

## Introduction - Global Cities/Local Sites

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The essays in this collection selectively examine the material, imaginative and historical configurations of urban locations across four continents. Using a case-study approach, each essay opens up an understanding of how global and local forces intersect in the production of the spaces—or occasionally, non-spatial locations—of urban life. The extent to which spaces become places and then, in a sometimes unpredictable narrative, revert to the more anonymised spaces of global cities is a concern that runs through the collection as a whole.

There are no easy formulations for explaining the impact of global flows of capital, cultural capital and people on cities. In some instances local developments and practices are the stimulant for 'going global' rather than the site of resistance. Similarly, historical rootedness can reinvigorate the local sphere or be the source of 'heritage'. It is important, then, not to slip unwarily into assumptions that local and global respectively carry positive and negative meanings, or to overlook examples when the intrusion of 'development' has revealed or provoked manifestations of the local.

The contributors to this collection reference their own studies of the phenomenon of global–local interactions. However, a few key studies may be noted at the outset, by way of acknowledgement of the important work that has been undertaken as globalisation has taken hold.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abu-Lughod, Janet, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999; Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, New York, 1983; Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996; Castells, Manuel, *The Informational City: Economic Restructuring and Urban Development*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989; Cox, Kevin R. (ed.), *Spaces of Globalization: Reasserting the Power of the Local*, Guilford Press, New York, 1997; Cvetkovich, Ann and Kellner, Douglas (eds), *Articulating the Global and the Local: Globalization and Cultural Studies*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1997; Eade, John (ed.), *Living the Global City: Globalization as Local Process*, Routledge, London, 1996; Hannerz, Ulf, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, Routledge, London, 1996; Harvey, David, *The Urbanization of Capital*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1985; Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, New York, 1961; Jameson, Fredric and Miyoshi, Masao (eds), *The Cultures of Globalization*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1998; King, Anthony D., *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World Economy: Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World Urban System*, Routledge, New York, 1990; Lynch, Kevin, *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960; Marcuse, Peter and van Kempen, Ronald, *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000; Relph, Edward, *Place and Placelessness*, Pion, London, 1976; Rybczynski, Witold, *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World*, Scribner, New York, 1995; Sassen, Saskia, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1991; Short, John Rennie, *Global Dimensions: Space, Place and the Contemporary World*, Reaktion, London, 2001; Short, John Rennie and Kim, Yeong-Hyun, *Globalization and the City*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1999; Wilson, Rob and Dissanayake, Wimal (eds), *Global/local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1996.

While this introductory essay does not feature many of the possible benefits of electronic publication evident in the remainder of the book, we can at least highlight the appropriateness of the medium for analysing local/global relations. The essays in this e-book offer readers the facility to move between image, sound and text within the 'covers' of the book, as well as allowing readers to treat the boundaries of the book as permeable by means of hyper-links to a huge range of websites from around the world. Arguments on global/local themes depend upon successful negotiations between the general (whether theoretical or historical or geographical) and the particular. An imaginative use of the features of electronic publication can bring much more of the extensive archive of examples into a closer relationship with the key arguments of each essay than is possible in traditional publications, which must rely on references and relatively few examples.

In her study of Chijmes, a central heritage and tourist site in Singapore (titled 'Singapore "Missions": Local Heritage Sites in a Global Era'), Lily Kong invites us to revisit dominant notions of globalisation, offering three points of departure for doing so. In the first place, Kong directs our attention to globalisation as it unfolded in past centuries. The movement of populations over several centuries has etched globalising circuits that are just as powerful as the electronic networks of communication and transnational patterns of commodity circulation more recently taken as emblematic of globalisation. In a second move, Kong asks us to consider religious communities as among the oldest of globalising forces, and to see them as crucial in the inscription of global flows (and not simply an ideological supplement to the more 'real' globalising patterns of political or economic conquest). Finally, her analysis is marked, in her suggestive phrase, by an interest in 'the quotidian detail of the transnational flow'.

