaches, the arrival of the airplane literally began shaping people's *world views*. Where in the early 1930's only a half of a million Americans had flown, ticket sales soared to some four million by the following decade, and tripled several years later. The airplane was not only linking people and places, but its view from above spawned visions of a world free from topographical barriers, contested borders and political realities.[19] It brought the image of a world in which everything was now in reach, one global commons that everyone would have access to, it gave the impression of a shrinking and flattening earth, an image reinforced by the one-dimensionality of the flight path. The distinguished sociologist John Urry has described the phenomenon as "producing and reinforcing the language of abstract mobilities and comparison, an expression of a mobile, abstracted mode of being-in-the-world" one that is "ever easier to be visited, appreciated and compared even from above, but not really known from within."[20] No longer understood in metrics of distance, such notions were displayed in advertisements describing travel in hours: "New York—Berlin 20hrs," "Chicago—Singapore 47hrs," even claiming "No spot on earth is more than 60 hours from your local airport."[21] Time began to conquer space, as epitomized in American Airlines's *Air Map* which consisted of points indicating cities, deterritorialized and suspended in a blanket of globular airspace. These world views permeated throughout the magazines, newspapers, films, and radio broadcasts of the day. American high schools offered aeronautics courses, while other departments even taught from airline sponsored text books inevitably crossing curricula with exotic descriptions of their destinations.

Airports themselves helped produce such ideas and imagery, not only by their direct facilitation in the movement of people and goods from point to point around the globe, but they themselves became symbolic monuments of this new globality of fast and far-reaching networks, at times even literally putting some cities on the map. But as convincing as it seemed, airports were

never global, instead only connecting specific people and cargo to specific points of entry. Regardless airports, airplanes and other emerging communication technologies seemed to bring the world closer together fortifying these visions of peace, brotherhood and *one world*.[22] This rhetoric helped rally the public around the United States' new role and "responsibility" in endowing the world with freedom, promising "a truly American internationalism something as natural to us in our time as the airplane or the radio."[23] To the general public "global aviation" was increasingly pictured as "both a promise and a threat in the modern age."[24]
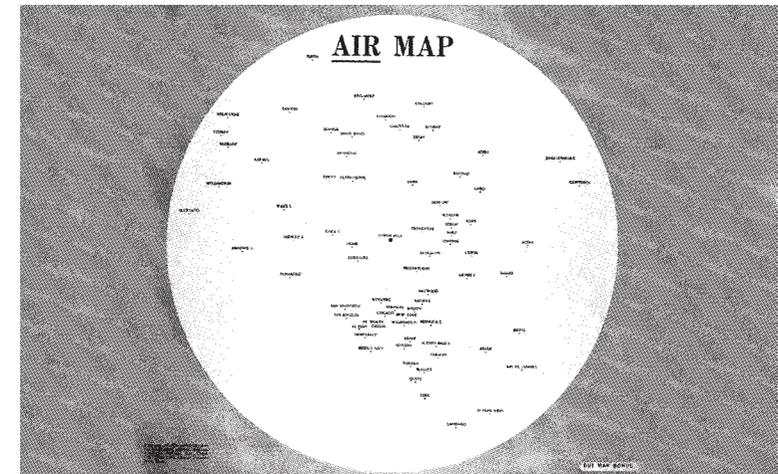
World War II

Before publicly entering the Second World War, during secret negotiations with Great Britain, the US agreed to divide the burden of aircraft production, with the former manufacturing smaller fighter planes, and the latter larger bomber planes, which would additionally serve to transport armaments and supplies to the many front lines of the world war. This division would prove significant following the war, while British planes would offer little versatility, American bombers could be repurposed into a flock of passenger fleets. In just a couple of years production soared exponentially, from ten thousand to one-hundred-thousand planes. But before the US could even deliver its wartime support, its planes were going to require proper runways, landing strips and facilities. Once again over the course of secret talks, this time with its commercial flag-carriers, in exchange for financial and diplomatic cover, the US asked for their support in constructing and managing a number of airports abroad, those of which could second as military bases if needed. In other words, under the auspices of commercial air travel, the US turned its airlines and airports into political arms expanding its reach, investments and influence into the heart of sovereign nations, building technical infrastructures according to American standards. From West Africa to Cairo, throughout the Middle East, India and China, along the borders of the Soviet Union and across the Pacific Ocean, the US constructed airports. Besides ensuring its dominance in postwar air travel, many of the airports were also built from the "defensive, " propping american occupation in all corners of the globe leading up to the Cold War.[25,26]

