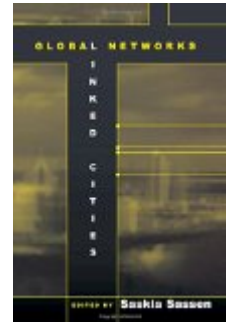


Saskia Sassen, ed.. *Global Networks, Linked Cities*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002. vii + 368 pp. \$125.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-415-93162-5.



Reviewed by Eric Schneider

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Measuring Globalization

By now most urbanists are familiar with the outlines of Saskia Sassen's argument in *The Global City* (1991) that globalization has caused a re-ordering of urban spatial systems. Some cities, most notably London, New York, and Tokyo, have emerged as command and control centers in the global economy, with a consequent deemphasis of nation-states as economic players. Within global cities, there has been a repositioning of downtowns as high tech employment centers that are simultaneously dependent upon unskilled and underpaid service employees. But if the metropolises have flourished in the postmodern ("post-Fordist") economy, even while developing deeper economic and social inequalities, what has been the fate of other cities, especially in the developing world? Do they share characteristics with the so-called "alpha cities" of the world?

Global Networks, Linked Cities is a collection of essays that begins to answer these questions. Chapters examine the "middle range" cities in the urban hierarchy, concentrating on the "global south," to see how information and communica-

tion technologies have affected them, how they interface with the global economy, and how their spatial organization has changed with globalization.

The first section of the book, "The Urban Architecture of Global Networks," develops the argument for a global hierarchy of cities and offers a series of benchmarks to see where cities rank. There are both theoretical and empirical arguments for the continuing importance of cities in a postmodern economy. Although telecommunications can allow for decentralized economic activities, the betting here is that business relationships will continue to require personal contacts and that investment will confirm centralizing tendencies within cities in the process of chasing after the most lucrative markets.

Which cities are the winners? Different scholars use different measures of activity to determine whether or not a city is global and where it ranks. Rankings are based on air travel between cities, on the locations where transnational firms in banking/finance, accounting, advertising, and law have branch offices, and on the amount of

private investment in the telecommunication infrastructures that move the symbolic economy. Not surprisingly, American cities—New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco/San Jose, and Atlanta—dominate the infrastructure rankings but this has more to do with American investment in the internet and fiber optic networks than with traditional measures of globalization. The other measures produce entirely different lists with London, Paris, New York, Tokyo, Frankfurt, and Hong Kong the clearest "alpha" cities. Of these, only Hong Kong is counted (I might add, a bit peculiarly) as a southern city.

The second section of the book, called "Cross Border Regions," examines urban centers that are organizing points for regional economies as well as points of contact with global networks. While the world's alpha cities relate largely to each other, divorced in some ways from their national hinterlands, these cross-border centers play more traditional economic roles. Mexico City and Sao Paulo, which appear in the middle range of the global cities hierarchy (so-called "beta" cities), are "relay cities" that link the global to the national. Mexico City shows signs of expelling industrial uses, much in the way U.S. cities have, and it has an emerging service sector with concentrations of infrastructure investment, much of it from foreign sources, foreign corporate offices, and firms oriented toward foreign trade both with the United States and with other relay cities such as Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires. Mexico City was already characterized by extreme economic disparity, but as its global profile grew in the 1990s, so did disparity as the informal economy replaced migrating industrial jobs.

Sao Paulo is the economic capital of the Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay) region. It is increasing its share of company headquarters and is at the center of a developing grid of electronic communications as well as other infrastructure investment in railways, roads, bridges, and waterways that link the lead-

ing cities of the region together. The fact that highways and bridges are being discussed suggests the relatively lower rank Sao Paulo has as compared to Mexico City and some of the other cities discussed here. No attention is paid to the restructuring of Sao Paulo itself in response to these developments, which also suggests that they are of a different order of magnitude.

If Mexico City offers the best evidence of global economic integration and its effects, other areas studied in this collection provide very little. Beirut, barely recovered from the disasters of Israeli invasion and civil war, has rebuilt its city center but its potential role as a portal between the Mediterranean and the Middle East seems a matter for the distant future. Similarly, an essay on the Dubai-Iran corridor provides evidence of trade and passenger/freight linkages among the urban centers in the area, no doubt intensified from earlier generations, but there is little evidence of a connection to the global economy. One is compelled to ask if all increases in foreign investment, border crossings, and financial exchanges equal signs of integration into the global economy? Or are they merely improvements in regional linkages accomplished by new technologies? For all of the reams of statistics that are presented as signs of globalization, there is no hint offered here of a threshold criterion that divides the global from the national or the regional level and that has been applied in analyzing these two regions.

The last section, entitled "Network Nodes," with chapters on Hong Kong, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, and Amsterdam, provides very different models of global networking. Hong Kong is building on its pivotal role in the British Empire and its history as a center for trade, finance, and entrepreneurship. Here telematics have confirmed the traditional social and economic networks developed over many generations by a vibrant private sector. In Shanghai, however, the state is much more actively involved, targeting specific

areas within the city for foreign investment and for infrastructure improvement. This is an example of "if you build it, they will come" globalization, but as in Hong Kong, this investment builds on Shanghai's past as one of China's most economically advanced cities.

Buenos Aires, as a result of increased foreign investment, has respatialized with malls and megastores, international hotels, entertainment centers, and even gentrification downtown and gated communities in U.S.-style suburbs. A bifurcated high-wage, low-wage economy, together with job losses in the skilled sectors and rising unemployment, fit the pattern of the globalized city. The final essay on the history of the digital city free internet network in Amsterdam seems to be an odd fit with the rest of the volume. While Amsterdam is a middle range city in the global hierarchy, like most of the others discussed in this volume, its telecommunication network is not the product of foreign investment and the essay does not discuss the spatial reordering of the city. But the essay is useful for showing an alternative path for internet development that was linked to Amsterdam's rowdy squatter movement and democratic resistance to gentrification. Although this path was eventually closed as the digital city project evolved into a professionally run, more highly capitalized enterprise, the fact that internet development took the initial form it did suggests the importance of local culture and urban social movements in affecting the shape and pace of globalization.

This collection is an important contribution to the literature on global cities. The attention to cities that are generally in the middle of the global hierarchy is particularly welcome. That their respatialization is so similar to that of cities at the top of the hierarchy suggests the powerful economic forces at work across the globe. In fact, position in the hierarchy may be more important than the north-south divide; as these cities become further integrated into the global economy,

they may come to share more with each other than with other cities in their country or region. And yet the roles these cities play in the global economy are sufficiently varied to show that historical development and local cultures also shape the impact of globalization. While this may not have been the intended message of these essays, for those interested in human agency it is a welcome message indeed.

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