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DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACE FOR MOBILITY: CONTESTATION, NEGOTIATION AND EXPERIMENT AT AMSTERDAM AIRPORT SCHIPHOL

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates airport design, using the example of Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, from the point of view of managers, architects and designers. It is argued that existing accounts of the airport as a space of transit as well as a place for shopping and entertainment have underrated the complexity and interdependency of the interests at stake in the airport design, as well the value of an airport terminal as an urban design exercise. This is particularly relevant in the discussion of the transformation of spaces of mobility, such as airports or railway stations, into multifunctional public spaces and may also be valid for urban spaces where mobilities are becoming increasingly important. The paper analyses the challenges and opportunities that arise in such design situations, tracing the recent transformations of Amsterdam Airport Schiphol from the perspective of professionals who have played a key role in this process.

Key words: Airport City, Schiphol, interview, mobility, urban design

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade the airport has become one of the key objects of study for geographers and sociologists working with the so-called 'new mobilities paradigm' as a particular set of research agendas, theories and methods exploring the movement of people and things as processes through which identities and social relations are produced, maintained and contested (Cresswell 2006, 2011; Sheller & Urry 2006; Urry 2007; Adey 2010). In this context the ideas of the airport as a 'non-place' (Augé 1995) or a mere node in the 'space of flows' (Castells 2000) have been repeatedly criticised as images that obscure the complex picture of power relationships that are enacted at airports through controlling, sorting and surveilling movement of people, things and data (i.e. Merriman 2004; Cresswell 2006; Adey *et al.* 2007; Salter 2007).

Furthermore, mobility scholars have brought to light the complexity of the airport as a multifunctional place of travel, work, commerce and entertainment and have shown that taking people from A to B as fast as possible is not always the priority for airport authorities. 'Dwell time' of passengers has been gradually increasing as the operators have to accommodate ever more sophisticated security checks and try boosting non-aviation related income from restaurants, shops and other facilities. Large international terminals not only process passenger movement, but also invite travellers

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and non-travellers alike to visit spa centres, boutiques and restaurants or work at an office with a view of the runways. Some airports, often together with adjacent areas, came to be marketed as fully-fledged urban centres and to be labelled respectively: AirportCity (Amsterdam), Sky City (Hong Kong), Aviapolis (Helsinki), Aerotropolis (Memphis) to name just a few.[1]

The design strategies that are introduced in the wake of these transformations are sometimes akin to those already established at shopping malls, yet their manipulative power can even be reinforced at airports due to specific security requirements, lesser degree of people's freedom of movement or the possibility of using surveillance for commercial purposes (Lyon 2003; Adey 2008). However, in many cases the operational objectives, security interests and profit-making incentives are hard to reconcile and some studies have pointed to the difficulties that airport authorities face on a daily basis (Adey 2007; Kellerman 2008; Salter 2008). For example, Klauser *et al.* (2008, p. 122) in their investigation of surveillance procedures at Geneva International Airport have argued that the airport should not be seen as 'a homogeneous world of complete control', having analysed how the CCTV practices are produced through compromises and negotiations between different stakeholders on a daily basis. In particular, it appears from their data that the airport's ambition to serve as a multifunctional urban space and a stage for commercial events brings a number of challenges for security and surveillance professionals who have to negotiate their vision of the 'trouble-free' airport with other parties.

This paper continues this line of research that aims to unpack the complexity of airport design as it develops into an 'entrepreneurial urban activity centre' (Stevens *et al.* 2010). However, it takes a slightly different perspective on the subject, inspired by a set of questions developed within mobility studies, urban geography and urban design. It has been suggested that as airports are growing, commercialising and look more and more like cities, cities in their turn develop features of airports (Urry 2009). Some put it another way: airports may supply solutions for managing mobilities in urban spaces and thus might represent the public spaces of the future: 'The airport is the primary testing ground, the vanguard of the organisation of the city as the space of heavily surveilled, highly managed flows (. . .) It models the city as a pure space of circulation and commerce' (Sorkin 2004, pp. 261–262; see also Adey 2004; Harley & Fuller 2004).

