Mobilities to the test of airports: 
from public spaces to networked territorialities.

The cases of Paris Roissy Charles De Gaulle, Amsterdam Schiphol, Frankfurt am Main and Dubai International.

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Translated extracts of the thesis

Table of contents

General Introduction

Chapter 6 – The social ascription of spatial mobility: 
the example of the social marking in airport advertising

General Conclusion
Table of contents of the thesis

General introduction (translated pages 5 to 11)

Part one: Airports as powerful places casting light on mobilities and territorialities

Chapter 1 – Mobilities, their places and their actors at the junction between territories and networks

Chapter 2 – The figures of the airport as a place of power in view of the literature

Chapter 3 – The challenges of field research in airport public spaces

Part two: The staging and the construction of mobility categories by and through airport public spaces

Chapter 4 – The public spaces of airports as a metropolitan laboratory of mobility

Chapter 5 – The categorisation of mobilities at stake in the fragmentation of airport spaces

Chapter 6 – The social ascription of spatial mobility: the example of the social marking in airport advertising (translated pages 13 to 47)

Part three: Airport mobilities shaping networked territorialities

Chapter 7 – The macro-situations of mobilities: telling tools to grasp networked territorialities of individuals

Chapter 8 – The activities of passengers at the airport: everydayness, extraordinaryness and ordinary at a distance

Chapter 9 – The airport border as territorial experience of mobile populations

Chapter 10 – Airports: unpindownable places? The territorial references of mobility places

Chapter 11 – The force of alternative practices of aeromobility

General conclusion (translated pages 49 to 55)

Bibliography (pages 57 to 103)
Logotypes related to airports, having the shape of planes or other forms, are frequent signs of metropolitan landscapes. They stud the different access modes to airports positioned in the urban space. But they bedeck also multiple objects such as film posters, bags, baggage or clothes. These iconic patterns sporadically echo visual paths of planes in the sky and continuous bass sounds coming together with air traffic. All these elements set up the airport as the vector par excellence of movement across the globe and provide evidence of the social and spatial dominance of aeromobility in the practices such as in norms and in the imaginary of globalized mobilities.

This aeromobility takes part in the intensification of the circulation of signs, people, objects and capital at the global scale characterising globalization. Aeromobility is more specifically part of the related multiscalar process of urbanisation named metropolisation, contributing to shape what has been coined as an invisible city, difficult to grasp because it only materializes on the move (Beaucire 1995).

However, in the understanding of this circulation, specific places emerge. Each of them appears to be a crisscross point, a switching point between multiple networks, a dense core in a gigantic entanglement of fluxes (Veltz 1996: 65). These places are each an intersection place between the visible city and the invisible city (Remy 2002: 323). They invite us to articulate rather than oppose this circulation and the places through which the circulation is arranged and make sense. Mobility appears thus to be not only a flux, a mere translation from A to B, but also a relationship to the place and to the change of place.

The notions of synapse (Brunet et al. 1992) and of switching place (commutateur) (Lévy, eponymous art in Lévy, Lussault 2003) convey this inflexion of the geographical thinking allowing to grasp articulating places between multiple networks and territories. These places connect different, and sometimes very numerous, spaces. Some of these spaces are continuous, or topographic, while others are discontinuous, or topologic. These
spaces overlap in these places. They are placed in a situation of co-spatiality, of close interrelation. Such an evolution is also at stake in the fields of transportation and planning, where exchange places and movement-places are also identified (Gille et al. 1993).

In Roissy Charles De Gaulle, Amsterdam Schiphol, Frankfurt am Main and Dubai International airports, the equivalent of the population of the commune of Lille interacts, rubs shoulder or spare contact with each other every day. Almost one quarter of a million of passengers, members of staff and other protagonists synchronize their practices in complex relationships of physical, topographical proximity, and in connection with multiple departing and arriving places by topological contiguity. These platforms are emblematic of big airports, diffusers of discourses and practices and powerful attractors (Arbaret-Schulz 2002, Lussault 2007a) characterized by the intensity, the density and the diversity of actors involved.

A combined investigation of place and mobilities

In this thesis, I adopt a double approach of the airport itself and of the mobilities of individuals implicated. Airports have been conceived in the academic literature as nodes in the global air network in spatial analysis. They also have been considered as urban poles at the infra-metropolitan scale, in the fields of planning and environment. More recently, they have been envisioned as normative devices or dispositifs of control of mobility populations at micro-scale in the fields of mobilities and social and cultural geography.

With these readings in hand, I question the airport as a place of power to better understand mobilities. I opt indeed for a relation approach of power, in the sake of a series of studies digging upon the notion in social sciences and in geography (Foucault 1975, Raffestin 1980, Allen 2003, Lussault 2009, Massey 1999, Butler 1990, Cattan 2012, Monnet 1998). Power is therefore approached as a capacity in situ to influence a situation in the relationship with other actors or actants. It is conceived as a key component of mobility itself, fully taking part in the experience of movement and of passing places.

The airport is also envisioned as a mobility place, namely a place inserted into the circulation in general and in the mobility of populations in particular. Place is then part of dynamics at far larger scale than the scale classically associated with the place itself. Such an approach enables to avoid the risk of the fetishisation of the place as well as the opposite risk of the fetishisation of flux and movement. Both of them are related to sedentary and nomadic metaphysics (Adey 2010a) permeating French and English speaking academic ways of thinking.

Mobility is considered in this thesis in an encompassing way, as what accompanies, precedes and continues the movement. To be grasped, mobility requires using scales from the body (or even parts of the body) to the globe (Cresswell 2010: 18). This thesis bets that the joint study of practices of mobility at fine scale in the airport and at the large scale of overall mobilities allows to better understand why mobilities shape and are shaped by places.

1 The airport of Frankfurt am Main is here the main airport of Frankfurt metropolis. Its official toponym does not entail other precisions about it, sign of the dominance recognised to the place, contrasting with the airport of Frankfurt Hahn for low cost airlines.
The passage: power at stake in mobility places

If all places can be conceived as mobility places, this thesis makes the assumption that passing places are more able to help us to get hold of what is a place in mobility. This is why the thesis focuses on certain of these places which are especially intensely frequented and in very different ways: vast airport hubs for air passengers. They enable us to comprehend the material and symbolic density of the built environment and of experiences of mobilities at the micro scale as well as their inscription in territorial and reticular constructions at multiples other scales and notably at the global scale.

As places of power, airports are particularly appropriate sites to deploy academic research design on mobilities as these mobility places constitute a spatial test for the different actors taking part in the assemblage of mobilities. These thresholds of movements for very diverse populations are places of both halt and access to networks and territories. This is this key stage in the passage which incites to understand how these places are designed, practised and represented by such a diversity of protagonists engaged in mobilities. The place of actors in societies is also at stake in and through these places.

Approaching mobilities through places permit to take into account a large spectrum of mobilities, classically examined in separated fields, of touristic mobilities, of mobilities of work or of international migrations. Such a perspective allows to further go beyond the compartmentalisation of spatial and temporal scales implicit in a large number of studies. Such studies oppose for instance everyday mobilities, or residential mobilities, conceived inside a living area, to others categorised as travel or migration, external to the living area (Gallez, Kaufmann 2009). The study of the large range of mobilities with which the different actors in airports are at stake helps us to develop a more transversal approach interrogating such categories.

Airports and their public spaces as spatial operators categorizing mobilities

This thesis intends to contribute to the conception of airports as micro-scale powerful operators of visibility, intelligibility and classification of mobilities through categories taking on their full meaning at larger scale. Mobilities are put to the test by their ascription to categories through the design and the practice of airport spaces. These tests make sense through fractioned spaces of more or less restricted access to the different publics, playing on distance at the micro scale.

Airports can be better comprehended in this way as public spaces in the non-idealized or non-romanticised sense of this notion, used for instance to qualify “new” public spaces such as shopping malls or theme parks. In this acceptation, these spaces are potentially, and potentially only, accessible to all. Such a qualification permits to question the urbanity of these spaces, largely promoted by their operators, proclaiming they are centres of authentic airport cities. Speaking of public spaces about airports leads to place into question the status, the uses, the norms and the access to these spaces, subjects to all sorts of actions. They are key components to understand the more general activity of public spaces, implying more and more private economic logics and actors (Dessouroux 2003, Decroly et al. 2003). These components help also to better understand the categorization of mobilities and of their actors at play in these places. These public spaces are here also more largely
considered as obliged passing places for multiple actors, *common spaces* (Lussault 2007a, Fort-Jacques 2010) where avoided or effective copresence is organized.

In these spaces, the confrontation of mobilities is based on a double movement: *human mobility implicates both physical bodies moving through material landscapes and categorical figures moving through representational spaces* (Delaney 1999, cited by Cresswell 2006a: 4). This confrontation condenses images, imaginaries and norms facilitating the identification and the assignment of individuals to figures of mobility and to spaces. This thesis focuses on the mobility of passengers, its significance having been notably stressed by a recent body of work of the mobility studies (Laurier et al. 2008; Adey et al. 2012; Bissell et al. 2011). The analysis of this mobility is here conceived in straight relationship with the mobility of the other actors, as the latter helps to better understand the former.

**Networked territorialities through the prism of passing places**

This work aims at enlarging the characterisation of mobilities at work in passing places by linking their practice at the micro-scale by individuals with their practice of other places at larger scales. In this new way, this work intends to contribute to the current approaches of the mobility studies. It questions the part played by the mobilities passing through these places in the activation and the evolution of the territorialities of populations. Alighting on ideas of Tim Cresswell (2006: 3), it considers that *if movement is the dynamic equivalent of localisation, then mobility is the dynamic equivalent of place*. It therefore makes the assumption that mobility is a major vector and motor of emergence of individual and collective networked territorialities.

These territorialities can be defined as the sets of functional and symbolic relationships of collectives to the Other and to Elsewhere through discontinuous spaces. Epitomised by the world metropolitan archipelago (Dollfus 1990, 1994, 1997) or global urban network, these territorialities are in striking contrast to classic areal and neatly bounded territories. These territorialities can be also comprehended at the individual scale, as lifeworlds characterised by the indecisiveness of their limits as spaces in network, inviting us to comprehend them in an overarching way. They allow us to approach different spatialities: the more mundane but also the ones situated at the limit of the territorial spaces, which contribute also to define and change territorialities. They can be maintained by the digital connexion, conferring an important autonomy of actors in their actions. But this thesis assumes that the connexion by the physical movement still remains essential, notably by the important showdowns that mobility brings into play.

To study the mobilities of passengers through the prism of airports enable to approach territorialities concerned in variable manners by processes of changes in scales in favour of larger scales. This way, the hypothesis of a development of *poly-topic dwelling* (Stock 2011) can be fully taken in account. An encompassing approach at a large scale can help us to better understand their assemblage in network focusing on the relationships between places topographically distant. In this research, I bear also in mind the intensity of practices at a micro-scale in individual territorialities. Fully aware of the significance of the local investment of individuals, of longstanding interest in the studies on lifeworlds, I suggest a complementary investigation of lifeworlds, notably at larger scale, without opposing or
rigidify the different scales of analysis.

The meaning of mobility places

The main question of this research is to see if airports constitute privileged metropolitan public spaces for the categorization of mobilities and if they form, as mobility places, an integral basic brick for the networked territorialities of mobile populations. A double questioning builds upon this interrogation. How the categorisations and the figures of mobilities used at the airport by different actors are instrumental in the construction, diffusion and naturalisation of major practical and normative knowledge on these mobilities, calling to mind the own categories of the academic knowledge itself? What is the agency of individuals in their practice of the mobility place and how is this practice related to networked territorialities?

Four main objectives guide the reflexion. The first one analyzes the public spaces of airports as metropolitan laboratory of mobility. The second questions the practices and categories of mobilities themselves. The third objective addresses the part played by mobilities in the construction of networked territorialities at the micro-scale and at larger scales. Finally, a fourth objective deals with the power relationships engaged in the practice of mobility places by individuals and collectives.

The thesis is thus positioned first in the field of mobilities, in relationship with the Anglophone field of the mobility studies (Cresswell 2006a, 2011, 2012a; Sheller, Urry 2006; Adey 2010a). This vast interdisciplinary body of work is particularly developed in the field of the social and cultural geography, to which a great attention will be paid. The reflection is also in line with the related and analogous interdisciplinary Francophone field, developing more composite encompassing and transversal approaches of mobilities. They allow us to comprehend more especially the anchorage of these mobilities (Allemand et al. 2004; Stock 2001; Lussault 2013; Retailié 2009; Capron et al. 2005; Depeau, Ramadier 2005; Montulet, Kaufmann 2004 notably).

In such a perspective, this work aims at contributing to the turn operated in the field of transportation instigated by the approaches of mobilities (Merriman 2007; Shaw, Hesse 2010; Shaw, Sidaway 2010; Fumey et al. 2009 for instance), criticizing the conception of mobility as an abstraction: “[We need to] move the focus from the circumstances and choices of an archetypal individual towards an understanding of the varied conditions in which differently-placed people negotiate transport problems […] in broader constellations of attitudes and practices.” (Skinner, Rosen, 2007: 85).


