


INTRODUCTION

Digging down into the global urban past

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Abstract

In our introduction to this Special Issue on early modern cities and globalization, we explore the current place of cities before 1850 in global urban history and address the promise of a greater focus on their role. We argue that the interplay between the large scale and the small scale in the imperial global city is an essential dialogical force in the formation of each city's relationship to the wider early modern world. Furthermore, early modern global urban history can help explain the creation of spaces that facilitated connections between distant, global locations, as well as illuminate the emergence of networks of exchange between city communities around the globe. Yet, it also reveals the tense, messy negotiation of the meaning of these urban spaces, as well as the incredibly diverse communities they harboured.

Portuguese maritime explorations in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries propelled western Europe from the periphery to the centre of a complex trading system that spanned half the globe.¹ Other European traders and imperial agents soon followed in the footsteps of the Portuguese, creating the financial, physical and ideological structures to support inter-oceanic trade and political claims over new imperial geographies.² This history of commercial and imperial expansion and interconnectedness marks a first age of globalization, when European economic and political pursuits combined (and clashed) with those of native societies in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean maritime routes were linked to new Atlantic and Pacific ones, promoting an unprecedented global exchange of goods and putting populations from all inhabited

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¹A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415–1808: A World on the Move* (Baltimore, 1998), 8–26.

²A. Pagden, *Lords of All the Worlds: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven, 1995).

continents in contact with one other.³ The development of these global networks of contact and exchange happened on ships and waterways, at trading posts and markets, and on the various sites of power where trade deals and political alliances were negotiated. More specifically, much of this history unfolded in urban port areas and neighbouring cities and towns, the product of urban actors' discrete efforts to shape their space and everyday practices in response to the promises and pressures of global exchange.

The five articles in this issue illustrate the historical relationship between urban places and people to the broader movement of material, economic and human resources in the early modern world (between the late 1500s and early 1800s). Quite disparate at first glance, the episodes examined in these works were all important to the process of early globalization. The adaptation of a sixteenth-century London building to new commercial practices and demands; the transformation of a small archipelago off the coast of Mughal India into the British trading outpost of Bombay; the emergence of eighteenth-century Manila's culturally diverse population and Spanish imperial efforts to control it; the promotion of the beaver fur trade through New York City; and late colonial Montevideo merchants' efforts to command trade in the South Atlantic all reveal the complex and contentious ways various groups negotiated the terms and meaning of their interactions with the wider world. These local developments shaped the possibility of global engagements which promoted connections and tightened networks of flux and exchange within that world.

In her introduction to the edited volume *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks*, Carola Hein proposes that port cities were 'embodiments of the interaction between larger global forces and local interests and nodes in larger networks'. Therefore, a history of the 'built and urban form' of port cities needs a network analysis that can reveal the connections – material, intellectual, political, migratory – that informed production and transformation of these urban spaces. An important work that offers an innovative historiographical and methodological approach to the study of port cityscapes, as Hein calls them, *Port Cities* places urban historical analysis within a broader, global context; but mostly within the recent past.⁴ It can therefore assume existing networks of contact and exchange on which to build its analysis. The question that animates this Special Issue, conversely, are the separate – sometimes local, sometimes imperial (in the cases explored here) – urban developments that created the conditions for networks of contact and exchange to form, and for cities and urban residents to participate in them, in an earlier time period. That is not to say that urban actors' efforts to establish, expand or control increasingly global trade and exchanges inevitably produced broad or strong networks. Nor did they necessarily launch the interconnected world of the late nineteenth or twentieth centuries. But they do illuminate a historical process that made that world possible.

The connection between urban and global in the early modern period is thus central to the historiographical contribution this issue makes. The analytical

³J. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York, 1989); A. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, 1972).

⁴C. Hein, *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks* (New York, 2011), 1–23.

potential and richness of this line of historical inquiry owes much to the scholarship of world and global historians who, having broken free from a requirement to explain a national community or state's trajectory, anchor their research on topics whose relevance to human history span the globe.⁵ Studies of trade, commodities, labour, slavery, migration, political ideologies, religious and legal traditions have opened historical inquiry into new geographies, synchronicities and connections between disparate and diachronic events.⁶ The work of social scientists and historians of the contemporary world who situate the trajectory of global capitalism within the physical, economic and social configurations of cities and networks of cities has created, in turn, a framework to understand connections between urban and global historical phenomena.⁷ A growing number of scholars of the city have helped to explain shared human experiences and comparable historical developments across time and space by addressing how the urban produces and negotiates the global.⁸ Still, much of this work remains focused on the modern and contemporary world.

New scholarship focused on the Atlantic and Indian Oceans has contributed much-needed chronological depth to analyses of cities' centrality to regional, trans-imperial and, ultimately, global history.⁹ Eager to understand the relevance of cities – whether ports or in the hinterland; primary economic centres or

⁵J. Belich, J. Darwin, M. Frenz and C. Wickham, *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford, 2016); S. Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016).