This is, in part, a call for research into the affective substance of daily experience, evocatively captured in Kong's speculation about the motives and feelings of religious women as they crossed the world to take up missionary work. The life of missionary women was marked by their experience of 'changes in climate and culture', and their capacity to build a sense of their own devotion around this experience. This quotidian detail of transnational flows also includes the material forms in which globalisation is embedded and which have remained as its residues. These forms range from the most visibly transformative (the colonial cities built according to British models) to the most abstract (the characteristic joining of 'school, nunnery and orphanage' in single complexes). The postcolonial history of formerly religious spaces, Kong suggests, is typically one of a de-sanctification in which their formerly religious and sectarian function has been displaced by commercial or heritage uses designed so as to address, in a newly cosmopolitan way, all possible publics.

Ports and railway stations have become privileged sites of heritage-oriented redesign and repurposing through that familiar process by which disappearing modes of industrial production or human transportation are rendered romantic. 'Terminal city' is an often-used nickname for Vancouver, capturing the city's longstanding status as the end point for Canada's national railroad system. (In addition, the term has served metaphorically in recent years to evoke Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a neighbourhood marked by extreme poverty and the world's highest rate of HIV infection.) 'Global and Local Forces at Work in Vancouver: The Fascinating Case of the Birth and Rebirth of Coal Harbour', by David W.

Edgington and Michael A. Goldberg, focuses on Coal Harbour, a 120 acre-area in downtown Vancouver which was once a major hub of rail lines and warehouses. Like many of the essays, this one begins with a delimited space and traces its transformations over time. Those transformations have followed changes in Vancouver's economic role, as the city has moved from being a key node in a resource-based economy to a transportation centre hub linking Canada to Asia, the British Columbia mainland to Vancouver Island, and the west coast of North America to the rest of Canada.



Vancouver: Coal Harbour Apartments and Marina  
Author's photograph

In the context of this volume, the case of Coal Harbour is relatively unique insofar as the development of this area has been guided and constrained by collective decision-making sensitive to a wide variety of public needs and wishes. Coal Harbour has become the site for spectacular large-scale developments, such as hotel complexes and futuristic transportation systems intended to underline Vancouver's status as a world-class (and Olympic-hosting) metropolis. At the same time it has become the focus of efforts intended to compensate for the relative paucity within Vancouver of ceremonial spaces, which, by linking together different parts of the city's topography (for example, parks and convention facilities), are able to express a continuity of uses and meanings.

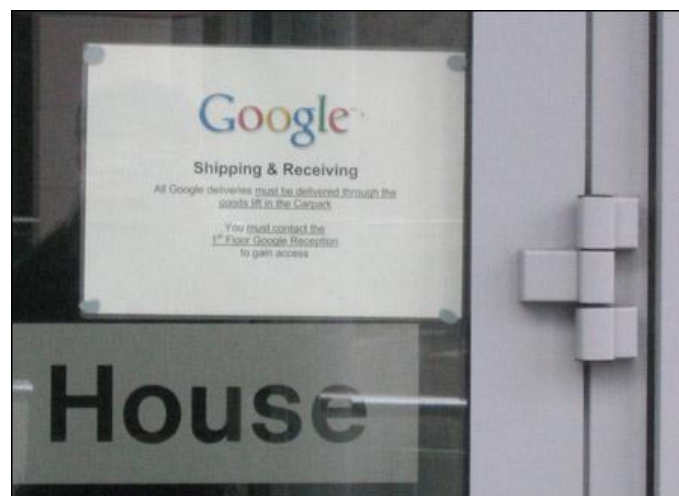
Kim Dovey's study of waterfront regeneration in Melbourne ('The Politics of Urban Spectacle: Melbourne Riverscapes') captures the international circulation and standardisation of contemporary ideas about urban design and regeneration. Just as access to water was a key factor in the original development of so many cities, so riverfronts and seafronts have become a predominant focus of recent urban restoration and redesign projects. Almost all instances of waterfront redesign across the world follow the path of what Dovey, following Hanigan and others, calls a 'scripted and branded form of placemaking'. Like the redesign of Singapore's older missionary areas, which has produced the new tourist itineraries of consumption discussed by Lily Kong, Melbourne's Yarra River district has been organised in a way that guides human visitors along preordained sequences of experience and interaction.



