

Exchange

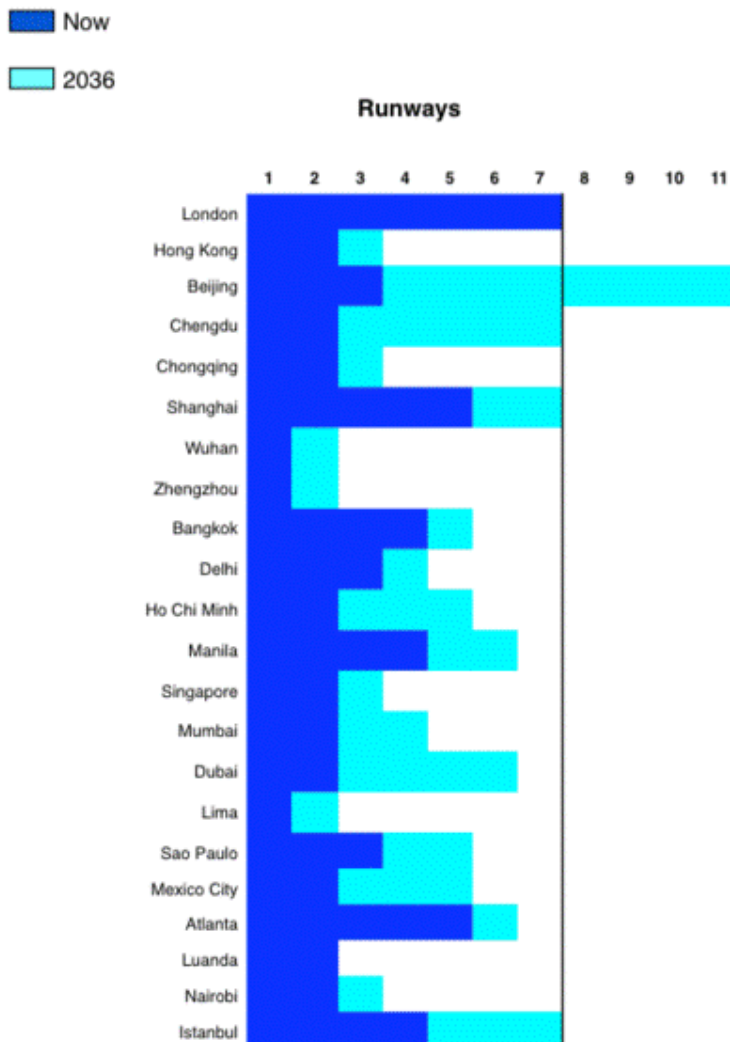
Newsletter for Aviation Campaigners across Europe

No 17 - Protest Special

March 2015

TAMING THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

Runways Across Worlds Major Cities, Now and in 2036



The aviation industry has big plans to expand. The chart opposite shows how many runways some of the cities in the world are planning to build.

But citizens are fighting back. Across the world there are protests against airport expansion. In this special protest edition of *Exchange* we feature some of them.

There are also other barriers to the expansion of aviation:

Aviation is one of the fastest-growing sources of CO₂ which causes **climate change**. At the end of the year in Paris the world's leaders will come together to discuss effective ways to tackle climate change. It is possible that aviation will form part of their discussions.

The demand for flying would fall if the **subsidies**, such as tax-free fuel, were to be removed. That is the reason why campaigns like Taming Aviation are so important: <http://www.tamingaviation.eu/>

Flight Paths. New runways are not the only way the industry is hoping to grow. It is planning to use new computer technology to enable more planes to use the existing runways by concentrating the aircraft along narrow corridors. This has resulted in protests from communities across the world. More details about this on page three.

PROTESTS ACROSS CONTINENTS

GERMANY



Noise Awareness Day
29th April

Anti-Noise Rally Berlin

German campaigners against rail, road and aircraft noise will come together to stage a major rally to call for less noise. It is organized by the Society for Acoustics.

Flash mobs and other actions are also expected to take place across the city.

Frankfurt campaigners in 40 cars blasted 80 decibels of recorded plane noise outside home of the airport chief executive for 2 hours. Campaigns against expansion continue at several other airports in Germany.

FRANCE

11 et 12 juillet
Notre-Dame
des-Landes 2015

The annual two day protest against the proposed new Nantes airport near Notre-Dames-des-Landes will take place on 11th and 12th July. But protests have continued throughout the year. This video shows one that took place in February:

https://youtu.be/TC_EUNpiOpQ.

Meanwhile, France's environment minister Segolene Royal, has suggested a local referendum may be held on the controversial new airport.



Polar bears invaded terminal 2 at Heathrow Airport to warn the Government that if it came up with any plans for a 3rd runway it would face a lot of protest, including direct action.

