

Preface

This book has taken a long time. My fascination with cities is long standing but it only began to translate into research curiosity in the 1990s. It coincided with trying to make sense of contemporary globalization as a practice, as everyday work that was enabling and reproducing worldwide economic integration. That work was done in cities, and a literature on ‘world cities’ and ‘global cities’ was emerging. This change in scale meant my new research curiosity was to become very different from my initial fascination. The latter consisted of ‘walking cities’, following in the footsteps, figuratively but perhaps sometimes literally, of Robert Park, the great Chicago urban sociologist of the early twentieth century. Taking in the ambiances, enjoying the ‘townscapes’, discerning differences – cities really felt like extraordinary achievements. But my research focused on work – I asked of a city ‘what work is done here?’ – and this could not be read simply from the townscape, however impressive the skyscrapers. The latter in Manhattan had commonly been called ‘urban canyons’ but this metaphor had been generally misconstrued. Real canyons are also impressive places to visit but their essence is the work that is done to create them, the river incessantly entering and leaving the site. This is also the case with urban canyons, so named as places, their essence is in the flows of work entering and leaving, today largely enabled electronically through cables linked to aerials on the roofs. The latter are hardly visible to the pedestrian enjoying the city below.

The idea that you needed to look outside a given city to understand that city is only dimly realized in the English language in one particular term, NY-LON. Predating contemporary globalization it originally referred to the ‘new’ first becoming fashionable in the world’s two greatest cities of the twentieth century. Latterly, linked to globalization, it encompasses the massive flows that take place between Lower Manhattan and the City of London and not just electronic ones: top executives in financial services and related work are said to have three offices – in New York, in London, and in a plane high over the Atlantic. Of course, today’s world-economy consists of much more than this particular city-dyad, albeit that it is the most important one. But LA-CHI, HONG-SING and PAR-FRANK, to suggest just three possible names for other important city-dyads, are

words that have not been invented; they cannot be found in the dictionaries of any language. In this case language does not reflect our material world; in globalization there are myriad flows across tens of thousands of city-dyads that constitute a global space of flows. Viewed this way cities appear to be very extraordinary, and very exciting to research. In 1998 I was awarded an ESRC research grant with Jon Beaverstock to investigate the economic links that London had with New York and a few dozen other major cities. From this small beginning we built GaWC (the Globalization and World Cities research network), now generally regarded as the leading website (www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc) and academic thinktank on worldwide links between cities. As a very large topic, researching it required working with people across the world and this book is a product of this exhilarating experience. Too many to mention, it may appear a little invidious to single out a few but here are my main collaborators in this venture; they have varied over time. I list them alphabetically: Jon Beaverstock, Ben Derudder, James Faulconbridge, Michael Hoyler, Paul Knox, Robert Lang, Pengfei Ni, Kathy Pain, Dennis Smith, David Walker and Frank Witlox. In addition Phil O'Keefe and Piet Saey read parts of the work in progress and gave me food for thought. I thank them all and I must also acknowledge the funding agencies that made my research possible: five grants from the ESRC, two each from the Leverhulme Trust, from the EU (Interreg III and ESPON) and from FWO (Flanders), and from the Anglo-German Foundation, the Sloan Foundation, and the Brookings Institution, plus research project work collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing).

My route into studying cities has been an unusual one. I am a geographer but I had not been a contributor to either urban geography or economic geography. Before embarking on research on cities I had spent a couple of decades or so studying political geography. I devised a 'global' political geography that was always hovering in the background of my cities research. In this book I bring it into the foreground, so that cities are considered not just in their relations to other cities but also to states. I know derivatives have been given a bad name in financial markets in recent years but this is the best term to describe where this book comes from. My ideas are derived from Immanuel Wallerstein as a world-systems political geography derivative and from Jane Jacobs as a dynamic cities urban geography derivative. Put these together in a heady mix with the related works of Giovanni Arrighi, Fernand Braudel, Manuel Castells, Gunder Frank, Henri Pirenne and Saskia Sassen, and the result is the text before you. However, as the main title indicates, cities remain the leading topic, but states have to be included prominently because they are necessary for understanding the impact of cities on humanity.

Some readers will have noticed that *Extraordinary Cities* is in contradiction to recent writings on 'ordinary cities'; I think it unfortunate that the adjective ordinary should be applied to any city. I had more difficulty in formulating my subtitle. When presenting some of these ideas at conferences or seminars I have employed the subtitle 'Ideological Ranting of a Bonehead'. This refers to anonymous descriptions of my work in refereeing situations. For a quantitative paper from which parts of Chapters 2 and 6 are derived, a numerophobic referee advised an editor not to publish such research by a 'bonehead'. In a more theoretical paper from which parts of Chapters 2 and 5 are derived, the work was designated 'ideological ranting' by a concerned reader. Hence my natty subtitle, but though tempted, I decided it was not suitable for the book: given a nudge too many people, perhaps reviewers, might be persuaded to agree with the over-the-top negative assessments! However, fortunately most journal referees have been kinder towards my offerings and have often been instrumental in sharpening and improving my arguments. Therefore I thank editors of the following key journals where both gestation and initial presentation of ideas developed below have been published: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*; *Cities, Environment and Planning A*; *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*; *Local Environment*; *Political Geography*; *Regional Studies*; *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*; *Urban Geography*; and *Urban Studies*.

During most of the writing the working subtitle has been 'City/State Relations in their Geohistorical Tango to Globalization'. Although I think the tango is a reasonably good metaphor for how I treat city/state relations, I now do not consider it important enough to appear on the title page, despite possibly losing some sales in Argentina. Instead I want to signal derivation from Jacobs and Wallerstein while giving more emphasis to the long time dimension of the work, thus coming up with 'Millennia of Moral Syndromes, World-Systems and City/State Relations'. Not very slick, but that's not necessary for the subtitle, it does let potential readers get an immediate sense of the text's coverage.

In the meantime, my grandchildren have been growing up, all six of them, ranging in age from five to early 20s by the time this is published. I dedicate this book to them, and to Enid, because between all of them they have kept me in the real world through revision upon revision upon . . .

And finally, thanks to Neil Sedaka who revealed to me that the book is actually my dinosaur pet.

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