

# 1. A cities' perspective

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Let me start with an admission: the main title of this book is a *non sequitur*. I do not want to mislead readers who might expect a text on a few exceptional cities. My 'extraordinary cities' does not translate into a select number of 'great cities'; there are important books that deal with such cities – for instance, by Saskia Sassen (1991) in her identification of 'global cities' and, historically, by Peter Hall (1998) and John Julius Norwich (2009) – but this book is not of that distinguished genre. Rather I follow Jane Jacobs (1969) in arguing that the inherent complexity of cities distinguishes them from all other settlements. Hence, for me, *every* city is extraordinary. Unlike 'simple towns', cities are astonishing in their economic growth potential and cultural vitality, and amazing in their societal resilience. Thus the fundamental premise of this book is that *all cities are extraordinary*; my title is just for emphasis.

The corollary of this premise is that if cities are so special then they should be taken *extremely* seriously. By this I mean moving cities to centre stage to create a city-centric, and therefore a very different, geohistorical social science. This book is the outcome of an intellectual experiment in 'putting cities first' that I have been conducting for over a decade. I am interested in macro-social change, a topic dominated by study of the fates of 'nations' and the rise and fall of 'great powers'. I do not argue that these histories are unimportant, far from it, but I will propose that concern for states and their concomitant politics tells only part of the macro-social story of humanity. And it is the underlying thesis of my argument that this political part is less important for understanding macro-social change than the economic part centred on cities. States are about pacifying territory to maintain a social order; they are inherently conservative. Such order might be enabling for growing city economies, but it can hardly be a driver of major change in the sense of being 'world-changing'. You need something extraordinary to change the world; you need cities. In the rather modernist terminology of the economist Edward Glaeser (2011, p. 1):

Cities, the dense agglomerations that dot the globe, have been engines of innovation since Plato and Socrates bickered in an Athenian marketplace. The streets of Florence gave us the Renaissance, and the streets of Birmingham gave us the industrial revolution. The great prosperity of contemporary London

and Bangalore and Tokyo comes from their ability to produce new thinking. Wandering these cities – whether down cobblestone sidewalks or grid-cutting cross streets, around roundabouts or under freeways – is to study nothing less than human progress.

This book tries to show that cities are indeed extraordinary and have had world-changing effects on the history of humanity. I differ from Glaeser only by taking the story way back before classical Athens to the very origins of cities.

Within history and social science I join Glaeser and others in a minority position that puts cities first; but it is a growing intellectual movement. And it is one that brings together some unlikely bedfellows. I begin this introduction by describing six autonomous ‘discoveries’ of cities, by which I mean fresh appreciations of the significance of cities. Occurring over the last two decades or so, these recognitions of the importance of cities have provided the backdrop out of which this book has emerged. You might well ask why these acts of discovery have been necessary; cities are hardly shrinking violets hidden away in our modern society. Thus in the second part of this introduction I rehearse the arguments as to how cities seem to have been taken for granted, as it were, in so much social science scholarship. This reveals critical limitations of what I label ‘state-centric social science’, and leads on to a brief exposition of my experiment in creating a ‘city-centric social science’ in the third part of the introduction. It involves turning some quite familiar ideas upside down. And such a contrarian programme requires a thorough review of the existing models, theories, techniques and methods, since many are likely tarnished by their use in uncritical acceptance of state dominance within macro-social change. Therefore in the final part of the introduction the idea of new conceptual toolkits is presented and from these the organization of the book’s argument is derived and outlined.

## SIX RECENT DISCOVERIES OF CITIES

The six intellectual discoveries I detail below are all positive in nature: cities are found to be relevant and useful for the discoverers’ wants or needs. But cities are not always seen in a positive light. In the late 1960s and 1970s the word most likely to be associated with cities was ‘crisis’, both political and economic. From the protests and riots of the 1960s to the difficult fiscal states of cities in the late 1970s, cities were where society’s ills were most visible. Thus it is hardly surprising they were viewed negatively; cities equal problems. Go forward a couple of decades and it

is all change; cities are seen as solutions. Thus the discoveries described below are recent and current celebrations of cities.

Such about-turns in perception of cities are nothing new; Tristram Hunt (2004) shows a similar changing of ideas from one extreme to another in his charting of the appreciation of the British Victorian city. There may well be 'cycles of dislike and like of cities', so perhaps the discoveries of this section may be better termed 'rediscoveries'. I think not; I stay with discoveries because the new positionings of cities are so very different from what has gone before. There is now a recognition of, or hope for, cities being truly extraordinary. For each of the discoveries below I begin with a quotation that reflects this sentiment. I may or may not agree with each author but for now that is beside the point: they all bring cities to centre stage.

### Globalization Discovery

According to Richard Knight (1989, p. 327):

Now that development is being driven more by globalization than by nationalization, the role of cities is increasing. Power comes from global economies that are realized by integrating national economies into the global economy, and cities provide the strategic linkage functions. Activities related to the creation of global linkages, such as identifying opportunities, advancing and implementing technology, financing and handling transaction flows, structuring and servicing global markets, are located primarily in cities and are expanding rapidly. . . . Not only are the barriers between nations being lowered but the control that national governments have over the flow of capital, technology, ideas and so on is also being reduced. To wit, as global society expands, the role of cities increases and the role of nations decreases.

The last sentence shows this discovery of cities to be part of the globalization discourse that has predicted the demise, or at least diminution, of the role of the state in economic affairs. Most of this literature has focused on territorial states versus transnational corporations but here we have linked cities as alternative protagonists. The quotation comes from a book called *Cities in a Global Society* (Knight and Gappert 1989), and like most discoveries, there were simultaneous discoverers: Anthony King (1990) in his *Global Cities* starts with discussion of new 'global paradigms in urban research', a 'paradigm shift' consequent upon globalization (p. 3); and Saskia Sassen (1991) in her *The Global City* argues the necessity for creating a concept to describe a unique new type of city – the global city – to do justice to cities' new roles in managing global economic dispersal (p. 4). The latter book has become immensely influential charting new research agendas on cities in globalization on which there is now a large and expanding literature (Derudder et al. 2012).

Although all three books suggest or imply that cities in globalization are transcending their states to create a newly structured, city-centred world-economy, they did not portend simple predictions of the end of the state: these global city books were somewhat more subtle in their approach than a simple ‘cities versus states’ argument. Globalization is changing the relationship between cities and states in interesting new ways and it is this that attracted me to the literature on world and global cities. I derived a world city network approach to understanding cities in globalization (Taylor 2001; 2004; Taylor et al. 2011) and, following Manuel Castells (1996), I interpret cities and states as being implicated in the production of different forms of social space: spaces of flows through cities and spaces of places bounded by states. This contrast is clear in the social compositions of these spaces: whereas successful states tend towards and promote cultural homogeneity (i.e. nation-states), successful cities tend towards and become cosmopolitan. From another perspective treating globalization as a neoliberal project, Brenner (2004; Brenner and Theodore 2002a) has also recognized the tension between city and national scales and has thoroughly investigated its relevance for contemporary governance issues.

The globalization discovery has been largely the work of sociologists and human geographers but other social scientists have also made their own discoveries of cities.