The end of the war prompted a number of international aviation organization, thought they mostly acted in line with US proposals and initiatives. Soon American codes, standards and the use of English would be extended internationally, which in turn would be written into the architecture and iconography of the airport. This enforcement of this modernization soon brought about a mass annexation of airports unable to keep up with the growing standards of length, width and strength of runways and landing strips, bringing to mind J.G. Ballard's take of how at the airport "everything is designed for the next five minutes."[27] By the 1950's, american companies were contracted by sovereign nations to build their airports and operate their airlines, besides the already diffuse collection of army bases across the globe, the american presence abroad opened up new vistas of business and tourism, opening the door to new markets. After traveling the world by plane, the presidential candidate Wendell Willkie enthusiastically recalled "Everywhere I went around the world, and I mean literally everywhere, I found officers and men of the United States Army. We have sent our ideas and our ideals, and our motion pictures and our radio programs, our engineers and our businessmen, and our pilots and our soldiers, and we cannot now escape the result."[28] Striking a similar tone the media magnate Henry Luce celebrated how "the American airman has been everywhere" declaring "his first purpose is commerce, the free movement of goods and people and ideas, at the lowest possible cost, in the largest possible numbers and amounts, between anywhere and everywhere. The world has nothing to fear from that."[29] While in one sense aviation was unifying the world, the US continued to project how it ought to be, dramatically expanding its military strength, markets and culture now broadcast to a much larger consumer base than back home.
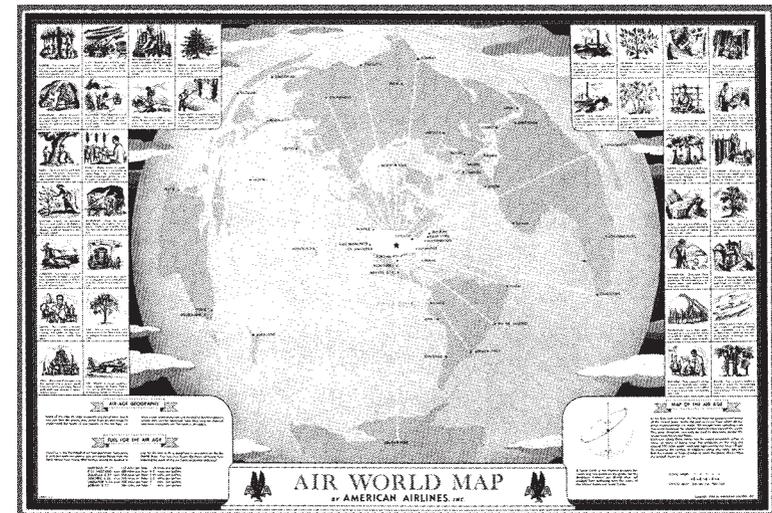
Jet-Age

With the war over, the emergence of the jet engine brought about faster, quieter, and more comfortable flights, no longer needing to intermittently refuel, jets began to make passengers feel more secure, and services financially viable, eventually giving way to the the so-called "democratization" of flight. This surge in travelers pressured airports to expand once again, and while some were unable to keep up, others overanticipated the boom, operating at only a fraction of their capacity, forcing some to close down, returning them back into parks and pastures, an example where "speed overtook the airport itself."[30]

Postwar aviation gave way to a new glamorous lifestyle formed around mobility, advertisements casually invited the public to come "fly down to Rio, see the Acropolis, visit Victoria Falls, the Taj Mahal, Peking, Baghdad, and all the other interesting places of the world." Besides the burgeoning of mass tourism, the airplane glorified the jet-setter, the international dealmaker, the businessman, reaping in the benefits of a supposedly free world. Urry again points out "as many people and objects are more mobile in airspace, others become relatively less mobile," and though geographical barriers had seemed to dissolve the historian Jenifer Van Vleck explains how "boundaries of class, race, nation and empire continued to restrict human movement, becoming perhaps more rigid as technology enabled elites to augment their power and status."[31,32]

