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The Enduring Importance of National Capital Cities in the Global Era

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Abstract:

This paper reports on the early results of a longer comparative project on capital cities. Specifically, it examines the changing role of national capital cities in this apparent global era. Globalization theory suggests that threats to the monopoly power of nation-states and the rise of a transnational network of global economic cities are challenging the traditional centrality of national capital cities. Indeed, both the changing status of nation-states and the restructuring world economy will reshuffle the current hierarchy of world cities, shift the balance of public and private power in capitals, and alter the current dominance of capitals as the commercial and governmental gateway between domestic and international spheres. However, claims in globalization theory that a new transnational system of global cities will make national boundaries, national governments and national capitals superfluous, albeit theoretically provocative, are arguably both ahistorical and improvident. Though one does see the spatial division of political and economic labor in some modern countries, especially in federations (e.g., Washington-New York; Ottawa-Toronto; Canberra-Sydney; Brasilia-Sao Paolo), the more common pattern is still the co-location of government and commerce (e.g., London, Paris, Tokyo, Seoul, Cairo). The emergence of global cities is intricately tied to the rise of nation-states -- and thus to the capital cities that govern them. Greater attention to the political economy of capital cities illuminates the continued interdependence between national government activity and global economics in the urbanization process. As such, "the local and the global" is a true but only partial depiction of the tensions in a capital city. Capitals also juxtapose local and national interests, as well as national versus international interests.

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The Study of National Capital Cities

Capital cities are an easily defined but poorly understood class of cities. Often marginalized in urban research as merely administrative centers, capitals are also symbolic theaters for national ideology, a reflection of the larger national stance towards urbanism, a catalyst of national economic development, and at least historically a bridge between local culture and the "imagined community" of the nation-state. There is no theoretically precise academic literature that concisely explains the role of capital cities in the modern era. The various themes found in capitals have been fragmented and absorbed by other disciplines. The resulting literature on capital cities consists of a diverse collection of writings by architects, historians, political scientists, urban planners and sociologists — each addressing different aspects of capital cities, without creating a single, explicit theory of capital city development. Though there is a wealth of writings on the description, history and architecture of individual capital cities, a bibliographic search for theoretical writings explicitly on capital cities leads to a surprisingly short set of readings (Clark and Lepetit 1996; Cornish 1971; Eldredge 1975; Gottmann 1977; Gottmann 1983; Gottmann 1985; Taylor, Lengellé, and Andrew 1993; Vale 1992). As Rapoport notes, "...little has been written about capitals as a type, as opposed to specific capitals..." (Rapoport 1993, 31).

In previous research on the urban economic development of Berlin, the need to place the German *Hauptstadt* in a larger theoretical context directly confronted me with this lack of capital city theory (Campbell 2000). The experience of Berlin is so exceptional that a literal generalization to other capitals would be unwise. However, exceptional cases are catalysts for rethinking theory (Campbell 1998; George 1979; Yin 1994). Berlin's bizarre history offered the unusual opportunity to observe the loss and recent recovery of the national government seat. The city's rapid, 20th Century transformation as the capital of an imperial, then a republican, then a fascist, and finally to a decentralized democratic government, demonstrated the challenge for capital cities to adapt to (or resist) broader historical revolutions. The capital city debate in 1991 between Berlin and Bonn — as well as subsequent controversies over renovation of historic buildings and architectural plans for new government buildings — revealed a broader debate over national identity (Campbell 1999). Political battles in the city highlighted the alternately collaborative and conflicting relationship between the local residents and the national power-brokers of the capital. Finally, the current economic policy of restoring Berlin to its prewar status as a world economic city is conflicting with the new competitive realities of global economic networks.

From this Berlin research I identified ten broad questions that can form the future foundation of a more general capital city research agenda. (This paper addresses a subset of these larger issues.)

1. What are capital cities and how do they differ as a group from non-capitals?

2. How do individual capital cities differ from one another (e.g., based on city size, year of origin, function, national government structure)?
3. How has the role of capital cities changed over time in response to the historical transformation of the nation-state?
4. Is there a unique local economy of capital cities?
5. What are the origins and implications of the local political structure of capital cities (e.g., a separate capital district vs. integrated into the national political geography)?
6. What are the tensions between neighborhood, municipal, national and global interests in a capital city?
7. How does the nation-state express its identity through the capital city (in particular through its architecture)?
8. What is the impact of the location of capital cities and of political efforts to relocate capital cities (such as in Brazil, Australia, Germany, Malaysia and Japan)?
9. What is the relationship between capital cities and global cities?
10. What are the broader implications (generalizations) of capital city research?

The Uniqueness of Capital Cities: How are capital cities different from non-capitals?

"The capital is by definition a seat of power and a place of decision-making processes that affect the lives and the future of the nation ruled, and that may influence trends and events beyond its borders. Capitals differ from other cities: the capital function secures strong and lasting centrality; it calls for a special *hosting environment* to provide what is required for the safe and efficient performance of the functions of government and decision-making characteristics of the place." (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 63)

By simple definition, national capital cities are the seat of the national government within the country. This role can vary widely across different capital cities, but in general capitals are unique from other cities because they provide a special site for the concentration, administration and representation of political power. Which of these three roles is preeminent for the capital depends on the observer. For the political scientist, the capital is the seat of power and administration. For the economist, it is the location of a disproportionate share of public sector employment. (For the macro-economist, it is often where trade, industrial and monetary policy is made.) For the architect, it is the

lucrative site of representative buildings, monuments and parks.¹

If the consequence of being a capital was limited to housing a disproportionately large concentration of government employees, then one would be tempted to see a capital city as simply a typical city with a lot of public sector administrative buildings. A capital would therefore be no more different from a manufacturing city as the latter is different from a commercial city, and so on. However, this specific function of capital cities not only leads to a distinctive labor market, but also to dramatically different municipal structures, land use patterns, local economic base, architectures, tourism, local cultures and political identities.

One sees these complex differences, for example, in the very different material and cultural experience of New York City and Washington. These differences extend far beyond the obvious functional contrast between Wall Street and Capitol Hill to shape different municipal politics, high and low cultures, and the residential neighborhoods (compare Greenwich Village to Georgetown). Capitals are thus both directly and indirectly different from other cities.

One manifestation is that the capital city is usually larger, more subsidized, or more bombastic than the rest of the nation's cities. National governments treat capital cities differently, wanting the capital to look and act differently than other cities in the nation. Under the old German Reich, residential hallways were to be at least 1.1 meter wide in the capital city, but need only be one meter wide in the rest of the nation. One sees this distinction in the rebuilding of Rome as the new capital of a unified Italy during the rapid industrialization-urbanization period of the 1870s, in which heavy industry was kept away from the city (Antoniou 1994, 24). The new capital, apparently, was not to be just another Italian industrial city. German urbanists therefore have traditionally distinguished between the sleepy, elegantly built city that held the royal residence (*die Residenzstadt*) and the more culturally dynamic, class-struggling industrial city (*die Industriestadt*). Were the differences between capital cities and industrial/commercial cities merely administrative, the study of capital cities would be far less interesting.

The unique role of a capital city is not absolute. Just as New York City is termed a "global city" even though not all of the city functions on a global scale, so too are the activities of "capital cities" clearly not limited to governmental functions. Despite their large public sectors, capital cities still must struggle within the national economy, and thus "there is every reason to first study the functioning of capital cities as cities, even if they are viewed as cities *sui generis*, because their future

¹Other observers of capital cities repeat this triad of identities for capital cities. Gilles Paquet defines three roles: socio-political forum, an economic production and distribution center for public goods and services, and a pattern of symbolic resources (Paquet 1993). Similarly, Klaus von Beyme distinguishes between the political, economic and cultural functions of a capital, noting that the cultural function is often more important than the economic (Beyme 1991, 15). Milroy stresses the importance of distinguishing "the constitutional, political, administrative and judicial senses of the expression 'capital' in order to keep from lurching about on constantly moving ground" (Milroy 1993).

also depends on their functioning regularly ..." (Drewe 1993, 344). Capital cities are both ordinary and unique, "doubly bound to be good physical environments where real people live out ordinary lives, as well as symbolically rich cities that capture the qualities a state wishes to portray to the larger world" (Milroy 1993, 86).