### **Economics Discovery**

According to Ivan Turok (2009, p. 14):

Cities are complex adaptive systems comprising multitudes of actors, firms, and other organisations forming diverse relationships and evolving together. Frequent face-to-face contact and other cooperative and competitive interactions enabled by proximity help to increase people’s knowledge and skills, to improve their capacity to respond creatively to economic challenges, and to develop new and improved products, processes and services. Other places cannot easily replicate these conditions . . .

These processes are known as agglomeration effects, and although they have a long and prestigious pedigree – Alfred Marshall’s (1890) *Principles of Economics* is the foundation text – for the most part, the discipline of economics has neglected location factors, and cities in particular, as it has pursued national economic modelling. But about the same time that global cities were being discovered, some economists came to appreciate cities as a locus for understanding economic growth. The result was the ‘new economic geography’ (Krugman 1995), as economists excavated early location models, and a revitalized ‘urban economics’ (McDonald

1997), with cities moving to centre stage for a small coterie of economic researchers.

The key feature that interested economists was the externalities resulting from concentrations of economic activities as represented by cities. Agglomeration was found to have a critical influence on economic process and was rigorously theorized as such (Fujita and Thisse 2002). Furthermore, economic clusters of firms within cities were found to be particularly important (Porter 1998). In this context Jane Jacobs' (1969) *The Economy of Cities* was discovered and lauded (Nowlan 1997): Krugman (1995, p. 5) refers to her as a 'patron saint of new growth theory'. Edward Glaeser (2000; et al. 1992) in particular has promoted Jacobs' ideas. This is particularly relevant because her oeuvre has a crucial role to play in the argument I develop in this book. However, curiously, this economic discovery of cities has remained largely oblivious to the globalization discovery of cities: it seems economists don't do global cities (Taylor 2009).

Nevertheless I find it relatively easy to combine ideas from both discoveries in my arguments below, since city extraordinariness is common to both. In economics this is most strongly advocated by Edward Glaeser (2011) in his *Triumph of the City* where he begins by pointing out that 'the magic of urban density means that agglomerations of people come together for simple reasons and often achieve amazing things' (p. 1). This is exactly my position.

### Political Science Discovery

According to Warren Magnusson (2011, pp. 5, 6–7):

To see both one's locale and the world as a whole *as a city* is to envision it quite differently. What follow are a different politics, political theory, and a political science from what we have been used to. . . . There are (alternative) concepts to be sure – rhizomes and lines of flight, singularities and emergent properties, cyborgs and networks, übermenschen and *dasein* – but it is hard to know what to do with any of them in the absence of an alternative ontology of the political. That is why I think it is so important to think the political through the city. The city is difficult to understand, but we can see how it works all around us. It offers a place to begin, both as analysts and as activists. Urban life is as familiar as it is strange and complex. If we look at it carefully, many of the standard political and analytic categories begin to melt before our eyes, and other ones more adequate to the purpose begin to take shape.

At first glance this intervention from a politics scholar is surprising since his discipline has been largely developed to understand the ways that states operate. To be sure, there is an important tradition of study of city government, but this urban politics research focused upon municipal politics

as sub-state processes. However, as Magnusson and many others have pointed out, the very word politics comes from the Greek ‘polis’, which were cities, from whence also comes the term ‘citizens’, now attributed to nation-states. The potential of freeing modern political discourse from state-centrism was always there and it has come to the fore with recognition of the importance of globalization, and cities therein.

Therefore, unlike in economics, the new research on cities in political science has been inspired by the ‘global cities’ literature with Saskia Sassen (1999; 2000) as a key contributor. The key text here is a collection of 16 essays in the book *Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City* that explicitly asks ‘Does the city have a future in democracy?’ because these new spaces have been created in globalization and ‘constitute themselves as political and social agents’ (Isin 2000, p.i). In addition I have made a modest contribution through bringing cities more to the fore in political geography (Taylor 2000; 2002; 2005). However, new encroachments of cities into political discourses are becoming increasingly fundamental, as Magnusson suggests above. For instance, Bell and de-Shalit (2011) consider city identities, Graham’s (2004) ‘urban geopolitics’ asks questions in the field of security that problematize state sovereignty, and Amen and his colleagues (2011) pursue global governance research through cities as ‘new sites for international relations’. In addition there are political historical studies that have searched out city-states and city networks as alternative organization to sovereign territorial states (Tilly 1990; Spruyt 1994; Parker 2004). Clearly research on cities has worked its way into the very heartland of state-centric scholarship.

### **Public Policy Discovery**

According to Michael Parkinson and his colleagues (2006, pp.9–10):

These are exciting – if challenging – times for cities. During the past decade many cities in many countries have emerged from a period of decline to find new economic, political and cultural niches. There has been a sea change in how cities are regarded. Governments, the private sector and researchers increasingly see them as the dynamos of national and regional economies rather than economic liabilities. Cities are becoming again ‘the wealth of nations’. . . . [A] cross Europe, north America and beyond, cities are moving up the political agenda and have become the focus of many policy initiatives.

This shows that the previous discoveries did not go unnoticed beyond academia. They have led to a discovery of the importance of cities by both national and international institutions that had hitherto not viewed them positively.

This turnaround is clearly seen in the United Nations family of institutions. The UN has long reported the population sizes of cities and the term 'mega-city' was coined to describe the growth of very large cities, many in poorer countries of the world. It is these cities, with their dreadful housing and infrastructure problems, that stimulated the UN-Habitat programme. But from originally being seen as urban problems, cities were redesignated as solutions: in the famous 2003 report *The Challenge of Slums*, the increasing concentration of poverty in cities was now interpreted more positively. The opportunities afforded by cities mean that this is where poverty is best alleviated. Stuart Brand (2010, p.31) traces this new 'city-boosting position' to Habitat fieldwork starting in 1978 that forced the 'reluctant optimism' of the 2003 report. Earlier the World Bank (2000) had discovered economic agglomeration processes in its World Development report that identified cities as key to reducing poverty through growth. By 2007 the United Nations Population Fund joined the new consensus, with its report entitled *Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*.

Running parallel to these UN discoveries, the European Union has similarly come to appreciate the importance of cities. Spatial policy in the EU originally focused upon 'problem regions' with no reference to cities (Berg et al. 2006). Part of the problem was that urban policy was deemed to be a national matter so that there were no policy instruments to develop a European urban strategy. However, in the 1990s cities became highly visible within EU regional policy, and this new official recognition has expanded as the EU has embarked on new priorities to maintain Europe's competitive position in the world-economy: cities as city-regions can no longer be ignored (Hall and Pain 2006).

However bringing something as complex as cities to centre stage in public policy making, and spatial planning in particular, is fraught with new problems (Taylor 2011b), and these will feature strongly in the argument developed below.