Melbourne: Crown Casino at night  
Courtesy of Crown Entertainment Complex

One role of the state, Dovey suggests, is that of regulating the desires of its subjects. Urban waterfronts, as objects of collective fantasy, are an important site for the fulfilment of such fantasies. City waterfronts are ambiguous spaces, typically combining the most primordial of natural substances (water) with the richly sedimented residues of human intervention (the wharfs and factories that were often among the first parts of a city's built environment). It is partly for this reason that waterfronts are famously the focus of conflicts which seek to resolve their murky status as publicly-owned civic amenities, on the one hand, and spaces of private capitalist investment on the other.

The meaning of centrality in a global/local site has shifted in each of the essays to this point. Hugh Campbell and Brian Ward give centrality a further semantic twist in 'eBay and Google in Dublin'. They look at the offices of internet commerce companies eBay and Google, which both chose Dublin in which to base their European headquarters as a result of the Irish Republic's deliberate courting of high-tech firms. The examples of corporate presence studied here expose the illusion of placelessness and virtuality which has come to surround internet commerce, and the inescapable geographical fixity of workplaces and markets.



Dublin: Minimal Google signage. Author's photograph

Located on the outskirts of Dublin, in buildings that bear only minor markings of corporate identity, the headquarters of eBay and Google are invisible to most Dubliners, though a few apparently turn up each week at eBay carrying goods they wish to sell. Generally, such invisibility belies the monumental ubiquitousness of these companies on the internet, where each has become the leading global brand in its field. In fact, people are surprised to know that these companies have regional headquarters and workforces at all since one assumption about internet commerce is that it requires no concrete attachment to place.

As Campbell and Ward remind us, currency differentials, differences of language and the need for local expertise in marketing global brands require the 'regionalisation' of Google and eBay if these firms are to be genuinely international in scope and success. It will be of some interest to observe how these companies deal with the current worldwide credit crisis. As a new high-tech capital, Dublin lives out the tension between Manuel Castells's 'city of flows' and the city of place-based amenities, as Saskia Sassen has theorised it. While no material goods may pass through the doors of the eBay or Google facilities, they are nevertheless complex organisations carrying out a wide variety of functions. As such, they require both an elaborate technical infrastructure and the workforce necessary to maintain that infrastructure.



Montreal: Place Emilie Gamelin  
Photograph courtesy of Claire Roberge

Place Emilie Gamelin, one of the three blocks in Montreal analysed by Will Straw ('The Palace, the Terminal and the Park: Three Blocks in the Middle of Montreal'), has seen a drift from the religiosity which gave this space its original distinctiveness to a more chaotic sedimentation of often contradictory meanings that have rendered the Place incoherent. A long series of projects over a half-century—the building of the Palais du Commerce, and then of the Grand Bibliothèque du Québec, the efforts to make of this area a centre of university-based knowledge production, and plans for a 'French' downtown for Montreal—have failed to fully dispel the sense of transience that has marked this larger area around the Place Emilie Gamelin since the Catholic church's withdrawal left it, as it were, up for grabs. For thirty years now, this area has been characterised by second-hand or marginal



commerce, appropriated for the subcultural practices of punk and skateboarding, and used by activist groups to begin or end their marches through the city. Ongoing attempts to stabilise the meanings of this three-block area have rarely succeeded. Each, by adding something new to an already cluttered history, simply adds to the confusion.