Several factors determine the relative importance of the political versus the administrative roles of the capital city: the size of government employment vs. private sector employment, the amount of city land devoted to government buildings, the form of the national government, its level of centralization, the economic-regulatory links between the public and private sectors, and the years that the city has hosted the national government.² Differences in these factors lead to very different public-private roles of capital cities (discuss in the following section). For example, the national government's share of total employment and income dominates the younger, federal capital cities of Washington and Bonn far more than in Paris and London — even if on the world stage Paris and London are no less viewed as capital cities than Washington or Bonn.³

The significance of the capital city thus extends far beyond the large presence of government employees. Nations — especially federal states — often have large centers of national government employees outside the capital city. The United States has located federal courts, military offices and bases, mints, and many agency offices in various cities throughout the nation. This is increasingly the case in Germany as well. This decentralized pattern creates local dependencies in these towns on national government employment and contracts, especially in the defense sector (Markusen et al. 1991). When the local share of national government-dependent employment is high enough, one might call these centers, such as Los Angeles and Colorado Springs, "government cities." Yet a government city is to a capital city what a branch plant is to a corporate headquarters: the result of the spatial division of labor, with the primary decision-making in a single, central location, and the implementation/production in many locations.⁴ The capital city, despite the globalization and decentralization of economic activity, remains the center of national government affairs.

Overall, a capital city is a specific form of an "information city": not just in its late 20th Century incarnation as a high-tech, financial and media center (Castells 1990), but also in its older role as a center of governmental and military information processing, of political decision-making, of power-

²One can quantify this relativity by comparing national government employment as a percent of total local employment between different capital cities. Location quotients also reflect the level of specialization in government activities.

³One could theoretically imagine that hosting the capital might not be nearly as defining a role for a city if the national government was small and benign. For example, if only several hundred people worked in the national government, and their work was fairly straightforward and not influenced by location, then the city that housed these several hundred people would not be primarily characterized by its government function. That this role of hosting the government is rarely benign demonstrates the dramatic consequences of being a capital.

⁴One can also see parallels with a national trading network: just as a national commercial center both controls and relies upon profits from buying and selling in the national hinterland, a capital city both controls and relies upon government revenues collected in the national hinterland.

brokering, of census and tax gathering. "A capital is a transactional crossroads catering to the problems and needs of vast areas from where transients come to the capital, in more or less regular and recurrent fashion, to transact diversified business or gather information" (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 81). The capital has become the huge processing center of the modern bureaucratic state — with high-profile, front-office leaders and low-paid back-office government clerical workers — analogous to the insurance, financial and legal processing found in the private sector of contemporary "information cities." As the boundaries between the public and private sector increasing blur, the data of this public information city extends far beyond the traditional documents of diplomatic treaties, military strategy and tax records to be remarkably similar to private-sector information used by the insurance, financial and legal businesses (such as the processing of medical, unemployment and retirement payments, loans, interest rates and repayment schedules).

Theme and Variation: the Range of Capital Cities

There is a tremendous range of capital city types. At one end of the spectrum are the classic capital cities of London and Paris: long-standing centers of powerful national governments, former centers of colonial power, with strong representative architecture, and dominating the urban hierarchies of their respective nations. At the other end is a more heterogeneous set of capitals, both dominant cities of weaker nations (such as Montevideo or Jakarta), or modest, administrative-oriented capitals of powerful nations (e.g., Ottawa, Canberra). Then there are the hybrid capitals with contradictory characteristics — capital cities that are peculiar to their nation's specific history and development, such as Berlin and Washington.

A broad survey of capital cities reveals numerous defining characteristics, of which I have counted at least fifteen. Size can be a useful characteristic: *the demographic size of the capital* (modest Bern versus massive Mexico City); *the demographic size of the nation* (Beijing versus Dublin); and *the geographic size of the nation* (Ottawa versus Singapore).

Then there are political characteristics: *the form of national government* (e.g., democratic Stockholm versus imperial Riyadh versus communist Pyongyang); and *the size of the national government* (e.g., Paris in highly centralized France versus Bern in decentralized Switzerland).

History plays a role: *the era in which the city was created as the capital* (e.g., the historical imperial capital of London versus the modern-day capital of Brasilia); relatedly, *original capitals* (e.g., London, Paris) versus *relocated capitals* (e.g., Bonn, Canberra, Brasilia, New Delhi, Ankara) versus *former capitals* (Constantinople, Petersburg, Calcutta, Philadelphia, Rio de Janeiro, and now Bonn).

Capitals can be distinguished by economic features: *the wealth of the nation* (e.g., rich London, Tokyo and Washington versus poor Mogadishu, Maputo and Dhaka); *the capital as dominant*

economic city in the nation (e.g., Montevideo, Paris, London, Copenhagen, Mexico City and Bangkok) versus *the capital as secondary city* (Ottawa, Bonn, Canberra, Ankara, Bern, Pretoria, Brasilia); and *the economic base of the capital city* (global finance and information in London and Tokyo) versus *government employment* (in Ottawa and Canberra).

Geography also is a defining feature: *split capitals* (Amsterdam and The Hague in Holland; Pretoria and Cape Town in South Africa; La Paz and Sucre in Bolivia) versus *single capitals*; capitals located in *the geographic center of the nation* (e.g., Rome, Madrid) versus on the *geographic periphery* (e.g., Berlin, Moscow, Beijing, Washington); and more importantly, *capitals located near central population centers and transportation corridors* (e.g., London, Washington and Tokyo) vs. *those that are not* (e.g., Brasilia, Canberra);

Finally, there is culture: *capitals of multilingual countries* (e.g., Ottawa, Bern, New Delhi and Moscow in the former USSR) versus *monolingual countries* (e.g., Paris); and relatedly, capitals as historical religious centers (e.g., Rome, Jerusalem) vs. secular cities (e.g., Washington, Ottawa, Bonn). One could go on.

With so many variables, one runs the risk of developing as many factors as cases — a predicament undermining useful statistical analysis because each case becomes unique.⁵ Sutcliffe warns that "[t]his search ... will be largely fruitless, for capitals vary just as much as other towns and cities" (Sutcliffe 1993, 195). The term "capital city" may itself suggest a precisely defined and standardized function, though one doesn't expect the same for the word government or state. The task of classifying all capitals might be as problematic as categorizing the nations that they govern.

Despite these variations, three crucial factors differentiate the development of capitals: the size and structure of the national government; the local and national economies; and the timing of the capital city's establishment relative to the political formation and economic development of the nation-state. In particular, cities that were capitals at the beginning of the nation-state's consolidation and urban-industrialization both built and rode this wave of national economic development. By contrast, cities that became capitals at later stages of the nation's political and economic development ("late capitals") — due either to late nation-state formation or a capital relocation — faced the challenge of establishing their political-economic role amidst a pre-existing network of established economic cities.

⁵Peter Hall defined seven types of capital cities: (1) multi-function capitals (London, Paris, Madrid, Stockholm); (2) a subset of the former called global capitals (London, Tokyo); (3) political capitals, without many commercial functions (The Hague, Bonn, Washington, Ottawa, Canberra, Brasilia); (4) former capitals (Berlin, Leningrad, Rio de Janeiro); (5) ex-imperial capitals (London, Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna); (6) provincial capitals that once had greater regional autonomy (Turin, Stuttgart, Munich, Montreal); and (7) super-capitals serving international government and organizations (Brussels, Strasbourg, Geneva, Rome, New York) (Hall 1993, 69-70). Jean Gottmann outlined three similar criteria for classification: measurements of the national entity administered from the capital; the networks of outside relations; and the extend of control of the capital over the nation (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 79)

The timing here is relative: at what stage of the nation's economic development (Rostow 1963) did the capital city emerge? An older, imperial capital of a centralized nation (e.g., Paris or London) is more likely to be the dominant economic city than the relocated capital of a federated country (e.g., Ottawa, Canberra, Bonn). Capitals of late forming nation-states (e.g., Germany and Italy) tend to be less dominant in their nation's urban hierarchy than capitals of older nation-states (e.g., France or England). Early timing is not a guarantee for a capital becoming the dominant economic city, however. The case of Washington, D.C., a capital since the earliest days of industrialization in the United States in 1800 yet never a powerful industrial or commercial center, illustrates that the national political-economic structure must also be sympathetic to a dominant capital city. Likewise, "late capitals" can still be powerful economic centers. Capitals of recent European colonies, continuing their pre-independence roles as entrepôts connecting hinterland to imperial markets, tend to be economically dominant, primate cities in their countries. This is also a common characteristic of South American capitals, such as Caracas (Violich 1975).

The classification of Berlin is unusually tricky, since it is hard to unambiguously define its "timing" as capital given the city's discontinuous history. Though an early royal seat of Brandenburg and Prussia, Berlin can also be seen as a "late capital" (in contrast to London or Paris) because it only became the capital of a unified nation-state in 1871 (Plessner 1974)— and thus faced the challenge of establishing its political-economic dominance in a Germany already well on its way toward a decentralized network of industrial and commercial cities. However, Berlin did emerge by the early 20th Century as the largest city and economic center of the nation, despite its late start and its geographical isolation in the northeast, only to have its capital city role obliterated in 1945. With the return of the capital in the year 1999, Berlin now becomes the youngest of "late capitals." One could even create a whole new category for Berlin: the "born-again" capital.