### **Green Discovery**

According to David Owen (2009, pp. 10, 13):

Thinking of crowded cities as environmental role models requires a certain willing suspension of disbelief, because most of us have been accustomed to viewing urban centers as ecological calamities. . . . A dense urban area's greenest features – its low per capita energy use, its high acceptance of public transit and walking, its small carbon footprint per resident – are not inexplicable anomalies. They are direct consequences of the very urban characteristics that are most likely to appal a sensitive friend of the earth. Yet those qualities are

ones that the rest of us, no matter where we live, are going to have to find ways to emulate, as the world's various ongoing energy and environmental crises deepen and spread in the years ahead. In terms of sustainability, dense cities have far more to teach us than solar-powered mountainside cabins or quaint old New England towns.

As indicated in this quotation, this is the surprise discovery, materializing, in part, from the UN institutional turnaround. Environmental concerns have their origins in non-urban realms and have often been explicitly anti-city as in 'garden city' policies to limit urban growth, negatively designated 'urban sprawl'. And more recently cities have been attacked for the large sizes of their 'environmental foot-prints'. But this is changing: Owen (2009, p. 3), in his book *Green Metropolis*, identifies New York as 'the greenest community in the United States', because its density facilitates use of far less fossil fuel, notably by cars.

Much has been made of the fact that the majority of humanity are now urban dwellers. This proportion is sure to increase in the coming decades – perhaps as much as 75 per cent urban by 2050 – so any green dreams of a world of sustainable rural idylls is no longer relevant. And most of this growth is happening in 'mega-slums', a derogatory term to describe the huge informal settlement growth of mega-cities in poor countries. But, as noted above through the UN, this great settlement shift is now being reassessed. For Neuwirth (2005) these 'slums' are the 'cities of tomorrow': it is not just that denser populations make it easier to provide essentials for living; it is also that these squatter settlements are so vibrant. They represent a world of innovations and improvizations that Jacobs (1969) lauds – as Jeb Brugmann (2009, p. 33) tells it in his *Welcome to the Urban Revolution*: 'City growth creates problems, and then city innovation speeds up to solve them', and currently this is especially true for environmental problems.

For Brand (2010, p. 51), cities 'are becoming the Greenest thing that humanity does for the planet' for another major reason. The great rural–urban rush is leading to reproduction reductions as large families with many children change from rural assets to urban liabilities. The result is that lowering of birth rates consequent upon urbanization has 'defused the population bomb' (p. 59) that has so excited environmentalists for over half a century. It seems world population will peak much nearer to eight billion rather than the doomsday environment predictions of the past: there is a new problem of 'population crash' in several countries (Pearce 2010). Such is the power of cities; this will be integral to my argument as I bring this book to a close, where I will link these issues much more closely into city economic processes.

## History Discovery

According to Paul Bairoch (1988, p. xvii):

The history of urbanization is without doubt one of the most exciting aspects of the adventure of humanity. When and how were cities born? Does each civilization have a distinctive form of city? How large were cities in traditional societies? What was the impact of colonization on urban systems? Did the Industrial Revolution favor urbanization? Has urbanization favored innovation and economic development? Does the urban explosion in the Third World constitute a handicap or an opportunity from the point of view of development? All these questions, and many more like them, bear on matters touching the very essence of world history and for that reason alone merit our attention.

Given the rich literature in urban history, it may count as another surprise to see history included in my list of discoveries. Bairoch's book, from which this quotation has been taken, is entitled *Cities and Economic Development*, a subject that focuses upon multiple cities in the wider world. It is in this sense that there is a discovery of sorts since the dominant tradition in urban history is the study of individual cities.

This discovery has a wider range of perspectives than the previous five, ranging from demographic studies (e.g. Lees and Lees 2007), regional studies (e.g. Clark 2009), city systems analysis (e.g. Chase-Dunn 1985), to what might be called 'multiple individual studies'. The latter consist of a selection of important cities through history and a production of vignettes on their particular prowess during their heyday. Peter Hall's (1998) *Cities in Civilization* and John Julius Norwich's (2009) collection *The Great Cities In History* are exemplary examples. Although they have a chronological order that includes consideration of the nature of cities, especially in Hall's case, the large-scale sweep of Bairoch's contribution is not part of their purpose. There are also comparative city studies of critical episodes in that broad sweep; excellent examples are: Patrick O'Brien's (2001) *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe*, which is a collection of essays on Antwerp, Amsterdam and London during their 'golden ages', and James Belich's (2009) *Replenishing the Earth*, which chronicles the settlement of English-speaking peoples across the world in a 'long nineteenth century' (1783–1939), focusing on the explosive growth of cities from Chicago to Melbourne.

It can be noted that there have been exceptions to traditional neglect of urban themes, notably historians from the Low Countries who did not need to 'discover' the centrality of cities because this has long been a focus of their research. Furthermore, their work typically features relations between cities, which is the approach to understanding of cities promoted

in this book. I draw on some of their findings and interpretations in later chapters.

These six discoveries are by no means a comprehensive portrait of recent and contemporary recognitions of the importance of cities in social change – for a glimpse of the wide range of such city-centric concerns see Allen Scott's (2001) collection of 22 essays on 'trends, theory and policy' in *Global City-Regions*. But we have now enough evidence on the rise of cities to centre stage to recognize the importance of the question: why were multiple discoveries of cities necessary in the first place?

## WHY THE DISCOVERIES WERE NECESSARY

If cities are extraordinary, how was such power not widely recognized: why have there been repeated discoveries of the critical importance of cities? This is an intriguing question. The basic answer I have to offer is that in the last two centuries the way we think about our collective selves has been nationalized. Cities, like many other social phenomena, are perceived through state-tinted spectacles. The result is a powerful meta-geography of the world represented by the world political map. This map hangs on the wall of every school geography classroom across the world, but it is by no means a narrow disciplinary icon to be forgotten on leaving education. It is a map for citizens; it shows where her/his country is located within the 'family of nations'. It seems that the ideological power of this map has triumphed over understanding the material power of cities. And this is both a popular effect and an academic outcome: social scientists and historians – the main sources for geohistorical studies – have certainly not been immune to knowledge nationalization.

The above argument has been developed by John Agnew (1993) as the 'territorial trap' wherein national frameworks of social activity remain unexamined as a sort of hidden effect that is broadly ignored. I refer to this neglect as 'embedded statism': mainstream social science and history have configured their studies within state boundaries and thereby unconsciously privilege the state in understanding social change (Taylor 1996a). Thus the spatial patterning of economic, political and social/cultural processes are considered to be spatially congruent based upon nation-states as the prime unit of humanity. The embeddedness is clear when the adjectives in 'national economy', 'national politics' and 'national society' are seen to be redundant – all three examples are deemed to be obviously (naturally?), national since their respective processes are interrupted sharply at state territorial boundaries. Thus the world is 'international' compris-

ing entities such as French economy, French society and French politics or Nigerian economy, Nigerian society and Nigerian politics, and so on through the list of all countries. This spatial congruence of the variegated processes of social change is a modern construct; it has little or no meaning before the creation of our modern world. It reflects the power of modern governments to grow their functions and move into social arenas previously beyond the ken of states – from security (territorial state) to economics (mercantile state) to cultural identity (national state) to popular governance (democratic state) to social wellbeing (welfare state) (Taylor 1994). In the process all manner of other institutions including religious communities, minority groups, cities, and aristocracies were nationalized, losing important elements of their autonomy to state sovereignty. Understanding macro-social change was also nationalized and came to be called social science.

