Reflection

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The studio was carried out in two semesters. The first semester was devoted for research, site visit and development of a masterplan. The research and masterplan development was done by small groups of students. All the students were divided in 3 major groups by the object they were researching – Lime Line, Garfield Park or Midway Airport. Each group was further subdivided into smaller groups by topic they were focusing on. The research was not always directly connected to the object – in my case Midway Airport. We often found ourselves researching side subjects, but that helped to develop a wider knowledge package that allowed us to ground our masterplans on more robust foundation. As a result of research, 3 research books were published + a Chicago building catalogue, that includes a set of drawings, axonometric views and images of different types of buildings in Chicago. Masterplans were exhibited and presented in Post - - Office in Rotterdam, where we had a chance to show our work to wider audience and receive some valuable feedback.

In the second semester each student individually developed a project within the masterplan. I chose to design an airport in the centre of Chicago. The challenge was to see what it takes to make an airport as compact as possible, so it would fit in the dense city and what are the ways to improve the air travelling experience. My chosen method was to build an in-depth understanding of the typology of an airport terminal building first. It was extremely important to not only understand how the building looks like and how it works, but also why it is the way it is. What are factors that inform the design and shape the architecture – how does the geometry of an aircraft affect the building design, how does the schedule of flights affect the passenger load, how does the building deal with the fluctuation in passenger load, how does the baggage handling system work, etc. I had to first understand the machine of the terminal before I could start rethinking it and designing something new. Building the knowledge involved reading design guidelines for airport design, regulations for security checkpoints, border protection and customs regulations, aircraft technical specifications by major aircraft manufacturing companies, baggage handling system manufacturers’ specifications and so on. That was an important part of the project and, in my opinion, the project would be impossible otherwise. Therefore the research has a very tight connection with the design.