

Organised by: Institut Seni Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia,
Australian Indonesian Art Forum, Project 11 Melbourne, & 16 Albermarle Project Space Sydney

Yogyakarta International Airport as Site-Specific New Space: Deterritorialisation, Reterritorialisation, and Spatial-Cultural Configuration

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Abstract

This research examines the construction of Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) in Kulon Progo as a new space that reshapes Yogyakarta's spatial-cultural conception. Drawing on Lacan's psychoanalytic framework and Deleuze's geophilosophy, the study analyses the shift from Adisucipto Airport as object a (desire) to YIA as das Ding (drive), generating sublimation and new fantasies surrounding modern airport experiences. Using Deleuze's concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, YIA appears not merely as physical infrastructure but as a concept that produces new constellations for Kulon Progo and the DIY Province, reflecting a dialectic between the local and the global.

Keywords: YIA Airport, deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation, geophilosophy

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v10iSI39.7676>

1.0 Introduction

The construction of the New Yogyakarta International Airport (NYIA) in Kulon Progo Regency was considered urgent even though some parties still rejected it. The opposing parties are a small number of residents in Temon District. Meanwhile, PT Angkasa Pura I will continue construction of the airport, which is a national strategic project. General Manager of PT Angkasa Pura I (Persero) Adisutjipto International Airport, Yogyakarta, Agus Pandu Purnama, said the main reason is that Adisutjipto Airport has exceeded its passenger capacity. "The capacity of Adisutjipto Airport was originally designed to accommodate only 1.2–1.5 million passengers per year, yet it has already reached 7.8 million," said Agus during the Media Site Visit Adisutjipto Airport event on Friday (26/1/2018). Second, the airport in Sleman Regency has a runway length of only 2,200 meters, so it cannot accommodate wide-body aircraft. In addition, the apron can only accommodate 11 aircraft. Third, the airport is a *civil enclave* belonging to the Indonesian Air Force, built since 1938 and designed for military flights. Fourth, development at Adisutjipto Airport cannot proceed due to limited land and natural constraints. Lastly, or fifth, Yogyakarta ranks as the second most visited tourist city in Indonesia, following Bali. Based on these reasons, the DIY Provincial Government decided to build a new airport located in Kulon Progo Regency. This study aims to investigate the construction of Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) as a site-specific new space that transforms Yogyakarta's spatial-cultural conception through processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation also to identify how public artworks at YIA function as cultural reterritorialisation mechanisms that negotiate authenticity between local Javanese identity and global space.

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Nomenclature

A	YIA-Yogyakarta International Airport
B	MP3EI-Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development
C	DIY-Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Special Region)
D	HB X-Sultan Hamengku Buwono X (Governor / Sultan of DIY)
E	DPR-RI-House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

2.0 Literature Review

The transition from Adisucipto Airport to YIA can be analysed through Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic framework, particularly a concepts of object a (desire) and das Ding (drive). Lacan defines desire as fundamentally intersubjective and distinct from biological needs; it is the desire of the other and is inherently unsatisfiable. The cause of this desire is object a, the missing object that promises to restore wholeness after the subject enters the symbolic realm of language. This object becomes the focus of our substitutions, driving us to desire specific things, such as improved infrastructure.

Adisucipto Airport perfectly represents this saturated object as an object and an area, it was perceived as crowded, saturated, and incapable of accommodating modern passenger activity. Its flaws, the short, undulating runway, limited apron, proximity to dense civilian housing leading to noise pollution, and vulnerability to flight safety issues, created a fundamental lack. The public consensus and government action reflected a collective desire to eliminate these uncomfortable aspects. Adisucipto thus became the inadequate, missing object, the cause for the subsequent massive infrastructural undertaking.

According to Lacan (Lacan et al., 2019), there is a necessary leap from object a (desire) to das Ding (drive). Das Ding is the reality that becomes sensible, serving as the subject's answer to a fundamental deadlock, a more radical answer than mere desire. Following Adisucipto Airport's chronic inability to meet growing demand, YIA assumes the role of *das Ding*. It is the new, projected reality positioned to resolve the structural impasse.

