Mobile identities and the socio-spatial relations of air-travel

Monika Codourey

Mobile Identities and the Socio-Spatial Relations of Air Travel

EVENT TOURIST

PACKAGE TOURIST

TRANSNATIONAL TRAVELER

CONSTANT TRAVELER

ENFORCED COSMOPOLITAN

*Classification of Frequent Flyers*, 2005, graphic by Monika Codourey.

From 'Kinetic Elites' to 'Frequent Fliers'

In these times of constant mobility strongly influenced by the transformation of world economy, metropolises are turning into intersections of goods, capital, services, cultures, knowledge, and especially people. New concepts of urbanity with transnational range are emerging. Moreover, the relationship between geographic and social space is shifting. Social realities with specific qualities are appearing beyond traditional descriptions of locality, implying new sociospacial correlations between the local and the global. Martin Albrow describes these emerging socioscapes as "formation of co-existing social spheres, coeval and overlapping in space, but with fundamentally different horizons and time-spans."[1]

Today many global corporations take advantage of marketing, labor and cost saving measures by setting up their node-offices all over the world. This practice necessitates corporate representatives to travel regularly between various locations of a corporate empire. Mark Gottdeiner wrote: "Many jobs are less dependent now on any one location than the use of many locations woven together as spaces for work using laptop, the cellular phone, the internet, or the fax. This mode of de-territorialization involves a progressively greater population and results in a redefinition of home, place, space, and local community."[2] This nomadic lifestyle is increasingly dependant on plane trips and inter- or even transnational activities. It is a lifestyle no longer practiced solely by highly mobile and affluent 'Kinetic Elites'.[3] Today almost all travelers are frequent fliers, using air transport the way people in the past used cars and trains for business and leisure.

The global market competition forces airlines to constantly lower their ticket prices. The growing variability of attractive flight offers allow 'event tourists' who are prepared to face cultural shock traveling with inexpensive flights to distant locations of the globe. The travel industry offers also endless opportunities to use franchise facilities with western level of comfort in exotic places for those who prefer avoid cultural shock, the 'package tourists'.

The traditional concepts of migration are being replaced by much more complex and dynamic mobility patterns of a transnational lifestyle. The new migrants, 'transnational travelers', often act as frequently flying agents between the their country of origin and their new domicile. The less desirable part of flying elites are displaced persons, refugees or emigrants, the 'enforced cosmopolitans', who can barely afford to pay a high price for the flight ticket (often their lifetime savings) in order to escape their miserable life circumstances.
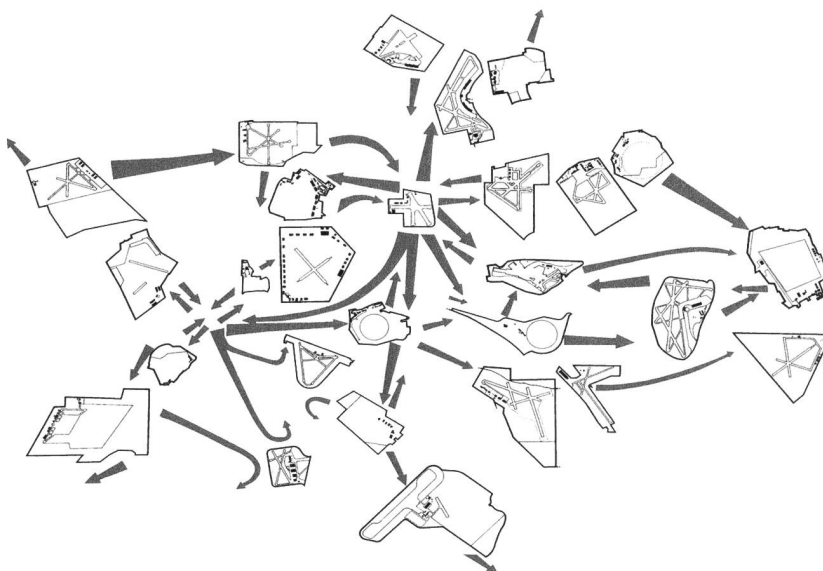
The Airport Hub – Aesthetics of Socio-Spatial Mobility

The Airport Hubs, for example the Frankfurt International Airport, are concentrations of local and global flows of information, people and goods in the world-system. They act as a conduit from one physical location in the world to another and can be understood as compressors of space and time. The airport plays an important role in increasing cross-border circulation of frequently flying elites. The airport hubs are transnational spaces inhabited by a mass of people traveling between nodes of global network. The air travel is becoming increasingly inconvenient. Flights are often delayed, overbooked or cancelled. Crowded planes, cramped seating, poor meals, and cabin service as well as the sheer boredom resulting from being stranded at terminals for hours are common to the point of cliché.