### **Geohistory of the Development of Social Science**

In the argument below I draw on the work of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Crisis of the Social Sciences (Wallerstein et al. 1996) but the configuration of the interpretation is largely mine.

Understanding macro-social change itself is not, of course, exclusively modern; religious and philosophical discourses had long provided social explanations within wider cosmographies. However, what was modern was the emergence of specialists in the study of social change in the nineteenth century. Specialization was a key feature of the German reinvention of universities as centres of research, the latter requiring focus on connected topics to produce modern disciplines. These research disciplines derived from the traditional faculty of philosophy and were divided into what C.P. Snow (1959) would later call the ‘two cultures’, the clash between the sciences and the humanities. These differed in two related ways; the sciences constructed knowledge as general laws (nomothetic) within the subject matter of physical and biological dynamics; the humanities constructed knowledge as particular occurrences (idiographic) within the subject matter of people and their relations with each other. Specific ‘social sciences’ emerged in the late nineteenth century as an intermediary category between the two, cross-cutting the distinction by using the methods of the former on the subject matter of the latter. This social science took many forms but gradually distilled into three leading disciplines: economics, political science and sociology. By the mid-twentieth century most universities across the world had departments with these labels (or something very like them).

Why these specific three disciplines? They are products of their time

and space. In the late nineteenth century, social scientists were not studying just any macro-social change, they were specifically charting progress within modernity. Accepting Enlightenment rationality meant that understanding the triumph of modernity was deemed possible through discovering 'laws' that could then be fed into public policy in a virtual spiral of cumulative rationality. This fitted a general agenda of reform: economic reform of states to guide economic growth, political reform for popular legitimation of government, and social reform to counter the negative effects of rapid industrialization. Hence the disciplinary trinity – economics, political science and sociology – was born to create useful knowledge for the modern state in its reform practices to aid social progress.

This origin had two important consequences. First, the three disciplines covered all forms of macro-social change; there was no intellectual space for other social sciences. Second, they researched only 'modern' societies, defined as the people living in Europe and European-settler regions. Elsewhere societies were less rational and therefore not susceptible to social science laws. This left a gap for idiographic disciplines – humanities – to fill. In parts of the world with ancient civilizations, their 'unchanging nature' (i.e. lack of progress) was studied as Orientalism, a focus on traditional texts and languages to decipher their exotic nature. In the remaining 'uncivilized' world, anthropology developed to understand 'tribal peoples' through intensive fieldwork to observe and catalogue their particularities. Both groups of societies were deemed to be 'peoples without history', to use Eric Wolf's (1982) famous phrase, because history was about progress. Therefore history emerged as a modern discipline to understand only Europe's past: a Whiggish pursuit to delineate how modernity came about in the countries of Europe through particular national study of unique events. The end result was that the social science trinity's study of modern societies was complemented by these three humanity disciplines to ideographically cover the 'unmodern', past and present. This neat arrangement, never quite as tidy as I have summarized here, was soon to break down in the second half of the twentieth century when interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and later transdisciplinary approaches came into vogue to cope with the actual complexities inherent in macro-social change. I will deal briefly with what this means for twenty-first-century scholarship in a later section of this chapter but in the remainder of this section I explore the more obvious implications of the state-centrism of the trinity.

The power of the trinity can be seen in the history of the modern discipline of geography, a subject about the same age as the social sciences but initially quite distinct from them. Geography emerged in universities as a quite contrary discipline in two ways. First it claimed to offer synthesis thereby bucking the trend to increasing specialization. Second it straddled

the 'two cultures', encompassing both human and non-human topics. In terms of methodology there were swings between the science and the humanities. Environmental determinism tried to explain macro-social change through the causal effects of environment on society; regional geography attempted an artistic synthesis of physical and human processes unique to every place. In neither case was geography theoretically tied to state-centric thinking, although in practice the discipline operated to provide knowledge-supporting imperialism. But these two conceptions of geography were relatively fragile, resulting in the discipline's university status being perennially under challenge. Survival and adaptation varied across different countries, often related to which associated 'time discipline' (history or geology) practising geographers worked with. However, eventually in the second half of the twentieth century, the discipline became divided in its research programmes, with human geography pursuing social science themes and physical geography environmental science themes. And the former soon conformed to the trinity imperative resulting in three dominant sub-disciplines: economic geography, political geography and social geography. This final conformity was not unique: history and anthropology similarly went adjectival: economic history, economic anthropology; political history, political anthropology; and social history, social anthropology. Orientalism was different, its post-imperial vestiges, especially the emphasis on languages, survived within 'area studies', a new post-World War II development. But the latter belongs to a different strand of the social science story.

All human institutions are created to deal with situations in a particular time and place and, as situations change, they become gradually less fit for purpose. But they do not easily disappear, because in the times and places of their successes they build up a resilience, a continuing insistence on their worth by entrenched vested interests. This has been very much the case for the social sciences. In the second half of the twentieth century the trinity of disciplines was challenged by a plethora of new knowledge categories generally referred to a 'studies'. These often developed in parallel with the established disciplines: business studies appeared alongside economics with focus moving from national economy to the behaviour of firms, international studies appeared alongside political science with focus moving from national government to multi-layered governance, and cultural studies appeared alongside sociology with focus moving from national social structure to personal identities. But these parallels suggest the trinity maintained more power over the changes than it actually had. As university departments, trinity disciplines largely maintained control of teaching programmes right up to doctorate level and hence the socialization of new researchers. This is the disciplines doing what they were designed to do:

discipline knowledge workers. But the latter as researchers were creating new research programmes that go far beyond the trinity; in addition to area studies previously mentioned there are also Afro-American studies, communication studies, development studies, gender studies, information studies, post-colonial studies, regional studies, urban studies, etc., each of which have their own further study divisions. And all claim to be free from basic disciplining through using descriptors such as interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. They are usually institutionalized not as university departments but as more dissipative organizations centred on new journals (mainly private sector initiatives), research centres and conferences. These allow for an eclectic bringing together of ideas, a feature that distinguishes studies from disciplines.

A key question from my perspective is how far the erosion of disciplines by multiple fields of study has reduced embedded statism in social research. Since state-centric thinking is far broader in its influence than social science thinking, it cannot be assumed that recent studies are necessarily any less under the sway of the territorial trap than the trinity.

### **State-centric Social Science Practices**

It is not part of my brief to answer this question comprehensively across a large range of fields of study. My publisher will probably market this book as 'urban studies'; I think 'development studies' would be a more appropriate label but this label is already taken by a body of knowledge that is the very inverse of my approach. Thus I will treat social science practices in only these two fields of study.

The idea of development as providing help to poor countries became government policy for rich countries in the period after World War II. Partly encouraged by the Cold War rivalry between the 'first world' (capitalist west) and the 'second world' (communist east) to attract allegiances from 'third world' countries (ex-colonial poor south), this changing circumstance had a profound influence on social science. A basic rethink occurred due to conceptual revision; the terminology for macro-social changed from progress to development. The former was a property of civilizations (modern versus the rest), the latter became a property of states: old stagnant civilizations did not progress, but new modern, decolonized, states could develop. In the two decades after World War II decolonization created a large number of new independent states, all ripe for development. In fact initially, development appeared to be the very *raison d'être* of this great flurry of state-making.