In this kind of discourse the example of airport design has often been linked to reflections on the detrimental transformation of urban public space, airports being rendered as 'consequences and causes of a shrunken public space, a space that no longer adequately functions as a genuine accumulator and circulator of persons and ideas but rather of consumers and non-consumers, or threats to consumption.' (Rosler 1998, p. 77). A few voices, nevertheless, have praised the international terminal for giving new space for urban culture to thrive and creating social space of unprecedented diversity, thus, being 'the closest many cities come to a public realm, in some cases hardly limited to travellers' (Sudjic 1992, p. 145; see also Gottdiener 2001; Pearman 2004). Moreover, other 'mobility environments' are gradually recognised in transport and mobility research as spaces of social interaction and possibly 'anchors of urban life' (Bertolini & Dijst 2003; Jensen 2010).

However, the urban design potential of the airport that may be developed purposefully or as a side-effect of commercialisation has not been explored further. How is the airport becoming a city-like environment? According to which visions and principles is this new multifunctional urban space designed and how are the tensions between different interests at stake resolved? Does the 'cityness' play any role in the envisioning of the terminal as a public facility, a space of travel and commerce? If indeed the management of mobilities at airports and in other urban spaces could be compared, how can the investigation of airport design enrich discussions on urban spaces related to mobility?

The existing literature has not addressed these questions adequately. Scholars have predominantly focused on the role of surveillance and policing in airport design, with other dimensions receiving less attention. Excepting a few examples (Cresswell 2006; Adey 2008),

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the intent and visions behind specific designs have often been merely inferred rather than thoroughly explored through engaging in dialogue with airport authorities and designers. Moreover, although the multiplicity of stakeholders in airport governance and design and diversity of their interests have been recognised by some researchers (i.e. Adey 2007; Klauser *et al.* 2008), there has hardly been made an identification of the professional worlds standing behind those interests, of their values and visions. Thus, it is still common in research to refer to 'the airport' that is designed in particular way to manage flows of people, make them obey, make them consume and so forth which creates a picture of some unitary approach the rationale behind which is difficult to question. Yet, the airport design should rather be seen as a continuous series of negotiations, struggles and compromises between specific professional circles that have some common agendas to address but pursue different objectives.

Taking the perspective of airport creators, the paper thus presents the airport design as a struggle between contested visions of mobility and of the airport as an urban space rather than a mere enactment of some omnipotent interests. I argue that the airport may become not only a testing ground for surveillance techniques, marketing technologies and mobility logistics but also, in a sense, an urban design laboratory in which understandings of 'public domain' and 'cityness' are rearticulated. The purpose is not to present an exhaustive overview of the design process and describe all the entanglements of interests, but to highlight certain connections between different visions at play which nevertheless opens up a new perspective on designing space for mobilities.

The case chosen to explore these issues is Amsterdam Airport Schiphol which holds a special position of one of the first European airports promoted as a city-like environment. Moreover, since the end of the 1990s its operator, Schiphol Group, has been selling the concept *AirportCity*[2] to other airports worldwide, having made *Creating AirportCities* its slogan which implies some purposeful analysis of the development by the participating parties.

After discussing approach and methodology I introduce Schiphol, sketching the gradual transformation of the airport into a more diversified and commercialised environment and some of the reasoning behind it. Next I discuss the tensions in airport design that this transformation entails from the perspective of different interests that are in play. I go on to analyse the dynamic interrelationship and interdependence between these interests and the corresponding visions of the airport as a space of mobility and temporary dwelling, suggesting that the multiplicity of goals involved and the novelty of the concepts allow balancing different views by means of experimenting with design. Finally, I relate the analysis of the struggles and compromises in airport design to current discussions on urban spaces of mobility.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The research brings together agendas from human geography, in particular the 'mobilities paradigm', and approaches from urban and architectural studies with their focus on the contexts of the production of built environment. Such a combination of perspectives and methodological tools has been since long advocated by geographers (Goss 1988; Lees 2001; McNeill 2005) and appears to be particularly productive in the case of studying spaces of mobilities – complex built environments enabling the workings of multiple socio-spatial frameworks of different scale.

I concur with Cuff's (1992, p. 4) view on built environment as the result of 'collective conception' and the understanding of architectural practice as a complex process of interactions between interested parties, that takes place across physical and textual spaces, involving not only the architect, but a number of other individuals – clients, consultants, engineers and so forth. I frame the analysis similarly to the way it is built up in Sherman's (2010) study of how urban property is developed through complex procedures of bargaining when the stakeholders have different goals and visions but are all interested in maximising profit and efficiency in the context of scarcity of space. This is exactly the situation at the airport with its limited floor space and priority of efficiency and profit-

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making. Sherman sees the city as a principally 'contentious environment' where the conflict is actually constructive and increases the chances of the implementation of creative urban design solutions that can satisfy the majority of stakeholders. Seeing negotiations as a means of enriching urban form, he calls for rethinking the role of the architect as a 'mediator' or an 'interlocutor' between different stakeholders whose mission would be 'attempting through his or her own design ingenuity to articulate, negotiate, accommodate, and substantiate each party's interest' (Sherman 2010, p. 135). Accordingly, in this paper I will outline the difference between the goals of different parties, their ways of reaching agreement and will look into the role of the architect in this context.

