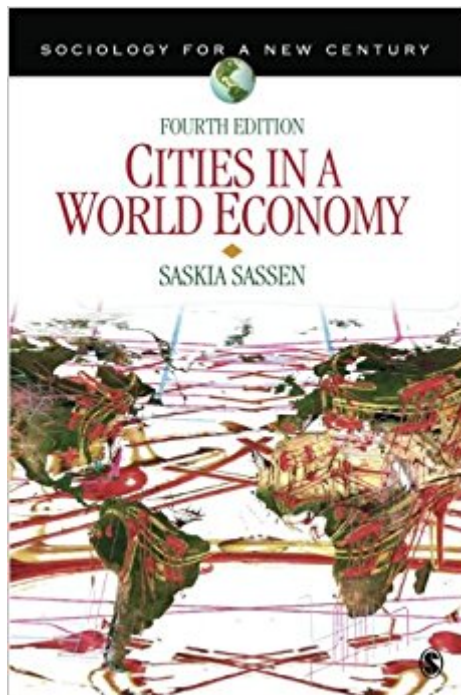




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Cities In A World Economy (Sociology For A New Century Series) (Volume 4)



Synopsis

The Fourth Edition of *Cities in a World Economy* shows how certain characteristics of flows of money, information, and people have led to the emergence of a new social formation: global cities, new types of migrations, financial crises, environmental catastrophes, and the multiplication of communication technologies. These developments give new meaning to such fixtures of urban sociology as the centrality of place and the importance of geography in our social world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

No other book locates cities (as distinct but changing settlement forms and institutional arrangements) in the world economy so clearly and concisely. --Renia Ehrenfeucht (05/04/2011)"I enjoy teaching with this book. It is much more challenging than a traditional textbook, and students learn about globalization, post-industrialization, stratification, gender and race inequality, and of course the importance of urbanization and the rise of global cities. --Stephanie Moller (05/04/2011)""No other book locates cities (as distinct but changing settlement forms and institutional arrangements) in the world economy so clearly and concisely."--Renia Ehrenfeucht (05/04/2011)"I enjoy teaching with this book. It is much more challenging than a traditional textbook, and students learn about globalization, post-industrialization, stratification, gender and race inequality, and of course the importance of urbanization and the rise of global cities."--Stephanie Moller (05/04/2011)-No other book locates cities (as distinct but changing settlement forms and institutional arrangements) in the world economy so clearly and concisely.---Renia Ehrenfeucht

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Sassen has extensively updated the book to include both new 'nodes' in her world cities project, such as Istanbul, and to cover some of the effects of the global financial crisis. She summarizes the work of her career in more of a 'textbook' format than her academic writing. Unfortunately, while her journal articles are clearly written, *Cities in a World Economy* ends up feeling very repetitive, as she continually makes the same points again and again as she tries to 'dumb down' her work. The end result is that she makes a lot of very similar sounding statements about her work and the theory behind it. She may have come to the conclusions from a lot of hard work, but it ends up coming out the same. This book is good if you only are using it as a reference (she cites a rich variety of research), or assigning a chapter or two to get a 'sense' of the global cities idea to a class, but it isn't a good book to read in its entirety. It's less specific than her actual research, and the writing is much less clear.

Satisfied

informative book, but is difficult to understand right away.

I read this book for a class, and despite the relatively dense subject matter, I found it to be a fairly enjoyable and highly informative read.

LOVE IT!

Item arrived on time and as described.

I'm a sociology major and I felt like this book was geared too much towards an economics field for me.

Review of Sassen's Cities in a world economy by Paul F. Ross Saskia Sassen's book is about cities in the world economy, as the title says. Perhaps, more importantly, it is about globalized cities in the world economy. One must read Sassen to get a definition of "globalized cities." "Globalized cities" have been acted upon by a verb, globalization, and are not merely different in an adjectivally descriptive sense as in "global cities." They have evolved in the last thirty years and have new, perhaps the right word is "additional," functions to perform in the world's evolving national and international economies. As a consequence they draw together different kinds of people than do non-

_____ Sassen, Saskia Cities in a world economy 2012, Fourth Edition, Sage Publications Inc., Los Angeles CA, xxii + 399

pages_____

_____ globalized cities, require out-of-the-ordinary kinds of infrastructures, require different kinds of services, accumulate more and different kinds of wealth and culture. Sassen addresses her topic from her background in sociology and as professor at Columbia University, uses as her data sources her own wide reading on the topic, other people's research, accumulations like censuses that most of us do not take time to read and study, case studies of cities, interviews, and the like. Understanding the evolving nature of cities, particularly globalized cities, is her objective. Is Sassen reporting scientific findings? Having spent a career of over five decades in behavioral science, this reader has developed a sense of what science fundamentals are in the behavioral sciences and in any science. (1) Science works with data, observables. (2) Science uncovers and then describes knowledge, essentially immutable knowledge, knowledge that holds true anywhere in the universe ... at least as far as we can observe the universe ... knowledge that relates this set of data to that set of data. Science is the found-framework that describes how these data relate to those data. (3) Science is verifiable knowledge. I as scientist can gain new knowledge, but it does not become science until another scientist repeats the procedures I used, starting with a new sample of data, and confirms having seen the same relationships that I observed. Picking up Sassen's Cities in a world economy (2012), I found myself reading science as sociology has developed it. I was