But by the 1960's and 70's, the prospects of a shrinking world were reconsidered. Where there had once been talk of brotherhood and world peace, the emergence of the Cold War began to sow a growing sense of fear. This conflicted with the bedrock notions of aviation's total-reachability in a unified world, instead the world became divided as forecast by Adolf Berle, a close adviser to President Roosevelt in 1943, "Today we are either friendly neighbors or close enemies to every country in the world. We are within reach of them and they of us."[33] The attacks on Pearl Harbor proved this point, but perhaps even more sinister was the total decimation of Hiroshima brought about by a single

aircraft, it put into perspective what a global *neighbor* could do to Chicago or New York. The fear and anxiety of nuclear holocaust was only compounded by a string of hijackings that occurred throughout the decades to follow, perhaps the most iconic of which involved the hijacking, evacuation and detonation of three commercial jets, later broadcast on television into the world's living rooms.[34] Airports became sensitive joints in world travel, an attack at any one of them became an attack at home, whether home was in Madrid or Baltimore. These events were soon inscribed in the airport's architecture, they became highly complex and secure, segregated into a series of sterile and non-sterile compartments. Where it had once revolved around the aircraft, and later the passenger, it became a space organized around the control and monitoring of those passengers.[35] As the architect Dianne Harris has rightly pointed out "landscapes and indeed architecture are never neutral, they are always powerful symbols and containers of cultural values just as they simultaneously construct culture."[36]

Airport Cities
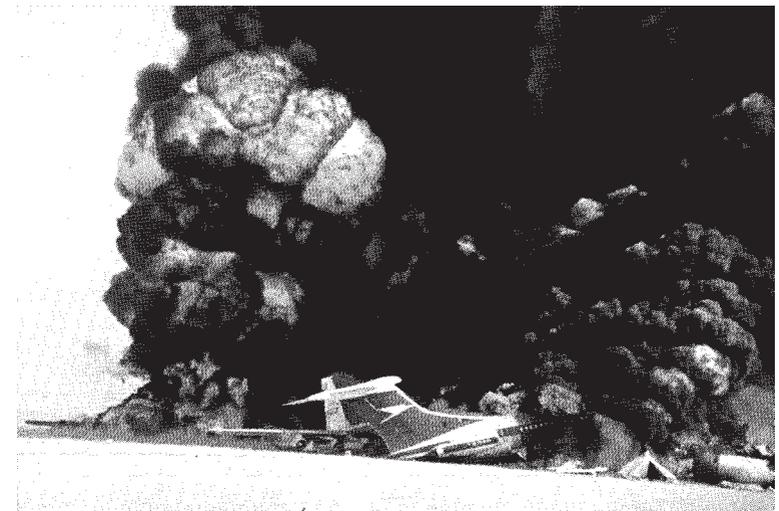
Already encumbered by security protocols, customer anxiety, and a stagnating post-reconstruction era economy, following the 1973 oil crisis shocked by a spike in fuel costs in turn eroding ticket prices, the aviation industry came to a near standstill. As they had done a half a century prior, airlines partnered alongside economists, think tanks and policymakers to vigorously lobby the state, however this time to loosen regulations, suggesting market competition would jumpstart the industry, or as the economist du jour Milton Friedman explained would "unleash the lean, innovative nature of unrestricted free enterprise."[37] The push successfully culminated in 1978 with the signing of the Airline Deregulation Act, which effectively dismantled nearly all previous regulations that had been put in place to protect workers and consumers alike, whether regulating fair prices, wages, working conditions, routes, and schedules. This same strategy was then carbon copied and set in motion deregulatory agendas across other industrial, commercial, and financial sectors, telecommunications, banking and trucking to name a few.[38] This became a watershed moment in the American and world economy, ending an era of state interventionism that had come to define the postwar economies of the West, prompting Milton Friedman to celebrate it as "the first major move in any area away from government control and toward greater freedom."[39] This supposed *move* remained just that, an evasive and undefined market logic, one entangled in vague platitudes of freedom. More recently economists, geographers, sociologists have begun to isolate its far-reaching effects under the shorthand term of neoliberalism. And though its social and cultural effects have been diffuse and less concise, from a policy angle, this recent iteration of classical liberalism has generally involved extensive state deregulation, privatization of the public sector, and the opening of new markets.