Finally, the Francophone and Anglophone approaches questioning the part played by networks in the mutation of territorial constructions are also foundational for this research. They suggest and deepen the notions of territorialities (Debarbieux 2009; Chivallon 1999), mobile territorialities (Terrhab-mobile 2012), of translocal experiences (Brickell, Data 2011) or of trans-territories (Cattan 2012). In this prospective, the thesis incorporates also
reflexions related to the networking of urban worlds and to metropolisation associated with spatial analysis. It pays also attention to the contribution of the time geography to the analysis of individual mobile practices (Berroir, et al. 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Dubucs et al. 2010; Frändberg 2003).

The outline

Three field works have been carried out in a comparative approach, related to the airports of Paris Roissy Charles De Gaulle, Amsterdam Schiphol and Frankfurt am Main, positioned in relationship with Dubai International airport. All of them are envisioned as airport public spaces in strong interrelation, forming in this way a common field work in network. In the following pages, I will use the names of Roissy, Schiphol, Frankfurt and Dubai for the four airports. These constitute vast airport public spaces with a strong density and diversity of mobilities. Taking largely part to the global metropolitan archipelago, they are among the most important international airports in the world. The three hubs of the European backbone are, with London Heathrow, the biggest European hubs of passengers. Dubai airport is here conceived as a horizon for the comparison. It participates in multiple logics of integration at the global scale and is more and more related to the European network of airports, this situation accounting for its adoption for the field work.

In order to interrogate these public spaces and the mobilities and networked territorialities they put into play, the thesis mobilises different methods. The crossing of the different types of material obtained is at the heart of its methodology. Four main types of methods are employed. The first one concerns the direct and participant observation, through the practice of photography, the writing of a research diary and the registration of the commented route of passengers throughout the airport. The realisation in situ of semi-direct interviews with passengers themselves, combined with the carrying out of questionnaires and sketch maps of the airport make up the second type of methods. The third one is formed by interviews and visits with the institutional actors. Finally, the analysis of data bases, surveys, of the documentation of diverse nature produced by institutional actors as well as pictures taken and diffused by passengers online give form to the fourth type of methods.

Therefore, the first part of this work questions the modalities by which airports can be conceived and studied as powerful and signifying mobility places. Shaped by multiple power relations, their enquiry at large and at micro-scale contributes to the change of view on territorial constructions and on the part played in their evolutions by the different actors of mobility. This part specifies the research design, first through the analysis of the Francophone and Anglophone works on these matters and then with the presentation of the methodology and the conditions in which the field work has been carried out, commenting on the choice of the four airports and their interest for this research.

Having this research design in mind, the second part interrogates the part played by the public spaces of airports in the staging and in the categorisation of mobilities. This part shows the complex status of these switching and multi-regulated places, where manifold actors claim their position. The intense experience of passengers combines copresence and avoidance, but also numerous modes of measure of distance, or metrics, discontinuous and continuous, in these microcosms. By the comparative analysis of the functioning of these public spaces, of their design and scenography, of the application of categories by
institutional actors and their scope in the experience of travellers, this part opens to scrutiny the airport as a dispositif both of knowledge and power. This device takes on its meaning at large scale, orders and organizes into a hierarchy mobilities, essentialises and widely disseminates figures and registers of mobilities made visible and performed in the public spaces that this part question.

Then the third part examines the practices and representations of these places set back in the context of the overall mobility and territoriality of passengers, at large and at micro-scale. The categorisations of mobility diffused at the airport such as the ones used in the academic literature are therefore questioned in this part. It also stresses that airports are key moments where the change from one place to another is experienced, tested and negotiated, and in which passengers have a signifying agency, making sense at the larger scale of their mobilities and of their networked territorialities.
Chapter 6 – The social ascription of spatial mobility: the example of the social marking in airport advertising

Introduction

The previous chapter has permitted to show the intense commercial differentiation of actors and of their mobilities at stake through airport public spaces. This chapter deepens this perspective by proposing a more thorough analysis of the categorisation of the spatial mobility through the prism of its social marking in public airport spaces. This analysis is especially relevant when considering the inequalities not only between passengers or between passengers and staff, but also more generally in the access to air transportation. Yet these inequalities are still very little treated in the literature. Some authors, in the wake of the reflection on aeromobility, have however underlined the lack of work on this subject, in particular on the relationship between social class and air travel (Cwerner 2009), which is part of a more general deficiency of studies on this subject concerning each transportation mode, partly due to the rarity and the difficult access to these data.

To grasp the social issues concerning the social marking of spatial mobility, a major component of its public spaces will be investigated, which plays a key role in the dissemination of the category of mobility in airports: advertising. It is an important conveyor of representations of mobility. Its large-scale dissemination makes it a legitimate object of study in dominant discourses linked to mobility, considered as a set of norms, practices and infrastructures associated with travelling. Advertising displays particularly act on travelling timeframes and spaces. They are hence messengers of a discourse on travelling which participates to the construction and to the distribution of the category of mobility as it is used in the social world.

Using the logics of group and individuals' classification, advertising conveys practices and relationships to the world which aim at arousing forms of identification or of rejection amongst observers. To draw attention and reach their objectives, advertising displays have to anticipate the context of reception, that of mobile practices, and its spatial positioning in transit spaces. The efficiency of the advertising rationale and rhetoric resides precisely in the contextual mobilisation of the collective imagination which they contribute to cultivating and to shaping (Cronin 2010, Valverde 2010). Posters fully pertain to commercial dispositifs of
capture of the attention, “concrete, limited and easily observable objects” (Cochoy 2004: 18). It socially and spatially characterises mobilities and their passing places. The study of advertising spatial devices can therefore enable a better understanding of representations, spaces, actors and the logics of the construction of the category of mobility.

Mobilities and transit points are here considered as markers of social identity and of the logics of social positions, and not only as providers of a personal identity (Ramadier et al. 2009). Following the studies which questioned the social marking of public places (Bulot, Veschambre 2006), this work aims at pointing out that airport advertising conveys a distinctive conception of mobility that takes on its full meaning in this transportation place.

Numerous studies have highlighted the vigorous imagination associated with air transportation and its infrastructures (Pitt-Rivers 1986, Moricot 1992, Adey 2006a, Roseau 2012, Moles et al. 1998, Ross 2011, Demetre 2008). The role of this imagination in power relations between actors in the social world (Castoriadis 1975) has been little underlined in the past, particularly its contribution to the strategies for distinguishing upper sections of society. However, recent studies suggest taking more account of the role of air mobility in the construction of the symbolic capital of certain actors. It is notably the role of performative discourses aiming at bringing transnational elites to life that is invoked, through the linguistic study of the onboard magazines of airline companies (Thurlow, Jaworski 2003, 2006) or the touristic economy related to their frequent flyer programs (Gössling, Nilsson 2010). This chapter intends to question the meaning but also the symbolic effectiveness of these discourses, by investigating the role of the spatial dimension in these discursive and distinctive constructions. I assume that this spatial dimension has a key importance in the formation of these constructions. Through the reflection on the category of mobility itself, the aim is to specify the reach of the diffusion of the category through the place, with a triple analysis of the producers, the receivers and the products themselves in the construction of the imaging devices of advertising.

To question the social and spatial categorisation of mobility at stake in airport advertising, this article builds upon the reflections that emerged from cultural studies and the sociology of cultural products (Hall 1973; Le Grignou 2003; Collovald, Neveu 2004; Macé et al. 2008). These reflections cast doubts on the linearity of the communication scheme from the producer to the receiver by rejecting the idea that a cultural product is a framework of meanings that imposes itself to the public in a monolithic way. On the contrary, they suggest considering the intricate intertwining of the processes of production and reception of products with a strong symbolic component elaborated by cultural industries, and their social and political significance (Hesmondhalgh 2002, Williams 1981, Gibson 2003). They allow the analysis of advertising communication processes by taking into account the categories, the spatial context and the actors engaged in their coding and decoding. I will show that this process is focused on the upper strata of society, in particular on trading elites.

The objective of this study is to demonstrate that the advertising device promotes and conceives a certain distinctive vision of the world maintained by this social segment in which spatial mobility and social mobility are supposed to go hand in hand through the paradigmatic example of air travelling. Flying is thus associated with a high social status. The study of the exposition of the category of mobility in airports will enable us to see how this social promotion of spatial mobility naturalises the use of characteristic registers of trading elites’ practices, mobilising the collective imagination linked to air transportation.

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1 Here including also upper middle classes, keeping the notion of intermediate layers for lower and middle middle classes referring to Anglophone classifications.
The reflection is mainly based on field work in Roissy airport for which diverse sources collected have led to a particularly thorough study. I will also mobilise studies done in other airports in order to support the investigation done on Roissy grounds.

The analysis is based on the exploitation of four major types of sources in Roissy. The first rests upon the use of databases, in particular the national survey on air passengers, to expose the social composition of passengers. The second source is based on the analysis of an exhaustive corpus of 245 distinct advertisements. From November 2010 to January 2011, advertisements located in the passenger spaces of terminals were listed, on both sides of security, customs and passport checkpoints. They represent both the busiest times at the end of the year and less-busy times. These advertisements are mainly located in spaces commercialised by both the airport manager, Aéroports de Paris (ADP), and JCDecaux, the first world advertising distributor in airports, also in charge of advertising in Frankfurt and Dubai. The corpus is mainly made up of posters and commercials broadcasted on airport televisions. It also contains other mediums (10 advertisements identified), promotion stands for products with a utilitarian purpose linked to brands, such as clocks financed by Rolex. Moreover, a systematic record of the localisation of 1255 examples of advertising posters and stands was done in all terminals from November 6 to 25, 2010.

The third type of sources concerns the practices and representations of actors in the advertising field. It is based on the exploitation of interviews done with two ADP managers and three JCDecaux managers. It also includes the analysis of two guided tours of the terminals with one of the ADP managers and the study of the documentation produced by these actors. Finally, the fourth source gathers interviews with 48 passengers due to leave during which the theme of advertising was developed. In other airports, only three sources were collected: the complete identification of advertisements at a given date, interviews with actors in the airport field, the collection of their documentary materials and interviews with departing passengers in Frankfurt and in Schiphol airports.

To understand the category of mobility derived from airport advertisements, the analysis of this material will enable us to show that actors in the advertising field consider airports as places of social distinction. This relationship between spatial mobility and the assertion of social status will then be examined in view of four registers of mobility categorisation linked to the advertising corpus. The scope of this specific conception of mobility will then be questioned in a third part through the analysis of the reception of these advertisements by passengers, demonstrating the appropriation of the social categorisation of space by the upper sections of society.

\[2\] Messages in shops and airline lounges were not taken into account as they are located with a high degree of proximity and not on the inevitable paths taken by passengers. Being less distributed thus makes them less representative of the prevailing representations that shape the category of mobility in airports. Moreover, they refer to advertising distribution channels which are specific to each managing company and rarely limited to airports. Their exclusion is also due to methodological and practical reasons: the boundary between advertising and the presentation of products is vague in shops.

\[3\] During the investigation, billposting was done by JCDecaux Airport, a branch of JCDecaux, on behalf of ADP, who provided the spaces whilst still being an associate of this activity. Since July 2011, the commercialisation is done by a firm equally owned by these two companies.
I – The conception of the airport by actors in the advertising field: a place for social selection and distinction through air travel

The spatial horizons of airport passengers under study are varied but do not preclude important social inequalities in the act of visiting airports by populations, to which literature has paid little attention.

I – A. Inequalities in access to air transportation: passengers with various spatial horizons but with often high social statuses

Social and even academic discourses on the democratisation of air transportation often tend to present air transportation as a potential for mobility now open to all, in contrast to the recurrent and nostalgic mention of a distinct golden age in aviation or the similar theme of the jet set from the 1950’s to the 1970’s. They present the process of expanding to all publics as completed or almost. The headlines of airline companies illustrate this, such as is the case of the low-cost company Air Asia who has adopted the slogan: Now everyone can fly. Numerous publications communicate the same enthusiasm, such as the recent book on the history of air transportation, Clipping the Clouds: How Air Travel Changed the World (Dierikx 2008), in which the title of the last chapter mentions the coming of travelling for all since 1977: “Effects: Global Travel for All, 1977-present”.

However, we cannot but notice the persistent selectivity in the effective access to air transportation, as illustrated by the example of the population residing in France. Table 1 compares the population of passengers leaving Roissy who live in mainland France and who were interrogated in the national survey of passengers in 2011, with the whole population on the same year, principally according to two forms of power linked to the socio-professional position and to gender. Executives, members of high white collar occupations and managers are 2,4 more numerous in airports than among the resident population, whereas declared workers are seven times less numerous than in the population residing in France. Contrasts are even more striking when looking at the flight frequency. Passengers of the first group indicate flying regularly: they alone count for 40% of the total number of declared flights in a year leaving France. Workers, however, claim little use of air transportation: they only represent 0.8% of these flights. Gender relations are also at work in the effective access to air mobility amongst the surveyed passengers, but according to the intensity of flight. Surveyed women residing in France declared flying half as much as male passengers.