⁶S. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1986); P. Gootenber (ed.), *Cocaine: Global Histories* (London, 2002); W.G. Clarence-Smith and S. Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989* (New York, 2003); M. Strobel, 'Gender, sex, and empire', in M. Adas (ed.), *Islamic and European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order* (Philadelphia, 1993), 345–76; J. Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815–1920* (Chicago, 2019); Chia Yin Hsu, T. Luckett and E. Vause (eds.), *The Cultural History of Money and Credit: A Global Perspective* (London, 2015); P. Manning, *Migration in World History* (London, 2013).

⁷Most notable, of course, are S. Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd edn (Princeton, 2013); P. Taylor and B. Derudder, *World City Network: A Global Urban Analysis*, 2nd edn (London, 2015); A. King, *Writing the Global City: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and the Urban* (New York, 2016); M. Katz, 'From urban as site to urban as place: reflections on (almost) a half-century of U.S. urban history', *Journal of Urban History*, 41 (2015), 560–6; B. De Munck, 'Disassembling the city: a historical and an epistemological view on the agency of cities', *Journal of Urban History*, 43 (2017), 811–29.

⁸P.-Y. Saunier and S. Ewen, *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Moment* (New York, 2008); C. Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago, 2012); M. Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (New York, 2015); J. Prestel, *Emotional Cities: Debates on Urban Change in Berlin and Cairo* (Oxford, 2017); A.K. Sandoval-Strausz and N. Kwak (eds.), *Making Cities Global: The Transnational Turn in Urban History* (Philadelphia, 2017). For recent work and academic efforts in this emerging field, see also www.globalurbanhistory.com and www.globalurbanhistory.org.

⁹F. Knight and P. Liss (eds.), *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850* (Knoxville, 1991); M. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, 1998); K. Hall (ed.), *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400–1800* (Lanham, 2008); F. Gipouloux (ed.), *La Méditerranée asiatique: ville portuaires et réseaux marchands en Chine, au Japon et en Asie du sud-est, XVI–XXI siècle* (Paris, 2009); D. Catterall and J. Campbell (eds.), *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500–1800* (Leiden, 2012); J. Cañizares-Esguerra, M. Childs and J. Sidbury (eds.), *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia, 2013).

peripheral trading markets – to the creation and the articulation of historical processes of oceanic proportion, this literature has showcased these urban spaces as places of synthesis. Attracting goods and peoples from near and far, these cities and towns combined and disseminated social and economic practices, and cultural and political identities that facilitated connections, exchanges and the establishment of new hegemonic orders.

But whereas historians of the early modern Atlantic or the Indian Ocean and world historians of the early modern period have comfortably grounded research in cities, urban historians working on periods prior to the late nineteenth century are more timid about considering worldwide implications of the local urban histories they study.¹⁰ The richness of these local urban histories, we argue, are nonetheless key to understanding how the shared practices and experiences of that period could emerge. Importantly, these stories challenge narratives of a neat progression towards global connectedness that was shaped by imperial projects, powerful trading companies, wealthy merchant communities and well-established western institutions. The complex and messy path to emerging global connectedness, the contributors to this issue reveal, resulted from the contested claims to, and tentative transformations of, local urban spaces negotiated by urban actors and communities.

Learning about globalization from the early modern city

While the articles in this issue take a variety of approaches to a very diverse subject matter, they universally consider early modern ports cities as ‘portals of globalization’. That is to say, places that facilitated a historic process of globalization by concentrating networks of long-distance connectivity within an urban environment.¹¹ Although situated in quite different times and places, all of the towns discussed here acted as conduits for processes and people with a larger geographical reach than had historically been common within their regions of the globe. By reflecting on these early modern cities as nodes of globality, our aim is to enrich the conversation about the global urban past both temporally and spatially. These articles achieve this goal especially by reflecting on the ways in which global networks interacted with local ones, a dynamic which was critical in determining the role that the city would play as an actor in the global process.

Over and above their observation that cities could act as ‘portals of globalization’, historians have done much over the last decade or so to investigate cities as global places and important sites of the unfolding process of globalization. As Rebecca Madgin and Nicholas Kenny emphasized in their volume, *Cities beyond Borders*, research into the global urban past has revealed ‘the complexity of transnational connections, the dynamics of cross-border networks, and the shifting spatial scales

¹⁰Published in 2013, *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, edited by Peter Clark, flirts with the idea of the city as a window to understanding global history, but is mostly interested in facilitating a comparative analysis that illuminates the history of cities as a human artifact throughout the ages. See P. Clark (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History* (Oxford, 2013).