Ironically, instead of jumpstarting competition the lobbyists had proposed, it resulted in its very elimination, recalling the same conflicts that led to state intervention in the first place. Now free to regulate itself, the industry submitted to the logic of the market. After a short period of cutthroat price wars, just about the entire competition was brought to its knees resulting in buyouts and mergers, returning American aviation into an oligopoly as it had previously been during the Great Depression.[40] As has repeatedly been the case in other industries, deregulation in the aviation industry resulted in a "downward redistribution of regulatory burden, risk, and costs to consumers, passengers, and rank-and-file employees."[41]

Many airports, which had up until then been publicly owned and operated, began contracting out operations and leasing their properties through public-private partnerships, and in some cases wholesale privatization. Internalizing the market landscape, airports adopted a more competitive hub-and-spoke model for organizing flights, which in its essence funneled a greater number of flights into a single hub airport from which passengers would connect to secondary and tertiary flights en route to their final destination. With market principles guiding airport operations towards greater profits, airports were fixated on growth, no one wanted to be the spokes, "everyone wants to be the hub."[42] In this flurry to net more flights and their potential profits, once again airports began expanding their footprints constructing additional runways and terminals. As was the case with the airlines, this new system benefited those airports which could direct the most investments, not only causing outside interests to enter cities and regions, but once hub airports secured a substantial slice of the market, they became emboldened to manipulate prices and routes. In this landscape of sprawling airports, the oscillations between running to catch connecting flights and the idleness of dwell time resulted in their popular disenchantment and disregard, such sentiments only reinforced by their homogeneity, more recently widely interpreted as non-places, vapid of meaning.

Since 1978 up until the present, lacking direct federal support and the industry's embrace for neoliberal reforms, a new type of airport has given rise, one "driven by risk management strategies to diversify income streams and lessen reliance on aeronautical charges in an industry vulnerable to external shocks like pandemics, terrorism, economic downturns, and natural disasters."[43] Beginning with in-terminal retail taking advantage of captive travelers' dwell time, airports began to expand their commercial horizons outside of the traditional airport. Where before there were "minimum public services beyond the obligatory duty free shops, overpriced restaurants and overcrowded bars" a proliferation of hotels, offices spaces, car rentals, appeared, later chasing the market constructing spas, theme parks, big box stores and even distilleries, brickworks and chocolatiers.[44] As an airport operator in Melbourne declared "We are now in the property development business."[45] By the 1990's these den-

se economic activities were branded as airport cities, appearing around major hubs from Washington D.C. to Amsterdam where they have since become "nuclei of major urbanization trends" reaching deep into their surroundings. The aerotropolis is the most recent incarnation, clustering "time-sensitive and 'smart growth' economic activities" with aims of constructing entire cities and regions around "the global economy of the future," multi-billion dollar projects of which have already begun taking shape throughout Eastern Asia and the developing world.[46,47]

Aerotropolises

As has been the case with seaports, rivers and canal systems, railway corridors, and motorized vehicles, transportation infrastructures have unquestionably played a role in urban growth. In light of this, the aerotropolis has been glowingly boosted by its lead proponent John Kasarda as the "fifth wave of urban development," likening them as a new urban form "placing airports in the center with cities growing around them, connecting workers, suppliers, executives, and goods to the global marketplace" and serving as "the primary drivers of urban growth, international connectivity, and economic success."[48] At its core, the aerotropolis is composed of "time-sensitive" and "-critical" infrastructures, a feature Kasarda has pressed, even describing our age as the "survival of the fastest," one where "speed now matters most."[49,50,51,52] In this context, time becomes a vector for organizing economies, resources, cities and people, all of which, like the view of the earth from the airplane, become flattened "into mere collections of abstracted information" as to streamline the course of global market flows, a concept Karl Marx grasped decades before the first airplane ever took flight.[53] In one of his unfinished manuscripts he explained in detail how "Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it … Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time."[54] We can apply this process to the airport, when faced by the the laws of market competition and technological advancements, perpetually threatened by loss of marketshare or technical obsolescence, the airport is forced to update and expand, either intensifying