Enter the social science trinity. The rationality missing in old civilizations could now be expected to appear in the new independent states so

that nomothetic social knowledge would finally be extended to the whole world. Laws and theories that worked in what was now the first world could be transplanted to the new third world. Thus would social scientists mark out a new arena for rational policy advice to governments' development departments. The trinity operated to offer economic development models to aid industrialization of new national economies, political development models to promote liberal democratic constitutionalism for new national polities, and social development models that proclaimed nothing less than paths to the modernization of the new national societies. It was realized that these planned processes would be closely interrelated and therefore development studies became strongly interdisciplinary in nature. But the knowledge remained explicitly state-centric; development was deemed to be something that happened to states. The reaction against this notion is the idea that development transcends individual states, and this has been best articulated through world-systems analysis (Wallerstein 1979; 1983; 2004). This is the position I take in this book.

Urban studies would appear to be a completely different case. Cities were among the institutions that lost political autonomy in the nationalization consequent on the rise of modern states. The study of cities as social nodes with multiple outside connections, such as transport hubs, resulting in places through which rapid macro-social changes such as industrialization occurred, would surely not fall into the territorial trap. But yes, urban studies has been as thoroughly nationalized as development studies: the 'national urban systems' research school was the major research programme on how cities relate to each other from the late 1950s into the 1980s (Bourne and Simmons 1978).

The idea of national urban systems derived from central place theory, a model that posited urban places being hierarchically arranged. Nationalizing this model generated the concept of national urban hierarchy, a simple ordering of cities by population size. The results were interpreted as the spatial organization of the national economy and therefore were offered as policy tools for government (Bourne 1975). Comparative analyses of these city hierarchies across countries produced some quite sophisticated understandings. At one end of the spectrum there were hierarchies where all levels were fully represented within a country (the 'rank-size rule'), and at the other there were countries where one city was very much larger than other cities in the country (the 'law of the primate city'). The former were interpreted as complex fully integrated national economies – in short 'developed' – and the latter as simple national economies – in short 'underdeveloped'. Thus the US and Canada fitted the rank-size rule as befitting developed economies while most Latin American countries were distinctly primate in their city population graph – Asunción, Buenos

Aires, Caracas, Havana, Lima, Mexico City, Montevideo and Santiago are all classic 'primate cities'. To be sure there were exceptions, but these could be dealt with as particular contingencies; for instance, the primacies of London and Paris reflecting past imperial prowess, and India's rank-size rule reflecting the country's size rather than its development. Thus the national urban systems school offered both credible theoretical outputs and relevant policy inputs, the dual ideal of good social science.

But, and it is a big but, there was a basic flaw to this nationalization of understanding cities. The consequence of this approach is a mosaic world of inter-city relations: an urban world of about 200 or so separate urban systems, one for each state. This is because inter-city relations across state boundaries are generally conspicuous by their absence in this modelling and are always severely neglected. Thus New York is identified as top of the US hierarchy but with little or no reference to its role as a major port, the leading gateway between the US economy and the world-economy. This undervaluing of the 'international' in national urban systems research came to a head with the growth of economic globalization in the 1980s that, seemingly overnight, made this school of research theoretically suspect and practically less useful.

I began this chapter with the 'globalization discovery' of the exceptional importance of cities but this should not be interpreted as urban studies escaping from the national territorial trap. The global/world cities literature has been led by sociologists abetted by human geographers, but the other discoveries have been less inclined to ditch ideas from the national urban systems school. The trinity lives on in economics, the most disciplined of disciplines, where the economic discovery makes no references to the globalization literature, and the history and policy discoveries remain largely wedded to classic hierarchical views of inter-city relations. In fact the idea that cities are arranged in hierarchies is the main legacy of the national urban systems school and this has been commonly accepted in the globalization discovery: an early and very influential contribution by John Friedmann (1986) simply up-scaled 'national city hierarchy' to 'world city hierarchy'. The debate about the nature of inter-city relations – hierarchy versus network – is discussed in some detail in the next chapter.

### **State-istics**

In the substantive sections of this book I try and make my arguments as evidence-based as possible. It seems to me important that social science knowledge should be creatively speculative in the early stages of projects but final products should be concretely grounded on the best evidence available. The latter will vary by circumstance but ultimately social science

is only as good as its empirical evidence. Thus if we look at Friedmann's world city hierarchy we find no systematic data collection to support the concept, which is in keeping with his creatively introducing a new hypothesis. But later widespread acceptance of the hypothesis is much more problematic. Subsequently it has been reported as to how he came to configure his world city hierarchy revealing the paucity and poverty of his initial evidence: it seems he used a Japanese Airlines flight map that he perused in-flight (Abu-Lughod 1989, p. 32). What is happening here is that the paradigmatic notion of city hierarchies is being up-scaled – a creative input – with an implicit invitation to others – users of his ideas – to confirm the hypothesis or otherwise. But no such comprehensive evidence-based research was forthcoming; if it was generally viewed as unnecessary this would indicate an immanent paradigmatic power of the idea of city hierarchy. This would seem to be confirmed by Sassen (1991) using the concept of 'global hierarchy' as integral to her global city thesis. Looking more closely at this foundation work on global/world cities, it has been found that in a survey of the evidence she used, fully one-third deals with states rather than cities (Taylor 2004, pp. 36–8). As an iconic text on cities, why should this be so?

Researching my subject matter, the study of macro-social change, is a huge undertaking. Translating this task into the lexicon of the natural sciences would bring up the label 'big science'. In these circumstances, the theory is used to suggest what evidence is required and then a huge data collection exercise ensues (for example, through the CERN particle physics laboratory). But social science research does not command such resources; our funding is minuscule within overall science budgets. However, this does not mean that there is no macro-social change research. This is because massive amounts of social data are collected, not by social science researchers, but by bureaucrats in modern states. As these states took on more and more functions they collected data to organize, justify, and evaluate their new activities. Thus most European countries have conducted decennial censuses for about 200 years. Originally just population counts, they are the clearest example of data collection growing as the state grows. But all departments in state bureaucracies now publish data on their activities as a matter of course, resulting in a real treasure trove of information available for social scientists of every ilk. And this includes Sassen (1991) who uses, for instance, data on states for evidence of foreign direct investment in her argument about global cities.

This has proven to be a good solution to the impossible expense of the 'big social science' data needs but it is only satisfactory for social scientists in a rather narrow sense. It provides us with available data but not necessarily the specific data we would choose to collect. It is data collected by

the state for the purposes of the state and that is why such data is referred to as statistics, or state-istics as I like to call it. This is not a minor semantic point; it is not even just a matter of subjects covered: the actual nature of this data is affected by its state provenance. Data comes in many forms but there are two basic types that are generally identified: attributional and relational. Attribute data are descriptions of an object; relational data are measures of links between two or more objects. State-istics have a clear bias towards the former, whereas social science should have a particular preference for the latter. For instance, national censuses provide myriad descriptions of state-defined areas from collection units through administrative districts to the whole state territory: an 'areal accounting' exercise to service myriad area-based policies. Overall, most state-istics are attributional because these serve state purposes – generally administration – best.