The paper is based on the results of documentary research, observations and 39 in-depth interviews with the agents involved in management and design process at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. Interviewed persons included current and previous architectural supervisors, main architects working on Schiphol since late 1980s, designers of interiors and signposting, managers from departments of Commercial Services and of Passenger Services, managers from joint project teams reviewing and managing design projects and other professionals working at Schiphol currently or previously. The purpose of the interviews was to identify key actors and parties in the design process, their values and goals, exploring with them the process of designing and conceptualising particular spaces.

Sources for documentary research included both annual reports of Schiphol Group, factsheets and marketing brochures that are publicly available and some organisation charts and manuals used by different departments within the company. This research has supported and refined findings from the interviews with more precise historical data and helped to reconstruct the organisation of design and decision-making process over time.

Finally, regular ethnographic observations at the airport, made at different times of day and week have served as a supplementary source of information about how the airport can function as a place and how different visions of it identified during interviews are working together in practice.

'MORE THAN JUST AN AIRPORT'

Amsterdam Airport Schiphol is one of the busiest airports by international passenger traffic in Europe. Over 45 million passengers passed through Schiphol in 2010, of which around 19 million were transfer passengers (Schiphol Group 2010). Schiphol's financial dependency on international traffic, and in particular, transfer passengers, together with the limited capacity for expansion influenced the exceptional attention which has been paid to the efficiency of passenger and cargo operations. Thus, the constant ambition of Schiphol has been to stay a 'preferred' airport of transfer since passengers (and airlines) can always opt for another hub. The airport has received more than 160 awards as the best airport in Europe or in the world since 1980 (Schiphol Group 2009). For many, Schiphol is interesting for research because it has been a blueprint of airport management and design even before the concept of *AirportCity* came into play and the airport authorities started exporting their expertise on a contract basis. First, Schiphol was praised for the efficiency of passenger processes, later it became known for integrating non-aviation related facilities into the terminal and maintaining the quality of operations. I focus on the latter aspect and analyse how specific interests and visions of the airport were framed during this process of upgrading the space of mobility to the environment promoted as a meeting place for people and businesses.

The core of the current passenger terminal was opened in 1967 and despite numerous expansions and renovations, the old building is still in use. Thus, the discussion of the 'design process' at Schiphol refers to extensions, small-scale interventions and renovations. By the middle of the 1990s Schiphol was upgraded with a railway station, a covered Schiphol Plaza with more food and beverage outlets and shops accessible for general public and World Trade Center Schiphol Airport. Airside has also gradually been upgraded with more shopping facilities and restaurants as well as with less usual places to be found at airports – a casino (1993), a branch of the national museum (2002), a beauty and wellness centre (2008), Airport Library (2010) and so forth.[3] And although there have been different facilities

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not related to air travel at Schiphol since its early years, the scale of new developments since the middle of the 1990s was different. The first annual report that mentions *AirportCity* dated 1998 and around the same time the ambitions arose to export the 'formula' to other operators around the world. Celebrating this concept, a recent brochure issued by Schiphol Group claims that Schiphol is 'more than just an airport': it is 'a modern transport hub integrating people and businesses, logistics and shops, information and entertainment' (Schiphol Group 2009).

The shift in the airport management approach from perceiving the airport as a public facility enabling efficient passenger and cargo operations to a more business-like strategy entailed the rearrangment of design priorities and, as a consequence, some challenges for participating parties and struggles over Schiphol airport as a place, its layout and its identity. Talking to my interviewees about the development of the *AirportCity* concept and the commercialisation of the airport, I tried to trace the logic behind these developments, in particular, to find out what kind of interest was driving the process.