This leap generates sublimation, which transforms the old, unsatisfactory experience into a new, more valuable one. Sublimation from Adisucipto to YIA demands both a level of comfort and a completely new experience. This unique experience at YIA is widely understood as a fantasy in which passengers project an image of enjoyment, often modelled after what they perceive as "best" airports, such as Changi in Singapore. This fantasy, however, is a sublime experience, one that involves both pleasure and implicit fear or pain. This fear stems from new complexities: the significantly longer distance from the city, the initial incompleteness of supporting transportation facilities, and the enhanced, complex security protocols demanded by a significant international hub.

New fantasy thrives when the subject can adjust the distance between themselves and das Ding. In the context of YIA, comfort and satisfaction rely on people living in their imagination about the pleasant experience, distancing themselves from the site-specific risks and inconveniences. Therefore, the fantasy of comfort is determined by how well the traveller, informed by prior experiences at other airports, navigates and defines the appropriate psychic distance from the new, complex YIA space.

3.0 Methodology

This qualitative research methodology is descriptive-analytical and inductive with the researcher as the main instrument for planning, implementing and collecting data so that it is more precise regarding the focus of the study and the research objectives (Anggito, 2018). This methodological approach is justified because the study requires interpretive analysis of complex spatial-cultural transformations that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods alone. Furthermore, the case study approach allows for in-depth examination of the unique confluence of traditional Javanese governance structures, modern infrastructure development, and contemporary art intervention that characterizes this particular site. This research uses a qualitative case study approach to examine Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) in Kulonprogo. Primary data were collected through non-participant observation at YIA in 2022-2023, focusing on the architectural design of the terminal, public artworks (the Entang Wiharso relief and the Ichwan Noor statue), and the airport landscape.

Secondary data include: (1) YIA planning documents, including the master plan and the 2018 Art Program document, which contains detailed information about the public art program; (2) government policy documents such as the Presidential Regulation on National Strategic Projects and the Yogyakarta Special Region Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2017-2022; (3) mass media reports on the YIA development process, particularly President Jokowi's speech at the groundbreaking, which quoted an ancestral saying about the Temon region; (4) theoretical literature, particularly the works of Deleuze (Anti-Oedipus, a Thousand Plateaus, What is Philosophy?) and Lacan (Desire and its Interpretation).

4.0 Discussion

4.1 YIA Airport as a Concept of New Space: a Geophilosophical Analysis

Deleuze aims to reorient philosophy from a focus on temporality and historicity to one on space and geography, because "thought takes place in relation to territory and Earth" (Deleuze, 1991, p. 86). According to Deleuze, space is not something physical, given beforehand, but concerns the creation of a concept like a wave on the plane of immanence; it is a cutting, a fragment, a fold: "a concept is like several waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them. An infinite movement continuously wraps the plane, passing over it without end; yet a concept marks the infinite speed of a limited movement that, in each instance, traverses only its own components.

If we link Deleuze's argument to YIA Airport, we will not only see it as a place or physical site but also as a concept. A concept serves as a starting point (especially in Kulon Progo and the DIY province) for a new constellation in which views of a region, including its culture, will change and develop. Local tradition had already foreshadowed this conceptual transformation, a point even highlighted by President Jokowi when he cited its decree during the groundbreaking ceremony for YIA on 27 January 2017, as reported by *Harian Tribun Jogja*.

The words in the ancestral decree are as follows:

Ancestral Decree Sesuk ning tlatah Temon kene bakal ono wong dodolan camcau ning awang-awang. Tlatah Temon kene bakal dadi susuhe kinjeng wesi, Tlatah saka lor Gunung Lanang lan Kidul Gunung Jeruk bakal dadi kutho, Glagah bakal dadi mercusuar ing bawono.

Later in the Temon area there will be people selling cincau in the sky. The Temon area will become a nest for iron dragonflies (aeroplanes). The area between the north of Mount Lanang and the south of Mount Jeruk will become a city. Glagah will become a lighthouse of the world.

The ancestral decree clearly states that the area between Mount Lanang and Mount Jeruk where YIA Airport now stands will become a city. The idea of making the Glagah area (or Temon District in general) into a new city, even suggesting that Glagah will become a lighthouse of the world, is a profound conceptual shift for a site historically treated as the periphery of Yogyakarta.