The economy of capital cities

"...the economic center did not necessarily also have to be the political center. Based on economics, Lyon had a better chance than Paris to develop into a future metropolis. Capital cities were economically often parasitic — above all Paris. All attempts to attract manufacturing had only marginal success. The economy served above all the consumption and support of the court and the courtiers. Only London, as the trading center of a growing empire, did not burden..." (Beyme 1991, 15).

Capital cities have a double existence: they are unique creatures of the national government with a guaranteed public-sector economic base, seemingly outside the normal economic network of a nation's cities. Yet at the same time they are local economies subject to the vicissitudes of economic restructuring, global competition and fiscal constraints like all other cities. Overall, capital cities have

seemingly contradictory economic development histories. Some capital cities have developed a powerful public-private economic dynamism from this dual identity, while others have suffered under the burdens of hosting the national government. This section addresses three aspects: the economic benefits of being the capital; the economic downside of being the capital; and the local economy's impact on the functioning of the national government.

How does being a national capital benefit the local economy?

The most obvious economic presence in a modern capital is the high concentration of national government employees, along with the generated indirect employment that follows. In many cases, the national government also directly contributes to the local municipal budget. Construction of government offices, monuments, museums, embassies, theaters and other facilities brings in additional economic activity. These facilities in turn attract outsiders for both business and tourism. Firms seek proximity and access to government offices and bring in more jobs, construction, and tax revenues. Other firms set up in the capital to serve government offices with legal, financial, communication, and administrative services. Lobbyists for corporations, trade unions, non-profits and other interest groups cluster in the capital. The communication and transportation infrastructure built to service government activity also attracts users from the private sector. The cumulative result is that the most successful capitals act as powerful growth poles. And this urbanizing force of capital cities is not new: one third of the total increase in urban population in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries took place in nine capital cities (Clark and Lepetit 1996, 1).

Given their political construction, capital cities have not had to rely nearly as much on "natural" locational advantages (access to raw materials, natural harbors, etc.) to achieve a comparative advantage in urban development. Athens is an example of a capital whose growth and wealth was not merely due to the city's geographic location or industrial base, but rather due to political will, being "artificially recreated in 1835 by a foreigner-king, eager to establish his prestige and authority on a historic site, Athens is a Brasilia that has succeeded." (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 78). Berlin's history also demonstrates how politically mandated, subsidized development can overcome a capital city's originally modest locational virtues.

The most powerful capital cities (e.g., London, Paris, or prewar Berlin) were locations where the public and the private sectors synergistically combined: the government attracted economic activity, which in turn strengthened the government sector, and so forth. Sometimes these political and economic forces are so effectively intertwined that their boundaries blur. "[C]apital cities tend to combine, especially in their physical forms, the power that accompanies administrative functions with the power linked to the bourgeoisie and capital. This duality makes it very difficult to distinguish local and national forces affecting urban form" (Sutcliffe 1993, 196).

The resulting two-dimensional synergy — between the public and private sectors, and between local and national forces — is typically the most successful in countries where the capital city and the nation grew up together. In these long-standing capitals, the government seat often emerged as the center of industrialization, trade and financial capital. Even if Manchester was an early national center of manufacturing in England, London would assertively combine its imperial and industrial strengths to emerge as the dominant economic city (Fishman 1987). These "early" capitals, continuously serving as the center of early nation-states, were generally able to both act as catalyst to the nation's industrialization and use this new-found wealth to reinforce their dominance among the nation's cities. Taylor argues that the 19th Century was an era where capital cities could use their political power to gain advantage over "purely industrial cities," creating a structure where "the importance of a world city was measured by the power of its state" (Taylor 1995, 55).

Capital cities can deviate from this Paris/London model in several ways: either by the late date of nation-state consolidation (e.g., in Germany and Italy), and/or the late relocation of the capital city. For example, Berlin, Rome and other "late capitals" of nation-states, established late in the 19th Century after the process of urban-industrialization was well under way, had to compete economically with other powerful national centers of industry, finance and trade (e.g., Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg; and Milan, Turin, Venice, Florence). However, there are capitals that were established long after Berlin and Rome. These are commonly the "modern relocated" capitals. Established in the 20th Century, Bonn, Canberra and Brasilia have had the least historical economic benefit from their government role. The result is three types of capital cities — "early," "late," and "even later" (20th Century relocations) — based on the timing of their establishment relative to nation-state formation and national industrialization.

Washington again is the curious exception: though the young American government moved there in 1800 during the earliest days of American industrialization, the city never economically competed with the eastern commercial and industrial centers in New York, Philadelphia and Boston or the newer industrial cities further west. This demonstrates that timing alone is not enough for a capital to also emerge as the nation's industrial and commercial center; one also requires a national political-economy that has adequately tight links (both institutional and spatial) between the national government and the leading private sectors, political will to mandate that the capital city's geographic isolation be overcome through massive infrastructural projects, and a pro-urban national political culture that strongly endorses a powerful, prominent capital city as the symbolic and material center of the nation.⁶

⁶During the 19th Century Washington, D.C. had to compete with the western frontier for the collective imagination of Americans as the dominant landscape of the "imagined community" of the young nation. Perhaps the small federal city on the Potomac swamp was no match for the wide expanses of Chicago, St. Louis and the wide expanses further west. How

The down-side of being a capital city

"...the future of capital cities ... depends at least as much on their functioning regularly as cities as on their being capitals" (Drewe 1993, 368).

Hosting the national government is therefore no guarantee of a successful, dynamic local economy. Though somewhat protected, a capital city is not wholly immune to the vagaries and dangers of the marketplace. In the eyes of the national government, its priority in the capital city is to run an effective administration, not to build the foundation of a healthy local economy. As such, the number of government jobs in a capital is driven essentially by government demand and fiscal constraints, not by the local labor supply. This local reliance on national government payroll and subsidies leads to a unequal relationship of dependence between capital and nation. If the local economy is not adequately diversified, a capital city can resemble a company town, where a single industry dominates the labor, capital and property markets, and in turn retards the healthy diversification of entrepreneurship, labor skills and capital availability in other sectors (Chinitz 1961). The national government does not have a direct incentive to promote the economic diversification of its host city. In extreme cases, the loss of the capital city due to relocation (e.g., Rio de Janeiro, the former West Berlin, Petersburg, and now Bonn) bluntly reveals the downside of this dependence on the government sector, just as a plant closure or plant relocation reveals the vulnerable economic foundations of a company town.⁷

In larger capitals such as Berlin, there is not the same danger of the monopolistic company town dependency as in smaller capitals such as Bonn or Brasilia. However, this in turn means that the government sector alone cannot be the engine of growth. Current prognoses of Berlin's economic future reflect this inability of being a capital city to necessarily overcome deeper structural problems in the local economy: despite the arrival of the capital in the year 1999, total employment in the city is forecast to *decline* by over 30,000 jobs between 1995 and 2010, including not only a loss of 60,000 manufacturing jobs, but also a loss over 30,000 government jobs due to downsizing and decentralization (Eickelpasch and Pfeiffer 1996). The contrast to the 19th Century is telling: after Berlin became the capital of a unified Germany in 1871, the city's population soared from 826,000 in

could 19th Century Washington compete with an economically booming Chicago in a nation that defined itself more based on commercial wealth, territorial expansion and resource exploitation than on older European notions of nation-building from a feudal-imperial seat? Chicago, not Washington, became the center of the massive new railroad networks, and a young American would go to Chicago, not the nation's capital, to build a fortune. For a vivid description of Chicago's 19th century economic dynamism, see William Cronon's account (Cronon 1991).

⁷Not all former capital cities suffer the same level of decline following relocation. Though Moscow's population, already 200,000 by the year 1700, shrunk to 140,000 after Peter the Great moved the capital to Petersburg in 1713, the city remained a dominant economic center through to 1917 when Lenin moved the capital back to Moscow. "It was a measure of Moscow's economic-geographic resiliency and cultural significance for 'Mother Russia' that the city survived the loss of her political-administrative powers, and still remained Russia's great city for the next two centuries" (Frolic 1975, 304).

1871 to over 2,000,000 by 1910. The powerful synergy of urbanization, industrialization, and nation-state building that led to Berlin's phenomenal growth a century ago simply is no longer present.

For some cities, being capital leads to a healthy, though modest economy in the shadow of larger economic cities in the nation (e.g., Ottawa, Bern, Bonn, Canberra). Yet in some cases being a capital city can actively undermine the economic development of a city. High investments in nondirect income-producing costly public works, such as large public spaces, parks, monuments and palace grounds, can drain local coffers (Eldredge 1975, 510-1). The symbolic capital city — often lacking a healthy industrial or commercial base — does not generate enough taxes to cover the substantial costs of operating the real city.