In the case of Schiphol, developing more shopping and entertainment facilities, especially on the airside, was in many ways predetermined by its dependence on transfer passengers who should want to choose Schiphol again as a transfer point. They represent a captive market and the airport can profit on their 'dwell time' enormously but they would hardly come back to the airport if they are stressed finding their way, if they have to walk a mile to the nearest toilet but just 50 metres to just another Starbucks or a perfume shop. At the same time they might not like an airport with just Starbucks and perfume shops. If they have 10 hours between flights, they need more and expect more, having seen all sorts of facilities from showers and spaces for rest to cinemas and gardens at other airports. Thus, the rationale between upgrading the airport with shopping and entertainment facilities includes more than a mere profit-making incentive. It is also about creating certain experience for passengers, keeping up with standards set by major competitors and even supporting the smooth airport operations by assigning certain areas for functional movement and others for temporary dwelling. In this sense, the notion of 'more than just an airport' already had in its core a complex entanglement of incentives, or, put it in another way, it developed gradually through pushing forward different objectives by different agents and groups.

In the next sections I briefly present different professional worlds and their interests and analyse how they work together balancing mobilities and immobilities. I divide this analysis in two parts, first, outlining the divergent visions existing within the airport operator company, Schiphol Group, and, second, I discuss the ideas of the architects and their ways of translating their client's ambitions and requirements into an architectural form that may be conceived of in terms of urban design. The architects' visions are discussed separately in view of the difference between the roles of the client and the architect in the production and conceptualisation of built environment that concerns this paper. The architects are the party which not only takes primary responsibility in conceptualising the place in terms of urban design and its value as 'public domain', they are also the ones who actually make and realise the design, orchestrating the differences between various interests in a specific way. Furthermore, whereas Schiphol managers may well contribute to urban design in the case of the airport, their power does not extend beyond the airport – as much as it does in the case of architects and designers who work on train stations, museums, shopping malls and so forth, enabling the actual exchange of forms, ideas and solutions between the city and the airport.

'WE CAN TAKE A LITTLE BIT OF THAT SPACE': STRUGGLES AND COMPROMISES BETWEEN 'OPERATIONALS' AND 'COMMERCIALS'

A good starting point for understanding the design process is how the tensions are seen by the principal airline operator at Schiphol, KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines). Their vision of the competing ideas of the airport frames the situation quite precisely. The interviewed KLM representative says the airport is a 'bus stop' and not a 'shopping centre'.[4] For KLM, it is their flights

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which should not be delayed and their passengers who should be pleased by an easy and fast transfer. But for Schiphol it is their customers too. KLM admits that airport's incentives are understood, and that an airport with no shops would not be interesting for their passengers either. The goal, he says, is to keep the balance. The main parties within Schiphol Group in charge of making this balance work are the Department of Passenger Services and the Department of Commercial Services and Media respectively.

The Department of Passenger Services – the 'operationals', in professional jargon – is the one that is responsible for the efficiency of operations. It partly sympathises with KLM. The 'operationals' strive to secure transparency, clarity and simplicity of space organisation, straight ways, a lot of space for free (non-commercial) seating and a sufficient amount of toilets. There should be no obstacles in the flow area like stalls or advertising and the view should not obstructed by flashing banners and hanging billboards. The Department of Commercial Services and Media ('commercials'), on the other hand, needs the precious space often claimed by 'operationals' for new shops, cafés and restaurants or more space for display of the existing ones. In some cases they also might prefer having rather intricate roundabouts, shops and stalls in the 'flow area', billboards announcing 'special offers' or using other instruments of increasing profits which is the primary goal of their unit. The 'operationals' aim to develop simple, 'logical' routes that take little time whereas the 'commercials' insist on creating routes which provide maximal visibility of shopping and entertainment possibilities. From the operational point of view, it is crucial for the efficiency of the airport and people's comfort to facilitate 'natural way-finding' – the way people orientate themselves unconsciously, before they even notice the signage. In this sense, natural light, windows and transparent walls are very important in certain locations. Yet, from the commercial point of view, the empty space in front of a transparent wall or a window can be used for commercial purposes and, therefore, there are never-ending debates between the parties over the necessity to keep this transparency in certain areas.

At first glance, 'operationals' and 'commercials' thus seem to have incompatible visions of the airport, and when Schiphol came to be more commercialised these differences became the reason for continuous 'struggles' – the word used by the great majority of interviewees. However, the analysis of the design process shows that the incompatibility is not irreconcilable and is often a productive one.

The difference between the visions and priorities of each party is being dealt with through a number of procedures, including formal and informal negotiations, compromises and trade-offs, developing guidelines, involvement of mediators and creation of extra boards. In other words, through constant dialogue and exchange of knowledge. 'Struggle' or 'fight' is how many managers describe working on specific design projects: struggle for square metres, sometimes, for centimetres, for signs and seats, shades and colours. Thus, a senior commercial developer at Schiphol comments that in discussions with 'operationals' the flow area is one of the biggest points: Is it 7 metres? – No, 8 m? or 7.8 m . . . That's how it is!'.