A conceptual design of the airport area is articulated through the form of a *gunungan* the iconic mountain-shaped figure in Javanese wayang performance. The *Wayang Gunungan* is a symbol of the centre of life and signifies divinity; some also view it as a symbol of nature for wayang, suggesting that life passes through death or life in the mortal realm. Even for the Javanese community, the *gunungan* (and the wayang) has a more profound meaning because it conveys a picture of the life of the universe (*wewayang urip*). Wayang can depict the human life story with all its problems. In the world of wayang, the narratives communicate values about the soul's perspective in confronting and overcoming life's challenges.

The architectural realisation of the *gunungan* serves as a metaphor for space and place: let us imagine the plane as a space and a possible event within it. Deleuze says: "a concept is an absolute surface or volume, without form and disjointed, whereas the plane is without form, absolutely infinite, neither surface nor volume but always fractal" a concept of creation involves a relationship with space, because space and place are constitutive of it. The geophilosophical consequence of this is that cultural history is a creation/symbolic act in space. The use of *gunungan* symbolism in YIA represents a deliberate attempt to anchor a new, globally oriented space in locally recognized philosophical traditions.

There is a deep connection between the creation of philosophical concepts and the way humans inhabit the Earth's and their ideas about space and place. History and culture are the symbolization of space, the way humans create symbols in space. Space is not a neutral concept, but a natural element full of culture, in continuous evolution and in a dialectic of movement with it. There is a deeper bond between living on Earth and the philosophical concepts derived from it, making YIA's design a deliberate reterritorialisation attempt to infuse the new physical infrastructure with the spiritual and cultural values of Yogyakarta.

4.2 *Deterritorialisation and Reterritorialisation at YIA Airport*

Deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are fundamental concepts Deleuze employs to describe the dynamic process of creating and dismantling territory, two movements Earth possesses in continuous dialectic. In *Anti-Oedipus*, deterritorialisation refers to the severance of the "body without organs" from nature and earth itself. The YIA area was initially Earth's domain when uninhabited. Subsequently, groups cultivated this land, marking the territorialisation stage. When structurally entering the Kingdom of Mataram's territory, it experienced deterritorialisation as local systems adhered to the kingdom's framework. For Deleuze, territory implies all powers, restrictions, social history, and geography. Territory originates from Earth first; after deterritorialisation by specific powers, reterritorialisation follows. Deleuze describes an "undivided Earth where the connective, disjunctive, and conjunctive relations of each part are inscribed together with the others" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972, p. 146). Modern society is characterised by continuous deterritorialisation; what societies deterritorialise, they rewrite with another. These neoterritorialities are often artificial and archaic. Every deterritorialisation involves corresponding reterritorialisation. Deleuze demonstrates that empires function as deterritorialising forces—shifting roles from Earth to emperor's body—while simultaneously territorialising through citizenship principles. Deleuze's space is continuous dialectic between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, operated by social, biological, and cultural factors. This framework applies precisely to YIA. As Indonesian territory (DIY Province), this area is simultaneously Pakualaman ground owned by Kerajaan/Kadipaten Paku Alaman. YIA undergoes simultaneous deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. DIY's structural uniqueness intensifies this: the Governor is also King of Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Kingdom. Thus, processes operate on both territory and its "owner." When developed as airport, PT Angkasa Pura I purchased this land. Ownership shifted from traditional authorities (Lurah, Camat, Bupati, Governor, King, Duke) to PT Angkasa Pura's corporate control. This form of 'privatisation' materializes through fencing and restricted access, producing an exclusive territory in which previous sovereignties are absorbed into a corporate–state regime. As a result, the land undergoes a fundamental reconfiguration of meaning within Yogyakarta's spatial–political landscape.

Deleuze said: "Philosophy is reterritorialised on a concept. A concept is not an object but a territory. It does not have an object but a territory. For that reason, it has a past form, a present form, and, perhaps, a coming form" (Deleuze, 1991, p. 101; Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Geophilosophy becomes a proposal for a new contemporary philosophy. A concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation at YIA Airport help explain the dialectic between the local and the global. Every culture requires a local act (Earth as place) and a global act (Earth as globe). Every culture has a deterritorialising and reterritorialising movement: the interplay between the natural landscape of the YIA airport area and Javanese cultural principles generates the conditions for a place shaped by such movements. This type of relationship is never static, but implies continuous movement in relation to global flows.