Stephen Cairns's essay on Jakarta ('Jakarta: Cognitive Mapping the Dispersed City') begins and ends with Kevin Lynch's notion of the 'cognitive maps', through which urban inhabitants come to experience the landscapes in which they live as intelligible. Jakarta, a city in Java, has grown according to logics very different from those governing the development of western cities. Rather than expanding outwards from a core, subsuming agricultural land through suburbanisation, Jakarta has taken shape as a 'patchy fabric'. Urban forms, such as shopping centres, industrial factories and entertainment complexes, have arisen in the midst of land still used for agriculture. The result is a vast area characterised by zones of mixed activity in which the characteristics of city and village life are intertwined, as this comparison of the cartographic 'look' of areas of Jakarta and Melbourne demonstrates.



Maps of Melbourne and Jakarta  
Greater Melbourne Street Directory and Jabotek Street Atlas  
Courtesy Gunther W Holtorf/Falk and Melway Publishing

One of the intriguing observations in Cairns's analysis concerns the ways in which this distinctive form has favoured certain forms of mobility over others. Sprawling and complex, Jakarta's inhabitants rely on the two-stroke motorbike as their primary mode of transportation. It is perfectly suited to a city in which travel itineraries may be too highly individualised and convoluted for collective transit systems, and in which distances are too great to make walking or bicycling feasible.

A very different but no less interesting artefact analysed in Cairns's essay is the *kronologi*, a distinctive form of cartoon strip that maps the metropolitan space of Jakarta in terms of partial views and unusual assemblages reflecting a popular, non-official experience of the city. The *kronologi* typically deal with ephemeral incidents within city life, with faits divers (crimes, arrests, suicides, and so on) of the sort that have long nourished popular forms of urban journalism. By focusing on the interstices of life in Jakarta, Cairns suggests, the *kronologi* produce a novel 'socio-psychological cartography' that captures both the mobility and the highly complex fixities of that city.

Douglas Tallack's detailed examination of a forgotten island off the tip of Manhattan takes up the tension between natural amenity and municipal asset which has

characterised many of the urban spaces looked at in this book ('New York City: The View from Governors Island'). As Tallack suggests, the recent history of Governors Island has unfolded between two historical bookends. The earliest of these was the emergence, in the 1960s, of an intense critique of the development-oriented objectives that had guided urban planning in the middle of the twentieth century. According to the influential arguments of Jane Jacobs, urban planning almost led to destruction of the traditional textures and patterns of city life. While acceptance of Jacobs's critique by city governments was never total, that critique (and the activism it spawned) nevertheless made city governments sensitive to public demands for transparency and caution as proposals for the development of urban space came before city officials. Some of that sensitivity, Tallack suggests, may be seen in the relatively open process by which New York's city government considered proposals for the future use of Governors Island.

The other historical event bookending discussion of the fate of Governors Island was the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. In April 2002 the Federal government (its long-time owner) turned Governors Island over to the City and State of New York, acknowledging its potential role in the economic and social revitalisation of a damaged Lower Manhattan. Since the 1980s, New York had worked to exploit the potential heritage character of Lower Manhattan and, in particular, of Battery Park and South Street Seaport. In this context it was easy to imagine Governors Island as continuous with a system of parkways and tourist destinations filling the outer edges of Manhattan. Governors Island would cease being a historical relic or natural oasis left neglected at the edge of most New Yorkers' consciousnesses. Rather it would become part of a broader spatial logic, in which natural, commercial and institutional settings were interwoven to produce a new urban fabric. It is at once frustrating and appropriate that the habitual struggles within New York urbanism, and the unusually dramatic impact of Wall Street on the City and State budgets, make it impossible to complete the end of this phase in the history of Governors Island.

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Once formal reviews and informal reactions to these essays have been assessed, and new research and, in some cases, current events, have been taken into account, the technical architecture of this e-book will make it remarkably sympathetic to the ongoing aims of scholarship. If the 'covers' of an e-book are permeable, then in principle the book is not finished. As well as facilitating the more common, though still troublesome, process of revisions, an e-book can be expanded with additional essays examining global/local relations in a still wider range of cities. An accompanying website for continued debate and new scholarship is an option for authors and publisher. More immediately, e-mail addresses and websites are included in the details of each contributor to initiate debate with readers and build upon the open structure of this book.