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978-1-107-40258-4 - Berlin–Washington, 1800–2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation,
and National Identities

Edited by Andreas W. Daum and Christof Mauch

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PART I

Cities as Capitals on a Global Scale

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1

Capitals in Modern History

Inventing Urban Spaces for the Nation

ANDREAS W. DAUM

Our world is organized in nation-states, roughly 190 as of this writing. Almost every nation-state is represented through a capital, and most capitals are cities.¹ These cities are embedded in diverse indigenous settings, display very different physical shapes, and have distinct domestic and international reputations. Nuku'alofa (population 22,000), capital of the South Pacific archipelago of Tonga, and Cairo (population 8.1 million) belong to this group of cities, as do Berlin and Washington, D.C., which represent, respectively, one of Europe's largest nation-states and the world's only remaining superpower.²

What makes a city a capital? All capitals share the fact that they are privileged vis-à-vis other cities within the same political system. They represent the larger political entities surrounding them; since the early modern epoch, these entities have become successively nations and nation-states. Capitals are expected to perform specific functions for their nation-states. These functions allow a capital to act as a “multiple hinge”: a capital mediates between its urban space, the surrounding society, and the nation no less than between the nation-state and the international world.³ Often, capitals also have a distinct social life and display a particular cultural dynamic that goes beyond predefined functions.

The essays in this volume deal with both the hinge role of capitals and their distinct dynamics by focusing on the relation between capital cities

1 In the overwhelming majority of today's countries, capitals are simultaneously the largest cities, although there are remarkable exceptions such as the capitals of the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Turkey, China, India, Sudan, Nigeria, and South Africa.

2 Berlin had already had capital status in different historical periods, such as in the Kingdom of Prussia (1701–1945), the German Empire (1871–1918), the Weimar Republic (1919–1933), the Nazi era (1933–1945), and – its eastern part – the German Democratic Republic (1949–1990).

3 Jean Gottmann, in Jean Gottmann and Robert A. Harper, eds., *Since Megalopolis: The Urban Writings of Jean Gottmann* (Baltimore, 1990), 91. Gottmann has also used the term “pluralistic hinge”; see here, 67.

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and nation-states. Berlin and Washington provide the empirical focus: two capitals that have long been disputed and reveal paradigmatically the plurality of capital meanings from the late eighteenth century to the present. The contributors to this volume explore the cultural and political roles that Berlin and Washington have performed through their urban shape and architecture, their social life and metaphorical meaning, and through the ideas that city planners, politicians, and visitors from abroad have formulated to define the character of these cities. In particular, the chapters address the question whether and how these two capital cities have served to articulate a national identity. The volume thus aims to provide new insights into the relationship between urban spaces, nation-states, and political ideas in the modern era.

This volume takes a broad, multidisciplinary view of Berlin and Washington. Themes range from Thomas Jefferson's ideas about the new capital of the United States to the creation of a Holocaust memorial in Berlin, from nineteenth-century visitors to small-town Washington to the 1968 student protests in West Berlin. This thematic plurality goes hand-in-hand with methodological diversity. The contributors to this volume draw on literary semiotics and urban sociology as well as postmodern architectural theory and social history. The plurality of approaches signals a new interest in the study of capital cities, a field of research that is still in an incubation phase.

In this chapter, I will revisit the relevant literature, bring together dispersed empirical data, and provide some typological reflections that may provide categories for a comparative and transnational study of capitals in the modern era. I will apply these categories to Berlin and Washington and thereby offer an introduction to the succeeding chapters. My chapter, however, looks beyond the United States and Europe. I want to demonstrate that capitals are an “invented” and transitional phenomenon in modern history worldwide. Capital cities are neither “natural” products of nation-building processes nor do they have a fixed status. And a comparative view reveals surprising analogies between capitals on different continents.

I

Berlin and Washington are both relative newcomers in a history of urban development that stretches back to the third millennium B.C.⁴ Babylon,

⁴ For an overview on Berlin's history, see Wolfgang Ribbe, ed., *Geschichte Berlins*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1987); Wolfgang Ribbe and Jürgen Schmäddecke, eds., *Berlin im Europa der Neuzeit: Ein Tagungsbericht* (Berlin, New York, 1990); Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin* (New York, 1998); and David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York, 2000). For Washington, see Constance McLaughlin Green,

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capital of the Assyrian Empire, has enjoyed an enduring presence in the memory of later cultures. Urban historians tend, however, to confine their view to Europe and North America; they often disregard Latin America, Africa, and Asia. These regions also knew capitals as ceremonial centers and sacral points of large territorial entities, even if these capitals were not built as cities or, in some instances, were not equipped with permanent dwellings.⁵ The legitimacy of these places was based on their role in representing a sacred meaning and, in some cases, on specific cosmological models.

