



## Global Anti-Aerotropolis Movement (GAAM)

Email: [antiaerotropolis@gmail.com](mailto:antiaerotropolis@gmail.com)

Website: <http://antiaero.org/>

Twitter: [@AntiAeroGAAM](https://twitter.com/AntiAeroGAAM)

Facebook: [Global Anti-Aerotropolis Movement](https://www.facebook.com/GlobalAntiAerotropolisMovement)

### Aerotropolis Update – No. 1, August 2015

By Rose Bridger

The **aerotropolis** is a global phenomenon and barely a day goes by without an announcement of a new project. **An aerotropolis, or airport city**, is an airport surrounded by commercial development that is designed to be aviation dependent and support airport growth - such as hotels, shops, cultural facilities, business premises and industrial parks.

Major aerotropolis schemes are among the biggest development projects being imposed by governments and corporations. This update, covering just a few projects, is indicative of the scale of aerotropolis planning and construction worldwide, the high level of government support and expenditure, integration with other megaprojects, the threat to farmland and wildlife habitats and prevalence of resistance by affected communities:

- In **Andhra Pradesh**, land acquisition for [Bhogapuram Airport](#), an aerotropolis, triggered protests involving thousands of farmers. The resistance led to the government reducing the area required from 60 to 20 square kilometres. But massive [protests continue](#), involving farmers from the seven villages that would be wiped from the map. The Bhogapuram aerotropolis plan is linked to massive government investment and subsidies for [defence and aerospace industries](#) in the region;
- Operations at **Andal (West Bengal)**, [India's first aerotropolis](#), commenced in May. The project has been dogged by [land acquisition disputes](#) since 2009. In October 2014, land holders were demanding higher compensation for losing farmland for an [arterial road](#) linking the aerotropolis to a major highway. Part of the rationale for the project is to access [coal belts](#). Airport-linked industrial development is planned on land around the airport and the scheme has been lavished with tax breaks including on [land transfer](#) and [jet fuel](#);
- In **Nepal**, the government has allocated funds to fence off a 80 square kilometre site, mainly forested land, for an [aerotropolis at Niigadh](#) and is considering a [100% tax exemption](#) to make the project viable. [6,000 people](#), mainly from the marginalized Tamang community, live in the project area and are expressing concerns over rehabilitation. A 4-lane [mega highway](#) to Kathmandu crossed by 7 bridges, expanding to 6 lanes, is planned, with a 1-hour travel time to make the airport feasible;
- In **Zambia**, construction of the planned [new Ndola Airport](#) would mean deforestation. The 20 square kilometre site is a former forest reserve that was recently de-gazetted by

- the government. Plans include typical commercial developments such as a hotel, and aims to boost tourism and industrial development, in particular copper mining;
- Aerotropolis–style urbanisation is planned on thousands of hectares of undeveloped land around several airports in **the USA** including [Denver](#), [Charlotte](#), [Orlando](#) and [North West Florida Beaches](#);
  - In **Bangladesh**, the 32 square kilometre site for a second Dhaka airport, [Bangabandhu](#), is about to be announced, near the Padma River. A similar scheme was attempted in 2011, on biodiverse and fertile Arial Beel wetlands, but [resistance by affected communities](#) led to violent clashes with police and cancellation of the project;
  - Plans for **Sydney’s second airport** at [Badgery Creek](#) may threaten the nearby Blue Mountains’ UNESCO World Heritage status. A full [aerotropolis plan](#) has emerged with the typical industrial development and associated major road network. There are concerns over the loss of agricultural land and [farmers face eviction](#);
  - Fast paced aerotropolis development is planned at many sites in **Indonesia**, a country with a poor land rights record, including [Kertajati](#) on a 50 square kilometre site and at [Lebak](#) on a 40 square kilometre site, and around the existing [Juanda](#) and [Kuala Namu](#) airports. Indonesia’s National Commission on Human Rights has stated that development of [Kulon Progo Airport](#), on productive farmland, violates the human rights of land owners. In October 2014, [500 farmers](#) facing loss of land and livelihood protested against the airport. Now [aerotropolis](#) development is planned on land around the actual airport site;
  - In **Mexico**, indigenous communal land holders in [San Salvador Atenco](#), successfully resisted dispossession for a new Mexico City airport in 2001-2002. The government took vengeance in 2006, attacking the community a brutal police raid. Two young people were killed, 26 women were raped and several other people were injured. Now the airport plan is back, bigger than before, with an [aerotropolis](#) component. The 37 square kilometre site is the [lakebed of Texcoco](#), the destruction of which threatens water supply for communities and crops in the wider region and loss of habitat supporting a multitude of [native species](#) including 100,000 migratory birds.
  - In **Nigeria**, [Minna Airport City](#), languishes incomplete after considerable government expenditure, including on a shopping mall. There is opposition to pouring further funding, \$60 million, into the project in an attempt to make it operational;
  - In the **Philippines**, Mindanao Development Authority’s P959m (\$21m) [Gen San Airport aerotropolis](#) scheme is part of a broader plan for tourism facilities such as theme parks and a ‘major international gateway’ integrating infrastructure such as roads, port, industrial parks and a 'development corridor';
  - In England, Leeds Bradford Airport’s terminal expansion and ‘airport village’ plan is minute by global standards, covering an area of just [36.2 hectares](#). But the land in question, currently utilised for farming, is designated as ‘greenbelt’ to provide green space for urban residents and prevent urban sprawl. A proposed link road would destroy more green space.

Please share this update to help raise awareness of aerotropolis developments.

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