

Printing guide

workshop Flight mode off: Simulation game of an eco-social transition of an airport

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Background story simulation game: a fictitious airport in 2025

We find ourselves **in the year 2025 in Landington**, a small town with about 25,000 inhabitants close to an important metropolitan area (about 2 million inhabitants). In recent years, political efforts for more climate protection have increasingly intensified. Landington is home to an airport that is important for the region. **4,000 people are directly employed at the airport**, and another 60,000 jobs are indirectly related to the airport, according to the airport, for example, in supplier companies or as a result of increased tourist traffic in the region. In particular, the **air freight company freightplane24 is an important employer and economic factor** in the region. Since its inception, **the airport operator itself has been in the red** and has to be subsidized by the public sector. There are long-standing **civil society protests against the airport** based on noise and climate protection arguments.

A year ago, a **law was passed at the national level**. It requires all municipalities to submit effective strategies for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 to the level needed to meet climate targets. **This is mandatory!** In response to this law, there were surveys in the Landington region in which **a majority favoured focusing on a reduction of flight traffic at the local airport**, since this is where the most significant savings potential exists without restricting the quality of life of the population. An accompanying study showed that airport employees have qualifications that could be applied in other sectors of the economy, provided that appropriate conditions are created for this industry change.

Environmental groups and trade union representatives demanded that the **dismantling of the airport is approached in a planned and socially just manner**. As a result, under pressure from the public, the local government convened a so-called **transformation commission** in cooperation with the Ministry of Climate Crisis to develop this plan. The plan calls for a **gradual reduction in the airport's capacity by 2035 without any lasting loss of jobs in the region**. So there is **no question that the airport's capacity will be reduced**, but the commission is to discuss how much and how fast this capacity reduction will take place and what accompanying measures and investments are needed.

A **Just Transition Fund will finance the reconstruction**. It will be financed 20% by municipal funds and 80% by national funds. The condition for the funding is to find an agreement among the members of the transformation commission. The development of the dismantling plan is to take place with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders. The superordinate goal is to use this planned dismantling to encourage the sustainable development of the Landington region and, at the same time, to achieve the emission reductions required by law. **The commission is now developing recommendations for this dismantling, which will then go to the relevant political decision-makers for final decision and implementation**. If the commission cannot find a solution in this first round of negotiations, they need to assemble again.

CEO of the airport company

As CEO of the airport company, you are responsible for the airport's development, construction, and operation in Landington. This includes airport operations, security services, and the provision of infrastructure. In the last decade, the airport recorded growth rates between 3-5% per year regarding the number of flights handled. However, the airport operation is loss-making and dependent on public subsidies, primarily from the national government.

Fundamental convictions

As a parent, you feel a responsibility to preserve the livelihood of your children and grandchildren. But you are also convinced that the aviation industry is a future industry to ensure economic growth and prosperity in the region and the whole country. It is important to you that your contribution to the region's prosperity is recognized as a major employer. You believe that innovation and technological solutions will solve environmental problems.

Position on the dismantling of the airport

If it were up to you, the airport should not be dismantled; on the contrary, you want to strengthen the airport as an important transportation hub for the country. You counter climate protection arguments with the fact that technical innovations will massively reduce greenhouse gas emissions from air traffic. You also point to the sustainability measures that have been implemented at the airport itself in recent years, such as an electric bus for shuttling passengers. You are sceptical about the Transformation Commission, but you are putting a good face on the matter. Your main goal is to slow down or mitigate the reduction in flights.

Specifically, from the current perspective, you can imagine reducing the number of flights as follows:

- By 2030: No reduction in flight numbers but airport operations become climate-neutral (mainly through compensation payments*)
- By 2035: Maintain flight numbers at the 2030 level

-> these numbers are the basis for your initial statement. To prepare your general position and opening statement, you should also think of:

- *Further Measurements to reduce emissions at the airport*
- *Compensations for you and other companies at the Airport, in case it comes to a mandatory reduction of flight numbers*

[*“carbon offset/ compensation payments“: With a carbon offset, a business, a government, or an individual can pay someone else to cut or remove a given quantity of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. That can take the form of buying cleaner-burning cookstoves in countries of the Global South or it can come as a credit for restoring a section of tropical forest that takes in carbon from the atmosphere. *Source: Umair Irfan, 2020, vox*]

CEO of freightplane24

You have been CEO of freightplane24 for ten years. You were mainly responsible for setting up the site in Landington and negotiating favourable conditions (night flight permit, favourable take-off and landing fees, etc.). The company makes good profits every year. Thanks to a large offset-project* in Uruguay, the company's carbon footprint is officially very good. The company's sustainability department, which initiated this project, is in close contact with freightplane24's PR department.