Some European capitals, too, have encapsulated what has been called “high-level meanings”⁶ and have served as religious centers from antiquity on. Especially during the Renaissance, there were attempts, often religiously motivated, to design ideal cities that embodied utopian visions. Every urban detail, from the layout of parks to the facades of houses, derived from and was integrated in a grand scheme dominated by an all-encompassing ideology.⁷ Secularization did not prevent religious ideas from influencing the spatial organization of capital cities. The design of Washington, drafted in the 1790s, can be partly explained by the prevalence of ideas that defined the capital as a mirror of American civil religion and that reflected the national myth of the “city on a hill.”⁸ Still, the main function of capital cities across the world since the fifteenth century has been to serve territorial states. From that point in time, we can identify five periods in which the number of new capitals increased substantially.⁹

The *first* period is the Renaissance: Copenhagen, Prague, Rome, Madrid, Moscow, Buda, and Warsaw became capitals in this era. While the

Washington, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1962–3, reprint 1976); Kenneth R. Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital* (Fairfax, Va., 1991); David L. Lewis, *District of Columbia: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1976); Carl Abbott, *Political Terrain: Washington, D.C., from Tidewater Town to Global Metropolis* (Chapel Hill, 1999), and *Washington Past and Present: A Guide to the Nation's Capital* (Washington, D.C., 1983); and Lothar Hönninghausen and Andreas Falke, eds., *Washington, D.C.: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Tübingen, 1993).

5 This holds true for Persepolis, the Achaemenid capital of Iran, Teotihuacán in central Mexico, and the Shona capital of Zimbabwe.

6 Amos Rapoport, “On the Nature of Capitals and their Physical Expression,” in John Taylor, Jean G. Lengellé, and Caroline Andrew, eds., *Capital Cities – Les Capitales: Perspectives Internationales – International Perspectives* (Ottawa, 1993), 39–43. For reflections on political “spaces” and “sites” see Hilda Kuper, “The Language of Sites in the Politics of Space,” *American Anthropologist* 74 (1972): 411–25.

7 Hanno-Walter Kruft, *Städte in Utopia: Die Idealstadt vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert zwischen Staatsutopie und Wirklichkeit* (Munich, 1989); “Klar und lichtvoll wie eine Regel.” *Planstädte der Neuzeit vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. Exhibition catalogue, Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe.

8 Jeffrey F. Meyer, “The Eagle and the Dragon: Comparing the Designs of Washington and Beijing,” *Washington History* 8, 2 (Fall Winter 1996–7): 8, 17, 20.

9 See *The Capitals of Europe – Les Capitales de l'Europe: A Guide to the Sources for the History and their Architecture and Construction* (Munich et al., 1980); Taylor, Lengellé, and Andrew, eds., *Capital Cities*; Peter Clark and Bernard Lepetit, eds., *Capital Cities and their Hinterlands in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1996).

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seventeenth century saw the establishment of several new capital cities,¹⁰ a decisively new *second* period of capital–founding began in the late eighteenth century and lasted well into the nineteenth century. A wave of nationalism resulted in the creation of nation–states in Europe and North America. The ideologies of nationalism were regionally different but they shared the belief that nations were political entities that were predestined in history and could be traced in endemic cultural traditions. The need to bring together political functions within a new territory merged with the search for a capital that expressed the seemingly distinct features of a nation and could therefore serve as a metaphor of the nation–state.¹¹

If we include the capitals of semi-independent regions and states, the number of cities designated as capitals increased dramatically in the nineteenth century.¹² Yet even in the age of nationalism the declaration of a capital did not always coincide with the founding of a nation–state. It took years for Berne, Rome, and Washington to officially become the capitals of Switzerland, Italy, and the United States. Capitals – like nation–states themselves – were the products of political machinations, ideological contestations, and personal ambitions: they were – and are – “invented.”¹³ The “vision of an all-encompassing national capital” is a retrospective projection rather than a generic phenomenon.¹⁴ The development of national capitals in Europe was complemented by a wave of state- and capital–founding in Central and South America as European colonialism eroded.¹⁵ During the same period, the expansion of European colonial powers into Africa and Asia led to the establishment of new colonial capitals that replaced indigenous capital cities, as, for example, in Burma and Sri Lanka.