Even where the state measures flows and movements, notably for commodities (trade) and people (migration), these are only counted when areal boundaries are crossed, which is a very limited way of obtaining relational data. Comprehensive measuring of relational data requires origin and destination information irrespective of whatever boundaries are crossed. A person moving from one neighbourhood of the city to another, or from one region of a country to another, is in either case a migrant, but not always identified as such in national and international statistics respectively. There is a particularly notorious example of how these 'official statistics' do no favours to our understanding of macro-social change. According to the title of Castles and Miller's (2003) classic text on international migration, we are living in *The Age of Migration*. The authors acknowledge previous large international flows of people but quantitatively, with illegal movements taken into account, contemporary globalization is unrivalled in its demographic upheaval (pp. 4–5). But notice the state-centric thinking: the very term 'international migration' presupposes that states are the appropriate units for measuring migration. This is empirically sensible since such data are readily available, but it is seriously flawed theoretically. Castles and Miller (2003) illustrate the limitations of studying 'international migration' in a spectacular manner: they miss out what is happening within China, the largest flow of people in the history of humanity (see their Map 7.1, p. 156). There seems to be little doubt that the demographic process that will have most planetary effect in the first quarter of the twenty-first century is Chinese migration to Chinese cities. But this is 'only' 'internal migration' (that is, not 'international' like, say, migration between Belgium and Luxembourg), and is missing from their state-centric analyses despite the fact that it is completely reorienting the contemporary world-economy.

Understanding cities is a major victim of state-istics. This is not because

cities are in any sense neglected – cities are recognized as the locales of numerous ‘social problems’, are the basis of local administration through which problems are addressed, and therefore there is myriad data on cities. However, it is the nature of the available data that is at issue. Cities in state-istics are places to be measured; nearly all the data is attributional. But cities are dynamic places whose *raison d’être* is relations, myriad internal links, local links to hinterlands and wider links to other cities and regions. Cities cannot be understood fully without adequate relational data. And this is precisely what is not available. To be sure there is usually data on commuting that provides some indication of a city’s economic patterning but there is little else. Thus for London there are reams of data from the census and elsewhere describing a multitude of aspects, but if we ask the question of how London relates to Birmingham – there is migration data but little else. More to the point, how does London relate to New York – what are the flows of commodities, people, information that connects the two cities and what are their natures? This is important because it is generally accepted in the global/world city literature that this inter-city relation is the most important connection in the workings of the contemporary world-economy. It even has a name: NY-LON. We can get some information on relations between the UK and the US – trade, migration, inward investments – but not specifically on NY-LON. And why should there be any state-istics on NY-LON? Who would collect it? Not London or New York City governments, they focus on their own city. Not UK and the US, collecting data on a foreign city can be seen as a violation of sovereignty. Quite simply there is no organization in place with an interest in producing statistics on this city-dyad. And even if there was, what about London–Paris, or New York–Tokyo? The list of dyads is almost endless.

Clearly state-istics are not going to provide anywhere near the comprehensive data needed to understand cities in globalization. And yet this is a very relevant ‘big social science’ topic for research. Without available data from the state, the only solution is to find a way to collect data for relational analysis as a new project in its own right. Fortunately in an electronically connected world it is relatively easy to organize worldwide networks to spread the work and cost of data collection. In this case the medium for the task has been the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network ([www.lboro.ac/gawc](http://www.lboro.ac/gawc)) that I set up in 1978 and that has provided this service to urban researchers as part of the global electronic commons. I will draw on information from this unique resource in the penultimate chapter when I turn to contemporary globalization. However, the models devised in setting up this measurement tool have proven to be generic and will appear in the next chapter as part of my city toolbox. In this way, I aspire to research beyond state-istics.

## A CITY-CENTRIC EXPERIMENT

In this chapter I have been setting down my position with respect to understanding cities through social science, the body of knowledge in which we find most research on cities. The gist of my argument is that social science has been found wanting. In the next chapter I will be setting up a new position that I have found fit for purpose as a means of bringing cities to centre stage. Overall, Part I can be considered a thought experiment in which I try and envisage a city-centric social science.

I conclude this chapter by drawing two implications from my critique of social science that will frame my approach in the rest of the book. First I present my considered approach to the social science disciplines, trinity and others, one that I find quite intellectually liberating. Second, I consider more specifically how I approach understanding cities in relation to states: taking a city-centric position does not mean that understanding states has to be neglected. Rather I begin to ask the crucial question about how cities and states relate to each other.

### **The Possibility of Indisciplinarity**

In the previous discussions there has been the suggestion that the boundaries between disciplines have become more permeable. This is reflected in prefixes to ‘discipline’ that have become increasingly radical in their implications: multidisciplinary research promotes collaboration, interdisciplinary research insists on engagement, and transdisciplinary research suggests thinking beyond disciplines. But all begin with disciplines; *indisciplinary* research is about discarding disciplines. It is, of course, easy for me as a geographer to entertain the latter because taking disciplines seriously simply eliminates geography from academia: the nature of geography has always been a field of study. But this does not prevent me from appreciating the seriousness of a proposition for indisciplinarity. Disciplines provide intellectual depth to social research, coherent bundles of knowledge building on the insights of esteemed ‘founding fathers’. Figures such as Alfred Marshall, John Stuart Mill and Max Weber still have something to say to today’s researchers. Fields of study have a far less coherent theoretical basis and their founders are usually much less well known and revered: geography has its founding fathers but none are more than of historical interest today. Thus are ‘mere’ studies frequently damned for being ‘shallow’, the ultimate intellectual critique. So why the call for indisciplinarity?

Before justifying shallowness, I will interrogate the depth of knowledge that disciplines have supplied. What is this intellectual depth? As

previously described it is theory and practice honed about a century ago that has proven remarkably adaptable and resilient. But all social knowledge is transient; founding fathers can only know what they experience in and through their times and places. Nonetheless being revered means that in hindsight we can see that their ideas have fared much better than those of their contemporaries. But in something as complex as macro-social change there will always be severe limits on how far ideas can travel. According to Wallerstein (1991) the social sciences are now struggling against their confines: he calls for 'unthinking social science' to free ourselves from 'nineteenth-century paradigms'. But this is not indisciplinaryity, he advocates uni-disciplinaryity through unifying the disciplines that study social change (the trinity plus history) into a single historical social science. And he most definitely does not discard aspiring to intellectual depth as he attempts to bring the very different research traditions of history and social sciences together, a genuine best-of-both-worlds strategy. My position is very close to that of Wallerstein; I add 'geo' to his proposed intellectual construct but this reflects more than just my own geographical background. This 'geo' nudges our thinking towards indisciplinaryity not just because geography's founding fathers command little or no contemporary respect but through its literal global connotation that chimes with 'twenty-first century as crisis century', wherein disciplinary boundaries appear as so very trivial.