Capital cities often produce inert, non-competitive local economies that are dependent on national subsidies. A persistent complaint heard in West Berlin during the cold war was that the huge subsidies from Bonn created a "subsidy mentality" that undermined the development of a local economy that could successfully compete in the national and international economies on its own feet. In addition, these subsidies can often distort the structure of the local economy, inflating antiquated sectors while neglecting the emerging ones.

Another symptom of this inertia is the lack of a viable public-private growth coalitions in Washington D.C. and other capitals. Coalitions that in other cities strategically promote the interests of urban development, housing construction, job generation, local philanthropy and urban renewal. This lack of a powerful growth coalition is likely due to the subordination of the local private sector to the interests of the national government. What emerges is a reversal of a common unequal partnership in which the private sector benefits more than the public (Squires 1989): in the capital, national public interests gain more than local private interests. The result is a public-sector failure analogous to the traditional market failure. This sentiment is shared by Jane Jacobs, who sees the work of capitals as transactions of decline, and that behind the "busyness at ruling, a capital city of a nation or an empire, vivacious to the last, at length reveals itself as being surprisingly inert, backward and pitiable place" (Paquet 1993, 280).

This ability of the national government's presence to both promote and undermine the local economic development of a capital city leads to two conclusions: First, there is no uniform economic relationship between a national government and its capital city. Second, this relationship can alternate between cooperation and conflict, not only across capital cities, but also over time for the same capital city. One cannot simply conclude that the presence of the national government is good or bad for city's economy, for the government has simultaneously created and distorted the city's economy.

This echoes the some times cooperative/sometimes conflicting relationship between local and national power in the capital. The capital city's special administrative status within the nation can be both an advantage and a barrier to economic development. When the city benefits, it is because of the

symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship between the public and private sector. Public activity in turn attracts private enterprise, and each feeds off the other. When the city economy suffers, it is because the national government's activities crowd out private activities. The government takes the best real estate, crowding out room in the downtown for private development while removing the land from local property tax roles. The government takes the best-skilled people for government jobs, crowding out the private sector in the labor market. The basic question is, which is more powerful in a capital city, the synergy or crowding out? The answer is, to a great extent, dependent on the factors discussed above: the timing of the capital's establishment relative to the nation-state's formation and industrialization; the political structure of the national government; the institutional and spatial links between the public and private sectors; the pro- or anti-urban national political culture; and the national commitment to politically construct the capital as the undisputed center of the nation.

What kind of local economy makes for an effective capital city?

One might judge the success of a capital city based on its economic size and wealth. However, if the primary function of a capital city is to host the national government, then the primary criterion for a capital's success is how well it facilitates this role, and not how large the city itself becomes. For the nation as a whole, the economy of the capital city is therefore primarily important to the extent that it assists or hinders these national administrative functions (even if in the process the local residents of the capital suffer.) Perhaps in the earlier period of nation-state building the size of the imperial capital was a good proxy of the size of the nation as a whole, since the royal seat was typically the center of wealth, commerce, military power and education. This big capital-big nation link may also have applied to the early stages of industrialization in developing nations, where a high concentration of people, wealth, industry and capital in the primate capital city has been seen as an unfortunate but necessary stage of spatial-industrial development, which will eventually evolve into a more equal, decentralized national industrial geography as adequate transportation and communication networks spread throughout the country.

However, in most advanced industrial nations, there is no intrinsic link between the size of the capital city and the size of the national economy. True, there is still a curious pride involved in demonstrating national wealth and economic strength in capital cities, and this pride fueled some of the resistance to keeping the capital of a world economic powerhouse in unassuming Bonn. Yet the postwar economic success of France is no more tied to its maintenance of a dominant capital city in Paris than West Germany's success was tied to its selection of an intentionally modest capital city in Bonn. This is not to say that the relative size of the capital city is random or that the nature of the capital city has no influence on the functioning of the national government. It also does not reject the possibility that a nation still needs a large, powerful city (but not necessarily a capital) to compete in

the global markets: it is certainly not coincidental that the three leading global cities, London, New York and Tokyo, are located in three leading economic nations. It is to say, however, that nations with both dominant capital cities (France, United Kingdom, Japan) and modest capital cities (United States, Canada, Australia, West Germany) have been able to be economically successful in the postwar era.

On balance, capital cities are more complex, heterogeneous — and hopefully relevant — than their general reputation in urban literature suggests. Capital cities are politically constructed places, and yet are subject to many of the same economic and fiscal pressures of all other cities. They are simultaneously a municipality representing local interests, a capital representing national power, and a host of international embassies. They are home to both the symbolic "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) of national monuments and the bureaucratic apparatus of the national governmental offices. Capital cities also lie at the intersection of political and economic interests in the nation. Though all cities experience the interaction — both cooperative and conflicting — of government and private interests, nowhere do these interests intersect with such power as in a capital: the government-market interactions are more complicated in a capital, and the national government has greater influence over the local economy, labor markets, and land markets. This creates a distinctive political economy of capital cities.

The Transformation of the Nation-State and the Resulting Transformation of Capital Cities

"Capital cities are largely, if not entirely, the product of the era of nation states. it is the demise of great empires and the rise of the nation state which we would acknowledge as the driving force behind the proliferation of capital cities. It is worth reminding ourselves how very recent, in the longer historical term, this process is." (King 1993, 251)

"Capital cities are a product of recent times. Even the exemplary capital Paris, which can trace its relatively unchallenged role back to the *Merovingern*, only became a capital, in the sense of a concentration of all important functions, in the modern era. The differentiation of the political-administrative system in the early modern era, as the old *societas civilis* dissolved and morality, politics, economics and art became relatively autonomous subsystems of society, created for the first time the need for a fixed capital city. The medieval need for representation was still tied to persons and political positions. Where the rulers happened to be, the land also appeared to be represented." (Beyme 1991, 13-4)

If the modern nation-state is a relatively recent construction, so too is the capital city that administers the modern nation-state. The capital city is the spatial concentration of this modern national power in single, specific location. It reinforces the spatial division of labor between the

governing (in the city) and the *governed* (in the hinterland).⁸ The result is a hierarchy of power among cities, with the capital city at the top. This institutional division and concentration of political power is a prerequisite to the very idea of a modern capital city. And this division continues to evolve: just as the modern capital city is fundamentally different from the pre-modern city-state, I expect that capital cities in the 21st Century — including Berlin — will again transform and adapt to changes in national governments, economic networks, and military strength and vulnerability.

What are the implications of this parallel development of nation states and their capitals? As nations changed their size and boundaries, their structure and tasks of government, their internal communication and transportation networks, their control over their own citizenry, and their links to the outside world, the capital city has changed in response. For European capitals, this has meant constantly changing its local urban structure to reflect the transformations of national political power: from medieval to absolutism, industrial revolution, democracy, and late 20th Century modern. World-wide, however, the developmental histories of capital cities are as varied as the development of their nations. Some capitals were early royal seats, while others were the product of modern administrative decisions. Some were power centers of colonializing imperiums, while others began as port and/or administrative cities for their colonies. The former may have peaked in population, while the latter may be booming as a post-colonial megacity (such as Mexico City). The Asian capitals, in turn, present a qualitatively different story.

The Rise of the Modern Capital City

In a previous historical era, the great urban transformation occurred with the shift from city-states to nation-states. The decline in power of once-great trading city-states, such as Venice, Genoa and Antwerp, and the rise of modern national capitals, was the outcome of this shift in the source of municipal power. A city-state's status was based on its military strength and economic wealth relative to other city-states; it was a self-contained and fortified entity (Burke 1986; Taylor 1995). The emerging nation-state redefined this fortified space, and the city became only part of a more complex whole. The nation-state forced a sharp distinction between the city and the state. The strength of the new capital derived not just from the wealth and military strength inside the city's ramparts, but also from its land and resources in the national hinterlands outside the city fortifications. If a city-state's strategic task was to defend its own boundaries, the capital city had to administer the larger territories far beyond the city boundaries. The rise of the absolutist nation-state therefore transformed the military role of the capital city from a fortified military location to a broader demonstration of the

⁸A special case is the city-state, in which the capital is the nation. (Monaco and Singapore are modern-day analogs.) If the nation-state evolved from the city-state, then the role of the capital also emerged from this dualism, from the growing juxtaposition of the city (as seat of power) and the state (the governed hinterland).

political power and symbolic centrality of the capital (Beyme 1991, 25). In Berlin this was the transition from its brief membership in the Hanseatic League of trading cities to its role as the seat of the Mark Brandenburg, then Prussia, and finally the German Reich — each larger than the previous. The shift from city-state to nation-state also forced a shift in the loyalty of citizens: "the state rules and commands personal 'citizen' identity, the city has minimal political power and its 'citizens' having first loyalty to state not city" (Taylor 1995, 55).