Different mobility patterns of varying relevance circulate in the airport's structure, and are distributed within airport architecture according to the typology of various levels of comfort and aesthetics. Growing business mobility has led to a segregation within business travelers according to miles spend in the air. For example, the division of lounges into Business, Senator, HON, and First Class by Lufthansa exemplifies new strategies, priorities, and standards in air travel based on flying status. These Lounges not only offer different levels of comfort but as well various aesthetics. For example, Lufthansa is setting new international standards for their 'premium travelers' who spend the most time in the air and generate 80% of the airline's profit. Since December 2005, Lufthansa offers 'preferred customers' a luxuriously styled separate HON/First Class terminal. To ensure the most comfortable and smooth travel possible for their top clients, Lufthansa offers its services already on the ground in sophisticated architectural surroundings. This new dimension of travel includes exclusive services and privileges like parking a car to check-in, eased security control and customs, an exclusive ambience with gourmet catering, private rooms for work and refreshments, personal attention, direct limousine transfer to the plane and even concierge services. For those who do not participate in any airline bonus program, "pay-per-use"-lounges such as *Europe City Club* or *Priority Club* offer exclusive airport space and services paid on hourly basis.

A growing airline competition has led to budget optimization in the economy class. For example, cheaper tickets and lower service standards, or the even opening of so-called low-cost-airports as Frankfurt Hahn, located 150 km away from Frankfurt City and linked by bus services with Frankfurt International Airport, change the flightmarket's conditions. Frankfurt-Hahn, a former
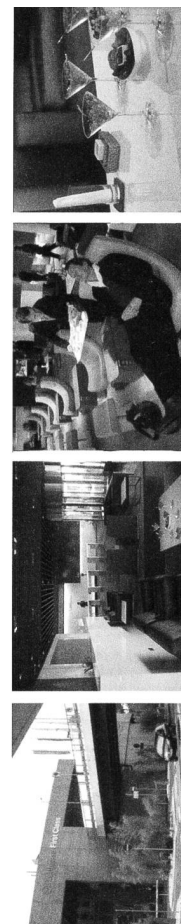
Terminal City, illustration of geographies of kinetic elites, 2002, Re-make of Guy Debord, *Naked City*, 1957, with terminal hubs, graphic by Monica Codourey.

1 Martin Albrow, "Traveling Beyond Local Cultures. Socioscapes in a global city", in: John Eade (Ed.), *Living the Global City. Globalization as Local Process*, New York: Routledge 1997, pp. 37–55.
2 Mark Gottdeiner, *Life in the Air. The New Culture of Air Travel*, Lanhan/Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2001.
3 In the 1980's the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk described people who travel enormous amounts of miles a year and use their home base primarily as place to recuperate between flights, as 'Kinetic Elite', in: Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, London: Verso 1988.

AIRPORT TERMINAL
German sovereign territory

LANDSIDE

It is bound at no reservation class or airline, pay a fixed amount of 18 Euro for a up to 4 hours stay. A daily stay cost 32 Euro. Contained all snacks beverages and services. Free entrance for passengers with invitation from airlines.

When travelling in First Class or Business on American Airlines, customers may use the Admirals Club on the day of travel.

Envoy class passengers may utilize United Red Carpet Club or Lufthansa Senator or Business Lounge. The facilities offer amenities such as beverages, snacks, newspaper, magazines, television, business amenities.

ECC Lounge | Admirals Club | Red Carpet Club

German sovereign territory

AIRSIDE

TRANSIT-not entered Germany

Business Lounge | Senator Lounge | First Class HON Lounge

As a member of Lufthansa HON Circle, you are one of our most valued customers. HON Circle member status is awarded to senators who collect at least 600 000 HON Circle miles within 2 years.

As a Senator you are a very important person for us, entitled to extra services as privileges that others can only dream about. It is the high point of your miles&more career. A total of over 150 000 status miles per 1 year earns you Senator status.

Access with Business Class Ticket on Boarding card.

Lufthansa First Class HON Terminal

The exclusive service starts on the ground in Frankfurt, in the newly built First Class Terminal or in the First Class lounges. In the premium travel segment Lufthansa is setting new international standards.

LANDSIDE

AIRPORT AREA

LANDSIDE

Frankfurt - Hahn Low-cost Airport

Frankfurt-Hahn has become one of Germany's fastest growing airports. A US military base from the 50's to start of the 90's, this is the first German low cost airport to attain a 24-hour operating licence. Within only ten years Frankfurt-Hahn Airport has become the tenth-largest international airport in Germany. Frankfurt-Hahn Airport is a veritable melting pot of travellers - including business people - from the whole world.

