

Aerotropolis

The Way We'll Live Next

John Kasarda's work on airports and the aerotropolis is certainly not new. For over a decade, he (re-)publishes books and articles: mostly case studies based on his airport consultation work. His new book is written by journalist Greg Lindsay who followed the aerotropolis guru on its way to consulting jobs. Lindsay took the time to write down in a smooth way what is in Kasarda's mind - and probably wherefore he couldn't find time. Joint by the praising reviews in *The Wall Street Journal* and other journals and magazines, it paves the way to a wider audience than the insiders of airport area development.

By John D. Kasarda and Greg Lindsay

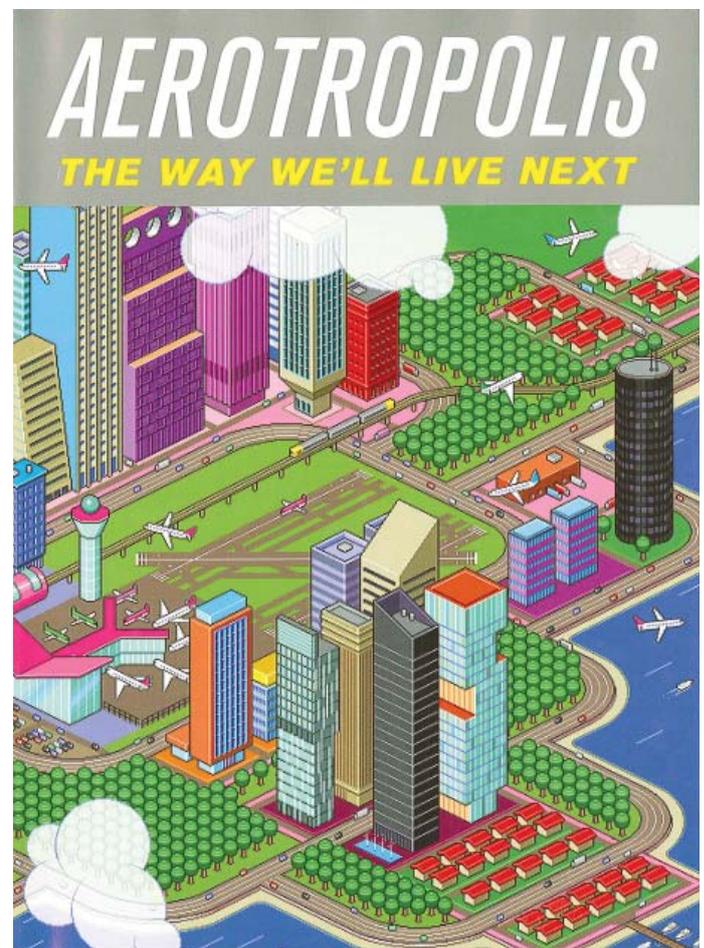
Book Review by: Michel van Wijk

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, this book will do for airport cities what Joel Garreau and his edge city did for the suburban business parks and shopping malls. This is too early to judge, but it fits in the line of firm statements in the book itself. According to Kasarda and Lindsay, the current Age of Instant replaces Garreau's Age of Suburbia. In the upcoming era, the price of oil matters less than the price of speed. And for the authors, aviation will have to continue growing, as millions of Chinese factory workers and Kenyan flower farmers' incomes depend on the trade of their goods in the rest of the world. We will have to look for sustainability solutions in new technologies, not in reducing aviation.

Comparable to earlier work, the book contains mainly case studies. Therefore, examples in the U.S., Europe (London and Amsterdam), the Middle-East (Dubai and Abu Dhabi) and East-Asia (China and Korea) are described one by one. The cases are rich of context, details, and quotes. These quotes are sometimes grotesque or even clownish, when Lindsay quotes various experts quoting the Aerotropolis guru Kasarda, instead of writings of the mastermind himself. One of the quotes is from Fred Smith of FedEx' airport hub of Memphis. "Not every great city will be an aerotropolis, but those cities which are a metropolis will be great ones (...) the airport area is the calling card and the handshake. It's the first thing people see and it's the last thing they see when they leave." Therefore, Memphis spent millions planting trees.

The comparison of Memphis with rival Louisiana, where the other leading integrator UPS is contributing to an aerotropolis, is relevant and striking. UPS contributes to the hub development, and for standardization has deskilled the work at the transportation hub almost completely. Hundreds of unskilled - and therefore cheap - Somali's from the Bantu tribe have resettled in Louisville in recent years, working mostly in and around the UPS-hub.