With this territorial expansion came a growing political hierarchy of cities, with the capital city at its apex. This expansion also transformed the geopolitical power of a capital city from the concrete to the abstract: the city's wealth and military might were not simply a concrete source of power, but also a symbolic representation of the larger power of the nation. The size of buildings, monuments and streets not only demonstrated the specific size and wealth of the city, but also served as a proxy, suggesting the size and wealth of the nation as a whole. This allowed for the citizen and the visitor alike to grasp the size and wealth of the growing nation simply through a tour of the capital, its museums, libraries, barracks, parks and prisons. This representation was not always accurate: national leaders could often build false facades to cover the real workings of the national government (such as the image Hitler cast to the world at the 1936 summer Olympics in Berlin that didn't reveal the uglier side of Nazism). Or leaders may build preposterously large buildings, avenues and monuments in the capital city to exaggerate the sense of importance of the nation and hide poverty in the hinterlands (such as in communist Eastern Europe or in poor African countries such as Zaire). The capital-as-façade is analogous to a puffadder snake or a pufferfish, each swelling their bodies to ward off predators.

The path towards the modern capital city also led to an increasingly complex and differentiated city and state apparatus. While in the late Middle Ages there was a relatively simple state apparatus with the royal palace and its courts, by the 17th Century capital cities became the center of absolute royal authority (Sutcliffe 1993, 198), and even more complexity in the modern era.⁹ Eventually, four institutions emerged in the capital city to threaten the monopoly of power exercised by the royal leaders: the state bureaucracy, the capital city's municipal government, organized religion, and the emerging business elite.

The first was the bureaucracy. The rise of a semi-autonomous bureaucracy (later examined by Max Weber) transformed the capital city by creating a counterbalance to the absolute, centralized power residing in the palace. The emerging separation of the royal court from the government

⁹With this growing complexity of government, it became increasingly difficult to follow the earlier model of building an ideal capital city as a direct analogy to a perfect reflection of their power. "The high point of capital city creation was the era of Absolutism. The city utopias from Morus to Campanella were hardly effective any more. They were utopian not only because of the often socialistic vision, but also because they still wanted to organize the state still as a city, at a time when the high-point of the city-state was long past. Absolute territorial states had a need for planned cities" (Beyme 1991, 24).

administrators meant that the various elements of the nation-state — leadership, administration, wealth, military command, political legitimacy, symbolism — were no longer synonymous, but were increasingly separated and dispersed throughout the various buildings of the capital city. Buildings housing parliament, their staff, ministries, and other state bureaucratic agencies would now stand along side the palace as centers and symbols of national power. Whereas one once spoke of the palace grounds, with the rise of the modern capital city one now spoke of the "government district" as the definitive landscape of the 20th Century capital city.

A second element of the capital city's growing complexity was the increased differentiation between local and national interests. Municipal and national institutions competed for space at the city center and for control over political and economic affairs. While the nation-state constructed additional bureaucratic, parliamentary and symbolic buildings, the municipal government also expanded its role and physical presence in the capital city's built environment. In Berlin and other capitals, the palace and the city hall sat juxtaposed, representing the sometimes conflicting relationship between local and national power (discussed later in this chapter).

A third division in the capital city, one with a long history, emerged out of the competition between religion and the state. This relationship evolved into various forms, from coexistence and collaboration to competition, hostility and repression, and often expressed itself through spatial separation of the two power centers. As far back as ancient Athens, the Acropolis and the Agora stood juxtaposed as the spiritual center removed from the political, social and cultural center (Antoniou 1994, 12). The spatial arrangement of church and state in Rome is the wholly separate enclave of Vatican City, a country of only 109 acres, within the capital city to house the nation's dominant religion. In medieval London, Henry VIII altered the state-religion relationship by creating the Church of England and thereby granting more autonomy to the state. In Moscow, the Soviet Union appropriated the Kremlin, the citadel for the church, and redefined it as the seat of government. The case of Jerusalem is likely the most problematic juxtaposition of religion and politics, in which the city's disputed status as capital of Israel is largely due to its role as a sacred place for three religions. Though organized religion plays a distinctly marginal role in Berlin's contemporary power structure, in the past the state's approach toward religion has defined the extremes of tolerance and terror, from welcoming thousands of Huguenot refugees from France in 1685 to planning the genocide of European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s.

The fourth division was the growing separation of political and economic power. As capital cities developed more autonomous economic bases generated by massive urbanization, industrialization and commercial trading, the emerging capital and middle classes became an increasingly influential power base in capital cities. This was accompanied by the rise of personal and property rights (Sutcliffe 1993, 198). The result was that the national government no longer held a monopoly of

influence over the city's development. The new factories, banks and corporate headquarters rose up to compete with the architectural symbols of the nation-state. The capital city now not only represented the military and political power of the nation, but increasingly the economic development power of the nation (Beyme 1991, 25). (In some cases, this growing influence of commercial activities in the capital would eventually lead some national leaders, such as in 20th Century Brazil, to relocate the government to a new, less threatening location.) Government intervention was increasingly oriented towards directing the dynamism of private enterprise and development, creating a new relationship between the government and the private sector. In Berlin, the increasing importance and autonomy of the middle class outside the Prussian (and later German imperial) government transformed the capital city in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Berlin's emerging reputation as a *Weltstadt* (world city) by the 20th Century had as much to do with its newly dominant economic and cultural status as with its political function as capital city.

These various transformations led to a twentieth century capital city that was as different from its medieval counterpart as the modern nation-state was to its predecessors of kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities and empires. It is the shift from the culture of the royal court to the culture of the state bureaucracy. The movements towards democracy, decentralization, federalism, late capitalism and internationalism have left their mark on the seats of government. Whereas once the palace dome and the church spire dominated the capital city skyline, later came the tower of the town hall, the industrial smokestack, the waterfront warehouses, commercial skyscrapers and television towers. With the growth of the modern nation-state capital also came a new and enlarged built environment for the capital.

The Transformation of Capitals in the 20th Century

If the path to the modern, 20th Century capital city was one of tremendous expansion, differentiation and complexity, it also has led to the decline of the capital's traditional centrality and dominance. Though contemporary capital cities are still often symbolic, political and economic centers, much of the writing on capitals suggest a past heyday that corresponded to a perceived peak in the nation-state (Sutcliffe 1993, 199). One break point was certainly the aftermath of the First World War, which toppled three monarchies in Europe (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia), eliminating the identity of the capitals of Berlin, Vienna and Petersburg as absolutist royal seats. The crisis of doubt and stability in European nation-states after the war was reflected in their capitals, even as dictators perversely deployed neoclassical architectural symbols to reinforce militaristic nationalism. Postwar Vienna would never regain its Fin-de-siecle status as a vibrant modern metropolis (Schorske 1981). The Hapsburg capital on the Danube would further cede its historical status as the leading Germanic city to the German capital on the Spree. Yet Berlin's explosive

emergence as a definitive modern capital city would fall to calamity before achieving any stable maturity. Though post-World War One Berlin has been glorified for its cultural and industrial innovations, it too could not escape the crisis of the post-1918 period: its last 26 years as capital were of a fragile, tenuous democracy that fell in 1933 to the National Socialists (Friedrich 1972).

For many, Paris would remain the quintessential model of this peak capital city era. "In reference to capital cities, one can say Berlin is certainly not Germany, Rome is certainly not Italy, Washington is not the United States, but Paris, Paris, *is* France" (Gunther 1969, 46). In fact, the status of Paris as the most beautiful of European capitals led to Paris-envy in Germany, which led to the belief that if Berlin could not be as beautiful as the French capital, it could be at least larger: "Wasn't Paris beautiful? But Berlin must be made more beautiful. In the past I often considered whether we would not have to destroy Paris, but when we are finished in Berlin, Paris will only be a shadow, so why should we destroy it?" (1970, 172). Paris represented the coming together of all the elements of imperial, industrialized national capital city building: "Napoleon III and Haussmann rebuilt Paris exactly at the moment when Paris could readily be seen as the epitome of the modern capital. Railways made it more accessible, and the international exhibitions, beginning in 1855, showed that the French government wanted to take full advantage of its potential. From the 1860s, other capitals began to copy Paris, or at least covet its features. Paris would remain the exemplar until after the Second World War, when the physical example of New York, and the largely theoretical ideal of the Modern Movement, displaced Haussmann's Paris in favour of a capital city of towers and autoroutes." (Sutcliffe 1993, 207).