Kinetic elites transit condition / spatial segregation, legal extension of exterritorial Zone outside airport area for enforced cosmopolitans, 2005, artistic mapping based on field research at the Frankfurt Airport by Monika Codourey / Bettina Boknecht.

Reduced and price conscious aesthetics of Frankfurt-Hahn, terminal building/interior/waiting room /airplane meal, 2005. photos by Monika Codourey / Bettina Boknecht.

US military base from the 1950's, became the first German low cost airport to attain a 24-hour operating licence. Within only ten years, Frankfurt-Hahn became 10th largest international airport in Germany, providing services to all kind of travellers – including cost conscious business people – from the whole world.

Displaced persons, refugees and immigrants are the unwanted part of the spatial segregation regime, within the airport space, in-between nation states. Shortly after the implementation of the 'Airport Procedure'[4] new special purpose terminal buildings were built at the airport that are physically detached from the main terminals. This 'detention camp'[5] gives temporary accommodation to the refugees arriving by plane and prevents them from entering the territory of the nation. For enforced cosmopolitans with restricted legal rights, the comfort and airport services are reduced to the absolute minimum. Asylum seekers are not allowed to leave the building during their stay at the privately secured detention camp. During their stay they are entitled to medical and social assistance. Social workers try to animate their stay at the camp offering various indoor and outdoor activities. Asylum seekers are carefully placed in the rooms according to their cultural similarities or places of origin. Refugees are not allowed to cook in the building because cultural differences could cause problems. Therefore airport catering services supply the meals. Because they can afford to pay for flight tickets, we can assume that asylum seekers are representatives of the middle and upper classes of their countries of origins. Accommodation at the camp is covered by German government for the time of airport procedure. In case of any delay of the stay after the court decision, the airline bringing potential asylum seeker to the country is obliged to cover further costs of their stay.

David Harvey wrote: "We have been experiencing, that the last two decades, an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life."[6] At the airport different legal orders create manifold sub-territories that are only accessible to a selected group
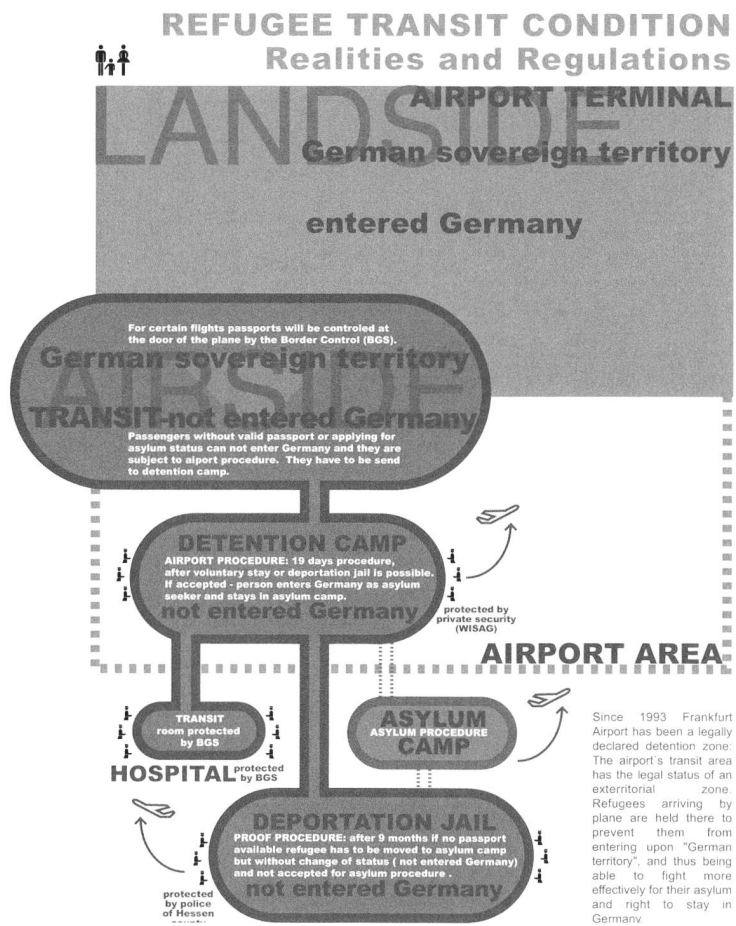
Aestetica of detention camp, outside / inside / secured courtyard / living conditions, 2005, photos by Monika Codourey / Bettina Boknecht.

AIRPORT TERMINAL
German sovereign territory

entered Germany

For certain flights passports will be controled at the door of the plane by the Border Control (BGS).

