

Gauteng Region

Invitation

The Inaugural Aerotropolis Symposium

Building an Integrated Aerotropolis: Innovation, Connectivity, and Sustainable Growth for Africa's Aviation Future

Date: Wednesday, 29 – Friday, 31 October 2025

Time: 8:30 – 15:00

**Venue: Functions Hall, 4th Floor, Kgorong Building
Unisa Main Campus
or Online**

[Click here to register](#)

[Provisional Programme](#)

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PREAMBLE

Building an Integrated Aerotropolis: Innovation, Connectivity, and Sustainable Growth for Africa's Aviation Future

Africa stands at the threshold of a transformative era in aviation and urban development. As global trends shift toward smarter, greener, and more interconnected cities, the concept of the Aerotropolis - a metropolitan region where infrastructure, layout, and economic activity are centred around an airport - offers a bold and strategic pathway for the continent's growth.

Scholars and practitioners have provided a multi-faceted analysis of the Aerotropolis model, highlighting its potential to enhance global competitiveness, stimulate economic growth, improve connectivity, and diversify transport systems. At the same time, they raise critical questions about its long-term sustainability, equitable development, and integration with existing urban frameworks—issues that are especially relevant in Africa's rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape. With Africa's aviation sector poised for expansion, the integration of airports into broader urban ecosystems presents a unique opportunity to catalyse inclusive prosperity, drive innovation, and improve mobility across regions.

These are exciting times. Cities around the world - large and small - are embracing smart technologies to better manage resources and deliver services more efficiently. The development of a Smart City relies on the integration of physical, political, environmental, and socio-economic dimensions. It involves key elements such as management support, appropriate infrastructure, citizen engagement, digital technology, stakeholder participation, data systems, policy alignment, and reliable internet connectivity.

While the Aerotropolis is a spatial and economic model centred on airports, the Smart City is a technological and governance model focused on improving urban life. When combined, they offer a powerful framework for building future-ready African cities that are:

Globally connected
Digitally empowered
Environmentally sustainable
Socially inclusive

ABOUT THIS SYMPOSIUM

This symposium brings together thought leaders, policymakers, urban planners, city makers, aviation experts, academics, and community stakeholders to explore how we can harness the Aerotropolis model to drive innovation, enhance connectivity, and promote sustainable development.

Through dynamic discussions, collaborative workshops, and visionary presentations, this gathering will chart the terrain for building an integrated Aerotropolis that reflect Africa's unique socio-economic contexts, environmental priorities, and technological aspirations.

We invite policy insights, reflections, case studies, innovations, and provocations that explore how we might create sustainable urban futures—futures that facilitate connectedness and propel national, continental, and global development.

We welcome contributions from academic communities of shared purpose and practice, curriculum designers, researchers, public and private sector leaders, entrepreneurs, and community advocates. Your insights, experiences, best practices, and studies will contribute to a transdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration on Aerotropolis and Smart City development in South Africa and across the continent.