Such results encourage us to interpret with caution the annual air traffic figures. Despite the high level of sophistication of the information technologies of air networks, the counting unit is always the passenger as a temporary entity that takes a flight, and not as a singular individual liable of taking numerous flights during a year.
Table 1 – Inequalities in access to air transportation: the case of 2011 Roissy passengers residing in mainland France*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Declared socio-professional and gender groups</th>
<th>Percentage of the total number</th>
<th>Percentage of the total residing population</th>
<th>Percentage of the total annual number of flights declared by passengers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executives, high white collar occupations and managers (^5)</td>
<td>23,2%</td>
<td>9,7%</td>
<td>40,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate professions</td>
<td>26,7%</td>
<td>13,2%</td>
<td>31,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>19,8%</td>
<td>16,1%</td>
<td>13,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>1,7%</td>
<td>12,4%</td>
<td>0,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftspersons, shop owners and farmers</td>
<td>2,2%</td>
<td>4,2%</td>
<td>1,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>10,3%</td>
<td>8,5%</td>
<td>5,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired persons</td>
<td>12,6%</td>
<td>28,9%</td>
<td>5,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without professional activity</td>
<td>3,5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Passengers aged 15 and older. Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2013, on the basis of 11 000 questionnaires of the National Survey of Air Passengers (ENPA) of the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGAC) 2011, and of the general census of the population (RGP) by Insee 2011.

The assessment of these inequalities in access can be completed by the study of the distribution of passengers by types of airlines in Roissy, visible in figures 1a and 1b. The groups of executives or intermediate professions first fly with classic airlines whereas employees resort to a greater extent to charter airlines and, secondarily, to low cost airlines, used to an even greater extent by high school and university students. These variations are nevertheless relative and the evidence of the much distributed representation of low cost airlines as strong and immediate conveyors of air transportation accessible to all must particularly be reconsidered. The contribution of charter airlines to the expansion of flying to the working classes and to women seems greater than the one of low cost airlines. Low cost airlines appear to be particularly used by young passengers enrolled in secondary or higher education, which suggests a contribution of these airlines to an expansion in terms of age rather than socio-professional position. The analysis of these two types of airlines suggests that the selectivity in the access to air transportation would not be undermined in Roissy with the rapid expansion of low cost airlines. Roissy does not host all such airlines, such as the emblematic low cost airline Ryanair. However, the results of the survey of the British civil aviation, mentioned in chapter 3, suggest that even for these airports the diversification of the public seems limited.

\(^{5}\) Managers of businesses with 10 or more employees, according to Insee, the French national statistics office.
Figures 1a and 1b – Passenger populations residing in mainland France by types of airlines and by socio-professional groups (top) or by gender (down).

* Passengers aged 15 or older. Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2013, on the basis of 11 000 questionnaires of the ENPA 2011 and of the census (RGP) 2011.

These results are notably linked to the differences in overseas holidays, associated with differences in resources but also in mobility projects. The annual studies of the Credoc\(^6\) (2011) thus indicate that trips of over four days for non-professional reasons concern almost half of the French population each year, 47% in 2010. As Florence Despret (2006: 35) recalls when criticising the presumptions of the expression “mass tourism”, “departure rates barely exceed the 50% threshold. Only senior and middle managers and professional occupations are concerned by departure rates exceeding 80%, rates that were already high in the 1960’s”. Similar situations can be found in other European countries, even if they are little documented and commented (Hall 2010, Axhausen et al. 2003). The use of airports is thus well marked by a social selectivity of access to air mobility. But how is the passenger population and its practices considered by actors in the advertising field?

\(^{6}\) The French Research Centre for the Study of the Conditions of Life.
I – B. Airport advertising according to its targets

Advertising being a tool for mediation between a firm and its clients, it is a result of the joint construction of the product and its public by the advertiser, through a selection and a prioritisation of consumers practising the place. To make sense of diverse advertising situations of communication, the analysis is founded on the joint analysis of advertisers, products and the audience advertisements shows that it is mainly actors in higher metropolitan positions that play a role in the functioning of global cities who are targeted (Sassen 1991). Most advertisers are from highly specialised sectors, such as from advanced services for software companies. They are for instance related to special computer programs called ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning or integrated management softwares). For example, Infor, a small publisher of ERP, addresses passengers with a catch phrase mixing French and English, obscure to most passengers: “Prisonnier de big ERP?” (Prisonner of big ERP?).

Other advertisers explicitly target passengers travelling on an international scale, this scale being largely emphasised by actors in the advertising field. 35 advertisements were done by transnational firms or international service providers. Their posters are located in Roissy just like in other big international airports in the world, in departure and arrival areas. They notify the presence of these firms by accompanying passengers from one hub to another. The HSBC bank is the most exemplary advertiser with 18 different advertisement types, from luggage trolleys to plane walkways. 8 advertised international banking services specify resource conditions, of a very selective nature. A few of these advertisers concern very narrow mobility channels, such as the China Unionpay payment card which is only addressed to Chinese residents arriving in Roissy.

The products sold in Roissy airport shops make up a group of 53 advertisements, strongly identified by passengers. They contribute to the duty-free distribution chain which is specific to international transportation modes, whether they be air, road or sea, known as travel retail. Implemented before and around shops, these advertisements seek to draw into shops rich consumers liable of buying luxury products: perfumes, cosmetics, clothing, watches and jewellery.

Other consumer products concern a group of 51 advertisements. Some of the advertisers target a wide audience of passengers, of people accompanying passengers or airport staff in the fields of automobile, telecommunications or computer software. The manager of Aéroports de Paris asserts that there are “ever fewer brands for the general public”. Half of these advertisements concern emblematic consumption patterns of upper classes in terms of eating practices (Nespresso coffee), of shopping (Galeries Lafayette), of banks (private banks) or of entertainment (boat shows).

A last group of 48 advertisements gathers other advertisers whose activities are present in or associated with the airport: travel and transport agencies. Airline companies, Aéroports de Paris or airport shuttle services are particularly present in departure and arrival areas. Sponsors linked to the airport promote available destinations from Roissy, by air or train, or big hotel chains linked to business trips. The targeted public of this group is more heterogeneous but 14 of the advertisements promote services linked to a high economic capital or to frequent travellers (business or non-business).

The six key types of advertising situations thus designate variable advertisers and target groups, but of mainly high social statuses. Nevertheless, is this specific to airports?
I – C. A singular profile of advertisements in the urban landscape

When compared to other public spaces, the advertising landscape in airports firstly differentiates itself from a formal point of view by the density and the varied nature of the devices used. The advertisement location plan in Frankfurt mobilises, for instance, no fewer than 42 temporary features to designate types of advertising mediums, far beyond the classic mediums used in the street. All forms of advertising are present in all airport public spaces, including in waiting areas before police controls and security checks, in passport control points in Dubai and in toilets in Schiphol. In numerous darker areas, whether they are corridors or baggage claim areas, backlit displays are even more visible as they largely contribute to providing light to passengers. Representative of the intensified commercialisation of airports and air mobilities, multiple objects aim at drawing the attention of passengers. They range from very big formats typically found in airports to screens with animated advertisements whose fast motion catches the eye, from images projected on the ground to diverse so-called ‘experiential’ installations. The latter aim at arousing interest in the displayed products through a kinaesthetic experience associating eyesight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Notably because of their heightened surveillance, airports are the testing grounds of new advertising mediums, to promote new or previously forbidden products. For example, since 2009 in Dubai, advertisements for alcohol are authorised in the restricted passenger area, an exception in all countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. A whisky tasting stand was also opened in 2010. It was inserted in a black plastic cube to hide the use of alcohol in the airport, following an order by the airport managers, but which also has been converted into a marketing strategy to arouse the curiosity of passengers. But it remains to be seen if this singularity of advertising devices is a way of socially ‘marking’ which is specific to airports.

Figure 2 – Multiform and ubiquitous advertising devices: exposing new products at the entrance of washrooms in Schiphol.

This can be compared to outdoor advertising in France, as regulations only allow signs, installations and posters to be deployed in cities. I assume that the number of distinct advertisements of each advertiser reflects to a certain extent the size of its gross investment in advertising. Advertisers concerned by the corpus were codified according to the Kantar Media 2010 nomenclature of economic activities, which evaluates the investment in outdoor advertising in the country.

Table 2 – The specificity of advertisers in Roissy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising sectors</th>
<th>Number of advertisements in the corpus</th>
<th>Percentage of advertisements of the sector in the corpus</th>
<th>Percentage of the sector in the gross investment in outdoor advertising in France in 2010*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel-Tourism</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19,2</td>
<td>5,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial institutions-insurances</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17,1</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office tools and computer software</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13,1</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing-Accessories-Textile</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene-beauty</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7,3</td>
<td>3,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>6,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile-transports</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4,1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,3</td>
<td>7,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,3</td>
<td>0,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiovisual-Photography-Cinema</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td>0,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information-Media</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td>5,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,6</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,6</td>
<td>0,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture-Entertainment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>15,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>7,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing, Maintenance, Furniture-decoration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>3,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2013, based on the advertisement corpus of Roissy and of Kantar Media 2010

As table 2 shows, the comparison between the profiles of advertisers indicates a real specificity of the advertising in Roissy airport in relation to French outdoor advertising. It is no surprise to see that advertisers of the ‘travel-tourism’ sector are clearly more represented than in classic billpostings. The sectors that promote shops (clothing, accessories, textile and hygiene-beauty) also stand out. But the financial and insurance, office tools and computer software sectors are even more specific of the airport. This result underlines the importance of the promotion of advanced services to businesses: the airport bears the representations of
the actors of metropolisation.

Airport billpostings thus appear as a targeting media and not one of coverage, closer to the advertisements of certain newspaper or magazine headlines than billpostings in urban areas, which pushes us to question the representation of the airport fabricated by professionals in airport advertising.

I – C. A place where mobility distinguishes: the supported and diffused representation of the airport

Distributors conceive diverse documents intended to advertisers and communication agencies to encourage them to rent their advertising displays. Their analysis reveals a specific conception of the airport which influences the choice of advertising campaigns and advertisements that are displayed. The airport is described as a special place, representing a complete break with the outside world: “a bubble”, even “a territory” in itself. This representation is in line with JCDecaux’s traditional activity linked to city billposting. It rests on the appropriation and detailed differentiation of urban spaces where JCDecaux establishes itself. The airport is presented as an “airport city”, a microcosm where everything can be found “under one roof”, inspired by the significant imagination of the aerial city amongst architects and town-planners (Roseau, 2012). Presented as a “place of exchanges and mobility that creates a unique experience”, the airport is precisely described through the prism of the category of mobility as an idealised place of dwelling and sociability. Presentations state that major decision-makers visit the place and stress the interest for advertisers to target these frequent and captive customers who are not concerned by advertisements in other public spaces. According to JCDecaux, these arguments find considerable support in managers of advertising firms who visit airports on a professional basis. This representation spreads and self-perpetuates through feed-back loops (figure 3).

Figure 3 – The dissemination of a distinctive representation of the Roissy airport by actors in the advertising field.

Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2013, based on interviews, visits and documents produced by actors.
The surveys conducted significantly confirm the absence of a specific targeting of terminals dedicated to low cost and charter airlines. In terminal 3 where they are located, it is the lower density of billpostings which marks the difference in the treatment of the terminal and not the differences in advertisements. Their installation causes multiple contrasts between the social characterisation of spaces through advertisements and the use of spaces, the latter being regularly associated with migrants’ woven plastic bags (figure 4). The surveys indicate that 41% of advertisements in terminal 3 concern in-transit shopping and none of them publicize other widely consumed products. Why is it that advertisements targeting a wider public do not complete this relatively small target, even at the scale of passengers? The explanation lies in the importance of dominant social representations associated with aeromobility and its emblematic spaces. According to one of the managers of Aéroports de Paris, media agencies appointed by advertisers associate the airport to “the up-market segment of their media plans”. They thus limit the distribution of widely consumed products in airports. This situation concurs with the advertiser’s and the airport manager’s expectations, the latter understating “not really wanting to have dog food brands in our airport”. Two visits of Roissy terminals with an ADP manager have let us to grasp the manager’s ongoing concern for the social image associated with airports. These airport social markers are thus not exclusive of the advertising field and are also the case of airport operations and development (see box 2).

Figure 4 – The contrast between the promotion of luxury products and passengers’ practices: the case of Shiseido cosmetics displayed in Roissy terminal 3, where charter flights leave.

Boarding area for a flight to Algeria. Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2011.
Box 2 – Broadening social markers to airport operations and development

The choice of a high level range of shops is also an issue of airport and air mobility representation. As outlined by commercial operators, amongst various transportation public places, airports are particularly associated with expensive stores (Senand 2011). However, differences can be found according to the researched actors and airports.

Of all airport managers, Schiphol Group is the one which targets the widest audience. Its actors frequently highlight low prices and good deals in its shops as well as fast food installations. The Burger King in Schiphol Plaza, which prides in being the largest in the world in terms of sandwiches sold, is located in a key spot of this emblematic area of the airport. There are also clothing shops such as H&M, a brand associated with characteristic middle-class clothing practices.

While Frankfurt and Dubai hold an intermediate position, Roissy appears to be the most exclusivist, hosting even more restaurant services and shops linked to prestige brands and chains. A good example of this is the limited presence of fast food hamburger chains, only represented in Roissy by McDonald’s. Seeked by certain passengers, it is only present in two locations amongst all nine terminals and exclusively in the public area. On the contrary, other managers have granted greater prominence to these types of chains: three in Schiphol, five in Dubai and six in Frankfurt.