German sovereign territory

TRANSIT-not entered Germany
Passengers without valid passport or applying for asylum status can not enter Germany and they are subject to aiport procedure. They have to be send to detention camp.

DETENTION CAMP
AIRPORT PROCEDURE: 19 days procedure, after voluntary stay or deportation jail is possible. If accepted - person enters Germany as asylum seeker and stays in asylum camp.
not entered Germany

protected by private security (WISAG)

AIRPORT AREA

TRANSIT room protected by BGS

ASYLUM ASYLUM PROCEDURE **CAMP**

HOSPITAL protected by BGS

DEPORTATION JAIL
PROOF PROCEDURE: after 9 months if no passport available refugee has to be moved to asylum camp but without change of status (not entered Germany) and not accepted for asylum procedure .
not entered Germany

protected by police of Hessen

Since 1993 Frankfurt Airport has been a legally declared detention zone. The airport's transit area has the legal status of an exterritorial zone. Refugees arriving by plane are held there to prevent them from entering upon "German territory", and thus being able to fight more effectively for their asylum and right to stay in Germany.

of travelers. The territory of 'frequent flyers' (lounges), separate HON/First Class Terminal of 'kinetic elite', distant low-cost Airport Frankfurt-Hahn for price conscious tourists and as well business travelers, the secured territory of enforced cosmopolitans (detention camp) are all examples of emerging socio-spacial segregation at the airport.

Refugee transit condition/realities and regulations, 2005, artistic mapping based on field research at the Frankfurt Airport by Monika Codourey / Bettina Boknecht.

Transit Condition of the Mobile Body – Locating Borders at Frankfurt Airport

The legally declared extraterritorial zone of the airport hub is a threshold controlling the flow of people in a free market economy. This space in-between exists outside of territorial limits of the nation. In fact, it is an abstract space created by a bureaucratic system of inclusion and exclusion within transnational states. Various laws, rules and agreements that apply to passengers, depending on nationality or travel status, regulate this zone. The *International Air Agreement*, Fundamental Rights (Asylum), the *Geneva Refugee Convention*, the *Schengen Treaty* and National Border Laws, Airport security measures, the *Sky Marshals Agreement*, Frequent Flyer Programs, Customs Law, Duty & Tax Free Agreements, or US Security Requirements are just a few examples of the growing list of the airport rules and regulations.

At the airport border the geo-political concept of nation state and concept of global Empire[6] modify the relationship between geographical and political space. The access to both is regulated by very particular set of procedures and rules. The national border determines the geographical territory of a nation and allows to regulate the access to the country. At airports, the boundary of the nation is negotiated within an area inside the actual country. Moreover, the Frankfurt Airport border is not longer strictly national. Effective on March 26th, 1995 the *Schengen Agreement* has been implemented in Europe. The aim of it is to remove immigration control for travel within the collective territories of the member states. This creates a border-less region known as the Schengen territory. The Schengen countries introduced a common visa policy for the
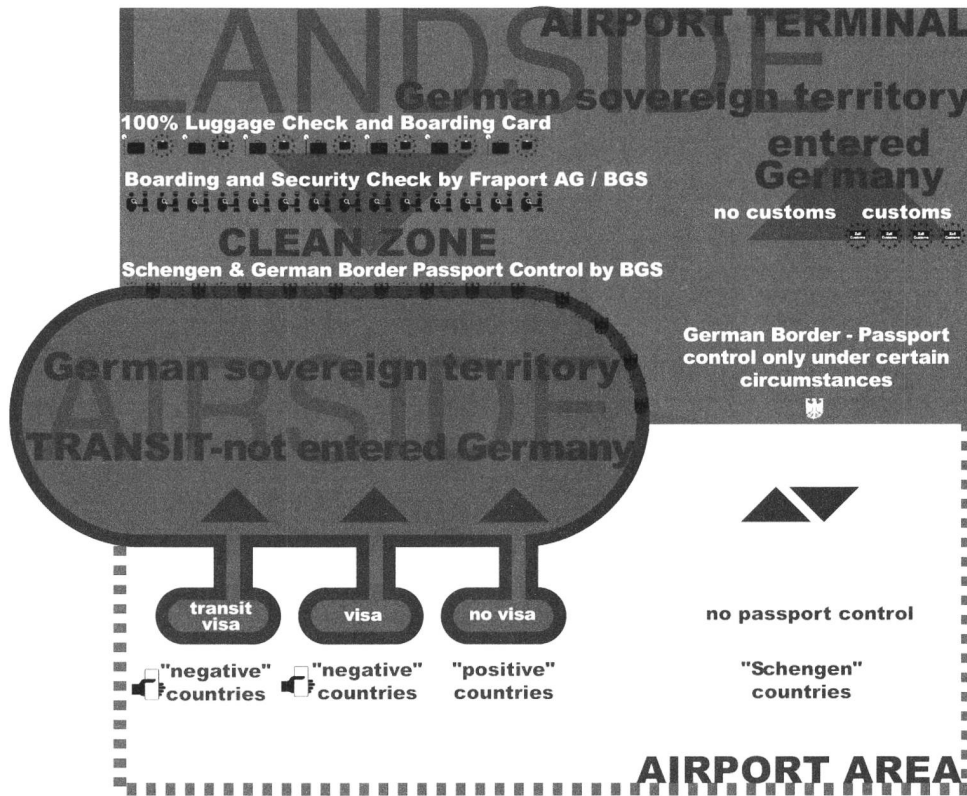
4 The *Airport Procedure* is about establishing if refugees get the right to apply for asylum in Germany. It lasts 19 days. If a refugee gets sick in the camp and has to be brought to the hospital he still stays in transit. In case of acceptance as an asylum seeker, the refugee will be brought to an asylum camp and will be subject to the asylum procedure. In the case of non-acceptance as an asylum seeker, the refugee is subject to the deportation procedure. If the person does not have any travel documents, there are two possibilities: first a voluntary stay in the detention camp until papers are available. Or second, a move to the deportation jail and subject to proof procedure. If no passport is available after nine months, the refugee has to be moved to the asylum camp but without change of status. He is still not accepted for the asylum procedure and can be deported as soon as travel documents are available.