Let me elucidate this position: why advocate the possibility of indiscipline and shallowness? The argument is that the transience of social knowledge is speeding up; previously experienced transience enabled coherent disciplines to maintain relevance over several generations of researchers. In the twenty-first century this will be a luxury lost. Enhanced transience results from contemporary alterations in the nature of macro-social change. For Wallerstein (1999) the structures underpinning our modern world are themselves reaching their limits; we are entering no less than 'the vanishing guarantees of rationality' (p. 137). In other words the disintegration of old structures of behaviour creates a new situation in which knowledge of current and recent behaviour can no longer be expected to have a salient longevity. From a different perspective, Jane Jacobs' (2004) final book, *Dark Age Ahead*, is similarly doom-laden. In many ways her writing career exemplifies my idea of indisciplinaryity: she evaded disciplinary identity although posthumously, in a 'reconsideration' of her ideas, she has been found to be a human geographer after all (Harris 2011). Jacobs' warning of a dire future includes an indisciplinary argument in the form of a devastating critique of contemporary universities for providing students with merely 'credentials' rather than an education (pp.44–63). This has resulted in what she calls 'science abandoned' evidenced by one 'so-called

discipline' (p. 79), after another becoming 'disconnected from the scientific state of mind' so that each 'unfortunate segment of knowledge is no longer scientific' (p. 69). Although derived from very different premises, we can appreciate that Jacobs' 'no longer scientific' approximates to Wallerstein's 'vanishing rationality'. Knowledge is not what it used to be.

I address the issues arising from 'twenty-first century as crisis century' in the final chapter and I describe how I get to there in the final section of this first chapter. But there is one further point to be flagged relating to indiscipline. As well as the crisis processes outlined by Jacobs and Wallerstein there is, of course, a very dark cloud hanging over the future of humanity: the real possibility of catastrophic climate change within the next century. This provides another reason for indiscipline; the rapid erosion of theoretical relevances and empirical findings makes deep thinking problematic, all thinking becomes strategic. Cities feature in the literature on climatic change in the role of victims – low-lying settlements vulnerable to rising sea levels – and states feature in the practice of combating climatic change as hopeless obstacles – the large number of states leads to seemingly intractable free-loader problems in policy making. I aspire to transcend this unpromising assessment of cities and states. Contemporary experience of globalization has exploded the neat spatial congruence of the nation-state through which citizens voted for governments to generate economic growth and thereby provide for the good life. More and more, the economic futures of countries are determined by processes that transcend state boundaries, which makes promoting and diffusing democracy quite problematic. And, of course, the social science trinity is premised on this very spatial congruence. Specialized disciplines were a product of our modern world; their demise will likely be integral to the disintegration of that world. Indiscipline appears inevitable; it will be reflected in this book by my lack of respect for disciplines.

### **Geohistory as a State/City Tango**

I have included reference to states in the subtitle of this book to show that while my starting point is cities, I try very hard not to neglect states. Obviously there is a real danger that reacting against state-centric social science will swing the pendulum too far in the new direction. My view is that it is impossible to properly understand cities without knowledge of states and vice versa. Since these two key human inventions are so entwined, I have chosen to characterize their relation as a tango, that most energetic of dances where the two dancers are prescribed related but distinctive roles.

The tango appears to be a suitable analogy for city/state relations

because there is a mixture of rivalry and support between the participants. Further, I am interested in how the city/state relationship changes through time and space, and just such a geohistory is to be found in the changing fortunes of the dance. Although there are many different styles of tango, they can be reduced to just two basic positionings. The styles are mostly danced in either open embrace, where lead and follow have space between their bodies, or close embrace, where the lead and follow connect either chest-to-chest (Argentine tango) or in the upper thigh, hip area. This reduction of possible relations works well for the entanglements of cities and states. I will argue in narratives below that cities and states usually have an open embrace whereby they define separate realms of activity but on rare occasions they can have a close embrace, as in the political economy of our modern times. In the open embrace the states are definitely the 'lead' and the cities 'follow', but the close embrace is perhaps more interesting, for there can be different ways to 'connect' and it is less clear where the power lies.

Of course, there are always limits to analogies; a tango involves two people playing roles, cities and states are rather more complex than can be captured as roles. In fact these complexities have always meant that understanding relations between cities and states has been beyond the full comprehension of social science disciplines with their boundaries. Instead of knowledge separations I search out knowledge connections without concern for disciplines. I am always intrigued when key researchers say effectively the same thing while coming at the subject from distinctly different perspectives. Here are some inter-author links from across the twentieth century that are at the very heart of my contemporary thinking. First, the same basic statement has been made by two outstanding urban theorists writing half a century apart: in 1921 Max Weber (1958, p. 65) argued that the city is not simply 'a large locality', and in 1969 Jane Jacobs (1969, p. 129) argued that 'a city is not a large town' – I use this insight as the basis for my understanding of cities in the next chapter. Of course, these theorists subsequently diverge in their respective paths to city definition: Weber focuses on functions, Jacobs understands cities as a process (Jacobs 1969, p. 50). Second, move on another quarter century and we find Jacobs echoed in Castells' (1996, p. 386) influential work on network society: 'the global city is . . . a process'. Although the latter is based upon another quite different theory, drawing on ideas of global cities atop a world urban hierarchy, Jacobs and Castells share the same relational view of cities. This idea of city as process is critically useful in handling the complexity of cities. Geographically, the great advantage of conceptualizing cities as process (a bundle of processes), rather than as a place, is that there can be myriad processes in one place. Thus defining

a city as a global city and listing attributes to be found in such a place to qualify to this exalted status leaves the researcher open to the accusation of missing so much more about the city. But defining global city as a process – global city formation – allows it to be understood as one process among many that make up a given city. There can still be debate about the relative importance of the global city process, but there is now no simple practice of labelling that conceals so much else that is going on in the city. I extend this methodology to states by treating states as process (a bundle of processes) – state formation is my subject matter. With both city and states as processes, the salient complexity is assured because it takes two to tango.

This geohistorical tango unfolds as depicted in Box 1.1.

My narrative begins as the beginning in prehistory and finishes with the upcoming environmental catastrophe, possibly ending in ‘post-history’ (that is to say, a demise that could mark an end of written records). I use the term ‘normal’ for two circumstances that encompass most of the existence of humanity: Normal Prehistory covers most of the experience of our species across the world; Normal History covers most of the experience of humanity when city networks existed, commonly referenced by the written word as historical source, and described as ‘civilization’. Normal Prehistory is the world of hunter–gatherers spreading across the world as small territorial groups. We know from the artefacts they have left behind that they were also producers and traders but this was only a small element in their material reproduction. ‘Normal’ should not be interpreted as inferring homogeneity; there is and was much variety amongst hunter–gatherer bands related, for instance, to the ecology of their territories. At the extremes of this variety there can be unusual bands developing specialist skills, such as in coastal fishing. I call this Abnormal Prehistory and focus on just one particular example: concentrations of producer–trader activities. Where they form trade networks, the trading camps can grow into small cities to create the first incipient city networks. These seem to have appeared in several places across the world, perhaps most famously at Çatalhöyük (Anatolia), Sannai-Maruyama (Japan), Great Zimbabwe (southern Africa) and Cahokia (Mississippi valley). Successful trading and production leads to increasing population resulting in the first major urban problem, how to feed the unprecedented concentrations of people. Solving this problem reveals the first great expression of city creativity: the invention of agriculture. This generates city hinterlands to complement city networks in the urban spatial ensemble. But this is initially quite a fragile invention; sustainability is a further step along a learning curve. Initially decreasing agricultural returns can be compensated by extending the hinterland, but this has its own limits in terms of accessibility to the