A *third* period began in the wake of World War I. The Versailles Treaty and the dissolution of the German, Austro–Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman

10 Stockholm, Crakow, and Bucharest.

11 See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed. (London, 1991); and John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1994).

12 Among them were Helsinki 1812, Amsterdam 1813, Oslo 1814, Brussels 1831, Athens 1834, Belgrade 1841, Berne 1848, Berlin and Rome 1871, Budapest 1873, and Sofia 1879. See Thomas Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London, 1997).

13 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

14 Gerhard Brunn, “Die deutsche Einigungsbewegung und der Aufstieg Berlins zur deutschen Hauptstadt,” in Theodor Schieder and Gerhard Brunn, eds., *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten* (Munich, 1983), 16.

15 See Jorge E. Hardoy, “Ancient Capital Cities and New Capital Cities of Latin America,” in Taylor, Lengellé, and Andrew, eds., *Capital Cities*, 99–128.

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empires triggered a territorial and political recomposition of Europe; new nation-states came into being, each of which designated a capital. Some of these cities were newly designated capitals; others had already performed central functions in their territories for decades or centuries.¹⁶ World War II and the Cold War initiated a *fourth* period of capital foundations in Europe and, with decolonization and the proliferation of indigenous independence movements, in Africa and Asia as well. In 1945, Belgrade became the capital of Yugoslavia; in 1949, Bonn became the seat of the West German government. New Delhi, planned as a new administrative center in 1911, officially became the capital of independent India in 1947. Taipei assumed capital status in 1949 due to the split between the Taiwan-based Republic of China and the People's Republic of China on the mainland. The ideological-political rift of the Cold War led to the establishment of two capitals on the Korean peninsula and in Vietnam during the 1950s. From 1960 on, many newly created African states followed suit with the founding of their own capitals.¹⁷

The *ffifth* period has produced the map of the world as we know it today. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the breakup of Yugoslavia, the political and geographic landscapes of Europe and Central Asia were remade by centrifugal forces. Capitals were established in the emerging nation-states; many of these cities had already served as political centers in earlier times.¹⁸ The one exception to the proliferation of capitals after 1991 was Germany. The united city of Berlin took over the capital functions that Bonn and East Berlin had performed for the “old” Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR).¹⁹

16 Tirana 1920 and Ankara 1923; Warsaw 1918 and Dublin 1922.

17 For Africa, see D. Pfaff, “The Capital Cities of Africa with Special Reference to New Capitals Planned for the Continent,” *Africa Insight* 18, 4 (1988): 187–96; and Allen Armstrong, “The Creation of New African Capitals. Appraisal of a National Spatial Strategy,” *Journal of the Geographical Association of Tanzania* 23 (June 1984): 1–22.

18 Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sarajevo), Slovenia (Ljubljana), Montenegro (Podgorica), the Ukraine and Belarus (Kiev and Minsk), the Baltic states Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia (Talin, Vilnius, Riga), and the newly created Central Asian republics; in the Central Asian state of Kazakhstan, the government decided to shift the capital status from Alma-Ata (Almaty) to Astana. See Harald Heppner, ed., *Hauptstädte in Südosteuropa: Geschichte – Funktion – Nationale Symbolkraft* (Vienna, Cologne, 1994); Harald Heppner, ed., *Hauptstädte zwischen Save, Bosphorus und Dnjepr: Geschichte – Funktion – Nationale Symbolkraft* (Vienna, Cologne, 1998).

19 After 1949, both German states upheld claims on Berlin as the German capital; yet only the German Democratic Republic officially declared Berlin, i.e., the eastern zone of the city, its capital and documented this status in its constitution; see Otto Dann, “Die Hauptstadtfrage in Deutschland nach dem 2. Weltkrieg,” in Schieder and Brunn, eds., *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*; and Werner Süss and Ralf Rytlewski, eds., *Berlin. Die Hauptstadt. Vergangenheit und Zukunft einer europäischen Metropole* (Bonn, 1999), 157–86, 194–234, 259–94.

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II

We often take the existence of capitals for granted because they are inscribed on our mental map as geographic reference points and symbolic markers.²⁰ But this picture becomes more complicated as we realize the heterogeneity and historicity of capitals. If a capital is defined as the central and economically most potent city in a given territory, many capitals – such as Berne, Washington, and Ankara – fall through the grid. Moreover, capital functions and meanings may change over time. Several cities have been displaced as capitals: Florence and Turin by Rome in the nineteenth century, Saint Petersburg by Moscow after World War I, Saigon by Hanoi after the Vietnam War, and Bonn by Berlin in 1991, to give only a few examples. Capitals are not static even if the territories they represent remain stable (which is often not the case). Capitals are transitional phenomena in the *longue durée* of nation-states. They are always limited in the power to either represent or influence decision-making processes and cultural identities in their respective states.

