



RHS Symposium
14-15 May, 2020

World Making and the City

The growth of global history is having a significant impact on how we write histories of the city. This can be seen on the one hand in recent attempts by global historians to anchor the global in the social space of the local, in which the city often comes to the fore. It can also be seen in recent attempts by urban historians to bring parts of cities or entire cities into dialogue with global processes and projects (see the upcoming Global Urban History Project/Centre for Urban History conference '*The Pursuit of Global Urban History*'). Both strands of enquiry position the local as a social space, and yet, the importance of the city scale in analyses persists. How can we account for this? In what ways can the urban landscape function not as a pre-defined container but as a helpful canvas for rendering global connections, networks, processes, and/or projects visible? In what ways has it contributed to new descriptions of the world, classifications of its workings, and/or plans to reshape it?¹

Foundational to any such reflections is the notion of the city as a site of contact. For instance, demographic diversity in cities has been instrumental to the development of ideas about cosmopolitan worlds or multiculturalism. Closely tied to this is linguistic and sectarian alterities. For Muslim travellers in the late nineteenth century, for example, cities provided the grist out of which ideas about the 'Muslim world' were made. Similar stories can be told for other religious communities. In areas of governance and law, the city has been instrumental to world-making projects. Likewise, a number of cities have come to the fore in making worlds of political solidarities. For example, non-Europeans met and forged the anti-imperialist notion of a united 'Third World' in interwar Paris and London. And after the Second World War, members of exiled liberation movements mixed and forged new ideas about non-alignment in the Global South in cities such as Cairo, Algeria, and Dar es Salaam.

The creation of these global 'worlds' is, of course, extremely complex. Despite their claims to universality, they are riddled with divisive politics. This is something the city scale appears to illuminate. For instance, power relations located in the city have helped to stabilize some collective worlds over others. This is particularly noticeable in places of socialising and socialisation. In addition, some classifications of the world have become embedded in institutions, offering reproduction for future generations to the benefit of some people over others.

¹ For an extended discussion on world making see Duncan Bell, 'Making and Taking Worlds', in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. by Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 254-80.

This conference looks to push forward such lines of research by focusing on how the city facilitated new ways of thinking about global processes and ultimately, world-making activities. It asks: Why did new visions of world order emerge in particular cities? How? What role did individuals, associations, and states play in facilitating or shutting down urban spaces with globalist inflections? Why do we see some such projects succeed and others fail? And how do the pluralised origins of such activities brings into question potentially teleological narratives?

Papers should be 25min in length and must be based on original material. We expect to be able to cover all costs for participants, pending the successful outcome of grant applications.

Possible running plan:

Our symposium will focus on six themes. Each theme will form the basis of a two-person panel, bringing together early-career and senior researchers from around the world, and faculty from the University of Warwick. Papers will be 20-30 minutes in length, followed by a combined 30-minute discussion (1.5 hours total per panel).

The following plan indicates possible panel participants. I would like to primarily construct the running plan through direct invitations but an open call for papers could further widen the representation of all career stages, genders, and ethnicities represented at the symposium.

Evening Before Conference

Keynote: Prof. Michael Goebel (The Graduate Institute, Geneva): on methods of urban/global

Comment: Prof. Anne Gerritsen (The University of Warwick)

DAY 1

Making Markets and Global Trade

- Dr Camillia Cowling (University of Warwick): Brazilian Cities and the Slave Trade
- Dr Alexia Yates (University of Manchester): Nineteenth-century Paris and Capitalism
- Dr Sarah Miller-Davenport (University of Sheffield): New York and Neoliberalism

Cosmopolitan Worlds

- Dr Su Lin Lewis (University of Bristol): Cosmopolitanism
- Prof. Rita Chin (University of Michigan): Cold-War Berlin and Multiculturalism

Confessional Ecumenes

- Prof. Nile Green (UCLA): Indian-Ocean Cities and the Muslim World
- Dr David Stenner (Christopher Newport University): North African Cities and Jewish worlds in WWII

International Legal Landscapes

- Anna Ross (University of Warwick): The City and International Investment Law in the Twentieth Century
- XXXX

DINNER

DAY 2

Political Solidarity

- Dr Thomas Jones (University of Buckingham): British Cities and Asylum
- Dr George Roberts (University of Cambridge): Global Cold War Cities/African Liberation

Environments and Extinction

- Dr Sadiah Quresh (University of Birmingham): The City, Endangered Races, and Extinction
- Dr Pierre Purseigle (University of Warwick): Reconstruction after urban disasters
- Dr Perrin Selcer (University of Michigan): World Environment

12:00-12:30 Wrap up

12:30-1:30 Lunch and leave