

Developing Strategies for the Modern International Airport

East Asia and Beyond

By Alan Williams

The contribution is multidisciplinary, with chapters reviewing a range of issues facing international airports. It examines the process of global economic integration from economic, geopolitical and geographic perspectives. Its ambition is to identify structural changes in international business and what the implications are for the airport industry. *"The book identifies some of the matters and issues that could form the agenda for further and more detailed examination", says the author about his book.*

A book review by Hans Mohrmann

Review

Chapter 1, The Changing Role of the International Airport in the Global Economy, talks about the imperative of intermodal transportation systems, mainports, the aviation as a service industry, internationalization, deregulation and Porter. Unfortunately, the approach is a qualitative description without any quantification. In my opinion, substantiation requires quantification. In addition, it would be interesting to compare the relative world trade distribution in value in the early part of the 20th century with the early part of the 21st century.

Chapter 2 identifies the change in the airline industry. The author focuses on airlines, but fails to look at key implications for airports. He states that the issues and problems concerning airlines that are discussed, may be found in the airport sector.

Chapter 3 touches on relevant issues of deregulation and privatization, although it is anecdotal in style.

Chapter 4: The Influence of Geopolitical Factors on Major East Asian Hubs. In my preference, this chapter should have touched on current ambitions fueling the global war on terrorism and the responses airports may have to face as a result. That would have been a good contribution.

Chapter 5; the case of Mumbai Airport, where thousand illegal dwellers occu-

py large tracks of the airport property compromising the development of the airport. However, think about the importance of retail for airports. The author's rambling about supply chain management and cargo is interesting, but the key value driver is tourism fueled by the continuously falling travel costs, cost and speed of information. Quantification of trends would have been helpful to bring focus to the topic. Furthermore, airports are just another form of real estate. The way real estate benefits best from its location under threat of urbanization is of major relevance. Haneda, for example, is the largest O/D airport in the world and it is a large, multi-level shopping/entertainment mall with several ticket counters on ground floor. Take another good look at train stations in Japan to see the development of airports as air travel becomes a mass commodity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although developing strategies for modern airports (title) is a nice aim, the author did not, unfortunately, touch upon some interesting and elementary issues, such as quantification of his arguments instead of the anecdotal style that is used. Furthermore, he did not focus on airports as real estate. In my opinion, the book mixes and matches the evolution of the airline industry, the changing nature of bilateral agreements and urbanization. Williams uses a lot of complicated phrases, corners popular academic terms such as paradigms,

asymmetric competition, externalities, efficiencies in scope and scale and contestable markets. These terms did not positively influence the clarity and message of the book: It is like drowning in the complexity of multidisciplinary approaches. As Williams himself puts it "the result is less a sequence of clearly defined arguments and more a series of often interlinked macro and micro issues which recur in a wide range of topics....".

About the Author

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About the reviewer

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