5 The detention camp is also a part of the airport transit area. The number of asylum seekers has rapidly decreased since the implementation of the *Airport Procedure* in 1993. Asylum seekers are not allowed to leave the building during their stay at the detention camp. They are not allowed to cook in the building because cultural differences could cause problems. Prepared meals are supplied by a catering service. Asylum seekers are carefully placed in the rooms according to their cultural similarities or places of origin. The airlines are responsible for bringing the asylum seekers back to their home countries, who are obliged to cover costs of the accommodation in the camp.

6 David Harvey, *The condition of Post-modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell 1990.

AIRPORT TERMINAL
German sovereign territory
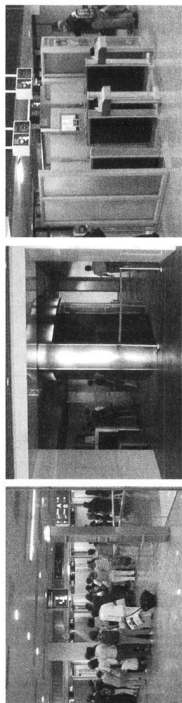
entered Germany

LANDSIDE

100% Luggage Check and Boarding Card

Boarding and Security Check by Fraport AG / BGS

no customs   customs

CLEAN ZONE
Schengen & German Border Passport Control by BGS

German sovereign territory

AIRSIDE

TRANSIT-not entered Germany

German Border - Passport
control only under certain
circumstances

transit visa	visa	no visa	no passport control
"negative" countries	"negative" countries	"positive" countries	"Schengen" countries

AIRPORT AREA

"Fortress Europe", segregation of passengers according to access privileges at the Frankfurt Airport, artistic mapping based on field research at the Frankfurt Airport by Monika Codourey / Bettina Boknecht.

Different border check points, border crossing for economy, HON/first class and 'smart border', 2006, photos by Monika Codourey.

whole area and agreed to establish effective controls at its external borders. Checks at the internal borders may be carried out for a limited period if public order or national security make this necessary. On one side this space promises to overcome the violent legacies of the nation-state, while at the very same time undergoes a process of effective border fortification and cultural homogenization. Moreover, the border condition increasingly turns into a space itself: the airport's so-called 'transit area' or 'air side'[7] is in fact an jurisdictional enclave inside the territorial boundaries of a nation. Various laws, rules, and agreements that apply to passengers, depending on nationality or travel status, regulate this zone.

What is more, in many cases the area of jurisdictional exclusion extends beyond the physical territory of airports. This makes it impossible to mark this artificial boundary at the footprint of an airport. In fact it does not make any difference where the border is located. The checks can be activated at any time within an airport transit zone depending on situation. For example, as long as the doors of the airplane are opened, the space of the airport is an extension of the transit zone.