These choices are not only economic. Commercial developments are part of diverse strategies of commercial profitability, but also of representations of the airport, of the city and country and the social identity of airports and its actors. ADP representatives indicate that prestigious brands, such as the ones located in terminal 2E, are not the most profitable. Lower-range brands, intended for a larger public, bring to airport operators far more substantial incomes: “there is a debate to figure out if we ought to aim lower but it is a very political issue at ADP”. Through restaurant brands and shops in the airport, it is also the social categorisation of air mobility that is at stake.

For ADP managers, “flying is always related to social status”. Given the rarity of studies on airports and air passengers, the construction and presentation of surveys play a key role in the legitimisation of this conception of travelling and airports by advertisers. Distributors collect and produce some of these studies. To convince advertisers, their strategies of presentation systematically emphasise the most privileged groups of passengers. Billposting firms in various airports insist in their reports on the importance of decision-makers amongst passengers, whether they be decision-makers in the advertising services of Schiphol (2012b: 13), CEO, service managers, project managers, self-employed or high officials in Frankfurt Media or the upper medium class mentioned in Dubai by JCDecaux Middle East. For example, in Roissy, a survey of passengers carried out in 2010 by JCDecaux focuses its validation questionnaire on a population of “490 frequent flyers”, flying at least six times a year. The presentation of the survey constructs a particular profile of passengers. It asserts, for instance, that “the air passenger, a very mobile person from upper socio-professional categories and always looking for novelties, is an opinion leader”. Air travel is not only presented as proof of this social identity but also as a leverage to take on this identity temporarily, isolating certain quotes of surveyed passengers: “When one is in an airport, one feels oneself important”. As a consequence, advertising devices are not only meant to assume a role of confirmation of the dominant social position of targeted passengers, but also of promises of upward mobility through spatial mobility. How is this representation conveyed by advertisements?
II – The normative categorisation of mobility in view of the advertising corpus: four registers of distinctive travelling situations in airports

Advertisements are polysemous and subject to various interpretations. They still conform to structured elements that restrict meanings (Morley 1993) and influence interpretation. This was notably studied by visual semiotics. In social sciences, the advertising medium is analysed on an ad hoc basis (Mendibil 1989, Floch 2002, Cronin 2010) rather than on a systematic basis. To investigate delimited corpuses, it is mainly thematic criteria that have been adopted (Goffman 1977, Brunet 2004) and more rarely methods drawn from semiotics and content analysis (Conley 2009, Bardin 2007). These extremely formalised analyses are based on detailed code frames whose various categories have been elaborated by successive authors on a same type of product. The airport advertisement corpus is more heterogeneous and more complex in some respects. Presentative or referential advertisements (Péninou 1972, Floch 2002), which rest on the strict exhibition of a product on an imitative mode, are few. The corpus is mainly made up of predicative or oblique advertisements that aim at imputing diverse attributions to the product with numerous connotations. It is the reason I have opted for a more explicit and synthetic code frame that links the two spatial and temporal dimensions associated with displacement. As per the mechanisms of semiotics, the analysis of the advertisements focuses on both iconography and texts.

Table 3 – The registers of mobility conveyed by advertisements in Roissy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space/Time</th>
<th>Synchronic approach</th>
<th>Diachronic approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Places concerned</strong></td>
<td>The distinctive access to the ‘faraway’ (54)</td>
<td>The physical and cognitive injunction to travelling (44) : mobility as a condition of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- touristic cities (23) including Paris (14) and New York, USA (7)</td>
<td>- threatening environments (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- places represented as being exotic (18)</td>
<td>- places presented on a global scale (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- faraway (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- generic places (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- everyday places (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel and the airport</strong></td>
<td>The distinctive use of rare and available time (62)</td>
<td>Mobility as a resort to a dominant transportation mode (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- encouraging purchases in airport shops (44)</td>
<td>- promotion of air transportation (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- telecommunication services (13)</td>
<td>- support services to air mobility (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- other airport activities (5)</td>
<td>- increase of airline client loyalty (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- automobile equipment (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : J.-B. Frétigny 2013, based on the advertisement corpus.
From a spatial perspective, a first scrutiny of the corpus has allowed us to distinguish advertisements mobilising displacement itself or its transit points from those which refer to places of departure and arrival. From a temporal perspective, advertisements that fit into a synchronic logic appeal to immediacy and instantaneity, whereas others follow a diachronic approach through a repertoire of displacement support, of future or potential times. By applying such a code frame to the corpus, I have classified advertisements according to each category without duplicating them (table 3). 42 advertisements do not explicitly refer to displacement. Their scarcity in the inventory shows the importance of anticipating the reception context, in this case of travel, to capture the attention.

Between 41 to 62 advertisements correspond to each category of the corpus. To qualify them, attention was drawn on the representations of mobility and addressing modes, on the relationship and positioning of the image with the public (Morley 1993), which correspond to as many units of meaning as listed. To identify them, the interpretation requires tools of visual semiotics, the existing analyses of these representations, the context of production of these images and their spatial positioning in the airport. Visual semiotics integrate on a very small scale this context to the analysis of the medium through an immanent investigation of the cultural product (Péninou 1972, Floch 2002) which does not allow us to understand its total meaning. To integrate this context, the analysis of the corpus thus also examined the discourses of actors in the advertising field and the rationales behind the establishment of advertisements in the airport. This analysis therefore allows us to explicit the “performative rules […] that actively try to impose a semantic field or to make one prevail over another, and that decide of the integration or exclusion of an element from appropriate sets of meaning” (Hall 1973). In the advertising field, rules constitute “willing structures to the incorporation […][objects] of a complete commercial work” (Cochoy 2004: 21).

The analysis of the components of the corpus allowed me to distinguish four registers of the categorisation of mobility that confirm and clarify its attribution to distinctive practices of the upper classes. Each of them stages displacement and its places of departure and arrival as something which asserts social status. Their power of persuasion is all the more acute in that they exploit the functioning logics of the airport in their rationale and objectivise their categorisation of mobility through the experience of air transportation.

To grasp the spatial positioning of images from each type, the 1255 surveys of the localisation of advertisement samples were used. Their location is analysed according to the five big steps air passengers are obliged to follow: public area, security checkpoint, passport checkpoint, boarding area and baggage claim areas. These differences of contexts are taken into account by the publicist and the advertiser when implementing a campaign. As figure 5 shows, the advertisements of each type are not equally distributed along passengers’ path. On the contrary, these registers of categorisation of mobility concentrate their arguments on certain steps of the path, passengers then being confronted with a succession of registers of category of mobility. They contribute to the construction of the airport as a place of memory in the rhetoric sense of the term, where, to retain a discourse, the orator associates the familiar passage in each of the different rooms of a building to images and arguments of discourse to remember it better (Yates 1974, Aaltola 2005). This is why we will deal with these registers by following passengers’ path which participates to the symbolic efficiency of categorisation.
II – A. When spatial mobility rhymes with social success: the physical and cognitive injunction of displacement

In the public area, the leading register is the one of mobility as a condition for professional and social fulfilment. It develops the most injunctive conception of mobility of all registers and which, according to advertising actors, marks a space considered as particularly stressful for passengers, before checking in and going through the security checkpoint. This register adopts this tone. Mobility is presented as a necessary arrangement for a changing world, in a very metaphorical conception of mobility. It is by far the register whose advertisements drift away the most from the referent they promote. They leave a considerable part of the interpretation to observers, in a strategy of drawing the public’s attention. After being translated and adapted to the different advertising devices, the global images of the media campaigns are exposed in numerous airports worldwide. The vagueness of the message facilitates the reception of images by a large public. These advertisements are displayed for business to business advertisers or advertisers who wish to transmit international recognition, each of these types of advertisers being linked to a specific addressing mode.

Business to business messages favour a symbolic mode of communication (Mendibil 1989) through a rhetoric that combines numerous interpretation levels. Mobility is presented as a disposition (Bourdieu 1994), a cognitive structure to act in a specified way, that would be essential in power relations in the world economy. A poster sponsored by the multinational management consulting company Accenture is a good example of this (figure 6). It is located in the public area of terminal 2D of Roissy, where numerous flights leave for European business destinations such as Frankfurt or Luxemburg, and displays a metaphorical, anecdotal scene inspired by fables. A savannah landscape, seen from a low-angle shot, is interrupted by a ditch which an elephant crosses on a trunk. Its movement is associated with its agility by the text: “We are never too big to be agile […] High performance. Delivered”. The illustration and the text of the advertisement turn mobility into a biological attribute comparable to size but also to a “performance”. This physical interpretation falls into a metaphorical interpretation of the adaptation abilities of a large firm.
or managers who wish to resort to the consulting firm’s guidance. The pending context of the plane taking-off is mobilised to reconcile signs which are apparently incompatible: air and gravity. With similar symbolical methods, other advertisements present mobility as a situation that managers find themselves into after a logical but also heroic and powerful choice in a changing and threatening environment at climatic, energetic and sanitary levels.

**Figure 6 – Mobility: a heroic practice according to advertisements intended to business passengers: the case of a poster for a consulting firm in Roissy.**

![Terminal 2D. Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2010.](image)

This register is also present in other airports. In Amsterdam for instance, the headlines of a Dutch bank engage in increasing the heroic aspect of business mobility: “Exploring new markets is not a paper exercise”. This echoes the slogans of the German insurance company Allianz in Frankfurt which hammers home: “If you want to understand risk, you need to get out of your desk”. The mobilisation of the metaphor for aerial ascension is also greatly used. The German daily newspaper *Handelsblatt* suggests for passengers to board: “Bitte aufsteigen”, which means both “board, fly up in the air” and “rise in the ranks”. This injunction is shared by the economic weekly newspaper *Wirtschaftswoche* in check-in desks for Lufthansa Schengen flights (figure 7).

Advertisers who wish to emphasise their international position abundantly draw on the repertoire of economic globalisation. It influences actors’ fulfilment in the change of the scale of displacement, to a global one. This projection to a global scale can be found in the analysis of the frequency of terms used in advertising slogans: the term “world” is the most used in slogans and signatures of the Roissy corpus. The imagery of the HSBC bank is the most explicit of them. The transnational firm, although emblematic of a top-down globalisation, insists on bottom-up globalisation associated with international migrations. The posters that passengers pass in the corridors from the train station to terminals offer trade-offs between different places and latitudes of the globe, whether they be attractive markets, institutions of higher education or places of retreat (figure 8), thus imitating the flight over these places. They contribute to the distinctive construction of the global scale: “Knowing what is going on abroad, but more importantly, knowing that we are expected, known and recognised in numerous countries undeniably contributes to the increase of the symbolic capital which we can define as the social importance and the reasons for living, a capital
whose distribution is the most uneven and the most cruel” (Bourdieu 1997: 46). This register thus categorises mobility as the result of a choice of destination following an elective conception of travel. It ignores differences in resources but also in the dispositions and intentions of populations, whilst acquiring a self-evident nature in check-in halls where multiple destinations are displayed.

**Figure 7** – Air mobility and social mobility: “one must read to stay on top” – check-in hall for Lufthansa Schengen flights in Frankfurt.

![Check-in hall of terminal 1A. Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2011.](image)

**Figure 8** – An elective conception of mobility: arbitrating between places at a global scale – excerpt from an HSBC poster in Roissy.

![Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2010, corridors from the RER and train station to terminal 2.](image)
II – B. The flexible use of travel time: a distinctive arrangement

Near control checkpoints, duty-free shops and boarding gates, mobility is predominantly envisaged as using precious and distinctive travel time. These advertising locations are particularly coveted as the control checkpoint bottleneck concentrates the traffic and increases the audience and the observation time of the images. In this register, time is considered as rare, a winning or losing opportunity according to the activities experienced. This discourse is consequently closely linked to the context of waiting time of passengers before controls and boarding. This use of travel time advocated as flexible and fluent excludes the more hermetic relationship to time (Montulet 1998), dedicated to transportation alone.

As for posters advertising products sold in shops, the promotion of a “great duty-free time” by Aéroports de Paris aims at taking advantage of passengers’ waiting time to turn it into shopping time. With these advertisements, ADP wishes to inscribe these practices on the move in the continuation of Paris’s most opulent consumption places: “we try to prove that there exists another department store in Paris, to position ourselves next to Galeries Lafayette and Printemps, by showing that we have the same advantages but also free time whilst waiting for a flight and duty-free prices”. Other activities are promoted to highlight this airport dwelling time in boarding halls, from charged massage services for instance to Playstation video games, Gulli playgrounds for children, televisions and Samsung electric sockets to recharge phone or computer batteries. These last objects are part of an advertising strategy known as service-based advertising (servicial), that Aéroports de Paris wishes to develop: they are potential activity resources for passengers, closely linked to a brand that “offers the service”. When presenting their arguments to advertisers, publicists of the airport significantly appeal to passengers’ yearning for more activities when waiting at the airport. They base their arguments on their own surveys but also on their personal experiences, such as this manager who presented the airport as “the only moment where businessmen have time to [think about] their wives and [buy them a little something]. I should know!”