shocked. For Sassen, a thought becomes a scientific truth. Stating what for her is a scientific truth, she writes: "These emergent intercity geographies function as an infrastructure for multiple forms of globalization. The critical nodes in these intercity geographies are not simply the cities but, more specifically, the particular, often highly specialized capabilities of each city. Further, a critical trend is that, ultimately, being a global firm or market means entering the specificities and particularities of national economies (p 113)." In Sassen's approach to doing science, a single story becomes all the data one needs to form and confirm a scientific truth. For example, confirming the scientific truth stated above, she writes: "... even such a routinized operation as McDonald's adjusts its products to the national cultures in which it operates, whether that is France, Japan, or South Africa (p 113)." Having stated the principle in science-acceptable style, having provided one example, now all one needs to confirm a statement as a scientific truth is the agreement of fellow scientists. Gulp! That method for defining what we today would call scientific knowledge was widely used among people in general in 1490 CE to prove that the Earth is flat and that Columbus' expedition risked sailing off the edge of the Earth ... even though a few individual observers had suspected and published, over 1,000 years earlier, their notion that the Earth is a sphere, that remarkable notion (for its day) based on the curved line observed on the face of the Moon (as the observer then imagined what could be) as the Earth's shadow passing across the face of the Moon during an eclipse of the Moon. Other observers, in those days, had noticed that the sun was directly overhead at noon - its light reached the bottom of a well - in southern Egypt while, in the same season, the same sun's light did not go to the bottom of a well in Alexandria, northern Egypt. Perhaps the Earth was a sphere. Those observers calculated a relatively accurate estimate of the circumference of the spherical Earth. Seeing scientific truths developed as Sassen develops them, I obviously had much mental accommodating to do if I were to continue to read Sassen productively. First steps in understanding Sassen's view of globalized cities In reading Sassen, one first must capture the framework of ideas on which Sassen festoons her analyses and prognoses. Sassen does not present this framework of ideas in her first chapter or her first table. One has to lift the framework through one's own effort from the section headings, the introductory sentences, her tables and figures, and her habits in developing an idea as one progresses through the first 100 pages. Even the book's index does not lead one reliably to a definition. As concepts, one finds ... geography ... the whole Earth with its seas and continents and harbors and undersea cables foreign direct investment ... detected as money flows, to and from banks, when transferred by private individuals, businesses, or governments. Foreign direct investment is detectable and available to count as information only when the money crosses a national boarder, the direction of flow (inflow, outflow) being important. nations ... political

concepts and geographic territories that have borders. Nations are mapped on the surface of the Earth, presumably "own" in some sense (have custody over) the land and other resources within their borders, and regulate money and other transactions within their borders.transnational corporations ... corporations that have operations in multiple nations, experience revenues and expenses in many nations, move money from nation to nation within the private economy of the transnational corporation, decide where work of different kinds is to be done.globalized cities ... cities where banks are located that handle money flow with respect to foreign direct investments and also where headquarters of transnational corporations are located, these cities thus acquiring human resources with specialized skills of high market value because the services offered by these organizations require those specialized skills.strategic places ... consist of export processing zones, offshore banking centers, high-tech districts, globalized cities, harbors, massive industrial districts.trans-boundary issues ... immigration, asylum, international women's agendas, anti-globalization struggles, etc.population growth ... a variable worth watching, urban population growing faster overall and rural population growing slower overall during the 1970-2010 period being studied by Sassen.intercity connectedness ... can be measured in people movements, money movements, data movements, movements of goods by weight or by value, etc., the descriptions forming networks subject to being graphed or described arithmetically.new politics ... connections between globalized cities provide a setting for global politics of a kind for which there is no other current setting.services ... a part of the economy different from growing food, making automobiles, digging iron ore out of the Mesabi Range, transporting crude oil from Russia to China, harvesting lumber from a forest, sewing garments, tanning leather, making electricity, maintaining cell phone towers, these other activities being labeled agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, communication, etc. Services are of key importance to globalized cities.producer services ... services that agglomerate (accumulate to greater concentration) in globalized cities because particular economic activities are performed in those cities, especially international importing/exporting, the conduct of business-communication-travel across national borders, and the direction (guidance, management) of transnational corporations. These business activities require specialized capabilities - like management consulting, advertising, data systems development, legal guidance in many different countries, financial services, insurance services, real estate services - that governments and transnational corporations access on a contractual basis (often not staffing those services in all their varieties within the organization needing those services). Seen as a whole, the International Standard Industrial Classification dictionary used by the OECD calls these services "producer services." Sassen follows suit.edge cities ... urban clusters that grow not far from a much