Another good example of the detachment between physical and social space practices is the implementation of the Airport Procedure. The Airport Procedure is about establishing if refugees get the right to apply for asylum in Germany before legally entering the country. During a 19 days procedure, asylum seekers are not allowed to leave the building. They stay at the air side of the airport in specially designated detention camps. In case of refusal to voluntarily stay in the detention camp, the refugee is transfered directly to a deportation jail and subject to so-called *Proof Procedure*. In both cases the asylum seekers are residing at the geographical territory of the country, but they are not entitled to so-called 'entered Germany' status even if they have to be transported to the hospital or asylum camp and are still subject to immediate deportation. Asylum seekers occupy the geographical space of the nation without occupying its political space. Since the implementation of Airport Procedure, the statistical number of asylum seekers has rapidly decreased because it is almost impossible for them to cross the German border in a legal way.
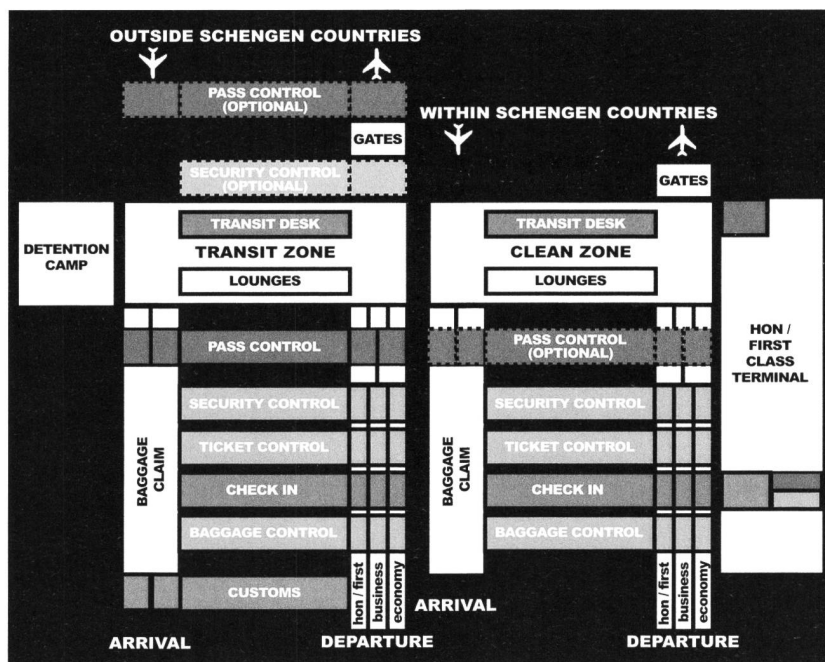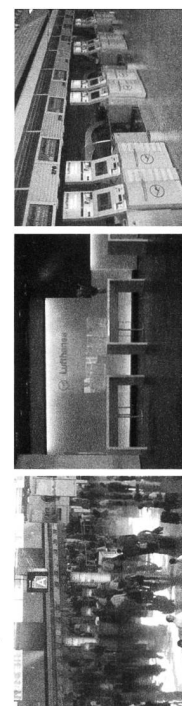
Airport security thresholds, 'tunnelling effect', 2005, diagram by Monika Codourey.

Different conditions of check-in procedure, check-in points for economy passengers, HON/first class- and quick check-in terminal, 2006, photos by Monika Codourey Wisniewska.

The airport border is not a simple line separating geographic regions or political divisions anymore. According to Etienne Balibar the borders are not disappearing, they are intensifying and being both "multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function, thinned and doubled, even becoming zones, regions and countries where people are forced to reside and live."[8] Nowadays, rather than geographical boundary of the state, the airport borders are a transit condition of the mobile body.

Airport Threshold – Technology of Space and Body in Transit

Transit zone at airports emerge because of a complex set of factors like border crossing, contemporary security and safety regulations. The innumerable thresholds to the transit zones are points of congestion that are governed by an imperfect system of identification. Gillian Fuller writes:"The airport constitutes a space where a series of contractual declarations: 'I am Australian, I have nothing to declare, I packed my bags myself,' accumulate into a password where I am free to deterritorialise on a literal level – I take flight, but not without a 'cost'. I have been scanned, checked and made to feel guilty."[9]

Different mobility patterns of varying relevance are intertwined in the airport's structure, and they are distributed within airport architecture according to the various levels of comfort and aesthetics. Travelers move through airport safety and security thresholds at different speeds. The economy class travelers must take into account longer check-in procedures than privileged business and first class travelers. Paul Virilio observed: "Highly mobile and affluent business travelers can, increasingly, bypass normal arrangement for immigration and ticketing at major international airports. This allows them seamlessly, and speedily, to connect between the domains of ground and air, and through the complex architectural and technological systems designed to separate 'air' side and 'ground' side rigidly with major international airports."[10]