operations, vis-à-vis air travel, or seeking out new additional modes of income (i.e. hardware stores or wellness centers), whatever will generate the highest possible return on investment. As it continues to intensify operations and ventures into more profitable streams, its overall market value increases. In efforts to remain competitive, it is forced to expand outward into its direct surroundings, the city, the region, and eventually internationally incorporating additional airports into its holdings, as seen in Frankfurt Airport's Fraport operating airports in China, India, Brazil and Peru, or the recently privatized San Francisco International Airport's purchase of all four Honduran airports, or the Italian multinational Vinci's activity in Japan, Chili, Portugal and thirty-two other airports internationally.[55,56,57] As airports gain in size and value, so do they gain aggrandizing titles as *economic engines* and *job creators*, titles that only strengthen their chokehold on its local politics and economies. However, as airports perpetually expand, the market places them perpetually on the cusp of financial ruin, a condition that can only be remedied via expansion, streamlining costs, or secondary state support (i.e. new runway, layoffs, tax breaks). Nevertheless their sheer size and precarity become enmeshed in city-wide and regional economic agendas that their growth rests on the legalized violence and coercion of their surrounding environment, or a living example of time annihilating space, through the literal flattening of entire neighborhoods as has been experienced and threatened in Phoenix, Tokyo, Mexico City, and Frankfurt to name a few.[58,59,60,61]

Social Imaginaries

As we have seen throughout aviation's development, neoliberalism has similarly reconfigured geography into "standards of global capital, by flattening all difference into manageable, measurable and commodifiable contours."[62] As the political economist Peter Hall describes, where "others have once seen families or communities" today's economists and policymakers see one dimensional "economic actors driven by a market calculus."[63] As these trends pervade all spheres of life, so does the notion that "everything can in principle be treated as a commodity," or inverted as only that which can be monetized holds value.[64] As cynical as this may sound, such ideas have entered our social imaginaries, as the market becomes an ethic for all social relations, the public good has been exchanged for values of "entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and sturdy individualism," those that equate the "pursuit of self-interest and consumer satisfaction with human freedom," those glorifying personal wealth, understand charity as a reasonable solution for solving social ills, and associate welfare programs with "inefficiency, corruption, and incompetence."[65] In the US this is on full display pressuring the poorest people in a society to find solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security all by themselves, then blame them, if they fail, as lazy.[66] And just as the economics of neoliberalism have effected today's social imaginary, we are reminded of the "social costs" that cars, trains and airplanes have made as they "burrowed their ways into everyday life," new technologies and modes of transportation that "quite literally rewire cultural landscapes."[67,68] With such shifts in our social imaginaries alongside an onslaught of neoliberal policymaking that has certainly contributed to the irrational growth of airports, a century ago Max Weber described that it was: "Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the "world images" that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest."[69] In this light, over the course of a century, the airport has been both an idea produced by, and later an idea actively shaping the social imaginary. A product of the publics

imagination with flight, it later came to symbolize a new era of communication and connection with distant people and places. However the trauma of two world wars reappraised it as symbol of a new age of warfare and reorganization of global power. Peacetime and the jet-engine returned it to the public sphere, this time imbued with ideas of freedom, luxury and international brotherhood, sentiments quickly toppled by the threat of nuclear holocaust facilitating yet another transformation, similar to that of the worlds hemispheres, highly secured and compartmentalized. Following the oil embargo and the end of the Cold War, run as a business, the airport rebranded itself and its surrounding as a destination itself and an economic engine for its surrounding. Enduring these decades of psychosis, today the airport has slipped past the public's consciousness, rendered into an invisible site, the same no matter where you are in the world, a site popularly regarded as nothing more than a non-place.