## BOX 1.1 FRAMEWORK FOR A NARRATIVE

### **Normal Prehistory**

Hunter–gatherers with producer–trader activities

### **Abnormal Prehistory**

- Specific concentrations of producer–trader activities leading to first city networks
- Increasing demand for food leading to invention of agriculture in urban hinterlands
- Desiccation of hinterlands leading to city failure, empty quarters and subsistence agriculture

### ***Initial creative interludes***

- *Particular concentrations of producer–trader activities leading to resilient city networks*
- *Food problem solved by invention of sustainable agriculture*
- *Large cosmopolitan cities enabling world-changing innovations and the rise of commerce*
- *Large, diverse population concentrations create new demand for order leading to invention of city-states*
- *Competition between states leads to multi-city territorial state as empire and the demise of autonomous cities*

### **Normal History**

Rise and fall of world-empires with dependent commerce reproduced through acquiescent city networks

### **Abnormal History**

- Post-Roman imperial power vacuum in Europe lasts for a millennium
- Vacuum not filled through conquest by non-European world-empire
- Rise of autonomous Europe-wide city network in European commercial revolution

***The modern creative interlude***

- *Divided sovereignty in inter-state relations heralds modern world-system*
- *City-led world hegemonic cycles replace rise and fall of world-empire*
- *This enables city commerce to dominate the system with ceaseless capital accumulation becoming the prime social logic of a capitalist world-economy*
- *Cities in world hegemonic states create world-changing innovations to reproduce an ever-expanding capitalism*
- *World city network underpins contemporary globalization, which heralds the demise of the modern world-system*

**Global economic and environmental upheaval**

- Leading to . . . ?

city. The result is that without sustainable agriculture, hinterlands become desiccated, empty quarters, and the city network necessarily collapses after a few generations. Thus these early networks of cities are only partially successful, but farming continues without cities as subsistence agriculture. This is the great legacy of traders and producers in Abnormal Prehistory.

There is a second development of city networks that proved to be much more resilient. Again based upon producer trading activities, in these networks the food problem is solved long-term through the invention of sustainable agriculture. Commonly this has been achieved through the harnessing of river floods renewing the soil. The earliest example is probably in Mesopotamia, usually identified as the locus of the first cities, here reinterpreted as the locus of the first resilient city network. This resilience provided time for the trading and production to grow cities to new demographic levels. This creates the conditions for multiple innovations – including writing – that are usually interpreted as ‘world-changing’: the invention of civilization, no less. As well as in Mesopotamia, this occurs in several locations across the world including Egypt, the Indus valley, China, West Africa, Mexico and Peru. I call these ‘initial creative interludes’, periods covering several centuries centred upon self-expanding city networks.

Such interludes come to an end with the invention of the state. This is a city invention to solve the problem of internal conflicts in increasingly large and cosmopolitan cities. The nature of governance transfers from

light touch administration to sovereign king in new city-states. This change is indexed by the building of walls: the dominant mutuality between cities in networks is converted into a new condition of rivalry and war between city-states. Victors in this process produce multi-city territorial states that become empires subjugating even more cities in their logic of expansion. The demise of autonomous cities marks the end of the creative interlude and the city/state tango begins.

Normal History now proceeds. Starting at different times in different parts of the world, these are periods of the rise and fall of empires, periods of political centralization interspersed with inter-state rivalries to become the next 'universal' empire. Network formation between cities continues, and their commerce remains important. However they lose their autonomy and thereby their full creative potential. City networks can prosper in Normal History but only in circumstances dictated by states – for instance, in the frontiers between empires or in the 'long peace' that a successful empire achieves. However, in Normal History the largest cities are the capital cities of states as recipients of tribute and war booty, a hierarchical political process separate from city network formation. As with Normal Prehistory, in Normal History there are a wide variety of specific outcomes relating to, for instance, imperial ranges and longevities. There will be some unusual situations and those at the limit can be called Abnormal Histories. I focus on one such example: western and northern Europe. Brought into Normal History by the expansion of the Roman Empire, with the demise of the latter it entered an exceptionally long period without a replacement universal empire, a whole millennium in fact. Such a political void would normally be filled by conquest by a powerful outside empire. This did not happen to Europe and the resulting divided political landscape enabled the rise of relatively autonomous cities culminating in a 'commercial revolution', with a Europe-wide city network in the second half of the millennium without empire.

It is from this particular Abnormal History that the modern creative interlude emerged in the 'long sixteenth century' (c. 1450–1650). The decentralized politics was formalized as the inter-state system (international relations and international law confirmed in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia) and commerce (including production) becomes concentrated in the new city-rich Dutch republic. The phenomenal economic success of the latter 'merchant state' creates the response of mercantilism whereby economic matters are brought to the centre of state affairs – the modern state is born. Now the relations between economic elites and political elites are fundamentally changed: there is a much greater parity than in Normal History. This is called the modern world-system, which operates as a capitalist world-economy. In this historical system cities are able to recover

much of their creative potential: world-changing innovations return. Modern change is dominated by innovations emanating from concentrations of vibrant cities in 'hegemonic states', first the Dutch Republic, then Great Britain, and latterly the United States. In this way hegemonic cycles based upon new bundles of city innovations replace the irregular rise and fall of empires in Normal History. The latter continues in regions outside Europe until they are incorporated into the capitalist world-economy. The demise of the last great Chinese empire through such incorporation marks the global triumph of the modern world-system in the nineteenth century.

In the late twentieth century economic globalization, an intensification of the capitalist world-economy as global economy, seemed to mark a final twist in the city/state tango. This new scale of economic process was enabled by the rise of world city networks that transcended the states. This is not the end of states as advocates of a 'borderless world' have suggested, but it does mark a new city/state relationship that has been brought into the twenty-first century. And therefore this is the situation we are in as we face both an economic crisis in the demise of the modern world-system and an environmental crisis caused by the economic success of the self-same system. My narrative concludes tackling this conundrum.

Finally, let me say how the framework in Box 1.1 fits into the organization of the book. The narrative part of my text is divided into three parts of two chapters each. In Part II arguments covering Abnormal Prehistory and initial creative interludes are interwoven across the two chapters. In Part III I devote a chapter each to Normal History (including Europe's abnormality) and the modern creative interlude in order to contrast them. In Part IV I describe contemporary globalization as the apogee of the capitalist world-economy, a prelude to thinking ahead to the twenty-first century as crisis century. But before we come to this mega-narrative I need to introduce and describe the conceptual toolbox that I employ to specify and justify the story I tell. Thus the second chapter of Part I, the introduction, is about social science but without the usual boundaries. In other words I try and do what I preach in the research of which this book is the outcome.