larger city. Content Sassen treats some fascinating ideas. The notion that a globalized city is different from an ordinary city is rather like a scene from Scheherazade's stories, commandeering attention. The key elements of globalized cities are financial services that reach across national borders and the local presence of headquarters for transnational corporations. These business functions operate using the best and latest in computing, telecommunications, and transport. These businesses in turn require specialized, high priced talent, especially talent that can communicate in multiple languages, understand multiple cultures, and maneuver in multiple legal environments. People are needed with knowledge in the producer services and their help is often purchased under contract, not included in the regular staffing of the financial firm or the transnational corporation. People with these rare skills along with leaders of the financial and transnational corporations want beautiful places to live, intriguing restaurants in which to dine, centers for the arts that win attention, education at the leading edge. The high-talent individuals also need services from economic sectors that pay ordinary wages, even low wages - shop keepers, domestic help, child care, local transport, home maintenance. Sassen's chapters draw data from censuses, consultant's studies, studies by international organizations like the OECD and IMF, ... the stuff that most of us do not routinely pick up and read, not to mention study and array in orderly comparisons through time. The academic put down Occasionally my life dips briefly into conversational circles where the practice is to use big words in order to impress one's fellow conversationalists and exclude the dunces who happen to be present. Sassen strikes this reader as a master in this practice. An idea that can be expressed subtly using a four or five syllable word has much more value, in this practice, than an idea expressed plainly using one and two syllable words. While reading I noted words of this kind and present a sample of Sassen's words here :: structuralization, imaginaries, contestation, minoritized, antiglobalization, agglomeration, suburbanization, articulation, financializing, deterritorialization, devalorizing, valorization, internationalized, megaregional, megaslums. My Microsoft Word spell checker underlines half these words as misspellings ... a strong indication that they are uncommon. There is value in inventing new ideas and giving the idea a name. Einstein gave a whole new meaning of high value to the term "relativity." The practice of naming an idea can improve the efficiency of communication a great deal and even supply a whole new perspective on phenomena around us. But Sassen's practice seems to me to be less for communication efficiency or the presentation of a new idea of value than out of a very bad habit in which people with large vocabularies try to impress others with equally large vocabularies, pointedly excluding the hoi polloi. I hope her students do not pick up the bad habit. Eye on important issues, heart in the right place Sassen addresses multiple issues that need addressing :: gender politics, political stalemates,

increasing income disparity, international trafficking in people, the sex trade, the growth of slums in cities, immigration, the risks to everyone following from new and esoteric financial practices as in the 2007-2009 stimulus for a world economic depression. She brings forward for our examination some startling data ... data we don't see in the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, The Economist, The Atlantic, the Harvard Business Review, the American Scholar, or the New Yorker. We very much need to understand and address these issues. Her heart is always on the right side so far as this reader is concerned ... attention to the victims of harsh treatments, not simply to the enhancement of luxuries that the well-off have always acquired and continue to acquire for themselves. The important omission If there are globalized cities (Sassen convinces me that there are), if they and the transnational corporations reach beyond, over, and around national boundaries and practices (they do; they must), if their presence and roles lead to new political ebbs and flows (surely they do), then the tasks of city planning, of state-regional-national economic development, of architecture, of transport planning and development, of the shaping of governmental functions all must change ... must look further into the future. When decision-making and economics reach across national boundaries, what regulatory body is going to supervise? Is regulation needed? Sassen and her sociological, economic, and political-science colleagues confine themselves to describing the phenomenon. "Look, a new way in which things hang together is emerging!" That's very interesting, but seeing the new patterns is not enough. We need to cope with the changes. We need to know where and how they lead us into new troubles (income disparity, megaslums, worldwide economic depressions, politics beyond the practices already in place for handling political issues) and think about how we're going to handle the issues. Scientific theory and description are not enough. We also need applied science to help chart our way into the future, to guide our choices. Sassen gives this need no thought at all. Cities in a world economy is an interesting read. Enjoy it. Endure its shortcomings. Do a little desk pounding to get the attention of these scientists to issues that need vast improvements in methodology, in communication, and in application. While pounding their desks, don't forget to thank them for progress to date. Bellevue, Washington 23 February 2015 Copyright © 2015 by Paul F. Ross. All rights reserved. References Sassen, Saskia Cities in a world economy 2012, Fourth Edition, Sage Publications Inc., Los Angeles CA

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