This suggests a certain incompatibility between modernism and the traditional capital city ideal. One could view Le Corbusier's urban renewal plan to replace the 19th Century Paris cityscape with modernist high-rise boxes not just as a rejection of the traditional for the modern (Fishman 1977; Hall 1988), but also as a rejection of the old form of the monumental capital for an emerging, secular model of capital city. If Corbusier's towers in the park were "machines for modern living," then his plan for Paris could be seen as machines for modern governing, where power was expressed through a belief in the centralized authority of technological and administrative rationality. In the end, Corbusier's vision for the French capital may have been no more accurate than Jules Verne's science fiction vision of 1960 Paris, written a century before (Verne 1996). The failure of Corbusier's ambitious plans suggests that if the classical capital city ideal was to be replaced, it would be by something other than the modernist grid and box.

Three Possible Threats to National Capitals at the end of the 20th Century

"The present era is characterized by a rapid evolution of technology, of economic and social circumstances, which is bound to cause substantial changes in capital cities in most cases." (Gottmann

and Harper 1990, 79)

Capital cities have evolved into very different cities than they were a century ago. Similarly, capitals in the 21st Century will continue to change in response to both the broader restructuring of the nation-state and the patterns of urbanization. Three future threats to the past dominance of national capital cities are plausible: the decline of the nation-state (as the provider of wealth and authority to national capitals), the ascendance of global cities as an alternative to capital cities, and the shift from a physical capital city to a virtual capital network.

The Decline of the Nation-State?

The old monopoly of power and authority of capital cities is threatened on two fronts. From below, federal systems of government decentralized power from the national capital to regional centers. This has also taken the form of population decentralization efforts in many nations after 1945 (Hall 1993, 79). From above, the rise of supranational institutions (the European Union, the United Nations, NATO, etc.) has added a level of political power above that of nation-states, and thus above capital cities. The current anti-government mood in some countries also threatens the dominance of capital cities: "Capital cities thrive on *dirigisme* [economic planning and control by the state]: when decision making by policy makers is replaced by that of scattered consumer choices, the sites of the former planners and allocators lose influence and become less relevant. ...'the new pluralism' may impinge on the place of capital cities in the lives of communities" (Meisel 1993, 4). In addition, capital cities have been affected by the more general decentralization of urban populations to suburban areas.

The fifty year history of Bonn as the capital of West Germany (1949 - 1999) illustrates how changes in the nation-state have altered the function of the national capital. One hundred years ago, Berlin's power base was built upon a centralized state, massive government-mandated transportation infrastructure (canal, rail, auto, air), a large military presence, massive immigration-fed urbanization, military victories against its European neighbors, and dominance in manufacturing (e.g., Siemens electronics), finance and culture. By contrast, Bonn has been a modest administrative center without a strong commercial or industrial center. Bonn governed over a remarkably decentralized, federated country with a pronounced dispersal of economic power and industrial specialization throughout many German cities (Frankfurt, Munich, Hamburg, Cologne, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, and so on). This was a spatial division of political, military, industrial and financial power in Germany that was unknown in the era of Prussia or the German Reich. Though Berlin's demographic size and cosmopolitan urbanism alone will make it a different kind of capital city than Bonn, the postwar model of Bonn as a "administrative capital" is as relevant for Berlin's role as capital as its own 19th Century model of the "imperial capital".

The Rise of Global Cities

Economic changes also threaten the traditional role of capital cities. International economic markets now make global cities a command-and-control center for a kind of financial capital empire building that both supplements and undermines the traditional role of capital cities in national empire building (Knox and Taylor 1995; Sassen 1991). The shift from manufacturing to services as the foundation of urban economies has also affected capital cities and their relationship to other cities in the nation. This economic restructuring has transformed the traditional distinction between industrial cities and capital cities (in German, between the *Industriestadt* and the *Residenzstadt*). If the castle was the symbolic center of the feudal system and the factory was the center of the industrial era, then the new centers of late modern cities are the banks, corporate headquarters and other urban towers. The contrast now is between the global city and the capital city. In some cases these functions are served by two distinct cities (such as New York and Washington), but elsewhere these functions have converged in one city (Tokyo, London, Paris).

For Berlin, both this globalization and deindustrialization are troubling: Frankfurt has surpassed Berlin as the international financial center of Germany, while Berlin continues to suffer from massive job loss in its antiquated manufacturing base. Furthermore, the decentralization and downsizing of German federal employment means that growth in public sector employment in Berlin after the year 1999 will not be able to make up for the loss of manufacturing jobs.

The future of capital cities is therefore a mixed picture. The advanced service orientation of post-industrial nations undermines capitals with strong manufacturing dependencies, yet it may actually benefit other capitals with strong private sector advanced services (such as London and Tokyo). The administrative functions and skills of a capital city overlap with the work of the advanced services in the private sector, making for potentially useful public-private synergies in capital cities — just as there were symbiotic relationships between private manufacturing and the military, infrastructure and consumer needs of the state in the 19th Century capital city.

But there is also a footlooseness to private-sector services that may also foreshadow the future geography of government administration as well. If, as some have argued, we are coming into a space of flows rather than a space of places (Castells 1996), and if the network is more important than the node, then the geography of political power could shift from a nodal center (the fortress, the palace, the Baroque capital city) to the network (the institutional and infrastructural connections between a decentralized administrative system).

The Shift to Virtual Capitals?

At the extreme, is a single point capital really necessary anymore? One could imagine a new

political geography beyond the very traditional notion of political power being physically concentrated in one urban center. Echoing the rise of the virtual office and the virtual corporation, a government could maintain its institutional centralization yet be spatially ubiquitous. The "virtual capital" would have an electronic parliament or congress, with direct representation from the localities. The scenario is a non-place capital city: a nation without a capital city, but rather with a spatially decentralized network of political administration and control. The logical conclusion would be direct democracy through the Internet, leading not to the Marxian notion of the state withering away, but rather to the withering away of the capital city. The World Wide Web would replace the World City. Indeed, one vision for Malaysia's new administrative capital in Putrajaya is the replacement of bureaucratic paperwork with the Internet and other forms of digital communication between government agencies (Landler 1999; Putrajaya Holdings 1999).

Ironically, this could signal a return to the Alexandrian model of the capital city, as opposed to the Platonic model that stressed the need for a single location. Alexander the Great, when asked where he wanted the capital of his empire to be, "is reported to have spread his hand on a map and used his fingers to point to a variety of directions..." indicating that he did not want a single location (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 29; Laponce 1993, 412). If the Platonic model defines the modern capital, then the Alexandrian could define the postmodern.

Not Fade Away: the Persistence of the Nation-State and their Capital Cities

These threats to the modern preeminence of capital cities have both provocative theoretical appeal, as well as some empirical support. Yet to argue that a new transnational system of global cities will replace national boundaries, national governments and national capitals is both theoretically ahistorical and not supported by current evidence. The emergence of global cities is intricately tied to the rise of nation-states -- and thus to the capital cities that govern them. It is true that global cities have strong, networked ties with other global cities around the world, that global cities have often loosened their economic and social dependence on their traditional regional hinterland, and that global cities show the emergence of a standardized advanced service culture and infrastructure (including a shared architecture, airport facilities, hotel chains and other business amenities). Yet it is surely no coincidence that the dominant global cities are located in the dominant trading nations of the world. The political economy of capital cities highlights the continued interdependence between national government activity and global economics in the urbanization process. The close links between capital cities and so-called "global cities" suggests that the national context of cities is still crucial, albeit changing. As long as nation-states wage war, control borders, regulate migration and trade, issue currency, and grant citizenship and its rights and responsibilities, they will not fully abdicate their powers to a network of global cities. Such a transference of power would require a

reversal of the shift in power from city-states to nation-states several centuries ago, and this return to a postmodern version of the Hanseatic League of free-trading cities is unrealistic.

The rise of supranational organizations and governing bodies is creating another layer of political cities outside of national capitals. This is an important and fascinating phenomenon, and should be followed closely in the coming years, especially if inter-national cooperation and agreements regarding trade, monetary policy, peace-keeping forces, and social policy continue to increase. However, it is unlikely that the seats of these organizations (e.g., Strasbourg, Brussels, Geneva) will supercede the power of national capitals. Instead, these cities will complement the network of national capitals and likely remain a secondary network on the world map.