But the terms such as 'fight' or 'struggle' are used as often as are 'balance' and 'compromise', making the whole process a never ending experiment in which both parties learn something from each other. 'Commercials' may study flow plans – the working tools of 'operationals' – and, for instance, find evidence that a flow area can be one metre more narrow with no harm for operational purposes and they 'can take a little bit of that space'. When the common framework for discussion is established via these sorts of tools, further dialogue evolves easier and, for instance, 'operationals', in their turn, may admit, that although shop signs should not stand out, 'that particular sign in that particular corner' will not obstruct the view and can be left.[5]

Another example of a tool that facilitates dialogue is a handbook with guidelines on the installation of spatial media (banners, different sorts of stalls, projections etc) in the renovated Lounge 3. The guidelines were prepared by bureau Mijksenaar, known all over the world for their expertise in way-finding, together with architects, Passenger Services Department and Commercial Services and Media Department.

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The handbook was supposed to bring together different kinds of expertise and secure on paper a number of compromises that were acceptable and understood as necessary by all the parties. As the analysis of most recent interviews suggests, each party treats this document in a different way. 'Operationals' tend to see it more as a binding document whereas 'commercials' see it as guidelines subject to a rather flexible interpretation depending on the circumstances. Thus, the debates continue but nevertheless, the handbook did facilitate the discussions and aided further exchange of knowledge between the parties.

Furthermore, this handbook and other tools of reconciling the visions – such as setting up joint teams, temporary boards and so forth – illustrate that despite differences, the actors also have some common commitments and goals which is of crucial importance for keeping the whole machinery of negotiations going. According to the majority of the interviewees, the bottom line of these compromises is financial and functional interdependency. First, the money earned on commercial services and media may be used for upgrading facilities that serve operational purposes. Second, a lost passenger does not shop and a stressed passenger does not go to a fancy restaurant. For successful integration of non-aviation related facilities one first needs to create a good quality airport environment which is easy to orientate oneself in, which offers reasonable amount of free seating and is meant to soothe the stress by the use of certain colours, sufficient amount of daylight and so forth. This is the idea shared by all the parties although they might prioritise certain aspects of this vision in their daily work. Such an understanding of airport design as related to people's experience of being at the airport has been shaped during years of collaboration and attempts of each party to accommodate its ideas within this common vision. The quality of operations and the profitability of the airport as a commercialised environment depend on each other, which means that in the end, 'winning' a square metre may turn into a loss for the very same party that 'won' if the overall quality and balance of functions are damaged.

Furthermore, it is crucial for the company as a whole to stand out in the competition between airports and to maintain the identity of Schiphol as an *AirportCity* as both a well-functioning *transfer* machine and a diversified environment or an airport as a *destination*. This also serves as a common vision which is not always visible when the parties disagree on some details on daily basis but which comes to the fore on certain occasions when key decisions have to be made. Again, the parties share the commitment to create an environment that stands out and this commitment makes it easier to accept compromises.

Regarding security questions, it is interesting to note that according to the schemes of the design process at Schiphol, the security professionals are not very involved in the design process unless security check or passport control areas are redesigned. Rather, they are consulted on an *ad hoc* basis and intervene if they see that there is a threat of compromising security rules by certain design. Thus, while not underrating the role of the security interests in the design of the airport, they can be seen as a set of conditions, as if in the lab, that set the stage on which the interactions I focus on take place. However, when the security processes professionals intervene and have to negotiate their priorities, it works similarly: there are areas of priority, for instance, security control spaces where certain requirements overweigh the others, but at the same time, there is a common interest in having as few stressed passengers as possible. And just as well trade-offs are inevitable: for example, reducing commercial space to give more square metres to security services for additional lanes is not a bad solution for 'commercials' as it may seem to be, since having extra lanes means less waiting time and, hence, more shopping time.

Now, how are these struggles, compromises and exchanges of knowledge translated into architecture and how does the urban design dimension come into play? This is where architects come into the picture. They are heavily involved in these negotiations and struggles and while trying to win or to regulate them, they conceptualise the whole process in terms that move the discussion beyond the specific practical challenges that airport authorities face. Their role and their vision have changed throughout the last couple of decades as the

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airport was gradually changing its face and its strategy. Tracing that development can demonstrate how transformations of other 'mobility environments' in cities can be interpreted and influenced.

