

The city that can be born with the New Airport

The new airports must be surrounded by residential areas, universities, hospitals and industrial ecosystems closely linked to international trade and technological innovation such as high-value manufacturing, biomedicine and software within a radius of 30 kilometers.



The airport as the heart of a city. That is the proposal of John D. Kasarda, one of the most prestigious voices in the design of international air terminals, to take infrastructure projects to the next level: highly competitive economic zones that trigger unprecedented urban and commercial development.

To achieve this, the director of the center for air commerce at the University of North Carolina proposes that the new airports be surrounded by residential areas, universities, hospitals and industrial ecosystems closely linked to

international trade and technological innovation such as high-value manufacturing, biomedicine and software within a radius of 30 kilometers.

"The airport is the engine that drives the aerotropolis," says the executive in an interview with **Forbes Mexico**.

The idea behind this concept is to change the center of a metropolis through the airport, since the value-added products, from advanced aeronautics pieces, through the specialized human capital, to sushi and freshly cut flowers, move by air.

When asked about the New Mexico International (NAIM), the president of the Aerotropolis Institute in Zhengzhou acknowledges that the Mexican project by itself is necessary, although with engineering, geological, cultural and land rights issues with ejidatarios that must be properly protected.

"It can definitely be an aerotropolis, it has all the attributes. The project is attractive and sustainable, if they understand the concept and implement it correctly," he adds.

The mega-project is under public scrutiny after the leader of the presidential polls, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has used as a campaign promise the cancellation of the infrastructure project promoted by the PRI government in the face of supposed excessive costs for the Mexican treasury, even though it is a Private Public Association.

The private initiative has defended the project. The richest man in Mexico and the sixth in the world, Carlos Slim Helú, argued that the new airport will detonate the country's economic development. His company CICSA is part of the consortium that will build the terminal building of the New Airport, whose design was in charge of his son-in-law Fernando Romero and the Pritzker Prize, Norman Foster.

Here the complete note: [The New Airport will detonate the development of the country: Carlos Slim](#)

Even the Business Coordinating Council (CCE) organized a forum with the presidential candidates to discuss the need for the airport, but chose to cancel it before the rigid position of the coalition candidate *Juntos Haremos Historia* .

Success stories

Kasarda shares a success story under this scheme: the economic zone of Zhengzhou airport, China, a rural area that, after the Asian government approved the creation of this area in 2010, houses one of the key companies for cellular telephony and for high-value manufacturing mobility.

Foxconn, the largest manufacturer of Apple, was installed in this aerropolis. The firm employed 260,000 people. In 2016, the complex produced 126 million iPhones, more than 60% of the brand's total production.

Another case is the FedEx Hub in Memphis, the world's best connected air logistics airport. The complex has had an impact of 29,000 million dollars in the metropolitan economy of Memphis, the majority derived from transportation activities. Even one in every 3 jobs in the region are linked to the airport.

Design errors

For Kasarda, the most common errors in aerropolis design are associated with four factors.

The first is in the design of the facilities. The manager recalls that in the case of the New Airport, the first plans put an office building on one side of the aircraft area. "I hope you have already corrected it."

Another is that they do not do enough demand analysis for the facilities they are building.

The third error is that there is not the appropriate transport and infrastructure service to take people not only to the airport, but to the homes and businesses associated with the air terminals.

The fourth is not to attend to the investors and the ejidatarios (in the case of Mexico) to properly preserve the important areas for the inhabitants of the lands where the project will begin.

What to do with the old airport?

Kasarda mentions that what has been done in the past should be reviewed. Ensures that the best example is what happened in Denver, Colorado, Stapleton International Airport ran from 1929 to 1995 and was a hub for Continental Airlines. Since then, the area has been redesigned to be a residential and commercial neighborhood that has reviewed multiple [awards](#) for its sustainable and ecological development.

"They transformed the place into a center for residential and commercial uses," he adds.

Another case was the Subang International Airport in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which closed in 1998 to make way for the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Today, its facilities serve as a hub for the Malindo Air and Firefly air services companies. In addition, Transmile Air Services also uses a track for flights without passengers.

"It was transformed into an air maintenance project and an aerospace production center," he added.

Slim approached this proposal in April, and proposed the construction of a small city with universities, housing areas, shops and a 12-kilometer avenue as dynamic as Paseo de la Reforma Avenue in the center of the capital.

"The concept is to make a new walk of the reform in the old airport," he added.