At the airport, travelers move through different spaces, and their commodified movements are constantly streamlined and proceduralized. Technology plays an increasingly important role in point-to-point airport traffic. Metal detectors,

7 Justine Lloyd points out that "The discursive basis of this border is clear in the history of the term 'air side'. The demarcation of a new form of border through this legal and administrative term – first used during the 1950s – clearly describes that part of the global city which is not considered national territory for the purposes of immigration and customs control.", in: Justine Lloyd, "Departing Sovereignty", in: *Borderlands* (2002), e-journal, vol. 1, no. 2.
8 Etienne Balibar,"Ambiguous Universality", in: *Differences* (1995), no. 7, p. 220.
9 Gillian Fuller, "Life in Transit. Between Airport and Camp", in: *Borderlands* (2003) e-journal, vol. 2, no. 1, in: http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au/vol2no1_2003/fuller_transit.html, state 2006.
10 Paul Virilio, "Aesthetics of Disappearance", in: *Semiotext*, New York: Semiotexte 1991.
11 "Fast and convenient – in the future you can handle border checks yourself. If you don't feel like waiting in line at the border control point, you can use the new automatic border control lanes at Frankfurt Airport. Until now passengers on non-Schengen flights were checked by border control officers each time they entered Germany. This manual check often included long waiting lines […]. Participation is voluntary, however, only citizens from the EU/EEC countries and Switzerland entitled to unrestricted freedom of movement who are 18 years or older and hold a machine-readable passport may participate." Source: "Automated Border Control. Do you want to participate?", BGS flyer, 2002.

Uniqueness of everybody, 2006, collage of photos from the installation and online project *Data Records of Mobile Identities*, http://www.mobile-identities.info, assembled by Monika Codourey.

machines to X-ray luggage, quick check-in and other facilities are already a vital part of transnational spaces of control and security. Recently, in order to guarantee the highest degree of security possible, airports have been using the latest technology in automated border control. It replaces face-to-face (F2F) interaction between the controlled and those who control. The newest technology is based on biometrics and allows fast and convenient self-service border checks.[11] It grants entitled travelers unrestricted freedom of movement. This method also allows authorities to be more efficient and accurate when identifying people at airport border crossings.

The biometric system of authentification ties access codes to the bodies of travelers. Mobile individuals no longer have to be identified as a whole. The 'pattern match', the algorithmic logic of a database, replaces characteristics of the individual in a biometric system of control, inclusion and exclusion. Because they measure and statistically analyze the body as biological data, biometrics[12] is the perfect match for permeable borders, ensuring the verification of the uniqueness of everybody.[13]

Increasingly, the conventional system of control, inclusion and exclusion based on face-to-face interaction between the controlling and the controlled, will be replaced by the algorithmic logic of databases. The 'pattern match' ensures the verification of the unique of the body and makes airport border permeable.

In this system of relevance the body must be captured, coded, and scanned. Therefore mobile individuals are increasingly integrated into a collective electronic database;[14] a collection of data arranged for easy and speedy search and retrieval. Transnational spaces of airports continue to face different patterns of mobility that are also concerned to the biometric pattern match. In the nearest future,[15] anyone who resists submitting his or her body pattern into a global network of tracking and control, will simply not gain access to transit zone, a space of flow of network society.

Nowadays, airports are more than just a mixture of complex infrastructures and the emergence of city-like functions. They became a transnational state of mobility. They are manifestations of technology of abstract procedures of transition, inclusion, exclusion and emergent patterns of socio-spatial mobility in the global network.