Fundamental convictions

You are proud of the company's development and see it as an asset for the region, as you create jobs and transport urgently needed goods of the global goods economy. You are convinced that emissions from freight transport can be minimized through compensation payments and new fuels. You measure your company's success solely in economic terms. As an employer, you comply with labour laws. Still, you also feel the pressure to be efficient from other competing companies, which is why most of your employees only receive the minimum wage.

Position on the dismantling of the airport

You are strictly against the dismantling plans. The long-term corporate strategy foresees further capacity increases, which is why, before this survey, you were still planning to apply to expand. If the Transformation Commission proposes reducing capacity, you want a guarantee that this reduction will not affect freightplane24 flights or receive appropriate compensation. Otherwise, the company would consider moving to a region where wage levels are lower. The survey that led to the establishment of the Transformation Commission was, in your opinion, pure opinion mongering and manipulated by the climate NGO.

Specifically, from the current perspective, you can imagine reducing the number of flights as follows:

- By 2030: 30% of own flights become climate neutral through compensation projects
- By 2035: 70% of own flights become climate neutral through compensation and new fuels

In the event of a dismantling: 1 million euros compensation for every 5% reduction in capacity, otherwise there is a threat of legal action.

-> *these numbers are the basis for your initial statement.*

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Head of the research project "Climatefit working world - just transitions for green jobs of the future"

As head of the research project "climate-friendly working world - just transitions for green jobs of the future", funded by the Ministry of Labor, the employment aspects of the ecological transformation are your main interest. You are convinced that well-implemented Just Transition projects are beneficial for local employment. You are aware of the negative effects of missing structural change in Germany's coal and lignite mining areas.

Fundamental convictions

You advocate the idea that social and ecological demands go hand in hand and can and must be handled together. You are convinced that bold steps are needed to drive the necessary change in our economic system. You are familiar with the scientific studies on diverse employment opportunities in sustainable sectors. Still, you also know that large-scale positive examples of structural change are scarce and hardly exist in the airline industry. You were also a member of a trade union and can therefore understand the fears and arguments of the employees and the works council. As a scientist, however, you are very aware of the relevance and extent of the climate catastrophe, and you regard the aviation industry as a sector that will sooner or later be massively affected by restrictions anyway. Therefore, in your opinion, it is best for the employees if the transformation is initiated as early as possible.

Position on the dismantling of the airport

You take a positive view of the establishment of the Transformation Commission and the orderly dismantling of the airport in Landington. You regard this as an opportunity to create a role model for socio-ecological transformation and structural change in other sectors of the economy as well. You also plan to provide scientific support for the project. You are sceptical about the carbon-offsetting projects*, proposed by the CEOs of the airport and freightplane 24, because you see your goal of a deep transition of the region endangered by it.

Specifically, from the current perspective, you can imagine reducing the number of flights as follows:

- by 2030: 18%
- by 2035: 32%

> these numbers are the basis for your initial statement. To prepare your general position and opening statement, you should also think of:

- *(Re)training and Compensations for Employees*
- *Public Investments in Other Branches in the Region*

Background information for head of research project:

A new study by the UK NGO *Possible*. shows that with the right investments and programs for rail and local tourism, the job loss from reducing flights can be more than offset. Additional jobs could even be created.

Source: (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d30896202a18c0001b49180/t/61fab1fc6d428a739662a7c0/1643819535463/The+Right+Track+for+Green+Jobs.pdf>)

Important skills of the employees at the airport for a Transition to Green Jobs

Care, health and education jobs require good interpersonal and listening skills and patience alongside formal qualifications. Public or client-facing roles are essential for delivering housing retrofit programmes which require a high level coordination, and customer service alongside the more technical roles which may require building trades vocational and education qualifications. The ‘hard hat’ skills of energy, construction or building trades workers can be upgraded or repurposed to become retrofit, heat pumps or solar thermal workers.