Finally, how much validity is there in the idea of the "virtual capital" (to go along with the virtual corporation, virtual university, and virtual town hall)? The virtual capital will not likely replace Washington, London, Berlin or Tokyo anytime soon. History reminds us that enthusiastic postwar predictions of technologically-driven radical decentralization were eventually countered by forces of recentralization. Centrality is reconstituted, even if in a dramatically different spatial arrangement. The more likely scenario for the capital city of the twenty-first century is a hybrid of a single pole of centralized functions and decentralized administrative networks: that is, a hybrid governmental space of central place and flows. Patterns of this can already be seen in federal countries such as Germany and the United States, where district courts, regional offices, decentralized research centers and agencies conduct government work outside the capital city. Even with Malaysia's current efforts to create an online government administration in their new administrative capital in Putrajaya, these will be based in what amounts to a traditional capital city landscape, of baroque proportions and pretensions, that is wired to the Internet. It is the dualism of high tech and imperial representation. Their efforts contain the rhetoric of the space of information flows, but the massive, palatial architecture ultimately still reproduces the space of monumental places in a single, conspicuous site (Putrajaya Holdings 1999). National political power is complex, and capital cities are not just about technocratic administration, but also about the concentration, sustainability and ideological representation of power.

This hybrid space is even more pronounced in the private sector. Large firms no longer need to be completely housed under one roof in one community, but rather may have sites world-wide (Massey 1984). However, despite multiple locations with multiple plants and research and distribution centers, there is still usually a single headquarters. Similarly, the rise of technoburbs, edge cities, greenfield sites in remote locations, and international out-sourcing has not eliminated the need for centralization of administration and ready access to business services, often located in major metropolitan centers (including global cities).

By analogy, one can imagine continued decentralization of certain government functions (such as

the current effort to shift authority from the federal to the state level in the United States). Yet the capital city will still be the center of power and administration. Networking will not likely eliminate the need for a single, permanent meeting point (e.g., a parliament house) for elected representatives, just as the rise of electronic trading and NASDAQ has not eliminated the need for the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street. As two variants of "information cities," both capital cities and global cities retain powerful centripetal forces that reinforce the persistent clustering of political and economic power in single locations.

In fact, the benefits of agglomeration are arguably more powerful in the government sector than in any private sector. The reasons are many: face-to-face contact, the human element of special-interest lobbying, the non-standardized process innovation of political work, the persuasive advantages of manipulating national historical symbols in the capital city, and the fear that geographic isolation leads to loss of political influence. All these centripetal forces of political power would all undermine efforts to create a virtual capital. One is far more likely to witness the rise of the virtual market, the virtual corporation or the virtual university than the virtual government.



More than "the Local and the Global"

The juxtaposition between "the local and the global" is a useful dichotomy to describe the multicultural confluence of political, social and economic experiences in contemporary cities. But the dichotomy is only a only partial depiction of the multiple tensions in a city, especially in a capital city. The "local" itself is an oversimplification of multiple interests and groups, from activist neighborhood communities to the municipal growth machine. The global level contains both the corporate offices of global-oriented businesses and the embassies of foreign governments. Between these two layers comes a third: the national government and its administrative buildings and monuments. It is not just local and global interests that converge in a capital city, but also the convergence of local and national interests, as well as national and international interests.

I will just briefly touch on the national-global tension here, though this dichotomy is central to the capital city identity. Capital cities represent the confluence of forces of international capital and foreign nations with counter-forces promoting nationalism, protectionism, and other internal interests. It is the paradox of a capital reflecting national idiosyncrasies at a time of globalization when major cities look more and more alike. Bridging these conflicting domestic and worldly pressures may be the key challenge for capitals. As Anthony King argues, "... the most successful capital city will be the one that, in the forms and spaces of its built environment, in its allocation of its resources, most successfully combines the symbols of its national past with representations of the rapidly emerging conditions of contemporary globality" (King 1993, 276).

Capitals, like other types of cities, face powerful pressures in the globalizing world of markets, culture and information. Yet there are multiple obstacles to globally standardized cities: local community-based opposition, the interests of the capital city municipality, and nationalist interests. Despite the best efforts of nationalistic architecture, capital cities are rarely the pure expression of national, internal identity and culture, but instead are more complex: a mix of neighborhood, municipal, national, and global identities. I focus on the local-national relationship below.

The local-national dynamic in capital cities

A capital is the seat of the national government and a representation of national power and culture. But it is also a city in its own right, with a local culture and municipal political structure. This local government typically operates in the shadow of the national government, with more restricted powers and resources than those enjoyed by other cities. Sometimes collaborating with the larger and more powerful national government when interests coincide, the municipality usually loses battles when local and national interests conflict. This local-national tension leads to two common disputes in capital cities. First, how much power and autonomy should the local government have in capital cities? Second, how should conflicts between local and national interests be resolved in capitals?

The territorial administration of capital cities varies across countries, with at least three arrangements: (1) a separate, special administrative district (e.g., Washington, D.C.); (2) dual status as city and province or federal state (e.g., Berlin); and (3) incorporated into the federal or national political geography like other cities in the nation (e.g., Bonn).¹⁰

What determines which of these three models a nation will pursue? The internal political structure of the nation (including the level of centralization) certainly plays a central role. But a capital city's territorial-administrative arrangement, like the location of the capital city itself, is also the product of chance, historical legacies, the relative political and economic power of the capital city, and the balance of power between regional and national political force. Efforts to shift this balance of power between the local, regional and national levels often lead to changes in the administrative structure of the capital city. In 1995, leaders in Berlin and the surrounding province of Brandenburg attempted to unite the two provinces — and thus shift from the second to the third model of capital cities. This union would have brought greater scale economies and coordination between the capital city and its hinterland in areas of transportation planning, open space preservation, recreation, education, social policy and other areas. The voters of the larger but less populated and poorer

¹⁰West Berlin during the Cold War represented an exceptional fourth model, in which a capital, considered by the four Allied Powers in 1945 to be so important that it should cease to be the capital and instead be administered jointly by this international force.

Brandenburg vetoed this proposal, fearing that their interests would be lost in the union with the wealthier and more powerful Berlin (Heiser 1996; The Economist 1995).

No one arrangement is inherently better than the other two. Rowat argues that "... federal districts are particularly appropriate in decentralized federations, where the sharp division of powers between the central and state governments would otherwise prevent the central government from having adequate control over its own capital" (Rowat 1993, 166-7). Yet the case of Washington shows the shortcomings of separate federal districts when government support for the capital is weak — especially for a highly segregated capital city with a large underclass. By contrast, West Germany was able to exert adequate control over its capital in Bonn even though the city was part of the Nordrhein-Westfalen province. In addition, the current German government has been able to assert its interests in the design of the new government district in the heart of Berlin over the interests of the Berlin city-state and its neighborhood districts.

In the end, capital cities administered as unique, separate national districts (such as Mexico City, D.F.) do best if there is strong national support for the capital, if the city has a strong, revenue-generating local economy, if the capital can build a solid middle/upper-middle class base of highly skilled people, and if the city can tap into the resources of the surrounding suburban hinterlands. The lesson from the American case demonstrates the dangers when these conditions are not present. The main sources of Washington's woes are not the lack of statehood or its inability to fiscally benefit from its Maryland and Virginia commuter hinterlands; these are as much byproduct as cause. Rather, the capital suffers from federal neglect, an American anti-urbanism, and persistent urban-suburban racism: that is, from a fundamental lack of national commitment to the nation's capital. To be more precise: though there *is* a national commitment to Washington in the narrow sense of maintaining the necessary conditions for a functioning national government center, there is not a broader national commitment to adequately supporting the city, its struggling municipal institutions, and its more vulnerable residents.

The local and the national: a conflict of interests in the capital city

"In the medieval West, towns developed not just as ecologically distinctive settings, as dense settlements of people attending to specifically urban productive and commercial pursuits, but also as politically autonomous entities. Their autonomy was often gained against the expressed opposition and visible resistance either of the territorial ruler and his representatives (frequently bishops in Italy and Germany), or of the feudal element, or of both. Thus the ascent of the towns marked the entrance of a new political force into a system of rule thus far dominated, at whatever level, by the two partners in the lord-vassal relation. ... the towns typically asserted themselves — or reasserted themselves, after centuries of decay and abandon — in a way that was novel, if not utterly unprecedented, in that it involved the creation or political reactivation of *centers of solitary action by singly powerless*

individuals. The towns thus claimed rights that were corporate in nature, i.e., that attached to individuals only by virtue of their membership in a constituted collectivity capable of operating as a unitary entity." (Poggi 1978, 36-7)

Municipal governments of capital cities typically must struggle to gain legitimacy, resources and autonomy in a city where the national government is so dominant. The national government not only asserts its power when its interests directly conflict with the local government, but it often intervenes in local issues even when there is no clear national interest (Rowat 1993, 152-3). "Capital city governments appeared to chafe under inadequate power to manage their own affairs and despite national government interest ... they have had to battle against *other national* priorities for the muscle to get physical things of local import actually carried out" (Eldredge 1975, 510).