Fig. 1: Top view of the YIA airport design
(Source: NYIA Design Presentation Paper, Art Program 2018)

However, it is true that globalisation, marked by the construction of YIA Airport, is itself a process of deterritorialisation because capitalism applies extensive measurements to the Earth that, conversely, require intensive approach modalities. On the other hand, globalisation does not simply erase the differences and particularities of place. It must be understood through its various historical phases, not only the most recent one dominated by commercial capitalism. Instead, the 'globalised world' means a continuous dialectical movement between local place and global space. These poles of dialectic are not in radical opposition but are complementary. The global becomes a relationship and connection between different places.



Fig. 2: Aerial photo of YIA airport in December 2019
(Source: Angkasa Pura Airports)

According to Deleuze's theory (Bonta & Protevi, 2019; Gilles & Guattari, 1987), in reality, the YIA airport area/location is unpredictable with respect to the form of the building as well as the airport area (landscape) and the flow/activity of passengers/public passing through it: especially in the Postmodern era, there is no temporal stability or spatial fixation. We cannot merely and nostalgically speak of a place disappearing (the area used for the YIA location, namely Jankaran, Kebonrejo, Palihan, Sindutan, and Glagah Villages) by the qualities of globalisation, because the flows crossing a territory are now being unqualified; now configured by a new and deeper type of landscape. Whether this form is harmonious with a place (historical or symbolic) depends on the complexity of the elements that geophilosophy must analyse.

5.0 Finding

5.1 Artistic Reterritorialisation: Public Art as a Manifestation of Site Specific New Space

The process of Reterritorialisation at YIA is evident not only in spatial planning and infrastructure Aerotropolis (Kasarda & Lindsay, 2024) but also in the intensive manifestation of public artworks within and around the terminal. These works serve as visual and conceptual narratives that attempt to re-embed (reterritorialise) local identity (Javanese/Yogyakarta) in the new space severed (deterritorialised) by the logic of global capitalism.

- The 'Jogja on The Move' Relief (Entang Wiharso): Narrating Urban Dynamics

The relief entitled 'Jogja On The Move' by Entang Wiharso, located in the departure boarding lounge of YIA, acts as a dynamic mirror reflecting a concept of 'New Jogja' and the transformation of the old city centre. The artwork portrays the dynamics of Yogyakarta/Jogja City through a

visual narrative that encompasses aspects of history, sites, aspirations, and the artist's critique of the city's development. As a commissioned artwork strategically placed in the airport's central public space, its function transcends mere decoration; it becomes an artistic statement reflecting the profound transformation occurring in the old city centre, which is now "moving" to the new location (YIA).



Fig. 3: Jogja on the Move Relief, Entang Wiharso
(Source: <https://www.artcab.id/portfolio/jogja-on-the-move/>)

The deliberate placement of the work in the departure lounge is symbolic. This area is the final point before the subject enters the "global flow" (the aircraft). It is here that the subject is invited to reflect on the identity and dynamics of the Jogja they are leaving or about to enter. Wiharso's work functions as a concluding narrative about the 'Jogja that is being reshaped' before the subject transitions into global space (Witjaksono, 2025b).

The relief records the fragmentation and movement of historical elements and sites in Jogja, implicitly indicating that the centrality of Old Jogja is being broken (Deterritorialisation), and the meaning of the city is being transformed (Reterritorialisation) into a new context of mobility.

-The 'Bedhaya Kinjeng Wesi' Sculpture (Ichwan Noor): Hybridity and Contested Authenticity

The sculpture 'Bedhaya Kinjeng Wesi' (literally, Iron Dragonfly Bedhaya), created by Ichwan Noor, represents a significant intersection between traditional Javanese culture and contemporary art, making it a key case study in hybridity and Authenticity within the New Space.