This malleable use of travelling time is largely mentioned through another addressing mode with the numerous posters of IT services and telecommunications, mobiles phones and firms’ remote computer systems (known as cloud computing). The immediate access to other places made possible with these tools is presented as a way of breaking with the routine of the workplace. In line with the new spirit of capitalism (Chiapello, Boltanski 1999), the theme of the flexibilisation and individualisation of the time-space of work is greatly reinvested, in response to the artist criticism of daily constraints. The business to business advertisements of T-Systems are emblematic of this categorisation. One of them (figure 9) represents the footprint of an astronaut on the moon. It suggests the development of chosen mobilities, facilitated by telework, with notably the use of air mobility, and is in sharp contrast with everyday or endured travels, such as commuting: “When mobility becomes freedom. Work wherever you wish”.

Mobility is therefore regarded as a positive factor introducing porosity between the times and spaces of professional and personal activities. Intended for the fraction of the working population whose professional activities can be carried out outside a fixed place of work, this categorisation of mobility as a freedom of use contrasts with its context of implementation near the police checkpoint, blocking off the horizon in the photo. With the example of border controls, the police filter, as well as the waiting line for the tax-refund center in the foreground, remind us that large scale mobilities, far from being synonyms of the systematic disappearance of obligations, are also accompanied by numerous constraints. These controls are precisely less constraining for the passengers the most targeted by advertisements such as frequent flyers or first and business class flyers: they dispose of fast lanes for each control checkpoint. This photography thus illustrates that the category of mobility elaborated by these advertisements refers to singular experiences of travelling time that contrast with those lived by other airport passengers. Such a theme can also be seen in other airports, as this advertisement in Schiphol participating fully to the conception of mobility as an opportunity of time either saved or wasted (figure 10).
II – C. Mobility as a voyage: a distinction in the access to the ‘faraway’

After controls, in the commercial and boarding areas, as well as in baggage claim areas, the register of mobility as a voyage is particularly present, without ever being in the majority. In a synchronic approach, advertisements of this register describe places users are meant to simultaneously reach through the product, either literally (plane ticket, hotel) or in a connoted sense (food or clothing products): “the image, far from being oriented on the product (a centripetal image), alludes to the faraway (a centrifugal image) (Péninou 1972). This elsewhere is used to a break with the simple presentation of the product itself by associating it and the airport with multiple attractive ‘faraway’ destinations.

This register commits to the strongly ideological theme of the voyage (Urbain 1993). It turns mobility into an access to the elsewhere that would be the opportunity to confirm or reinforce one’s social position through distinctive tourist practices. The latter significantly concern the access to supposedly unexplored fringes of inhabited spaces of the globe, from ‘land’s ends’ to high mountains, in accordance with touristic representations (MIT 2002). Posters representing metropolis also provide a touristic representation of cities. Paris and New York are presented as touristic destinations for luxury consumption. Yet posters especially draw on exotic or orientalist repertoires of the occidental imagination (Staszak 2008, Said 1980). Using the romantic and erotic commonplaces of seduction and heterosexual amorous encounters, this exotic discourse presents as an access to places of attraction but also as a consumption of the Other and Elsewhere, reinforcing the superiority of here and the Self through the narratives of anecdote or fiction. For instance, a poster of the Dior firm displays the actress Marion Cotillard on a balcony in Shanghai with a subjectifying frame (figure 11). In the background, a skyline view of the business district of Pudong incites the touristic consumption of this much widespread landscape. In the foreground, the actress, with a languid expression, is held back by a young Chinese man.
who corresponds to Western fashion standards. She is looking away and her companion and the landscape are used as a foil to emphasize her Western bag. The passenger is cast from Roissy to Shanghai through the advertisement for conspicuous consumption in the relative Elsewhere of another node of the world city network. This process is characteristic of this register of mobility in which Otherness is only relative: the poster never fails to replace the experience of Elsewhere at the top of the social ladder.

**Figure 11 – Access to Elsewhere and conspicuous consumption: example of an advertisement for a fashion accessory in Roissy.**


**Figure 12 – The ‘faraway’ in work mobility through business seminars? A poster in Roissy for the seaside resort of La Baule.**

Figure 13 – The ‘faraway’ through the distinctive practice of the city in the airport: a Dubai specificity: “turn your transit into a visit”.
Advertising screen for the Marhaba hosting service.


Being in airports, these advertisements suggest an easy and immediate access to a certain experience and distinctive social attributes through travelling. Only four posters present places associated with aeromobility in a more generic way, from the hotel room to the car park. This depiction of the relationship to the ‘faraway’ does not preclude the representation of mobilities for work, on the contrary. Posters suggest a fluid combination of work and extra-daily touristic experiences in displacement, linking this to the register of the flexible use of displacement. The poster in figure 12 aims at maintaining this ambiguity linked to business seminars (Lassen 2006) which the seaside resort of La Baule tries to attract (Morice et al. 2008). Consequently, the poster graphically attempts to reach an ideal combination of the ‘here’ and the ‘faraway’ in work mobility; we shall question its relevance in regards to passengers’ practices.

If we examine the represented places in the whole airport, it seems as though passengers were leaving more than they were coming back. Only three images refer to everyday life places with the promotion of domestic equipment in baggage claim areas. The airport is thus almost exclusively linked to places located at a great or long distance. Nevertheless, travellers going to places near or to usual work places are far from being rare amongst the passengers surveyed. It concerned 40% of them on the day of the survey. Such a result proves the normative characteristic of this register. This can be found in other airports; one interesting difference can nevertheless be found in Dubai airport, which
presents more advertisements linked to the city of Dubai itself. Before the 2008 real estate crisis, almost all advertisements there referred to the city and its construction projects, according to JCDecaux managers in Dubai. This orientation is influenced and linked to the presentation of the city precisely as a distinctive Elsewhere filled with exoticism but also fully part of a characteristic urban ideology of the city. The advertising screen in figure 13, located in the arrival area of terminal 1, promotes the extension of the airport stopover in Dubai with a tourist yacht trip to the landmarks of the city. Produced for the paying hosting service of the Marhaba airport managing firm, it illustrates both the urban development strategy and the strength of this register of distinction through the access to the ‘faraway’. Not included in the corpus but embodying the power of this register, the money-boxes of various NGOs, such as the Red Cross, UNICEF or WWF, also place air passengers in the favourable social position of actors disposing of a sufficient capital to give a handout. Located in boarding areas, they induce the notion of a symbolical recognition linked to aeromobility as a form of reciprocity.

II – D. Mobility and dedication to superiority: aeromobility and travellers

When arriving, in the baggage claim area, predominates the register of mobility which interprets air transportation and those who use it as superior. With a broad spectrum of advertisers, this register evokes numerous support services for air travelling in which passengers are placed in a pronounced hierarchical. It thus presents to Chinese residents arriving in terminal 1 the Unionpay international payment card on a silver platter with a cocktail held by a waiter with a gloved hand. The continuity of the service is presented as the reassertion of the social status and its transposition in the territory they arrive in. Even if passengers are at the end of their journey and are about to use terrestrial means of transport, air transportation is still massively represented. It is as if mobility par excellence and paradigmatically was about air transportation. JCDecaux mobilises this social hierarchical organisation of transportation modes in Paris when dealing with advertisers of luxury products: “we reassure them: flying is not like taking a train”. The only other transportation vector illustrated and promoted in the corpus is the automobile, whose association to a higher social status conveyed in advertisements has often been underlined (Conley 2009). In the promotion of aeromobility, the discourse of the ‘airport city’ communicated by JCDecaux translates into the evocation of a distinctive urbanity considered as specific to the place of transportation. Messages of the insurance firm Allianz addressed to passers-byes are exemplary. Using a tone of confidence, various characters engage the public: “My one piece of advice? Always fly in your best outfit. You never know who you will meet.” This urbanity would thus result from brief encounters with members of the upper social class.
Figure 14 – The search for the accumulation of miles linked to status: the case of a payment card associated with an airline.

This way of socially characterising transportation modes has never been as manifest as in advertisements for airline loyalty programs, very present in terminals. They aim at ensuring airline customer retention by measuring the distance travelled and supposedly turning expenses into savings convertible into airline tickets (Barrey 2004; Gössling, Nilsson 2010). These miles are proportional to the spatial distance travelled but also to the tariff category; it is therefore a social construction of the distance travelled, emblematic of the naturalisation of a social and economic categorisation of mobility through space. The categorisation of mobility thus benefits market strategies that greatly resemble an activity of social engineering (Cochoy 2012: 49). Star Alliance, an airline alliance, depicts entrepreneurs or sportsmen who experienced a rapid upward mobility, presented as members of the program to convey the idea of a club. Displacement is, in this case, at the heart of a technology for the aggregation of groups of clients used by a marketing technique known as relational; the latter works with performative applications of the sociological theory of social networks (Cochoy 2012: 39). Advertisements for the Air France American Express payment card demonstrate the ambition for disseminating this hierarchical system of miles. These cards aim at accumulating points when shopping at the airport and elsewhere (figure 14) and rely on the identification with the figure of the businessman. Managers and executives who fly the most are not necessarily the most highly placed in firms’ managing hierarchy (Tarrius 2002; Gherardi, Philippe 2010), which further reinforces the interest of airlines’ managers to present miles as a parallel currency (Blanc 2001) and as a real capital related to travelling. This categorisation of mobility through distance thus reduces the strenuousness and repetitiveness of travelling (Dubucs et al. 2011) and replaces it with a positive vision of a cumulative process.

The strength of this register is implicitly confirmed in non-commercial advertisements that mark the end of passengers’ air travel, at the customs checkpoints. In Roissy, within the context of a French anti-piracy committee campaign, various posters reverse, point by point, the social consecration of aeromobility and passengers. They represent diverse counterfeit products with the following headlines: “With [this watch], you will have tremendous success...”
at the customs”, “next fashion show: at the courthouse”. Evocating by antiphrasis a possible downward social mobility of passengers, the posters confirm the strength of the social categorization of mobility conveyed by airport advertising.

Other airports are not be outdone regarding this register. Besides the promotion of miles systems and more generally of aeromobility, the distinctive combination of air mobility and car mobility is even clearer. Airports look like small car shows due to numerous cars being displayed. Drawing systems to win luxury sports car are particularly frequent. Qualified as ‘exotic cars’ by actors in the advertising field and by passengers, these vehicles refer to an exoticism deprived of its spatial sense of Elsewhere as ‘faraway’. The Otherness of the exotic categorization is here about a social Elsewhere, an exclusivist world of luxury (Staszak 2008) that illustrates the distinctive presentation of these vehicles in the aeromobility framework. The lotteries are very visible, especially in Dubai, and regularly photographed by passengers (figure 15). They take a particularly intense meaning in Dubai, where, more than anywhere else, possessing a sports car epitomizes social mobility.

**Figure 15 – Suggesting access to distinctive mobilities in airports: a photography of a lottery for an exotic car taken by a passenger in Dubai.**

Lamborghini Gallardo in Dubai terminal 1.  
Source: Shenghung Lin 2006.

These registers thus create a distinctive categorisation of mobility all along passengers’ journey. Mobility is presented as a break with old habits, as a rupture with self-restraint and self-control and as a transgression of the separation between work and entertainment. This “call for unleashing of passions [anthropologically constituted]” against

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7 A photography with a creative commons licence, available on: http://www.flickr.com/photos/shenghunglin/154517774
weariness and fickleness, classic in advertising (Cochoy 2004: 26), fully takes part in the
dispositive of enticement of the public and in the normative categorisation of mobility. But
what relationship do passengers maintain with this categorisation and these different
registers?

III – The reception of advertisements by passengers: a mainly congruent reading of
the category of mobility?

Interviews with passengers dealt with different themes in order to encompass the way
they received airport advertisements as an audience (box 2), which is not at all homogenous.
To grasp this reception, the analysis was based on the different readings of cultural products
identified by Stuart Hall (1973) and empirically tested by David Morley (1980). They underlie
the multiplicity of possible ways of decoding advertisements depending on the social position
of receivers. Hall firstly identifies the dominant reading, which is the most favourable way of
decoding their own encoding. He also mentions a professional reading of these material
representations practised by actors engaged in the cultural industry. This reading is more
oriented by technical considerations and does not question dominant ways of thinking: their
“reproduction takes place inadvertently”. In the negotiated reading, the legitimacy of
dominant categories is acknowledged for defining key meanings in abstract terms; but the
reader distances itself from them occasionally, at a more limited level, in their application.
Finally, oppositional reading corresponds to a global contestation of the coding framework of
the product through its detotalisation and retotalisation in another world of meaning.

Focusing on the relationship to advertisements, the range of registers and types of
advertisements evoked by passengers during the interview as well as the socio-professional
status of interviewees, I have identified contrasted positions of travellers according to the
category of mobility conveyed by advertising (table 4). The study of the reception of
advertisements by upper classes or by individuals linked to the professional worlds of
communication and sales shows that the category of mobility, as it is elaborated by
advertising elite through its products, largely corresponds to these populations’ reading. It
does not preclude other readings engaged by other passengers or of critical nature.