These complications may in part explain the striking lack of systemic and comparative studies on the history of capitals. No doubt, we know much about vibrant cultural life of historic metropolises, above all in Europe and North America.²¹ But the specific roles of capitals have not received much attention either in the flourishing historical research on state formation, nation-building, and independence movements or in the disciplines of geography and urban studies.²² German historiography is a noticeable

20 See Alan K. Henrikson, “Mental Maps,” in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (New York, 1991), 177–92; and Frithof Benjamin Schenk, “Mental Maps. Die Konstruktion von geographischen Räumen in Europa seit der Aufklärung,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 493–514.

21 Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1979); Peter Alter, ed., *Im Banne der Metropolen: Berlin und London in den zwanziger Jahren* (Göttingen, 1993); Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization: Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order* (London, 1998); Theo Barker and Anthony Sutcliffe, eds., *Megalopolis: The Giant City in History* (New York, 1993); *Metropolis and City Capitals: Italy, Russia, and the United States* (Rome, 1993); Anthony Sutcliffe, ed., *Metropolis, 1890–1940* (London, 1984); Philip Kasinitz, ed., *Metropolis: Centre and Symbol of Our Time* (Houndsmill, 1995); Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske, eds., *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930* (New York, 1994); Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann, eds., *Wien, Prag, Budapest: Blütezeit der Habsburgmetropolen. Urbanisierung, Kommunalpolitik, gesellschaftliche Konflikte, 1867–1918* (Vienna, 1996). For a view beyond Europe and North America, see Iwona Blazwick, ed., *Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis* [Exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery] (London, 2001).

22 See, e.g., the relevant bibliographies by Anthony Sutcliffe, *The History of Urban and Regional Planning: An Annotated Bibliography* (London, 1981); Christian Engeli and Horst Matzerath, *Modern Urban History Research in Europe, USA, and Japan: A Handbook* (Oxford, New York, 1989); Richard Rodger, *A Consolidated Bibliography of Urban History* (Aldershot, Brookfield, 1996); *The Urban Past: An International Urban History Bibliography* [by University of Guelph. Gilbert A. Stelter] at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/history/urban/citybiboutline.html>, and *History: Urban History* at <http://vlib.ine.it/history/topical/urban.html>.

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exception. In this case, academic interests reflect historical peculiarities in an intriguing way. Germany was not a unified nation-state until 1871. For centuries before then, a number of cities had shared capital functions. Political authority moved with itinerant rulers in medieval Germany. The Holy Roman Empire, which survived until 1806, had been a conglomerate of territories in which several cities had performed key political functions. It was a multicentered political body, an empire “without capital.”²³

Most of the successor states to the Holy Roman Empire – Austria was the major exception – joined in the founding of Imperial Germany under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck. The Prussian capital of Berlin was designated as capital of this first German nation-state largely because Prussia had dominated the unification process militarily and politically. At key moments in modern German history – the Revolution of 1848, the division of Germany after World War II, the end of the Cold War – Berlin’s status as the country’s capital was contested, however, and other cities were put forward as alternatives. Germany was on its way to becoming an urban nation from the mid-nineteenth century on; but national imagery never focused on one single urban space.²⁴ It therefore comes as no surprise that German historians have taken the vicissitudes and contestations of capitals as a particular stimulus to explore the history of these cities. Works on the topic have long titles such as “*Hauptstadtfrage*,” “*Hauptstadtproblem*,” and “*Hauptstadtssuche*”: the theme of what constituted a capital and which city should serve as a capital was seen as a “question,” a “problem,” and a “search.”²⁵ In 1983, Theodor Schieder and Gerhard Brunn elevated research to a new height by introducing comparative questions in a collected volume, which

23 Wilhelm Berges, “Das Reich ohne Hauptstadt,” in *Das Hauptstadtproblem in der Geschichte: Festgabe zum 90. Geburtstag Friedrich Meineckes* (Tübingen, 1952), 1–29; Karl Otmar Freiherr von Aretin, “Das Reich ohne Hauptstadt? Die Multizentralität der Hauptstadtfunktionen im Reich bis 1806,” in Schieder and Brunn, eds., *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, 5–13; Rudolf Schieffer, “Regieren ohne Hauptstadt. Ambulanz von Herrschaftsformen in der frühen deutschen Geschichte,” in Bodo-Michael Baumunk and Gerhard Brunn, eds., *Hauptstadt: Zentren, Residenzen, Metropolen in der deutschen Geschichte* (Cologne, 1989), 25–38.