THE AIRPORT AS AN URBAN DESIGN EXPERIMENT

Architects at Schiphol hold a special position. Limited capacity for growth together with the growing number of passengers led to the establishment of a position of architectural supervisor already in the 1970s – a unique position for Dutch spatial planning practice. The architectural supervisor is employed by Schiphol as an advisor on overall spatial development of the airport area as well as on the design and architecture of the terminal. The function of the supervisor is to keep the integrity of Schiphol's spatial development and architecture and the quality of its built environment both in functional and aesthetic terms, preventing the authorities from *ad hoc* decisions driven by the concerns of today.

At the end of the 1980s, on the recommendation of the architectural supervisor, the Dutch architectural office Benthem Crouwel was appointed as an overseeing architectural bureau. Ever since they have been working both as chief architects for a considerable number of specific designs and as an advisory party, working closely with other designers and architects. Jan Benthem, the co-founder of the bureau, started working with the idea of the airport as a strictly functional space, a 'machine for flying' as he calls it, but had to change his approach as the airport was becoming more and more like a 'destination'. Thus, Benthem Crouwel and the architectural supervisor Hubert-Jan Henket, working for Schiphol from 1996 to 2008, became involved in the process of conceptualising the phenomenon of the airport as a multifunctional built environment. Interestingly, both parties remained loyal to the priority of flow efficiency and, thus, held on to the ideals of transparency, simplicity, straight paths, clear view and so forth but at the same time, as the transformation of the airport into *AirportCity* was gathering steam had to face the ever growing desire of managers to have more impact on architecture. The architects came to be no longer seen as the sole masters of flow, because the flow was no longer the sole priority. Again, the parties had to work together and had to experiment since there had been no precedent for turning Schiphol into what it was heading towards. And in these dynamic processes of negotiations and creating an *AirportCity* as some new form of combining a space of transit and a destination, there emerged some space for experimentation with the idea of the city and urban form.

Being presented by Schiphol Group as an exportable commercial formula, implying a strategy of organising retail, and sometimes real estate, for maximal profits, for architects *AirportCity* means also something different. A good example is Schiphol Plaza – a covered multifunctional shopping area accessible for everyone. The development of a shopping centre supplemented by quite some space which allowed for spending time not doing shopping and not flying anywhere but just hanging around, according to Benthem, brings along the idea of Schiphol as a 'public domain' where people can come when they want and enjoy the spectacle of urban life. Thus, for Benthem, the idea of *AirportCity* is a concept that captures the experimental development of the airport into a unique semi-public space open 24/7 that does not substitute a city centre but creates a new image of cityness born out of juxtaposition of functions and very peculiar diversity of users.

Furthermore, this vision of the airport and the comparison to a city have been used by Benthem and Hubert-Jan Henket to justify their opposition to the ways the commercial function at the airport is reflected through the arrangement of space and, hence, through particular ways of managing people's mobility: 'In a city do you build shops on the streets, do you send people through the shop? No, you send people *through* the streets', says Benthem. He thus frames the idea of cityness as a certain kind of freedom of movement and challenges certain elements of the *AirportCity* vision put forward by the 'commercials'. Here we see an interesting way of enriching the idea of the airport as an urban space and at the same time of rearticulating the idea of an urban street through seeing it as a place of unrestrained movement.

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Another example of an interesting alignment between thinking in terms of urban design and planning an optimally functioning space of transit is Benthem's idea that planning an airport terminal as a small city helps people to find their way. The terminal space becomes more legible when broken down into streets and plazas and other elements that correspond to people's everyday experience of mobility in the city. Again, the urban and the mobile are thus mutually constitutive as the urban design elements are used as a means of communicating how to move around in a place.

When interviewed, Jan Benthem, Hubert-Jan Henket and a number of other designers stress the very special kind of freedom they can exercise at the airport, despite all the constraints in terms of square metres, strict security requirements, commercial objectives and so forth. In fact, it is a fragment of urbanscape under one roof, but where does one find such a varied urbanscape that can be designed by a single architectural bureau? Or a café, a seating area and a bar next to each other designed by the same interior designer? Architecture and design professionals get very unique commissions to design spaces that outside of the airport would be considered streets. Yet, they are not streets, but something else. The permanence of people's flow and the incredible diversity of users make architects and designers reconsider the way space may work and look, limiting them by rules and numbers related to flow but liberating them from typologies relevant when catering to city residents.