Cities as Airports

Disarmed as mere transitional spaces, the necessary prerequisites for international travel, exceptions to the rule, devoid of the public interest, airports' influence on the city and everyday life have gone unnoticed. Responding to their popular status as non-places Urry reveals "what is striking is how places are increasingly *like* airports," explaining how their atmospheres are being "copied, simulated and rolled out in towns, cities, resorts, islands, festivals, and events around the world; it is on the move and taking over cities near us all." This environment, composed of its technologies, organization, business practices and securitization are "trialled within airports which then move out to become mundane characteristics of many towns and cities."[70] Some have claimed "the airport is the city of the future," a surrogate for the public realm which "offers at least the illusion of a meeting place in which the rich and poor are in closer proximity than almost anywhere else in an increasingly economically segregated world."[71] Once again Le Corbusier correctly predicted that the airplane would "indict the city" claiming "whole quarters of them must be destroyed and new cities built."[72] These recent incarnates of the airport have been sold as "tailor-made for today's world, in which no nation reliably dominates and every nation must fight for its place in the global economy. It is at once a new model of urbanism and the newest weapon in the widening competition for wealth and security."[73] Others have alerted their "framework for turbocharging corporate globalization. Heavy-handed, centralized planning of an unprecedented magnitude supports the relentless drive for corporate dominance and profits, resulting in widening inequalities, worsening poverty and ruination of ecosystems."[74] Which as a result has begun transforming our cities into "privatized enclaves of commercial entrepreneurialism."[75] In fact there is even a proverb used by urban planners that goes: the airport leaves the city; the city follows the airport; the airport becomes the city.[76] Tightly wound with the global expansion of neoliberal market principles and policymaking, airport cities and aerotropolises have unearthed a host of other so-called "city-making" projects, prepackaged as commodities, cities with product names such

as "model cities," "economic cities," "charter cities," and "smart cities."[77,78,79,80] These "instant" cities often entail charter governments and tax-free economic zones, features that aim to liberate them from their nation-states, run as a business, competing as their own insular entities on a global scale, no longer bearing political, historical, or geographic entanglement, images reminiscent of the "Air Map" we visited earlier, cities suspended in the vacuum of the free market. Already in the 1940's, Jennifer Van Vleck explains that cities, nations, and national corporations began losing their "political significance," instead "names of places merely signified different kinds of consumer goods – strawberries from Bandoeng, mangos from Bangkok – that could be pleasurably and profitably exchanged by air-minded cosmopolitans."[81] However, by no means should any of this seem to suggest the airport as a city is in any way free from political connotation, quite the contrary, more likely they simply become technopolitical levers, a crux between the state and the marketplace. In describing her term technopolitics, historian Gabrielle Hecht refers to it as the "strategic practice of designing or using technology to constitute, embody or enact political goals."[82]
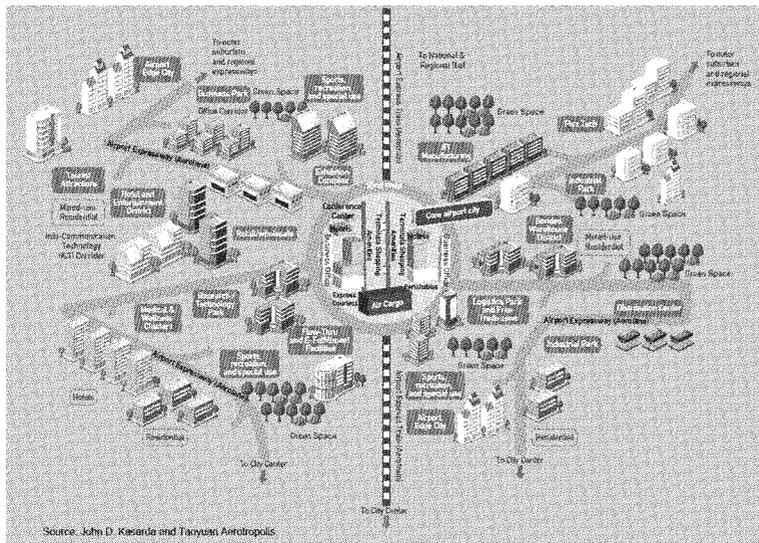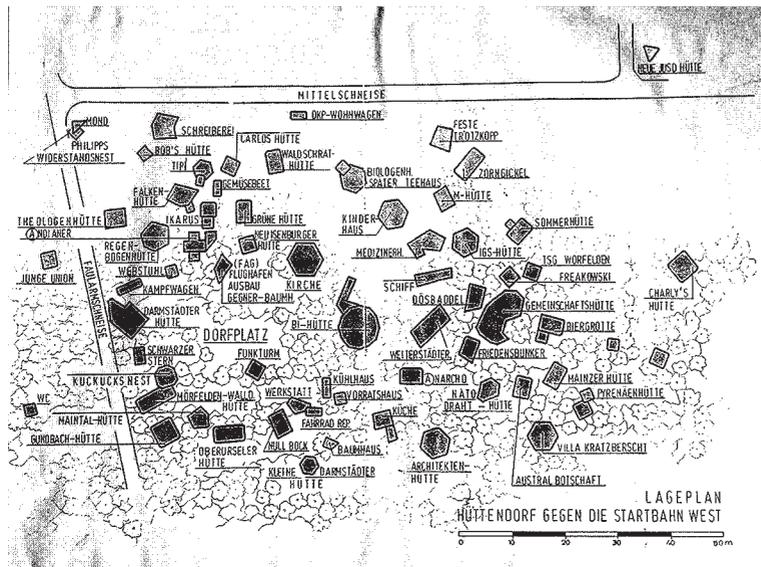