Watch the video: <https://vimeo.com/hyperoculus/timetoact>

Protests are growing against a third runway in HONG KONG

Some years ago, the old, city-centre airport had been shut down for safety and noise reasons and was replaced by a new two-runway off-shore airport. Now the authorities want a 3rd runway. 200,000 people would be under its flight path, experiencing noise for the first time. And it would endanger Hong Kong's famous white dolphins. Campaigners argue that the new runway is not needed as there is already a lot of spare capacity at nearby airports. Michael Mo, who is leading the campaign, explains in this video that there are already lots of empty shops at Hong Kong Airport. <http://youtu.be/9RwpDcF1qno>

- You can read more about the campaign here in an article John Stewart wrote after meeting Michael in London: <http://hacan.org.uk/blog/?p=171>

PROTESTS ACROSS CONTINENTS



Heathrow campaigners join a big climate change rally in Central London. Later this year the UK Government may decide to try to build a new runway at either Heathrow or Gatwick. The UK's targets on climate change probably mean that it could only build one new runway between now and 2050.

Flight Path Protests

At many airports across the world flight paths are being changed. New computer technology means that planes can be flown much more accurately than before when landing at and taking off from airports. Many airports, particularly in **North America**, are using the technology to concentrate all the planes on to one or two flight paths. It means the people living under these flight paths are getting all the planes. It has resulted in big protests from communities in places like **New York, Chicago, Phoenix and Toronto**. There has also been a lot of opposition in **Britain**, particularly from residents around **Gatwick and London City** airports. And in **Auckland in New Zealand**.

Heathrow is taking a different approach. It intends to concentrate its flight paths but it wants to switch them around so as to give people a break from the noise. It is still working on the details about how this can be done. It is speaking with community organizations like HACAN. It is aiming to switch flight paths so that 95% of residents can get relief from the noise 50% of the time. Residents' groups at other airports will be watching the Heathrow experiment very carefully. If Heathrow can provide some real breaks from the noise for its residents, there is no reason why it could not be done at other airports around the world.

DRAMATIC PROTESTS IN MEXICO

Members of Mexico Solidarity outline the protest against a new airport at Atenco, outside Mexico City.....



"Our lives, our land are not for sale" *

With these words, people from the farmers community of Atenco made it clear to the Mexican government they would resist the multi-billion dollar plan to build a new international airport in Mexico City. They knew the Mexican government's plan would lead not only to displacement from the land, kept so far thanks to a relentless social struggle, but it would also annihilate their livelihoods.

As a result of rallies, campaigns and demonstrations that gained national and international support for the *Peoples Front in Defense of the Land* (Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra - *FPDT*), the airport, announced to be built in October 2001, was subsequently cancelled in June 2002. This event represents a historical conquest of neo-liberalism by the social movements.

Nonetheless, last September, after 12 years of continuous harassment against Atenco and the *FPDT*, the Mexican Government launched a project to build a new, bigger and more ambitious airport. Designed by Norman+Partners, FREE and Netherlands Airport Consultants, the US\$9.1 billion project will initially consist of three runways that will eventually be expanded into six.

An airport would put an end to the farmers' livelihoods

Once again the *FPDT*, while preparing to prevent Mexican and international capital from taking their land, is telling the government and its new associates: "Our lives and our land are not for sale".

The conflict first started in 2001, when President Vicente Fox announced the construction of a new international airport for Mexico City, which consisted of a US\$2.8 billion project to be developed in the rural community of San Salvador Atenco, affecting also Texcoco and Chimalhuacán. Rather than asking for compensation, farmers from these communities formed the *FPDT* to warn about the government's lack of previous consultation with the farmers.

They also warned about the negative consequences this project would have on the environment of the valley of central Mexico, as it would be built on the remnants of what was Texcoco Lake. An airport would put an end to the livelihood of

the farmers, and also to any further possibility of ecological recovery in the valley. Furthermore, Mexico City would lose the chance to find new and much needed water supplies.

Between October 2001 and August 2002 the *FPDT* blocked main roads and highways to stop the project. They also organized rallies at the State Governor's Office and in Mexico City. But the local and federal authorities responded with police brutality, resulting in the death of one farmer and several political prisoners.

The protest was brutally suppressed by the Police

Protests and demonstrations increased in number, as well as the expressions of solidarity from other campaigns and movements. The machete that farmers use to clean the crops became a symbol of national resistance against neo-liberalism. Despite being criminalized by the mass media, the *FPDT* achieved the cancellation of the project. They became a celebrated example of popular resistance. Other collectives and struggles sought to learn from their experience and reverse similar projects across the country.