Box 2 – Main issues raised during interviews with passengers
- List of flights taken during the past 12 months (reasons, duration, size of the group of
  passengers, airports visited)
- Biography
- Travel on the day of the interview (destination, organisation and proceedings)
- Familiarity with airports
- Activities done in airports and use of displacement time
- Perception, description and positioning in relation to advertisements
- Qualification of the airport and of its public of passengers
III – A. A dominant reading of advertisements by trading elites which strongly corresponds to the category of mobility shaped by advertising elite

The way passengers of upper social layers, or of intermediate layers engaged into communication and sales, decipher advertisements match both the coding of the actors of the advertising field code and the decoding they advocate: a globally congruent reading. Whereas Hall separates the professional and the dominant readings, they are here inextricably linked. The reading of these passengers is based on a large spectrum of advertisements, concerning all types of announcements. It is as well strongly pervaded by each of the previously identified normative registers. This group of 16 passengers includes 9 commercial and financial executives and engineering consultants; it is completed with four passengers linked to the communication world without having a dominant position (hairdresser, daughter of a commercial director for an advertising sign manufacturer) and three other executives (a doctor and two researchers).

These passengers’ discourse demonstrates a frank acceptance of airport advertisements. Emblematic markers of cultural products, their aesthetic aspect and decorative function in the airport are particularly put forward by these travellers through a professional decoding of advertising. This reading focuses on technical and practical criteria without calling into question categorisation that develops inadvertently, as Hall underlined (1973). Emilie, who is in her thirties, works in the communication field as a coordinator for cultural events in Montreal. She turns home after spending the holidays with her husband’s family with Air Transat in terminal 3 and compares the posters surrounding her in the boarding area with the ones she studied as a student. She describes, without being critical, the construction of airports as a world of glazed paper: “[advertisements] blend into the background in a subtle way […] It is as in magazines.”

Advertisements are quickly associated to commercial rationales of communication and profitability of which passengers are familiar, as illustrated by Eraldo’s interview. Deputy mayor of the medium-sized town of Alghero, in Sardinia, in his fifties, he turns back home with the other town councillors after a visit of Parisian backlit displays, hoping to implement them in his city. He immediately mobilises an economic repertoire to qualify the advertising:

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Table 4 – The reception of advertisements by passengers in Roissy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decoding advertisements</th>
<th>Number of passengers concerned*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professionals associated with sales and communication, executives and high white collar occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant and professional readings</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated reading</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of reading (advertisements ignored or not seen)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppositional reading</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students and spouses are associated with the socio-professional group of the household member who has the highest status. Retired persons are associated with the most recent status they held when working.

Source: J.-B. Frétigny 2013, based on interviews in Roissy.

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8 Airline names are mentioned when it is not Air France, which concerns almost half of the flights.
These advertisements are very pleasant. They are appropriate. They play a key role in the financial management of the airport. Even the airport of Alghero, although small, receives a lot of money through advertisements; if he didn’t, that would be a shame!

Even the three passengers who do not have a direct contact with this professional field also adopt the dominant position. For instance, forty-year old Stephen, a biologist, manages a research team in a public institute in Maryland. In Roissy after a research trip in Armenia, he speaks of the advertisements for video game consoles located in terminal 2E from the point of view of the development contractors: “I have seen the Playstation 3 and I have thought: ‘right, that is neat!’”.

This second level of reception is fostered in advertisements by the programmed connivance with this public accustomed to self-presentation and to power relations in negotiation and sales. The frontal relationship with consumers is linked to presentations and face-to-face discussions to which they are used. The figure of the businessman is twice as present in the corpus as the figure of the businesswoman (21 and 10 occurrences) and four times as present as the tourist, thus chiming with the very strong proportion of men in this group (12 out of 16). The image of the mobility of the “forty-something, healthy male businessman” (Crang 2002) is not exclusive but still predominant. The advertising discourse on the care of appearance through clothing and on the exaltation of mobile bodies (Imrie 2000), athletic and working hard, meets the discourse of travellers in interview. Hugo for instance, 28 year-old studio hairdresser, lives in the 11th arrondissement of Paris and travels internationally every two weeks for filming commercials. In the lounge in terminal 2D, about to leave to a commercial shooting in Berlin, he associates airport advertising with the bustle of the place: “Yes, I often look at advertisements. […] I like airports and their energy, the atmosphere that [also] emanates from advertisements”. This discourse on self-presentation while on the move echoes the role played by business passengers required to represent and embody their company. In this strategy of connivance about the figure of the businessman does not preclude the evocation of solitude when travelling, but associated with the notion of professional success, banishing loneliness of these allusions. The Oxford International poster thus presents its Activebook as the receiver’s “most precious partner”. The receiver is supposedly powerful enough to obtain a specific seat in an airplane for its notebook, represented on the poster on a large and comfortable seat with a seatbelt in the first class or business area, next to his owner, a businessman.

This specific, professional way of decoding advertisements is thus very much related to the dominant reading of the message. The expectation of a distinctive social marking of air mobility is very perceptible in interviews, such as in Marc’s. This French back-office manager of the investment bank Natixis, in his fifties, lives in the 8th arrondissement of Paris after having worked in London and New York. To seal financial transactions, he flies each week to one European or North-American city, as the day of interview in the terminal 2F1, on his way to Geneva. He criticises Roissy airport for its too close proximity with more everyday mobility places:

Advertising is much less impressive [in Roissy] than in other airports where you have headstones for big posters [he does a V with his arms to imitate the imposing effect of such advertising formats]; here, its JCDecaux, it’s for bus shelters!

This reading reveals values and dispositions which remind almost point by point those of international executives analysed by Anne-Catherine Wagner (1998). The interview with Olivier illustrates this. This former senior civil servant, former director of central services of administration, who did the Grande Ecole Ecole Polytechnique, was a business manager for a long time in a telecommunications firm and travelled a lot for professional and for tourism
with his family. Retired recently, he lives in the western periphery of Paris, near Rambouillet. In the terminal 2E lounge, on his way to New York with his wife, his statements make clear the early socialisation of his children to international displacements, then on their professional experiences abroad but always related to a strong national anchorage. His interpretation of commercials illustrates a strong congruence with the reading that actors of the advertising field privilege:

I love the HSBC advert. I really enjoy it. [...] I think playing on cultural differences, on internationalisation, is remarkable. [...] This advert is striking and one looks at it with sympathy. From a professional point of view, it is well designed and well adapted to the clientele that goes through the airport. [...] [Advertisements in the airport] are not a nuisance; their aesthetic quality and the types of messages are well thought. [...] One is not annoyed by them as they are generally refined. [...] It’s all about the subtlety of the message: it’s not Darty with the little yellow car⁹, because honestly...

In accordance with the coding of posters by advertisers, this comparison shows the attention to distinction associated with the international level, as opposed to local and national displacements.

Besides this dominant reading, a group of only six passengers proceeds to a ‘negotiated reading’ of advertisements. They work in the field of communication, but with more modest positions related to intermediate professions, or in fields not closely related to sales (medicine, land management and hotel industry). They do not question the category of mobility associated with advertisements, which seems as self-evident to them, but voice contextual criticisms on the advertising dispositif. Malik, for instance, Chadian doctor in his forties, cumulates working contracts in the humanitarian sector in Europe and in Africa. On his way back to Chad in terminal 2E, he focuses his criticisms on the material dispositif:

Some brands dominate more than others, such as HBSC: it is everywhere. It affects me because it is the same advertisement all the time and I find it aggressive. I like to see the change of advertisements and the change of their colours.

Six other passengers who hold dominant socio-professional positions tell they don’t look at advertisements. Their jobs are remote from the professional world of sales and related to research, civil service or the management of public works. Elites’ ways of decoding advertisements are thus mainly related to an manifest proximity with those of actors in the advertising field. Only two passengers develop a more critical reading of these advertisements: what about this reading and readings developed by other passengers?

III – B. A decoding of mobility shared by all?

The dominant reading mode is mobilised by a group of seven passengers who have intermediate professions or who are employees or craftsmen and who travel for private reasons. Their reading concerns a more limited range of advertisements and excludes business to business advertisements and normative registered based on the long term. This reading echoes the social marking of mobility through airport advertising that the interview of Marie, from Marseille, makes for instance explicit. She works as an administrative employee on cruise ships in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas as well as in the Persian Gulf. Back from five months of work via Dubai and then Roissy, the promotion of a typical object of domestic spaces in terminal 2E caught her attention because it seemed inappropriate to her: “I saw the stove [on a Samsung advertisement] and I thought: no, in an airport, that can’t be possible!”. She immediately gives an explanation which re-establishes the respect of the

⁹ Reference to a common distribution chain of which commercials about the delivery of goods by the use of yellow cars are often seen on French television.
norm of the place: “and then I saw the notebook and thought: 'ok, it’s the whole range of Samsung’s products!’”

Apart from three passengers who do not pay attention to advertisements, six passengers who are employees, craftsmen, workers and of intermediate professions, interpret advertisements according to a negotiated reading. Their reservations are created by circumstances making particularly clear the discrepancy between the promoted categorisation and their own actual mobility. The experience of Cristina, of Colombian origin, and Vincenzo, a technician from Lombardy, back from holidays in Paris, is characteristic of this phenomenon. Stranded at Roissy because of a flight cancellation due to bad weather, they are staying overnight. Advertisements are described as objects deflected from their primary objective. They mention their use by their companions in misfortune to take shelter from drafts in the airport corridors, but such practices are not seen as subversive and don’t affect their overall reading of advertisements.  

The cost of promoted products is also the subject of other criticisms more or less explicit. Jennifer and Sébastien, receptionist and truck mechanic in the French Jura region, express certain unease in decoding posters. They take a plane for the first time of their life on the occasion of their honeymoon, going on an all-inclusive trip to Dominican Republic with XL Airways from terminal 2A. They avoid the polarisation of the shopping area, evocating the high price of products and the whole interview emphasizes their experience of the airport as a site where they feel out of place:

If you aren’t interested in them [advertisements], you don’t really look at them. […] We see them but if we don’t really need something in particular… well we… Here for example: the shop and everything, if you want to find this particular brand, well, you find it. Otherwise, you just walk pass. Actually, we did walk pass… [laughs].

The incitation to purchase in shops conveyed by advertising is not questioned: there is a certain implicit acceptance of social markers in airports, to which the advertising medium participates. Thought of as a legitimate cultural product, advertising is not questioned. The internalisation of an inferior social position and the social hierarchy of practices while on the move at micro-scale underline a certain symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1979) at stake in the commercial dispositif.

But why is this distinctive conception of mobility accepted by most passengers? Two factors can explain this. The first is linked to the elective conception of the frequentation of the place. The airport is considered as a distinctive place, but is also the object of a significant representation as a place potentially open to all. The acceptability of this distinction is thus permitted by the fact that it well appears as the result of a choice, that of flying, if not of a lifestyle. Travellers insist in interview on the diversity of passengers. 9 out of 10 of them believe that passengers offer a faithful picture of the society as a whole. This idealised and cosmopolitan representation of the airport pervades considerably the discourse of passengers. It is notably linked to the transposition of the spatial diversity of horizons of passengers to their social composition as well as the recurrent topic of the democratisation of air transportation. Moreover, the distinctive social marking of the passing place by upper classes can be more easily accepted by populations at a distance of their mundane spatial frameworks and of their everyday social roles when travelling for tourism (Remy 1996). The explanation lies in the strength of the representation of the transportation place as an

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10 The managers of JCDécaux underline the rarity of degradations of advertising material in airports, in comparison with other spaces, as airport spaces are very controlled. The practices of diversion of the advertising material are nevertheless quite frequent.

11 This representation is examined more thoroughly in chapter 11.
occasion of access or assertion of a high social status for all those passing through, being reflected and reinforced by airport advertising. It is the mobilisation of this proper social imaginary of aeromobility that permit the internalisation of its social marking through its place. Yet the reception of advertisements reveals also an oppositional reading engaged by a minority of passengers.

III – C. The oppositional reading of the category of mobility

This reading implies a detotalisation and retotalisation of the message in another frame of reference, which is very present in four interviews. This reading is first linked to the rejection of the dominant interpretation, as illustrated by N'Diaye. This sixty years old woman from Mali is back from her yearly visit to her daughter who lives in the south-eastern suburbs of Paris and takes Air Algeria to go back to Algeria, where she works as secretary. She refuses to adopt a flexible conception of travelling time linked to shopping in airports:

When I am at work or at home, I have things to do; but here, I have nothing. […] I remember advertisements. I don’t have the habit of buying products, they cost too much: they don’t interest me and they don’t impress me!

The retotalisation is more significant is the discourse of three other passengers who occupy higher social positions. Their reading make clear the political dimension of advertising reception as a cultural product (Ang 1992) and is based on three main criticisms.

The first one concerns the targeting of the sole passengers in advertisements, thus overlooking other actors engaged in mobility, especially airport staff. Raphaël, 27 years-old, is a French graphics designer in charge of the artistic creation in a textile company located in the Basque Country. He is going home with Easyjet in terminal 2B after a day of meetings in Paris with artists he works with. He sets back advertisements in the context of an opposition between “a very rich population of travellers” and “a population of employees of colour”. After underlining that his “wife is a little bit different” (imitating the accent of French black Caribbean diaspora), Raphaël hints at a kind of social apartheid. The coding of advertisements is thus denounced as a form of concealing of social relationships between the passengers and the staff at their service. This interpretation is linked to the social and spatial division of labour associated with aeromobility. 86,000 agents work in the Roissy airport, two thirds being employees or workers (OMEFPC 2011). To explain this oppositional reading adopted by Raphaël, who introduces himself as “a pure product of [the advertising field which works on] images”, we need to take into account different components of his biographical path (Morley 1993), including his working class origins, his wedding and his settlement in a seaside resort, that he describes as peripheral when considering his work environment. Yet, according to him, his studies and his previous jobs in the field of applied arts distinguish him from other passengers or from his colleagues who work in the field of communication or sales. This interview illustrates that symbolic creators of the cultural industry constitute a heterogeneous group that evolves with the tension between innovation and standardisation (Hesmondhalgh 2002, Gaertner 2007), whose decoding does not therefore systematically rely on the framework of the dominant reading.