Hybrid Concept manifested through a unique creative process: a traditional dance form (the Bedhaya Kinjeng Wesi Dance) was first developed as a reference, then reinterpreted through contemporary sculptural techniques. The resulting form depicts the configuration of Bedhaya dancers absorbed and interpreted by modern materia. (Witjaksono, 2025a).

The use of the name 'Kinjeng Wesi' (Iron Dragonfly) directly references the Ancestral Decree (Sabda Leluhur) quoted by President Jokowi during the YIA groundbreaking: "Tlatah Temon kene bakal dadi susuhe kinjeng wesi" (The Temon area will become a nest for iron dragonflies/aeroplanes). This action links modern contemporary art to the new sacred narrative of the Temon location. This is a powerful cultural Reterritorialisation, where ancient symbolism (Bedhaya Dance, Ancestral Decree) is bound to the new, global/modern physical entity (YIA).

The creation of this sculpture involved a complex negotiation between institutional stakeholders (PT Angkasa Pura/Central Government), cultural authorities (Kraton/DIY), and artistic vision (Ichwan Noor). This negotiation highlights the struggle to inject local Authenticity into a state-driven, global-facing project. The sculpture thus serves as a marker that the New Space at YIA is a territory reconfigured (reterritorialised) through layered political and cultural agreements.



Fig. 4: The 'Bedhaya Kinjeng Wesi' Sculpture (Ichwan Noor)

(Source: <https://theyakmag.com/artjog-mmxxi/>)

5.0 Conclusion

The construction of Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) in Kulonprogo is a crucial case study in understanding the transformation of spatial and cultural conceptions in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY). This project goes beyond the pragmatic goal of addressing the saturation of Adisutjipto Airport (object a), moving toward a new reality (das Ding) driven by the fundamental need to create a global gateway that sparks new sublimations and fantasies.

Geophilosophically, YIA is the result of Deleuze's processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Deterritorialisation occurs through the dismantling of the spatial centrality of Old Jogja, historically centred on the sacred axis of the Keraton (Palace), and the shift in land ownership status from Pakualaman Ground to state/state-owned enterprise assets. Conversely, reterritorialisation takes shape through the vision of 'Welcoming the Indian Ocean Century' and the development of the Aerotropolis concept in Kulonprogo. Together, these initiatives shift the region's orientation toward decentralisation and economic expansion, producing what is now framed as 'New Jogja'.

In line with the research questions, YIA emerges as a New Space not only through its physical infrastructure but also, and more significantly, through the intervention of public artworks. These works function as visual narratives that bind local identity to the global entity. Entang Wiharso's relief "Jogja On The Move" reflects the fragmentation and dynamics of Old Jogja as it moves, becoming an artistic reflection of the process of deterritorialisation of the city concept. Ichwan Noor's sculpture "Bedhaya Kinjeng Wesi" represents the pinnacle of cultural reterritorialisation. This hybrid sculpture, with its direct reference to the "kinjeng wesi" (iron dragonfly) from the Word of the Ancestors, successfully instils cultural legitimacy in the Temon site. This gesture represents an attempt to create a modern 'new sacredness' that links Javanese cultural roots with the airport's global reality.

Thus, YIA is a hybrid space that demonstrates that globalisation does not erase the specificity of place, but rather engages in a continuous dialectic with local culture. Artworks become a field of authenticity negotiation that confirms Kulonprogo as a legitimate global node, while also answering Adisutjipto's functional deadlock.

Limitation of this study relies primarily on non-participant observation and document analysis without incorporating extensive interviews with key stakeholders such as displaced residents, airport management, artists, or traditional authorities (Kraton/Pakualaman), which could have provided richer insights into the lived experience of deterritorialisation. Second, the observation period (2022-2023) captures YIA at a relatively early stage of operation; the full socio-cultural impact of reterritorialisation may only become apparent over a longer temporal frame. Dimensions of displacement experienced by affected communities in Temon District.

Recommendations for future research include: (1) conducting ethnographic studies with displaced communities to understand the human dimension of deterritorialisation and their strategies of cultural resistance or adaptation; (2) employing longitudinal research designs to track the evolution of the Aerotropolis concept and its actual impact on Kulonprogo's socio-economic configuration over 10-15 years.

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