Economic sectors for sustainable jobs:

- the entire area of renewable energies and grid infrastructure expansion, heating and cooling generation
- thermal redevelopment of buildings
- energy sufficiency
- circular economy
- expansion of public transport
- care-sector

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Mayor of Landington

As mayor of Landington, you have been in office for nine years and have a good reputation among the local population. Your social democratic party won around 40% of the votes in the last elections, and the basis for discussions with the opposition is also sound. Landington is home to 25,000 people and is considered an extension of a nearby metropolis. The city is in good economic shape - not least thanks to the tax revenue generated by the companies based at the airport and the compensation payments that the municipality receives from the airport corporation for the environmental impact. As an alternative to these revenues, however, you would also have the opportunity to receive national funds if you implement climate protection measures.

Fundamental conviction

As mayor of Landington, the well-being of your hometown is a matter close to your heart. You burn for the interests of the people of Landington. For Landington to flourish, you are convinced that it needs a strong economy - but this does not necessarily have to be connected with the airport. Instead, you have been thinking about how regional economic cycles could be strengthened. You are open to ecological issues, but climate protection is not your priority, and you do not serve your core constituency. Open, transparent politics are close to your heart.

Position on the dismantling of the airport

The planned dismantling of the airport gives you a stomach ache, not least because the municipal budget profits from the airport. As mayor, however, it is also important to you to represent the interests of the majority of the people of Landington, away from patronage politics. That is why you supported the broad-based survey in Landington and endorsed this participatory process. In addition, you hope to be able to compensate for the resulting gaps in the municipal budget through federal funding for the implementation of climate protection measures. 80% of the money in the Just Transition Fund will be matched by the federal government, provided you can prove that jobs will also be created in other sectors of the economy due to the dismantling. The municipality will shoulder the remaining 20% of the fund, so you're interested in not making too large overall payments. It is important to you that the decommissioning happens slowly so that a gentle transformation of the region is possible.

Specifically, from the current perspective, you can imagine reducing the number of flights as follows:

- by 2030: 12%
- by 2035: 25%

-> these numbers are the basis for your initial statement. To prepare your general position and opening statement, you should also think of:

- *Public Investments in Other Branches in the Region*
- *(Re)training and Compensations for Employees*

Representative of a climate NGO

You grew up in Landington and were involved in local protests against the airport from the beginning. Now you are a member of a national NGO working on climate and mobility and coordinated the campaign for the Transformation Commission. You also got the union and the workers council on board in the process. You see yourselves vindicated by the national law and demand a decisive dismantling. You are very clear about how climate damaging and unfair air traffic is. You have the scientific figures on air traffic subsidies, climate effects, etc. at your fingertips. You also know that freightplane24 makes profits at taxpayers' expense because the airport has to be subsidized, and the company can use the infrastructure cheaply.

Fundamental convictions

The most unjust transition would be one that doesn't happen. You are part of the climate justice movement and have a clear anti-capitalist standpoint. You sometimes doubt whether it was the right step to become part of the Transformation Commission and sit down at the table with the freight company you have been fighting against for so long. But since you as an NGO demanded the commission's establishment, you can't go back. Cooperation with the workers is important to you; you want a socially acceptable solution.

Position on the dismantling of the airport

You are against any compensation for companies at the airport, such as Freightplane24, but you also know that you will probably have to make some compromises. If it's up to you, these compromises should definitely not be in the reduction of flights and should also not be carried out on the backs of employees. You are against any offsetting* and criticize the plans for "climate neutrality" of the airport as hypocritical greenwashing, knowing that this only means ground operations and not the flights themselves. You have been fighting against this airport for years and are afraid to get into a shit-storm and to disappoint your fellow campaigners if you do not represent the maximum demand.

Specifically, from the current perspective, you can imagine reducing the number of flights as follows:

- By 2030: 50%
- By 2035: Minimize the the number of flights to absolutely necessary cargo, aim to close it altogether.