One other new development described by Lindsay and Kasarda is the rise of medial tourism as an engine for aviation growth.



Started up by Mr. Tordal in Thailand in 2001, it became a realistic alternative for health care in the US: you pay either \$65.000 in the U.S. or \$8.000 in Bangkok; according to Mr. Tordel the difference of credit card payment or going into bankruptcy for the many uninsured Americans. Recently, the service and quality levels of the globalized hospitals are comparable, so no need to worry and a holiday can easily be included in the trip.

A blunt case study with new insights of the shape that aerotropolis development can have is booming Dubai. Lindsay and Kasarda call the free zones of the airport and the hub carrier the dark side of Dubai "it's free zones are hubs for smuggling embargoed American goods into Iran, and for smuggling Chinese counter-

feit drugs into America. Dubai also traffics in sex and death. An estimated ten thousand kidnapped girls move through here, while the weapons dealer Viktor Bout reputedly armed both Hezbollah and the Iraqi insurgency from the emirates (..) Slavery was abolished in 1963, but the practice continues when 'guest workers' from Dhaka, Karachi and Sri Lanka arrive and get their passports confiscated (p.303).

The authors also critically discuss the aerotropolis developments in other emerging markets, in particular China and India. The World Bank's (and China's) formula for growth seems to be: supply chains + clustering + air power = productivity growth. Hundreds of airports are therefore under construction. This leads for instance to the bizarre experience of Lindsay upon arrival at Beijing International Airport. The shuttle between the terminals is there like a time machine, traveling in minutes from communist style concrete buildings to the glass- and steel facades of Norman Foster's dragon headed concourse, until Dubai's new terminal the world's biggest building under one roof.

Airport development also booms in India, where Kasarda calms down expectations. Not every city can have an aerotropolis in India. With the aerotropolis-fever, there is however few who share that opinion, ignoring to the Minister of Environment's arguments not to destroy the mangrove forests for building a second airport for Mumbai. "The bottom-line is that the aerotropolis needs more than a 'build it and they will come approach'", according to Kasarda. This approach in the upcoming market is in strong contrast with the muddling through approach that does not work at London-Heathrow, Chicago O'Hare and Los Angeles. He favors understandably a more harmonic model, with new types of governance, like in Amsterdam. Kasarda even brings the planners of Detroit's new airport to learn from Amsterdam, in order to convince them to set up a comparable model for a Detroit Aerotropolis Development Company. The main idea: the public sector gets the private sector to pay for the infrastructure, and the private interests help to decide where the money should be invested.

The book is thus full of rich details that are relevant for the discussion of where this Instant Age is leading too. What to think of the Bantu tribe moving from Somalia to Louisville to work

for UPS? And is aviation limited to the rich homo aeroporticus, the cosmopolitan elites that go Christmas shopping in New York and have a holiday house in France? Or do all people in the end have the moral right to fly, as Kasarda suggests, and therefore we will build more airports and need more jets? For this and other interesting discussions, I would recommend the book to them, other scholars and airport planners.

Overall, this book contributes largely to the field of research for scholars, policy makers and urban planners working on the crossroads of airports and cities. Despite the merits of the book, what is mainly missing is a theoretical, or at least an analytical framework. We have to read until page 174 before a definition of the aerotropolis is given, and the roots are described starting at page 383. But general patterns, urban design guidelines and required land uses, other conditions for building a successfully integrated aerotropolis or setting a governmental framework for implementation, are not given. Of course the cases diver to a large extent, but developing such a framework could be on the long run of higher added value than describing more case studies. Probably professor Kasarda knows more outlines of the framework than he until now shows, and might (let it) write down after his retirement. His colleagues at the University of Carolina or other academics will have to analyze the cases in the mean time. Or, until retirement, you'll have to hire him.

About the Authors

John D. Kasarda, a professor at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina, advised countries, cities, and companies about the aerotropolis and its implications. Greg Lindsay has written for Time, Fortune and Business Week. For one story he traveled around the world by airplane for three weeks, never leaving the airport while on the ground.

About the Reviewer

Dr. Michel van Wijk is advisor at Schiphol Area Development Company and wrote his PhD about airport area planning in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan in 2007. He is also editor of Airlines Magazine.

About the Book

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