Source: John D. Kasarda and Taoyuan Aerotropolis

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Neighbors

Of course airports have played a positive role facilitating social, familial, cultural, and economic exchanges, but as policymakers David Howarth and Stephen Griggs have rightly noted the "massive expansion of global aviation with its insatiable demand for more airport capacity and its growing contribution to carbon emissions, makes it a critical societal problem … alongside traditional concerns about noise and air pollution and the disruption of local communities, airport politics has been connected to the problems of climate change, peak oil, and social inequalities."[83] As we have come to see, the airport, as left to the will of the market perpetually expands, whether through conventional aeronautical means, appending additional terminals runways, or diversifying and venturing into retail, land speculation and property development schemes. As airports expand, so too does their hold on their surrounding areas and legislation, bending policies and agendas in their favor, bit by bit shaping our cities.

However, their growth and influence on the city have not gone without opposition. The world over, communities impacted by large-scale airport development have given rise to a unique form of place-oriented protest, playing on the airport's cultural significance, borrowing local histories and repertoires, these movement have begun to form new social bonds, melding concerns of the local with the global, transcending their airports to take on a critique of the irrationalities, austere inequalities, unsustainability and violence of capitalism, a system at the heart of neoliberalism and their unrelenting growth. These movements have looked towards bottom-up city-making in the form of small community-based institutions existing outside the marketplace, places which represent the shared needs and desires of the community. The sociologist Ann Swindler has referred to such approaches as "strategies of action," where "cultural products; the symbolic experiences, mythic lore, and ritual practices of a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action. When we notice cultural differences we recognize that people do not all go about their

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business in the same ways; how they approach life is shaped by their culture."[84]
These actions have helped recapture and redirect social imaginaries into
"sources of resilience," breaking away from the capitalist tenets of freedom,
private property and personal responsibility to those standing for equality, the
commons, and collective responsibility. Maybe one of the most striking aspects
of these actions has been the realization of small-scale, egalitarian models of
living as symbolized by their own "moral architectures," whether in the form
of classrooms, kindergartens, clinics, housing projects, kitchens, churches, or
farming collectives. Built adjacent to their airports, these moral architectures
have come to represent city models that don't flatten homes, histories, cultures,
solidarities, traditions, rights, nature and people into abstract commodities,
but instead, enhance them. By creating these "places" and all their cultural
and political significance, perhaps these examples of moral architecture can
help counter some of the effects of what Marx referred to as the annihilation of
space by time. On that note, perhaps it's most fitting to end with the words of
the urban sociologist, Robert Park, who in 1967 wrote: "Man's most consistent
and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in
more after his heart's desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it
is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and
without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has
remade himself."[85]

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