Architects see themselves as agents often performing the role of mediators between different interests within the company, mainly the operational and the commercial ones. While the 'operationals' are busy with 'pushing people from A to B' and the 'commercials' try to make 'the most commercial environment' that's possible to create in such context, architects use their ideas of what a city is, what a public domain is to balance the interests according to their own vision. They try to regulate the commercialisation of the airport by not reaching the point 'where an airport changes from a pleasant airport to an airport where you're obliged to buy', yet they also not always prioritise operational interests. For instance, they see Schiphol Plaza as a public domain which should be more loose and have less signage than the rest of the airport, thus protecting 'the idea of the square . . . – that everybody finds his own way'. This contradicts the idea of the maximal operational efficiency of the space and sometimes receives criticism. Yet it may well contribute to the commercial success of this shopping centre through creating a peculiar city-like atmosphere, some 'messiness' that the rest of the airport does not have. The multi-layeredness of Schiphol as 'more than just an airport' and its value as a small urban subcentre outside of the city is thus developed through balancing priorities and taking opportunities to experiment when the space is scarce, the stakes are high and the intense discussions push the creativity of all parties.

DESIGNING SPACES FOR MOBILITIES: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

On one of the hot afternoons in April 2011 I had to walk a few times to and fro between two Starbucks at Schiphol Plaza shopping centre, being not sure where exactly the interviewee was waiting for me. Despite getting a little nervous, I was enjoying the artificial coolness of the terminal and sunlight softened by certain design arrangements. On my way to *Arrivals 4* I noticed a middle-aged man in a suit with a small suitcase strolling in the opposite direction. He had probably just arrived and was not in a hurry. He did not look lost, confused, tired, anxious or purposeful as most of new arrivals usually look. He looked enchanted, walking slowly with a dreamy look so rare among contemporary travellers these days, be it Amsterdam, Venice or Paris. I did not expect to see him again on my way back from the *Arrivals 4*, but I did. He did not leave the airport but kept strolling, now in the other direction, still smiling while gazing at the glitter of shop windows, pieces of public art and people mingling in the sunlight. He could be seen as a prey of the commercialisation of the airport, as a passenger safely 'processed' from the gate to *Arrivals* or as a flâneur, enjoying the scenes of urban life that combined the excitement of an airport and the less extraordinary images of shoppers, cappuccino-drinkers and teenagers hanging around.

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Another observation made during one my travels in 2010. I was strolling along Holland Boulevard, a hallway with facilities located in the non-Schengen part of the airside, and heard someone playing piano. I could not see the instrument first but very soon found out that there was a sort of a living room easily accessible from the main flow area but set apart, probably to create an atmosphere of an enclosed, private space. There stood a piano surrounded by couches and armchairs and an old man improvised beautifully whereas the very diverse public resting around reacted very differently: some were observing him in silence, others were chatting and just nodding slightly to the music, two children were dancing. A suitcase stood next the man's seat which looked quite odd in front of an elegant piano. Then some few minutes' walk took me to the newly opened Airport Library with novels and poetry by Dutch authors translated into different languages as well as books on Dutch society, art, history and so forth. These two experimental spaces show the possibilities of creating little 'enclaves' amid flows of people – spaces of peculiar sociality and cultural exchange. Both are integrated into the space of the terminal so that the 'flow area' is left unobstructed and can be seen as elements working on the boundaries of diverse visions of the airport. They definitely contribute to the vision of the *AirportCity* as a possibility of giving people some options of how to spend their time, as if it were an urban centre, but they may also perform a function related to passenger operations by directing people who are not in a hurry to places where they do not compete for space in the 'flow area' with those who are. Of course, the commercial purpose of such experiments is also important for the airport: both spaces are discussed across globe trotters' blogs.

According to the French urbanist François Ascher (2003, p. 7), the agenda for policymakers and architects who want to create high quality public spaces of mobility includes the challenge 'to reconcile those near-opposites that constitute the richness of cities: hurry and dawdling, efficiency and unhurriedness, functionality and superfluity, the planned and the unexpected'. Thus, the design of spaces of mobility should go hand in hand with the analysis of public space transformation and everyday experience of being in the city and moving through it. The analysis of the design process at Schiphol demonstrates that reflections upon these issues have become part of the airport design process. The analysis of tensions and compromises demonstrates that those 'near-opposites' can be reconciled or orchestrated through a number of procedures upon the condition that the stakeholders make a conscious effort to create space for discussion and to learn from each other. I argue that from the complexity of their interactions in the context of integrating non-aviation related facilities into the airport there arise a few interesting possibilities important for other urban spaces of mobility.

