



Airports, Office Property-led Developments & the Restructuring of the Urban Landscape - the Example of Amsterdam Schiphol

Sven CONVENTZ, Research Associate
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany
sven.conventz@kit.edu

In the past decades international (hub) airports have gradually gone through a morphogenesis from originally pure infrastructure facilities into more complex and multilayered urban and regional growth poles. Simultaneously, airports and their vicinities have become attractive sites for real estate developments and property-led capital accumulation. Thereby, the boom of airport-linked spatial developments is primarily the result of a number of structural and regulatory changes that have forced airport operators to re-examine their strategic alignment. One approach is the consequent repositioning of airports as real estate developers and the foundation of corresponding subsidiaries. The changes of the airport operator's general conditions, however, have not solely affected the airport's physical texture which increase resembles urban-like entities - often circumscribed with the term "airport city" - but also the spatial restructuring dynamics of urban systems. In recent years many European city regions with a monocentric spatial tradition like Amsterdam for example have experienced an urban transformation process toward a more polycentric urban landscape with different emerging sub centers. Despite its increasing importance, contemporary debates on the urban transformation process indicate that the changed role of airports and their impacts on the urban form in general and on (office) real estate markets in particular is still an under-studied area.

The intention of the paper is to analyze the emergence of new office quarters at and around Schiphol airport and the spatial relationship to other more "traditional" office locations within the core city. Moreover, the developmental strategy, issues concerning factors of success and limiting factors as well as the future potential of such locations will be discussed. To answer these questions a methodological mix approach has been chosen. This includes an extensive desktop research of e.g. real estate criteria followed by field research in form of on-site visits and qualitative interviews with professionals and academics from different backgrounds as for example architecture, urban planning, aviation as well as from real estate and financial industry.

The results of the analysis indicate that the enormous success of new offices at airports or their vicinity is based on intelligent, comprehensive and innovative strategies on the part of different protagonists who either supply or demand office space at airports. The airport is not primarily perceived as a transportation node but as an advantageous business location. Multimodality combined with an extensive business infrastructure is understood as a crucial competitive and developmental advantage within the international time-based competition. With the expanding floor space for office uses at airports a new urban-locational pattern is evolving. This development is explicitly supported by the city of Amsterdam.

KEY WORDS: Aerotropolis, Airport City, real estate developments, multimodality, urban restructuring.