In May 2006, the *FPDT* took part in the struggle of flower vendors in Texcoco that, against previous agreements with the local government, were denied a place on the square where they had worked for the last 20 years. The protest led by the *Front* was again brutally suppressed, and Atenco was flooded with more than 3000 policemen. Abusing their power, both the local and federal governments caused the death of Alexis Benhumea and Javier Santiago, a 14-year-old boy, and detained more than 150 people. According to victims' testimonies and the reports of human rights organisations, police forces inflicted physical and psychological torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, and sexual violence and torture against 27 women.

After an intensive national and international campaign and five years of continuous effort, in 2010 the Supreme Court of Justice freed 12 members of the *FPDT*, sentenced to more than 60 years in prison, yet it did not prosecute those responsible for the state repression: the former President Vicente Fox, the former governor of the Estado de México and now president of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, and those responsible on police forces at municipal, local and federal levels.

Government repression

From the beginning of their struggle until today, the *FPDT* has continuously faced repression, and they have also served as the government's example of punishment to the rest of Mexican society, now in turmoil and anger. The Mexican Government completely failed to bring justice to these victims of the abuse of power, and insists on building an airport, once again threatening the farmers' livelihood and the sustainability of the Valley of Mexico.

The airport would end any possibility that Mexico City could recover from its ecological tragedy

On the other hand, the *Union of Scientists Committed to Society* (Union de Científicos Comprometidos con la Sociedad - UCCS), based in Mexico City, issued a document proving the project should have been rejected if official criteria were applied correctly. Mexico City in its entirety depends on the water basin where the airport is going to be built, and the government has not explained how they would find the amount of water needed for the city and the new airport. Furthermore, the plan would introduce a number of foreign species to the area that would cause a major ecological disaster. The airport would end any possibility that Mexico City could recover from its ecological tragedy. Peña Nieto's new airport, like most mega-projects in Mexico, should be seen as a way to further enrich the rich and as a political tool to repress society.

Today, the *FPDT* needs supporters more than ever. Once again, the *FPDT* has announced they will continue their struggle against dispossession, reaffirming that their lands and lives are not for sale.

With them, [London Mexico Solidarity](#) invites everyone interested in campaigning against airports and for land and human rights to keep informed about this situation, to get in touch with the Mexican and Atenco solidarity groups working across Europe, and show your support to the *Peoples Front in Defense of the Land!*

¡Zapata vive! ¡La lucha sigue!

* By London Mexico Solidarity, with information from [Centro Documentazione Conflitti Ambientali](#)

More information about LMS at <http://www.londonmexicosolidarity.org/>

For further information about *FPDT*: <http://atencofpdt.blogspot.co.uk/> (In Spanish)

Photo: Blog of the *FDPT*

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Taming Aviation petition calling for an end to the tax subsidies the aviation industry enjoys which was presented to MEPs last year (picture right) will soon be considered by the EU: <http://www.tamingaviation.eu/>

The aviation industry is the fifth biggest lobbyist in the EU <http://lobbyfacts.eu/news/29-01-2015/finance-industry-uks-biggest-lobbyist-brussels...> It spent €1,250,000 lobbying the European Parliament last year.

The number of people 'significantly affected' by aircraft noise in the UK has doubled in the last decade, according to the Government's recently published National Noise Attitude Survey. Four per cent of the population – over 2 million people – now consider themselves badly affected by noise from aircraft.

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=18288&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=no0237&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10>

75 % of the urban population of Belgium is exposed to noise levels above 55 decibels <http://fb.me/7e07SZGQp>

Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam has been given permission to increase flights to 550,000 per year after 2020 providing noise reduction measures are in place <http://www.telegraaf.nl/t/23614670>

A fascinating but frightening article which shows how living with constant noise can mean we no longer hear the sounds of nature: <http://gu.com/p/45ptf/stw>



Keeping in touch

There are a number of ways in which we can keep in touch and share news of our campaigns.

AirportWatch Europe

AirportWatch Europe is a network which brings together groups and individuals fighting the unsustainable growth of aviation.

AirportWatch Europe details: <http://www.airportwatcheurope.com/>; twitter: [@AirportWatchEU](https://twitter.com/AirportWatchEU); Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/AirportWatch-Europe/1444032905848045>

Taming Aviation

Taming Aviation details: <http://www.tamingaviation.eu/>; email: info@tamingaviation.eu

Both AirportWatch Europe and Taming Aviation work with other lobby groups such as UECNA - www.uecna.eu/ - and Transport and Environment (T &E) - www.transportenvironment.org/

- If you would want to make sure you get this newsletter regularly, email John Stewart – johnstewart2@btconnect.com

Exchange is compiled by John Stewart - johnstewart2@btconnect.com – on behalf of Airportwatch Europe. Check out our website: <http://www.airportwatcheurope.com/>.