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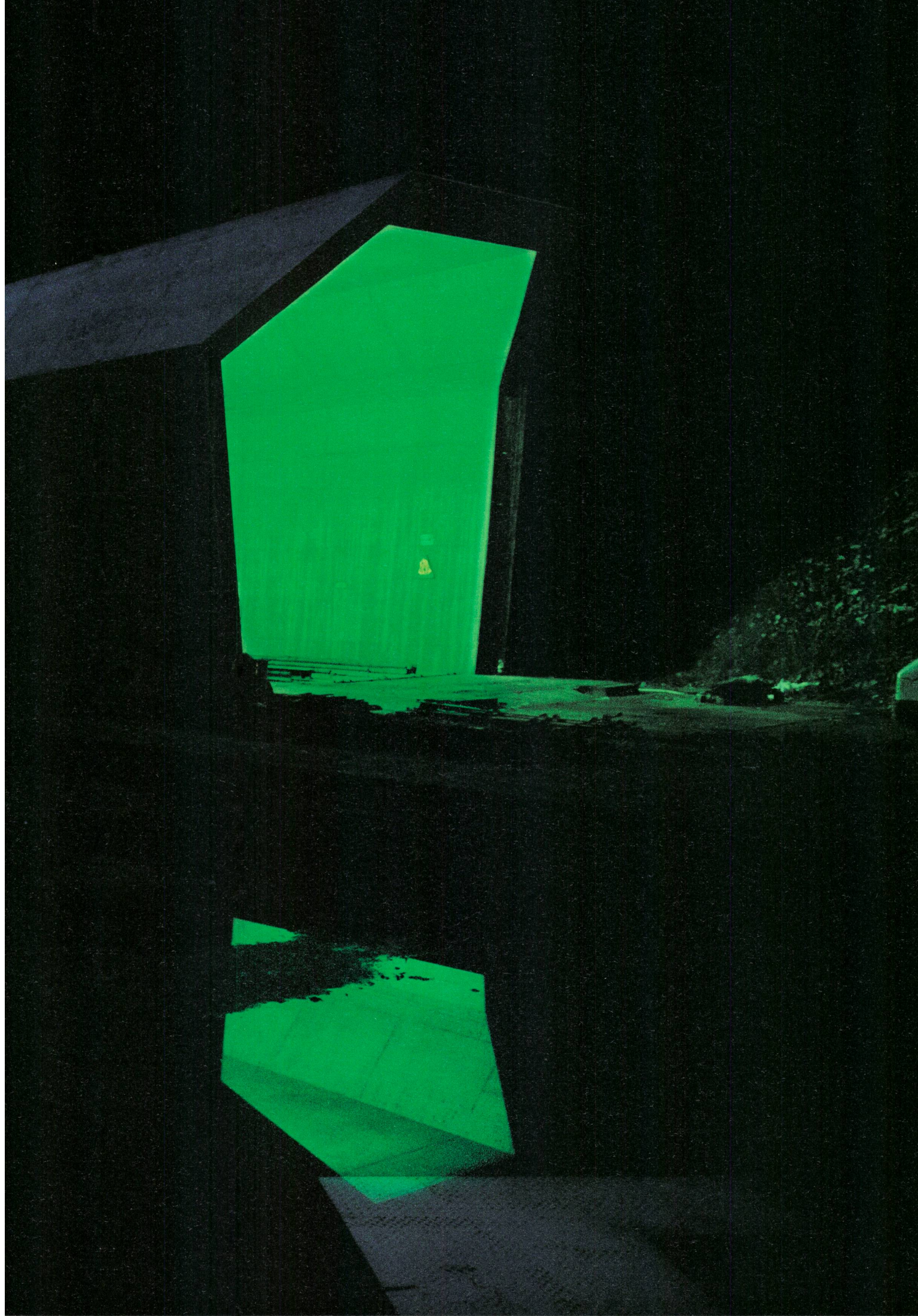
12 Biometrics is the science and technology of authentification by measuring the person's physiological or behavioral features. The term is derived from the Greek words 'bios' for life and 'metron' for measure.
In a typical IT biometric system, a person registers with the system when one or more of his physiological characteristics are obtained, processed by a numerical algorithm, and entered into a database. Ideally, when he logs in, all of his features technologically, "match 100%; then when someone else tries to log in, he does not fully match, so the system will not allow him to log in. Current technologies have widely varying Equal Error Rates – as low as 60% and as high as 99.9%."

13 The objective of the project is to create a database of mobile identities that is open to everyone, and draw attention to issues pertaining to the classification of mobile subjects. The project interface allows the scanning of photos of eyes into a databank. Persons participating in the project were asked to fill out a "5 minute Travel Form". The travel form asks for information on, for example, travelers' mobility patterns, their perception of the airport space and their particular experience with or emotions about airport border controls. Installation: Data Records of Mobile Identities, in: http://www.mobile-identities.info, state 2006.

14 "International migration affects the development of information technology", Rey Kosłowski said. Such new technology includes databases that will screen visitors, new border controls, advanced information on passengers and cargo, and an entry-exit system that could track visas and trace visa overstays, in: http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.item&news_id=53546, state 2006.

15 According to a White House statement: "The border of the future must integrate actions abroad to screen goods and people prior to their arrival in sovereign US territory, and inspections at the border and measures within the United States to ensure compliance with entry and import permits. [...] Agreements with our neighbors, major trading partners, and private industry will allow extensive pre-screening of low-risk traffic, thereby allowing limited assets to focus attention on high-risk traffic. The use of advanced technology to track the movement of cargo and the entry and exit of individuals is essential to the task of managing the movement of hundreds of millions of individuals, conveyances, and vehicles", Washington: White House 2002."

HPL architecture

www.argolite.ch

Argo*lite*