First, all the actors develop a very peculiar type of expertise in the dynamics of struggle and compromise, in particular, the expertise of envisioning and designing the space that can allow for different sorts of mobility and (im)mobility, that meshes different types of spaces into a new type and answers requirements that are sometimes hard to reconcile. Airports are not the only spaces of travel that acquire more and more functions. So do other public transport stations. Dutch Railways are currently transforming big stations into more diversified spaces with more facilities and the idea is inspired by the example of Schiphol (Veen & Lohuis 2009). What is further interesting is that Benthem Crouwel is involved into this project as is Studio Linse, the bureau closely working with Schiphol on interior design for more than 10 years. Part of the discourse on 'non-places' is the lament that these spaces of commerce and circulation spread (Augé 1995; Martinotti 1999). But as this example shows, so does the expertise, developing and growing on the way. There are many more examples of mobility of expertise between different projects across municipal and national borders. This paper has given some insights on how this expertise is formed and enriched through interaction with other experts, using a variety of tools. This analytical framework can be applied to explore how different professional worlds shape spaces of mobilities elsewhere creating a multi-layered urbanscape that allows people to move freely and at the same

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time invites them to slow down. Studying their work could uncover the struggles and negotiations which shape experience of mobility of thousands of people every day and, possibly, motivate the involved actors to purposefully develop tools for enhanced co-operation (working out guidelines or setting up a group of mediators).

Second, my analysis highlights an interesting dimension of designing spaces under constraint. It is precisely certain constraints and the complexity of tasks that require the distribution of powers and procedures that may allow for balanced and innovative solutions. Examining struggles that take place at design boards at airports can thus deepen our understanding of cityness under pressure of securitisation and commercialisation and help to reconsider our vision of balance of powers behind the scenes. In this sense, if the airport learns from the city and if the city learns from the airport that does not necessarily mean the disappearance of urban spontaneity and commerce-free space. But it may entail the development of a new range of options of what to do between A and B and may require new forms of expertise, on behalf of both urban designers and users.

In this paper I have argued that the airport design is not ruled by any specific interest exclusively. Rather, it is constantly created in struggles and negotiations, through trade-offs and compromises, written and unwritten rules as well as unexpected solutions that circumvent the rules. Furthermore, it is this complexity and diversity of visions of the professionals involved in the process which paradoxically creates space for urbanistic innovation in a built environment where every square metre works, every square metre earns and every square metre is surveilled. Reconstructing biographies of lounges, covered plazas and piers we can see how new design solutions and urbanistic visions are born out of coincidences or calculations, struggles or agreements, allowing for nearly idealistic visions of an urban public domain co-exist with dystopian controlling systems. I suggest that this argument is valid for other urban spaces where mobilities can create challenging but equally productive conditions for rearticulating what 'cityness' is when everyone is on the move.

Notes

1. Schiphol Group calls *AirportCity* their 'trademark' and keeps the joined-up writing. In some cases airport cities are developed as urban areas around the airport with business parks, logistics parks, shopping and entertainment centres. Kasarda (2010) argues that such an area should be called not an 'airport city' – which is just the core of this urban area – but *aerotropolis*. For more details on *aerotropolis* and airport city concepts see for example, Güller & Güller (2003), Kasarda (2010), Schaafsma *et al.* (2008).
2. Despite some definitions offered in Schiphol Group annual reports and fact sheets, understandings of the concept differ greatly. For analytical purposes I distinguish between the understanding of *AirportCity* as the idea of organizing the terminal like a city space – with a plaza and diverse facilities creating the urban feel – and the real estate concept which refers to developing real estate on the territory adjacent to the airport terminal. My investigation is limited to the space of the terminal.
3. In this paper I repeatedly refer to the distinction of the terminal into 'landside' and 'airside' which in this context should be roughly understood as the area accessible to non-travellers ('landside') and the area after check-in desks and security control that is accessible to travellers only (see Edwards, 2005, pp. 272–273).
4. Hereinafter I use quotations from the interviews with managers and designers that were conducted during the periods April–July 2010 and April–June 2011.
5. Thus, as a result of discussions, in the renovated Lounge 3 only a small Starbucks sign was allow to stand out from the wall.

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