The second criticism is based on the very generic nature of the mobility displayed and categorised by commercials, thus enhancing a vision of mobility and its places that is too distanced from the territories in which airports are locally and nationally anchored. Catherine, a social worker specialised in early childhood, exemplifies this oppositional reading. Originally from Toulouse, she migrated 25 years ago to Australia with her husband, who teaches in a technical college and has both nationalities. An advertisement for a Yves Saint-
Laurent perfume, although explicitly playing on the figure of the Parisian woman, which could be considered as a topical territorial representation, does not seem anchored enough to her and too focused on the logics of a transnational firm: “You will find the same in Dubai!” This criticism, as well punctually developed by other passengers, echoes the recurrent mails received by the airport managers about the use of languages other than French in advertisements\textsuperscript{12}. The contrasted reception of the international and transnational position of advertisements, reflected in the interviews of Olivier and Catherine, shows that the reception is not so much linked to differences in passengers’ nationalities, but rather to an opposition that is experienced by societies in a context of globalisation (Ang 1992), notably whether passengers are implicated by their work or not in transnational companies.

The social marking of advertising is also subject to a third criticism, largely linked to complex processes of privatisation and commercial exploitation of public spaces (Dessouroux 2003) and to the commercial categorisation of mobility. The criticism focuses particularly on the diffuse implantation of advertisements in the airport, all along the path of passengers. Aurélie, a student studying English in Caen, mentions, for example, an advertisement she noticed in the boarding area for a car and which she thinks is “inappropriate”:

I can understand the utility or rather the necessity of having advertisements in certain [shopping] areas; but in waiting and resting rooms, they shouldn’t be here.

She contests this emblematic commoditisation of all the circuits designed for passengers by advertisements and as well as the implicit flexible conception of the use of travelling time implied by such advertising dispositif. She favours a neat separation of the spheres and times for resting and for shopping and insists on passengers’ capacity to make own the mobility place.

The oppositional reading of airport advertisements highlights the political dimension of their reception through the evocation of social and spatial division of labour, of the territorial anchorage of advertisements and of the role of merchant activities in public areas for transportation. However, it remains true that most passengers make own some or most of the category of mobility and of its registers diffused by advertising, notably through its professional reading, through an exposed proximity between producers on one hand and privileged receivers on the other.

**III – D. The confirmation of these readings in Amsterdam and Frankfurt**

The light shed by interviews carried out in Amsterdam and in Frankfurt largely confirmed these results. The categorisation of mobility conveyed by advertisements is also subject of a dominant and professional reading by passengers linked to the elites of communication and trade. They easily make clear the significance of targeting frequent travellers and business travellers and the expected norm of the categorisation of these spaces, particularly in negative terms: in airports, no advertisements for Lidl, Aldi\textsuperscript{13}, Nivea or McDonalds, to quote the most mentioned brands by passengers in Frankfurt as a counterpoint. On the contrary, they refer to advertisements for banks, credit cards or computer products such as the SAP integrated management software, promoted in all four airports.

The match between the representations of aeromobility advertised and the ones

\textsuperscript{12} A phenomenon which concerns half the corpus of advertisements in Roissy.

\textsuperscript{13} Supermarkets with low prices which are very common in Germany.
expressed by other passengers is also manifest, especially as they strongly transpose aptitudes acquired during their own professional experiences to interpret the dispositif and the social marking of the place:

I pay attention to advertising. I enjoy the big signs with the stupid face of Brad Pitt in all that lounge [advertisement for the Chanel n°5 perfume] [shared laugh between the researcher and the interviewed person], I find it fun and amusing, I enjoy the big glamour of the parfum advertising. I don't buy stuff like that but I like the atmosphere they create.

Do you see differences with ads in cities or not really? Yeah, I think it's more glamour based in airports and more high-end luxury items and I enjoy that, although I don't buy at that level. I feel like a participant just because of all signs all around me... yeah, and I imagine that's the idea of it. I'm not a person to buy anything of that income level. (Schiphol, Linda, American English tutor and teacher in Equatorial Guinea)

Negotiated readings by these actors are also rare, and notably take forms of avoidance of advertisements: "I try not to react and to look at it, to be honest" concedes Elias in Schiphol, a professor of Oriental studies in an English university.

The dominant interpretation is largely mobilised by other passengers occupying more modest socio-professional positions. Euphemizing the social categorisation of aeromobility and its places through advertising, they regularly cite the figure of the passenger and its needs to justify the specificity of airport advertisements and tend to minimise them. However, their discourse betrays the specificity and normativity of this legitimate figure of mobility in naturalised practices, described, for instance, as a considerable consumer of financial services and duty-free products:

It's more geared towards travelers and so the things that you are going to see advertised are more for people to travel on, like banks, different travel credit cards, or things that you would be able to buy in the duty free shops. But generally, I would say that the advertising seems similar to what you would see in regular markets. (Schiphol, Jessica, American teacher of theater in English in Istanbul)

This banalisation contrasts with the negotiated reading made by other passengers occupying similar work positions and who are surprised by the incongruity of advertising dispositifs with which they are confronted, although not contesting the categorisation as a whole:

Dora [finishing her description of airports]: And many adverts! Many adverts cleverly set up...

What did they promote? Expensive watches, hi-fi systems or cars, that sort of thing.

Timo: Luxury products [...] Pretty things, which are also things no one possesses, right? (Frankfurt, Timo and Dora, telecom technician and accountant from Rhineland-Palatinate).

The oppositional reading of advertisements and its frame of reference are also at stake in these airports, with a criticism of the generic way mobility is represented but also its commoditisation. It is also carried out by actors in the world of communication who go further than the classic prism of the professional interpretation. Although in charge of events communication in a large South-Korean automobile manufacturing group, an executive like Jihoo mentions his opposition to advertisement inside buildings in Frankfurt:

[Here, it's a bit as] the outdoor advertisement on big buildings but I don't like the indoor advertisement. Why? It's not notified and identified as advertisement. That's why I don't like it.

The density of this merchant marking is also blamed for disrupting the orientation in the very dense landscape of airports. This criticism of commoditisation concerns the performative nature of this social categorisation of mobility and its places, and makes a mockery of this:

I took a course at the University [...] and I grew up in Canada without television, people newspapers, internet, without any of these things, not because they couldn’t afford it but because they
rather liked have a brain rather than cable televisions. My parents are super hippies and I’ve been raised that way so [...] I try to be indifferent to the ads around me, and not trying to let my brain being washed by not paying attention too much. [...] I feel like the advertising here is of a different kind of class in comparison with cities. In the city, they’re like sales, you know: “2 for 1 chocolate bar” or whatever it is. But here it’s like: [taking a mannered voice] “take home this diamant to your mother as a souvenir!” or “upgrade to the Calvin Klein” or “only’ 10 euros!” It’s just…: none of this is in the city. (Frankfurt, Ainsley, from Nova Scotia in Canada and finishing a globe-trotting year of mobility, daughter of teachers in secondary education).

The study of advertising reception in Amsterdam and Frankfurt has thus allowed us to confirm the significance of the distinctive social categorisation of mobility that can be found in these three airports. It also corroborates the existence of more circumstantial and critical interpretations of the advertising discourse, confirming that the acceptance of the categorisation in associated spatial dispositif cannot be taken for granted.

Conclusion

The exploration of advertising dispositifs, pervasive in airports, reveals the importance of a distinctive categorisation of mobility at stake in these public places, operated by certain social groups in the professional world of communication and of sales. Although this categorisation has been particularly analysed in the context of Roissy, the complementary study of the Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Dubai airports suggests that the presence and dissemination of this category is also largely at play there. The analysis confirms and amplifies the hypermobile categorisation identified in the previous chapter.

This hypermobile categorisation is firstly related to the selectivity of the access to air transportation and therefore to a large part of airport spaces. Inequalities in the access to aeromobility have been rarely highlighted. Yet, the analysis of existing surveys permits to prove the obduracy of such disparities, contrasting with the much disseminated representations of flying as a practice available to all.

The social categorisation of mobility and its public places is however linked to an even more restrictive conception of aeromobility, which is based on its distinctive construction. It focuses on the mobility of passengers occupying the highest social positions whilst being diffused to the large public present in airports: passengers, staff and visitors. The study of advertising in airports has showed the significance of this social marking of aeromobility, as well as in other airport equipments, which largely contribute to amplifying it. Airport public spaces thus actively contribute to the creation of general urban “embellishment” processes, of appealing spaces for executives, fetishising pictures and obliterating practices, which are seen in other contexts about the “revanchist city” (Smith 1996).

The categorisation rests upon the paradigmatic association between aeromobility and the assertion of a high social status. It can be found at different stages of passengers’ path in airports, according to four principal registers that naturalise this conception of mobility which thus seems as indisputable. Mobility is firstly presented as a heroic practice and a condition for success in professional terms. This most injunctive and heteronymous presentation of mobility is completed by the presentation of mobility as a fluid combination of work and discovery of the ‘faraway’ when travelling, making of aeromobility always a long distance mobility. This distinctive overcoming of distance is associated with the staging of a distinctive
use of travelling time as a precious time but also with the consecration of a dominant position by the access to aeromobility, placed at the top of the social and spatial hierarchy of transportation modes.

Through the study of the strategy of social and spatial placement of cultural products (Jackson, Taylor 1996) the apparent neutrality of spatial categories (Schaffter et al. 2010) of here of mobility can be deconstructed, analyzing the strength of rhetoric through space. It makes possible the diffusion of hypermobile representations assigning populations to emblematic norms and values of these trading elites. By paying attention to the reception of these products, through an analysis inspired by cultural studies, the effectiveness of these advertising dispositifs is largely confirmed. Nevertheless, this analysis highlights also the importance of keeping in mind the heterogeneous practices engaged in these dispositifs. The performativity of the category of mobility is dulled when facing the opposition of certain passengers. Such a result calls for a better consideration of passengers’ appropriation of airport public spaces by paying a closer attention to their actual practices of mobility at micro- as well as at macro-scales.
This thesis has explored airports as mobility places via a combined approach of these places and of the mobilities of individuals practising them. It has shown how airports are genuinely public, metropolitan spaces of mobility. A very marked categorisation of mobilities and of their actors is at stake in these key spaces of transit. There is a particular concentration of power issues, as a result of their contribution to the contrasted territorialities of populations, deployed on an increasingly wide scale. Far from the representation of airports as a parenthesis in the social lives of individuals, the thesis has in contrast shown how much these places are real building bricks in networked territorialities. They show the very way places are assembled one in relation to another, via the mobilities and power interactions that they entail.

This analysis has enabled the validation of two major hypotheses proposed at the outset, firstly by showing the close relationship of mobility patterns on the micro-scale with those deployed on a much larger scale. The intensity, the density and the diversity of the built environment and of the experiences of the public spaces of studied airports have enabled them to be envisaged as models of places practised on the move. Confirming the first hypothesis, airports do indeed entail mobile, rich and heterogeneous modes of inhabiting depending on the mobility patterns occurring, in terms of scales of time and space, of frequentation, of activities engaged in and of agency of actors when negotiating their way through the airport. The study of these places also clearly confirms the second hypothesis of the specific interest of passing places to capture the way place fits into mobility in all its complexity. These two hypotheses were verified by way of four investigation objectives: firstly the analysis of public spaces in airports, the way they are used and frequented, and their organisation and layout, second the exploration of mobility patterns on wide and micro-scale, third the capture of networked territorialities playing out in these places, and finally, in cross-sectional manner, the understanding of power interplay as it relates to mobility.
First of all, this work has shown that the public spaces of airports are powerful operators in the micro-categorisation of mobilities that take on meaning on a larger scale. These public spaces appear on the one hand as places of mediation among numerous actors, managing and reducing the social, political and cultural complexity of the practice of protagonists and bringing into play the representations and the intelligibility of these actors' mobilities in relation to place. Once seen in relation to knowledge and power, these public spaces have shown themselves to be closely involved in the implementation, in the large-scale, massive diffusion, in the naturalisation and in the legitimisation of categories of mobility which are hierarchical, performative and identificatory.

The thesis has also highlighted the discrepancies between these categories and the actual mobilities of passengers, on small and large scale. Study of these effects has confirmed the variety of networked territorialities, which are marked and highly contrasted. It has also shown the unequally distributed but genuine room for manoeuvre left to passengers in the airport dispositif. This shows their agency in these moments of articulation of places by and through the airport, thus fully confirming their territoriality in its individual and collective dimensions, whatever their situations of mobility.

