GLOBAL AIRPORTS AND THE CHALLENGE OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION: COMPARING CHICAGO AND TORONTO

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AIR TRANSPORTATION AND GLOBAL CITY-REGIONS

- Deregulation of national aviation systems in the United States (1978) and Canada (1987) opened intense inter-locality competition, pressures key continental centers to expand air capacity.

- Air transportation networks hold a privileged position in the study of global cities (Friedmann, 1986; Hall, 2001; Harris, 1994).
  - Crucial economic drivers, influential in global city rankings (Foreign Policy, 2010).
  - Global terrorism (Graham, 2006); vulnerability to global pandemics (Ali, 2006).

- "*Aerotropolises*"(Kasarda and Lindsay, 2011): The future of urban development?

- Airports are fundamentally political spaces, central to city-regional politics.

- There is a need to develop our understanding of:
  - Relations between airports and their surrounding regional spaces (Stevens et al., 2010).
  - Connectivity between global ports and local transportation (Keil and Young, 2008).
  - Financialization underpinning airports' production and operation (Torrance, 2009).

CHICAGO: CITY CONTROL AND THE PRESSURE OF REGIONALIZATION

- ***Chicago Department of Aviation*** (CDOA) administers all aspects of airport operations at O'Hare and Midway.
  - City controls the economy of the region's major aviation infrastructure, from everyday operations to economic development strategies and long range planning.
  - Operation and development of O'Hare and Midway are buffered from regional politics.
- Regional authorities defer planning, studies and the dissemination of information on Chicago's airports to the City.
- Political autonomy a double-edged sword: operational and planning expediency with limited intra-governmental disruption, but this infringes upon direct democratic involvement by regional actors.

The O'Hare Modernization Program

- **OMP** $6.6 billion plan, released in the summer of 2001 to:
    - Reconfigure O'Hare's intersecting runways to form six parallel and two crosswind strips.
    - Construct public road access, parking facilities and a new passenger terminal on the western side of the airport
- *O'Hare Modernization Act* , signed August 6, 2003, removed State interference from OMP and granted Chicago eminent domain powers.
    - The State acknowledged O'Hare's "essential role" in the national air system and OMP's capacity to "enhance the economic welfare of the State" (Illinois General Assembly, 2003).

Negotiating local politics in a fragmented region

- OMP moved ahead as a project of regional and national economic significance, but under the guidance, and chiefly serving the interests, of Chicago.

- Political opposition brings together anti-OMP (**Suburban O'Hare Commission**: SOC) and pro-Peotone/third Airport organizations.

- The Chicago region's fragmented political geography enabled the City to target differing benefits of OMP; localized interests of individual communities opened fissures in the SOC alliance.
  - Des Plaines embraced the freight and cargo development vision of the O'Hare area.
  - Other municipalities, (e.g. Itasca, Wood Dale) welcomed the potential to develop as conference and business centers on the western side of O'Hare.
  - Facing declining support and the apparent inevitability of OMP, SOC's last stalwarts dropped their opposition between 2008 and 2009.

Opening O'Hare to the region?

- Western Access a key factor in swaying suburban opinion on OMP.
- Catalyzes a new regional economic geography, but what of political power?
  - Regionalizing O'Hare likely to pressure City's existing planning and governance regime.
- CDOA (2012): Western Access provides "a more balanced and efficient airport for the region": but the City has not guaranteed a western terminal, nor opening access to the airport.

TORONTO: REGIONAL(IZING) AVIATION AFTER DEVOLUTION

- *Transport Canada* owned and operated Canada's major airports before 1994.
- *National Airports Policy* (1994) devolved responsibility for a rationalized *National Airport System* (NAS) to localized airport authorities.
  - NAS constituted by 26 "nationally-significant" airports.
  - Pearson International only NAS facility in southern Ontario.
- *Greater Toronto Airports Authority* (GTAA) established November 1994:
  - A not-for-profit corporation.
  - Overseen by a 15-person board with nominations from a variety of community interests.
  - Community liaison established through a community consultative committee.
  - Louis Turpen: GTAA's first CEO and President.
- December 1996: Terms of transfer finalized in a 60-year Ground Lease.
  - GTAA assumes responsibility for operating, managing and developing Pearson International Airport; includes ability to set airline rates and charges.

Shaping Toronto's aviation future

- First task: redeveloping Pearson's passenger terminal facilities.
  - $4.4 billion project, completed 1997-2007 (infield, airside and terminal development).
  - New **Terminal 1**, opened April 6, 2004, provided Toronto with an airport befitting an "emerging global metropolis" (Louis Turpen, cf. GTAA, 2003).
- Unlike OMP, Pearson's **Airport Development Program** avoids widespread public or political opposition.
- Funding mechanisms utilized have raised criticism.
  - GTAA points to the prohibitively high ground rents charged by Ottawa.

Governing a regional airport

- 1994-2004: GTAA under Turpen effective, but autocratic.
- GTAA attempting to reposition itself as a regional actor:
  - Working on strengthening ties with local governmental and community organizations.
  - Views itself as more accountable than previous regimes.
- GTAA emerging as a key stakeholder beyond Pearson Airport's boundaries.
- GTAA's current structure provides three key benefits as a model of airport governance:
  - Provides representation for a number of governmental and non-governmental bodies across levels of government.
  - Consists of professionals with a broad pool of technical expertise.
  - Does not rely on tax dollars, is more financially flexible than publicly-owned facilitates.
- Direct local democracy remains limited.

Integrating the global and the local

- Prior to GTAA's takeover, little interaction or integration between Pearson Airport and the region, municipalities.
- Rapid transit focused on local mobility; Pearson developed as an airport built for the car.
  - Freight infrastructure surrounding Pearson remains truck-oriented.
- Pearson's weak transit connections have emerged as a pressing concern for both public and private actors in the GTA.
- Connecting Pearson and Union Station via a new rail link is a central element of Metrolinx's *Big Move.*
  - Diesel rail connection versus *Transit City* (LRT).
  - Contradiction in scale and purpose between the City of Toronto and the Province.

DEVELOPING AIR INFRASTRUCTURE IN, AND FOR, GLOBAL CITY-REGIONS

- Airports are central to global city-regional development.
- Global tropes and imperatives of deregulated competition stimulate expansion.
- Both airport authorities pursuing "aerotropolis" development.
- But divergent models of governance structure particular pathways of development.
- Consequences and connections to regions and regional governance:
  - Splintering urbanism and premium global networks (Graham and Marvin, 2001).
  - Struggle to control and scale aviation activity, challenge of political representation.