Even in a city such as Paris, seen as the prototype of a dominant, supremely centralized capital city with enormous power, the city government still often acts in opposition to its national rulers (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 69). This conflict crosses ideological boundaries, and affected the former communist capitals such as Moscow, where the city competed with the military, industry and other priorities (Eldredge 1975, 510).

This local-national conflict is not new. "To be a capital was only a partial gain for its citizens. In the conflict between local autonomy and royal power, the cities usually came up short. Only in bishops seats was it more common that the bishop could not prevail over the rebellious citizens and relocated his residence to the countryside: from Cologne to Bonn, from Augsburg to Dillingen, from Speyer to Bruchsal." (Beyme 1991, 15-6). Even before the modern nation-state, cities and towns evolved into an increasingly powerful and autonomous economic force that competed with the strength of other centers of power. City walls and an urban militia sustained the town's growing economic strength. Hobsbawm notes that "Frederick the Great indignantly refused the offer of his loyal Berliners to help him defeat the Russians who were about to occupy his capital, on the ground that wars were the business of soldiers, not civilians" (Hobsbawm 1990, 75).

This relationship also shapes a distinctly different local identity of the capital's residents, who experience locally the national government on a daily basis. They see the working of the government from the back stage as well as from the perspective of the national audience, giving the capital city residents not only a more intimate view of the national government, but also a closer look at the discrepancies between government structure and government façade. For residents of the capital, it requires no great imaginative powers to envision the "imagined community" of the nation-state, as these residents encounter the national monuments, buildings, statues, parks and sculpture avenues in the daily lives. However, capital city residents may paradoxically also experience the greatest disparity between this imagined community and their own daily community of neighborhood and

municipality, especially when the residents sense that these national façades are intended for outside consumption rather than their own.¹¹

One should, however, be careful not to simply view the relationship between the city and the national government as simply a case of the local David and the national Goliath. The capital can be both victim and beneficiary of its position in the nation. Each capital city would require its own cost-benefit analysis to determine whether there is a fair distribution of costs between the national government and the local government. Even if such a cost-benefit analysis were possible to calculate, the resulting balance would likely only measure fiscal and economic impacts, and not address the larger social and political impacts of hosting the national government. The result is that it is very hard to either measure or achieve "a just balance between the interests of the local residents and the interests of the nation" (Rowat 1993, 165). As noted by Paquet, "[t]he locals complain about the national and international constraints imposed on the development of the city, while raking in the tangible benefits in terms of quality of life; the nationals complain about the excessive costs of the pomp and circumstance that surround national celebrations, while boasting with national pride as soon as they leave the national territory..." (Paquet 1993, 273-4). The local-national relationship in capital cities is thus a complex, symbiotic relationship, which varies tremendously from nation to nation, and from one era to the next. This relationship is both of dependence and synergy, exploitation and opportunism.

Generalization from capital city research

At a literal level, the study of national capital cities is inherently the study of exceptions: most nations have a only a single capital city (with the few exceptions of dual capitals in such countries as Holland and South Africa). The first level of generalization is simply among other national capitals. (Though there are similarities between national capitals and state/provincial capitals, their respective authorities, symbols, military functions and border control roles are often so different that the two should be treated as separate classes of cities.) More broadly, national capitals are part of a larger class of "government cities": cities with either an unusually high dependence on national government spending and/or cities whose primary function is to serve a larger national military, strategic, administrative or symbolic interest.

A second strategy for generalization is to see capital cities not just as the seat of a national government, but also as a site where economic interests and national political power converge. The prevalence of national capitals among the lists of global economic cities (Friedmann 1986; Sassen

¹¹In this regard the symbolic product of capital cities serves as an export product, intended for a national and international market. It is loosely analogous to a tropical island where the best produce is reserved for hard-cash exports, literally depriving the local population of the fruits of its own labor and soil.

1991; Taylor 1995) points to the intricate linkages between public and private interests in metropolitan economic development. By extension, the study of global cities that are *not* national capitals (e.g., New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Frankfurt, Sydney) provides a useful contrast to those global cities that are capitals. Overall, then, the value of capital city research is not only to understand this specific type of city, but also to understand the larger interaction of political and economic networks in the emerging global urban system.

Though capital city research will inevitably overlap with the extensive study of global cities, there will be differences in theoretical generalization. A powerful theme in the global city literature is the growing homogeneity of the global cities, or at least of their corporate downtowns. The expansion of global competition between cities requires standardization of markets, currencies, information systems, corporate support services, and labor markets. For architects and planners, the apparent outcome is the convergence towards a standardized global cityscape and infrastructure, seen in airport terminals, five-star hotel chains and expense-account restaurants, corporate high-rise architecture, fitness facilities. This homogenization facilitates the easy entry and exit of the global traveler, where cultural differences between nations are reduced to palatably subtle differences in cuisine, entertainment and architectural style. One of the few remaining adjustments that the global traveler needs to make is to reset ones watch to local time -- a problem that could be overcome by establishing a new, non-spatial time-zone: Global Citizen Time (GCT). By setting the clocks in all the global economy-servicing restaurants, offices, airport lounges and hotels to this unitary time (and perhaps synchronizing the ambient lighting to the hypothetical sunrise and sunset of this time-zone regardless of local meteorological conditions), the global traveler would never need to reset a watch or suffer jetlag.¹² One could even formalize this pattern by establishing "global economic zones" in major cities around the world— akin to free trade zones — that cluster these global services and share common time-zones, voltages, currencies, and language.

Some of this rhetoric of an emerging global city culture of standardized customs, norms and aesthetics may be exaggerated (especially my GCT suggestion above). Yet intrinsic to the global city thinking is the assumption that international competition leads to a high-stakes economic "king-of-the-hill" game, in which second- and third-tier cities strive to become first-tier global cities (e.g., New York, London, Tokyo) not just through innovation, marketing and boosterism, but through emulation. Success in a hierarchical network of cities comes from being like the other nodes, only better. This belief that the process of globalization itself standardizes cities, in turn, heightens the theoretical generalization in global city writings. There is a strong tendency to homogenize global cities into a unitary theory, and thus to speak of an archetypal "global city" without hesitation.

¹² The "jetlag" experience would in fact be transferred to the locally-based employees who would need to reset their schedules to synchronize with the visiting global traveler.

It is far harder to speak of a model, uniform capital city. There is greater variation among capital cities than global cities. For the author's research project (in progress), current efforts to find predictable, uniform patterns in a data base of capital cities have led to low correlations and R-squares.¹³ (Variables include population, political structure, density, per capital income, urban primacy, etc.) The relatively better success with simple typologies and cross-tabulations suggests that capital cities are not variations on one prototypical capital city (a useful assumption for regression analysis), but reflect a remarkable heterogeneity. Comparative case study research, which is more adaptive with exceptional cases and outliers, will likely lead to the best research results (Campbell 1998).

The foremost reason for this incongruity between capitals is that these cities are products of particular national cultures, histories, political structures and ideologies. This makes it harder to generalize about capitals than about global cities. This is not to say that capitals are wholly internal and unique creations: capitals are typically also gateways of international culture, politics and foreign visitors, and if the capital is also an important economic city as well, the home of an international business and immigrant community.¹⁴ (Some might even optimistically argue that a global convergence towards democracy will in turn lead to a greater standardization of national capitals.) Yet these international ties invariably co-exist and clash with domestic, nationalistic, and sometimes xenophobic tendencies.¹⁵ Capital cities remain more peculiar and less pliable into a unitary theory of urbanization. To summarize: the frequent globalization theory presumption about a global convergence of cityscapes will not easily apply to national capitals as long as the latter remains a complex mix of global traits and national peculiarities.

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¹³ A crucial empirical question to be addressed in future research is the following: Is there a different growth trajectory between global cities that are capitals and those that are not? That is, will more cities emulate Toronto, New York, Frankfurt and Shanghai, as the path to global city status, or will capital cities continue to dominate the global city rankings? Second, how will the economies of the currently more modest, administrative capital cities (e.g., Ottawa, Canberra, Bern, and even Washington) evolve as the relationships between political and economic interests continue to shift?

¹⁴ One sees in the postwar construction of Brasilia, for example, both a domestic statement about Brazilian national identity and politics and an effort on a grand scale to join the first world of developed nations through the assimilation of an internationalist, modernist style.

¹⁵ Capitals vary greatly in their emphasis on either looking more inward (e.g., Rangoon or Kabul) or outward (e.g., London or Paris). Historically, the relocation of capital cities has often followed a larger shift in national-political orientation. Both the move from Istanbul to Ankara and the move from Petersburg back to Moscow were efforts to reorient politics around nationalist, internal priorities.

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