**A cross-investigation of the metropolitan scope of passing places**

This thesis implemented a methodology that focused on three airports in the European backbone, Roissy, Schipol and Frankfurt. These airports are set against Dubai airport, conceived as an horizon of comparison to move beyond euro-centric viewpoints. The comparative approach enabled meaning to be given to the close networking of the different places. From one airport to the other, the different field works are conceived in network, as well as public spaces, mobilities, and territorialities involved. This work thus contributes to comparative study by moving beyond the juxtaposition of the spaces observed, analysing their actual relationships, and the circulation of models, ideas, individuals and objects at stake in each place. It thus contributes to a better understanding of configurations on a large scale by the empirical study of geographical objects on a finer scale, more favourable for the development of qualitative research design.

Through similar approaches the field work carried out in the three European airports has enabled the production of original material to capture highly complex places. It has contributed to empirical knowledge of these places, paradoxically difficult to access by researchers for in-depth investigation, and entailing numerous methodological challenges for the apprehension of mobilities. This material contributes to go beyond the poorly-supported theoretical suppositions and assumptions that have regularly been developed on the subject of airports. Documenting these places through a wide range of methods enables doubt to be cast on the putative universality of experiences of these places and of values attached to them. This empirical work has also questioned the implicit functionalism that impregnates collective representations by documenting the material and symbolic density of the experiences and of the assemblages forged into these passing places.

The research material was collected using well-tested, classic techniques, and techniques that are gaining recognition. Research involved methods of observation, interview, accompanied itineraries and documentary investigation in many forms, among which the exploitation of existing surveys and databases. The planning and implementation
of these techniques enabled the development of a new methodology for the reconstruction of the whole chain of formation, diffusion, reception and de-construction of categories of mobility. For instance, the study of 762 adverts made it possible to combine methods generally used separately. It thus linked the field of production to the field of its reception, going beyond the often exclusive focus on reception or on production in cultural studies. It also enabled a qualitative and quantitative semiological analysis of the advertising representations themselves, in close relation to their positioning in the advertising spatial dispositif at the airport.

The methodology contributed to casting light on the meaning of the heterogeneous experiences of passengers and airport staff in three ways: by collecting 8000 photographs that provide a kaleidoscope of artefacts, practices and representations in airports, by writing down dense descriptions in a research diary, and by the accompaniment of passengers through their itineraries. Interviews with 149 passengers are also a contribution as their realisation in situ is unprecedented in the academic study of airports. The analysis was extended to all mobile individuals, which means that it did not include only the most frequently studied individuals, such as frequent travellers, commuters, or nationals. It also took in account non solitary mobilities, with interviews made by 2 or 3. It explored a large spectrum of practices, and gave full attention to the components of these metropolitan and global passing places. The production of sketch maps proved also to be a relevant tool for apprehending complex spatialities, as was the analysis of photographs of passengers, and their comments posted on the social networks. Finally, the construction of diagrams representing the fragmented frequentation of the public airport spaces, the assemblage of their mobilities on a large scale, and places within their networked territorialities, provided original graphic illustrations of the different analyses on different mobility scales.

The spatial ordering organised by the airport dispositif has permitted a fine selection of interviewees and has allowed grasping a wide variety of situations of mobility. This selection was also an opportunity to reconcile the qualitative validity with the relative quantitative generality of the analysis. It enabled exploratory enumerations from both questionnaires and interviews, so as to generate original categories from interpretation of the field work, rather than solely mobilising pre-constituted categories. The thesis likewise mobilised surveys and databases produced by airport institutional players in a joint quantitative and qualitative analysis. This enabled the documentation of passenger practices, and also of the way in which normative knowledge on mobility patterns is accumulated. This investigation, combined with 40 formal interviews and a dozen visits, provided a better picture of the logics of action among private actors, who are becoming increasingly prominent in the coproduction and co-management of public spaces and require investigation.

On analysis, results for the three airports on the European backbone, with Dubai airport set as horizon of comparison, appeared highly convergent. These similarities were made explicit in the examination of the various investigation objectives, whether the public spaces themselves, the categorisation of mobilities, the deployment of individual and collective territorialities, or the power relationships in the dispositif and the practice of the mobility place. The most notable variations concern governance, the territoriality scales of the airport itself, and alternative mobility practices. These variations highlight the fact that airports are indeed part of metropolises with their singular base, and are not interchangeable, which fully justifies confronting them. This singularity is particularly marked in the comparison of the three European airports with Dubai, where social contrasts, the wide variety of the
spatial horizons of actors, and the complex territorial ideologies provide *a posteriori* validation of the relevance of the status given to this fourth airport in the comparison. Beyond the description of attested singularities, the analysis of the processes that affect these airports enables the great originality of these networked places to be emphasised. These processes illustrate the organisation of the global metropolitan archipelago to which these places contribute substantially, but they also enable an apprehension of their internal heterogeneity resulting from the various mobilities at stake, obeying similar logics from one airport to another. This is why the main conclusions of this thesis will be presented in a common analysis to the different airports.

**The production of a striated and practised public space**

First of all, this thesis investigated the design and frequentation of public airport spaces. A detailed analysis of the literature on the airport object in the Anglophone and Francophone literature over the last 30 years showed four main types of study on airports as places of power. Of these four, it is the theme that received the least attention, that of the public space, that was taken on here, positioning the airport as a spatial control device within this larger frame of analysis, and in a closer relationship with its status as a node in a worldwide network and an urban centrality.

This work shows how the position of each actor and the meaning of its mobility are also at play in these public spaces, which appear in their full ambivalence. These spaces are strongly invested, coproduced, inhabited by numerous actors so that they form a metropolitan micro-condensate in which are experienced manifold designs, organisational features and networks through contrasted mobile and static usages. Nevertheless, the analysis has showed their diversity but also the tensions and the complex power relationships they engage.

The examination of the field work underlined how strongly the intense fragmentation of these spaces, micro-organised by various filters in mobility, mediates the relationships between actors by assigning them to contrasting categories and to striated spaces. This approach made it possible to complete the existing analysis of the spatial *dispositif* of control in the literature by identifying the various segregation logics on the micro-scale which make these public spaces the operators of classification in association with various dominant actors. These logics are first of all related to an avoidance of co-presence, by centre-periphery strategies that hover between relegation and visibility. They also contribute to forms of neutralised co-presence, by the use of networks that cut right through the airport spaces. Finally, other segregation logics again exhibit a progressive fractalisation of passenger populations. These three logics underline the marked use of distance management technologies in the airport, and show how individuals do not frequent the same spaces, thus reappraising the usual representations of the airport city as being a cohesive whole.

The increasing intrusion of commercial logics and the commoditisation of mobilities by way of these fragmentation processes were specifically explored, complementing the security approach of the *dispositif* particularly studied in the literature. The analysis has underlined their importance, over and above the actual fragmentation of the spaces, in their social marking, a subject hitherto rarely explored. This marking, for instance in advertising, is
a good illustration of the contribution of commercial actors to the diffusion of values and practices, and of an image of the legitimate actor in these spaces – or of those considered *out of place*. This perspective contributes to broadening the perspective on social issues in public spaces, distinct from considerations of residential segregation or gentrification, showing in what way mobility and public spaces in which it occurs also has a key part in identification and classification processes.

The analysis also evidenced the appropriation of these public spaces by non-institutional actors, and in particular by passengers, by placing these *dispositifs* in a wider context. This *dispositif* is designed to capture, seduce and induce, rather than to manipulate. Alongside, the organisational layout and the segmentation of these spaces are also a subject of concern and diversion. Institutional actors are slow to recognise the individuals that are *de facto* the inhabitants and co-producers of the place, as such for their conception, illustrating how much public debate is needed about the governance of mobility places. But these switching places also give rise to forms of appropriation, ranging from union demonstrations by members of staff to the side-tracking of network technologies by passengers or other inventive and sometimes transgressive practices. This work has, in particular, sketched out an interpretation of the variable configurations of co-presence, allowed or conceded, of informal commercial exchanges, of transgressive mobility practices, broaching the subject of the porosity and the various mode of co-inhabiting that are negotiated in these spaces. The representation of the airport as a public space open to all, widely shared by passengers, shows all the ambivalence of the experience of these spaces. While it contrasts strongly with the powerful filters for access to the various fragments of airport space, this representation pervades the very urban and touristic practices of confrontation to otherness, however mediated it might be, in these circulation airlocks.

**Mobilities inside and outside categorisations**

This work has had a dual function, on the one hand a conceptual breakdown of the categorisations of mobility operating in these spaces, and on the other a concrete proposal for a reappraisal of the mobilities of travellers.

The analysis has first of all shown that the staging and implementation of categories of mobility in the studied airports is linked to the elaboration of practical and normative knowledge concerning the mobilities that is deployed by institutional actors. It has detailed the hierarchisation and naturalisation of the various categories linked to this knowledge and know-how, and their performative value via a study encompassing the whole airport spatial *dispositif*. This system reduces the complexity of the many experiences of mobility by assigning passengers to fractions of space and to profiles of identification or rejection. Here the institutional actors enumerate, classify and distribute mobile individuals into spaces according to various modes of transport, their social status, the recognised motive for travel, their destination and their territorial belonging. This investigation has shown how a dominant, hypermobile categorisation has been prioritised and diffused in the four airports by way of numerous micro-devices. This categorisation draws on a strong imaginary of airports as an occasion of social assertion by air travel and places the social relationships of gender, class and race in a freeze-frame. While numerous academic studies have contributed to relaying
this categorisation, this study has shown that it in fact amounts to a concatenation of collective representations that differ markedly from the actual mobility practices of travellers.

Rather than perpetuating the implicit segmentations or assumptions concerning categories of mobility, this work puts forward the notion of situation of mobility. This make it easier, on individual scale, to apprehend the activities that are associated with mobility patterns, their possible combinations, the intensity of practices, the related representations, and the power relationships to which mobilities contributes. By an analysis of observations, interviews and sketch maps produced, twelve main situations of mobility are distinguished. These situations enable the identification of marked contrasts in mobilities expressing strong power geometries at stake. They show that the passengers who most often travel by air do not necessarily occupy the highest social positions. Nor do they exhibit the most varied mobility patterns, thus contrasting strongly with their hypermobile categorisation. On the contrary, if we look beyond the dual analyses setting those who travel most against those who travel least, this research shows in particular that passengers in situations of mobility of intermediate intensity are the ones deploying the most varied activities: on the fine scale, that of the airport, and on the large scale as well, that of their travel overall. In these situations, mobilities involve the most numerous combined practices, going beyond the strict opposition of the professional, community and touristic spheres of activities motivating them. Exploring these situations, the present thesis has shown the need to go beyond a mere contrasting of the everydayness and the extra-ordinaryness, to envision the changes occurring in mobilities, defining markedly networked territorialities.

**Networked territorialities of inclusion and exclusion**

Making use of the notion of networked territoriality, this work has shown the clear involvement of multiple territorialities in the airport, and their contribution to a dual logic of inclusion and exclusion, at individual and collective level.

On the collective level, the analysis has shown how airports are key places crystallising manifold networked territorialities overlapping in the same space, in a situation of co-spatiality. The study has shown the marked persistence of national identifications, in particular in the rite of passage at the airport border or in the touristic practices of passengers. But other territorial constructions, such as at macro-regional, supra-state (EU, Gulf Cooperative Council) and global levels, show up very much as well. These different levels and the actors associated with them compete sometimes but they also work together to produce joint and equivocal assemblages. The ambiguity of the *international zone* is exemplary in this co-spatiality. This thesis has shown the many ways in which it is used - as a waiting zone, as an exclusion zone, as a particular transnational commercial zone for commercial operators as well as a symbolic place of identification for a global territoriality of passengers. It has also shown the significance of transnational territorialities deployed in the different airports. They correspond to a top-down globalisation process of transnational firms. But also express a bottom-up process of migratory circulation practices, contrasting with their invisibility in the *dispositif* of airport public spaces organised by institutional actors. Thus this work is an invitation to perceive possible forms of appropriation of key places in the world metropolitan archipelago that are not restricted to dominant actors.
On the individual level, the investigation of situations of mobility has permitted to highlight the vigour of the assemblage in network at large scale of the lifeworlds of travellers. The thesis specifies the significance of the articulations of places at stake in the mobility by the study of the activities of travellers at a micro-scale at the airport and the role of objects in these practices. The significance of the activities of transition appears strongly on analysis of the passage from one place to another. It epitomizes an experience of the mobility place which could be termed an ordinary at a distance, between familiar and non familiar, emblematic of forms of dwelling genuinely trans-topic. Therefore this work has proposed an analysis of mobility places as key moments of juncture of these territorialities, in which, even in the most coercive dispositifs of control, the margin of manoeuvre of individuals is never totally absent. The thesis therefore underlines the agency of passengers and the importance of going beyond the theoretical functioning of airport dispositifs. The field work indeed has allowed the description of the practices departing from the dominant representations of aeromobility, notably the significance of informality, which, to varying extents, permeate also the spatialities of travellers. These places in-between thus allow us to fully interrogate the total territorial experience that mobility puts into play.

All these results contribute to a better comprehension of the spaces of mobilities, and of multiscalar territorial entanglements and showdowns they condense. This thesis complements thus a large body of work already engaging research in the last 15 years in the analysis of the practices of mobilities, of passing places. It sheds new light by comprehending them through the lens of territorialities and public spaces in network.
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