24 Wolfram Siemann, “Die deutsche Hauptstadtproblematik im 19. Jahrhundert,” in Hans-Michael Körner and Katharina Weigand, eds., *Hauptstadt: Historische Perspektiven eines deutschen Themas* (Munich, 1995), 249–60; Uwe Schultz, ed., *Die Hauptstädte der Deutschen: Von der Kaiserpfalz in Aachen zum Regierungssitz Berlin* (Munich, 1993); Klaus von Beyme, *Hauptstadtssuche: Hauptstadtfunktionen im Interessenkonflikt zwischen Bonn und Berlin* (Frankfurt/Main, 1991), 116–17; Friedrich Lenger, ed., *Towards an Urban Nation: Germany since 1780* (Oxford, 2002).

25 Dann, “Die Hauptstadtfrage in Deutschland”; *Das Hauptstadtproblem in der Geschichte*; Alfred Wendehorst, “Das Hauptstadtproblem in der deutschen Geschichte,” in Alfred Wendehorst and Jürgen Schneider, eds., *Hauptstädte: Entstehung, Struktur und Funktion* (Neustadt a.d. Aisch, 1979), 83–90.

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recent works by Brunn, Jürgen Reulecke, Peter Alter, and others have built upon.²⁶

III

The existing literature on capitals is marked in general by a pronounced Eurocentrism. Scholars of Latin America, Africa, Australia, and Asia have hardly embarked on the history of capitals. The attempt to define “world capitals” as a distinct category has remained an episode. A global and transnational view on capitals is therefore much needed.²⁷ Here, however, two closely related challenges arise. The first is the trend in current politics to shift political authority from the nation–state to a supranational level. This process is most prominent in the case of the European Union. It entails both a weakening of traditional centers and a new centralization of power in supranational institutions such as the European Central Bank.²⁸ Second, the development of supranational institutions and processes of globalization seem to be undermining nation–states as economic and political actors.²⁹ Political, symbolic, and spatial order is now defined not by nation–states but rather by public– and private–sector global players such as quasi–governmental organizations (e.g., the International Monetary Fund), multinational corporations, and media. Consequently, capitals as representations of nation–states appear as remnants of a past epoch even if their local reality is heavily influenced by globalization processes.³⁰

Many observers believe the classic functions of capital cities are no longer relevant in a globalizing age that relies on transnational communication

26 Gerhard Brunn, “Die Deutschen und ihre Hauptstadt,” in Baumunk and Brunn, eds., *Hauptstadt*, 19–24; Brunn, “Europäische Hauptstädte im Vergleich,” in Werner Süß, ed., *Hauptstadt Berlin*, Vol. 1: *Nationale Hauptstadt – Europäische Metropole* (Berlin, 1994), 193–217. Brunn and Reulecke also directed a research program on “Berlin in Comparison with European Capitals”; see Gerhard Brunn and Jürgen Reulecke, eds., *Berlin . . . Blicke auf die deutsche Metropole* (Essen, 1989); Gerhard Brunn and Jürgen Reulecke, eds., *Metropolis Berlin: Berlin als deutsche Hauptstadt im Vergleich europäischer Hauptstädte 1871–1939* (Bonn, 1992); Alter, ed., *Im Banne der Metropolen*; Baumunk and Brunn, eds., *Hauptstadt*; Körner and Weigand, eds., *Hauptstadt*; Andreas Sohn and Hermann Weber, eds., *Hauptstädte und Global Cities an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert* (Bochum, 2000).

27 H. Wentworth Eldredge, ed., *World Capitals: Toward Guided Urbanization* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975).

28 See Peter Hall, “The Changing Role of Capital Cities: Six Types of Capital City,” in Taylor, Lengellé, and Andrew, eds., *Capital Cities*, 69–84, and Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, and Thomas Risse, eds., *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001).

29 John Friedman and Wolff Goetz, “World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and Action,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 6 (1982): 25–37; John Friedmann, “The World City Hypothesis,” *Development and Change* 17, 1 (1986), 69–84.

30 John Friedmann, “Where We Stand: A Decade of World City Research,” in Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor, eds., *World Cities in a World-System* (Cambridge, 1995), 25; John Eade, ed., *Living the Global City: Globalization as a Local Process* (London, 1997); Saskia Sassen, ed., *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (New York, 2002).