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# Urban Sociology

## *A Global Introduction*

This concise yet comprehensive overview of the political and economic development of the world's cities also offers a unique emphasis on their cultural impacts. The book stresses the transition from modern (industrial) to postmodern (postindustrial) eras and its effect on established and developing global cities, and arguments are supported with case studies for each of the main concepts of urban theory and research. Mark Abrahamson analyzes contemporary global cities – ranging from Lagos to Los Angeles, Paris to Beijing – helping students relate concepts to concrete places and understand the global nature of contemporary urban development. Rigorous yet accessible, this textbook includes key learning features designed to enrich student understanding and engagement, including chapter-by-chapter glossaries, summaries, and suggestions for further reading.

Mark Abrahamson is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut. He is the author of *Classical Theory and Modern Studies* (2010), *Urban Enclaves: Identity and Place in the World* (2006), and *Global Cities* (2004).

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# Preface

For as long as I can recall, urban sociologists have bemoaned the absence of a textbook that was truly global in its focus. My sample of colleagues primarily includes sociologists in the United States, and they often expressed their feelings by wishing for a text that was less U.S.-centric. No one, I think, wanted to exclude U.S. cities and, in fact, most probably wanted U.S. cities to be emphasized, but to a lesser degree than they had been in the past. Producing a book that would fill this niche has been a long-term plan of mine, although it was only a few years ago that I sat down to begin seriously writing it.

In recent years, global cities have provided one of the most researched and discussed areas in urban sociology. This interest further pushed urban sociologists toward a more inclusive worldview because although some U.S. cities would always be expected to be among the most important of the global cities, the list obviously far transcends cities in the United States. Further, the adequate study of global cities requires examination of the linkages among cities, regardless of the nations in which they are located. In writing this book, I have tried to capture the growing interest in global cities and combine it with a broad introduction to a global urban sociology.

The reader will find most of the topics traditionally associated with urban sociology are discussed in this text, including lengthy treatments of the discipline's major historical paradigms. To describe these paradigms adequately, I have found it necessary to relate them to the major economic and occupational eras in which they emerged. Thus, modern cities are examined in relation to multiple facets of industrialization, whereas global cities are analyzed in relation to de-industrialization and postmodernism. This macro approach is balanced by a good deal of attention to how patterns of interaction shaped both by widely shared values and attitudes and by conflicting economic interests, have also shaped the ways that cities of all types develop and change.

As a result of the emphasis placed on global cities, this book contains a more elaborate treatment of the issues and topics that are typically associated with this grouping of cities, including gentrification, income inequality and class polarization, tourism, and the cultural economy. In addition, because urban sociologists and many urban geographers have almost seamlessly joined in studying and writing about global cities,

the reader will find that a good deal of recent research published by urban geographers has been integrated into several parts of the book.

Another distinctive feature of this text is the numerous case studies it contains. Each one examines a major topic discussed in the chapter, focusing on one specific city, carefully selected from across the world for its instructive value. Most chapters contain two or three detailed case studies, each of which is designed to give the reader a clear sense of how some phenomenon discussed in the chapter – tourism, inequality, gentrification, homelessness, and so on – has been experienced or occurs in one particular city. The objective is to interconnect a general issue with a concrete place.

I owe more than the brief word of thanks I can offer here to very many people, beginning with several generations of students whose questions and comments helped shape my thinking and taught me much about how to think about and present the material. I am also very greatly indebted to a number of reviewers whose criticisms and insightful suggestions helped make this a much better book than it would have been without them. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to the supportive staff at Cambridge University Press and especially to Robert Dreesen, my editor.