-> these numbers are the basis for your initial statement. To prepare your general position and opening statement, you should also think of:

- *Further Measurements to Reduce Emissions → no carbon offsets!*
- *Public Investments in Other Branches in the Region*

Background information on aviation for NGO

- **Total climate impact** of aviation including non-CO2 effects amounts to just under **6% worldwide**.
- **1% of the world's population is responsible for 50% of emissions**, and even in countries like Germany, more than half the people fly less than once a year.
- 11 billion of taxpayers' money is lost to Germany due to the lack of kerosene tax and VAT on international flights.
- The aviation industry has never kept its promises of the last 10 years regarding the use of alternative fuels and the reduction of kerosene consumption. There are new studies, e.g. from the UK, that prove this.

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Head of the workers council of the airport (including freight company)

As works council chairperson, you are elected by the airport employees and want to represent their interests. You also work at the airport yourself to coordinate the ground staff. Together with the climate NGOs, the works council demanded the establishment of the transformation commission - but there were some internal struggles before this happened, and you did not only make yourself popular at that time. You are now under great pressure to negotiate good conditions for the employees.

Fundamental convictions

You are a committed trade unionist; good working conditions and job security are high priorities for you. You have a positive attitude towards climate protection and ecological issues but regard it as your duty to primarily represent the direct interests of employees. You call for a "Just Transition" strategy that provides targeted support for changes in qualification requirements and regional job offers. You also see innovative models for reducing working hours as part of the solution. In addition, you emphasize the importance of welfare state measures for social security.

Position on the dismantling of the airport

You've worked at the airport for a long time, but you don't have your heart set on the job and are relatively pragmatic about deconstruction - as long as it's not at the expense of employees. Climate protection is not a priority for you. Still, you follow global social developments and recognise that economic restructuring is likely to happen anyway. You now see a window of opportunity to negotiate the best possible conditions for employees. You call for a future job guarantee for all currently employed and continued wages during potential retraining programs. This is where most of the money from the fund should go. How many flights are reduced and when is of secondary importance to you, as long as the above conditions are met. In principle, however, you advocate a sufficient lead time before flights are actually reduced, so that the social programs to cushion the impact on employees can be initiated.

Specifically, from the current perspective, you can imagine reducing the number of flights as follows:

- by 2030: 8%
- by 2035: 25%

-> these numbers are the basis for your initial statement. To prepare your general position and opening statement, you should also think of:

- *(Re)training and Compensations for Employees*
- *Public Investments in Other Branches in the Region*

Background information for workers council

Fields of employment and professions at the airport:

- Commercial businesses at the airport: restaurants, travel agencies, etc.
- Technical professions: Engineers, Airport IT, Mechanics, Electronics Technicians
- Air traffic controllers
- Catering for the planes
- Air traffic clerk (coordination of the transport of passengers and cargo) - check-in, passenger handling, baggage acceptance, etc.
- Management assistant in freight forwarding and logistics services
- Other services: Security services, Public transport to and from the airport, Cleaning staff

Employment with the airlines:

- Pilots
- Flight attendants

Social plan:

A social plan is a company agreement that defines measures to prevent, eliminate or mitigate the consequences of a company change/dissolution. Possible contents of a social plan can be:

- voluntary redundancy payments
- transitional support
- Reimbursement of retraining, application and training costs
- Keeping of company housing
- preferential reinstatement of employees who have been dismissed,
- Establishment of a work foundation for broad-based retraining and further qualification

The **opening statement** should include:

- Who are we and what's our general position concerning the deconstruction of the airport?
- What are the most important conditions for us to agree to a deconstruction? (think about the rows in the result table!)
- How much binding reduction of air traffic do we propose for 2030 and 2035? -> concrete numbers.

Result table (to keep in mind)

		mayor	CEO Airport	CEO Freight- Company	scientist	Trade Union	NGO
Reduction of Flights [in %]	Opening statement	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%
	Adaptation after negotiations	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%	By 2030: X% By 2035: Y%
Further Measurements to Reduce Emissions	Opening statement						
	Adaptation after negotiations						
(Re)training and Compensations for Employees	Opening statement						
	Adaptation after negotiations						
Compensations for Companies at the Airport	Opening statement						
	Adaptation after negotiations						
Public Investments in Other Branches in the Region	Opening statement						
	Adaptation after negotiations						