¹¹M. Middell and K. Naumann, ‘Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization’, *Journal of Global History*, 5 (2010), 149–70.

at which agency takes place'.¹² What is more, as creators of global connections, cities' density of people and buildings concentrated these linkages alongside local relationships, providing compelling opportunities for understanding the relationship between the large- and small-scale forces at work across both time and space. As Nancy Kwak and Andrew Sandoval-Strausz's recent collection of essays on transnational cities has highlighted, urban policy, urban people and urban landscapes all fostered the exchange of ideas and practices across borders, even at the height of the nation-state's centrality to the world order. Cities, write Kwak and Sandoval-Strausz, functioned as 'key points of articulation between and among different peoples, economies, and cultures'.¹³ On almost every possible scale, cities connected across borders, both sustaining and creating global and transnational processes.

Cities' importance to the global is further emphasized by scholars who have produced thematic book-length studies. Carl Nightingale, along with Shane Ewen and Pierre-Yves Saunier, have unearthed the global journeys of ideas and practices of urban planning and governance, which increased in speed and effectiveness over the course of the nineteenth century. Concentrating on the transnational community of activists who gathered in Paris between the world wars, Michael Goebel examines how their interactions with each other and with their French urban environment influenced the post-imperial nationalist movements that many led in their home countries across the middle of the twentieth century. Port cities have proven especially critical to global processes of migration and trade, drawing scholars' attention to the shifting relationship between waterfronts and cityscapes with the containerization of seaborne exchange. Across all of these themes, historical actors and city space intersect to produce a diversity of places from where the trajectory of a global urban experience is negotiated and shaped.¹⁴

While increasingly diverse in its thematic outlook, global urban history has nevertheless been represented as a relatively short-term phenomenon and is currently associated chiefly with the nineteenth-century emergence of a modern globality. Carl Nightingale's *longue durée* approach to the successive bursts of segregation from the late 1600s onwards is extraordinary, yet the nineteenth century still forms the zenith of his analysis. To their credit, many of these global urban historians have recognized this temporal lacuna; in *Making Cities Global*, Kwak and Sandoval-Strausz have lobbied for a long history of the global urban. Clearly, there is an emerging realization that, in order properly to historicize the global urban, and work out the city's role in a historical process of globalization, we need to extend the reach of our research much further into the past.¹⁵

One result of this short history is that we do not have an especially rich understanding of the various possibilities and permutations of the global–urban relationship. This is not to say that historians more broadly have lacked curiosity about the whens and wheres of globalization's emergence. At the forefront of efforts to

¹²N. Kenny and R. Madgin (eds.), *Cities beyond Borders: Comparative and Transnational Approaches to Urban History* (London, 2015).

¹³Sandoval-Strausz and Kwak (eds.), *Making Cities Global*, 2.

¹⁴Nightingale, *Segregation*; Saunier and Ewen, *Another Global City*; N. Kwak, *A World of Homeowners: American Power and the Politics of Housing Aid* (Chicago, 2015); Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.

¹⁵Nightingale, *Segregation*; Sandoval-Strausz and Kwak (eds.), *Making Cities Global*.

assemble a chronology of the process of globalization stands C.A. Bayly. Bayly described a phase of ‘archaic’ globalization that slowly shifted to a more familiar modern globalization over the early modern imperial era. During this shift, global connections of trade and culture created and controlled by royalty and elites gradually became more democratic and eclectic in character, moving through an age of eighteenth-century ‘proto-globalization’ to a modern one in which deep and multi-faceted networks of trade and communication link up even the most remote parts of the world.¹⁶ In the meantime, other scholars have proposed that empires had globalizing effects, and were thus essential vehicles of a globalized world.¹⁷

There is clearly still much to disagree about when it comes to the history of globalization as a process, especially when the discussion turns to the pre-1800 era. Writing a longer history of cities and globalization – especially of cities that were hubs of early modern empires – has the potential, we argue, to make a major contribution to our understanding of this issue. Most particularly, it can focus our attention on the ways in which this era was much more than a prelude to ‘true’ globalization in the nineteenth century. All the cities discussed here were spaces in which the local and the long-distance met and mingled to facilitate global networks involving a huge variety of people and processes.

Imagining cities as ‘portals of globalization’ only in the post-1800 era has spatial as well as temporal implications. Both global and global urban historians are involved in a continuing conversation about globalization’s centres of gravity. Following interventions from the likes of Dipesh Chakrabarty and Kenneth Pomeranz, it is no longer possible to regard Europe and its empires uncritically as the motor behind increasing globalization. To view the continent, for better or for worse, as the nursemaid of a global world is both to assume that it set the terms of this condition and dictated the path of development.¹⁸

More often than not, however, as modern global urban historians merge with urban studies scholars they are not cautious enough about the assumption that the global city is a cutting-edge form that exists only in the ‘global north’, leaving cities in the ‘global south’ to catch up. By dissecting the role of early modern port cities in globalization – operating before anyone had an idea of dividing up the world hemispherically – these articles give vital insights into globalization as a poly-centric process. Shifting our perspective from the level of empires down to a city scale enables us to see globalization taking place in multiple locations, only some of which were European. What is more, when Europeans tried to shape global

¹⁶C.A. Bayly, ‘“Archaic” and “modern” globalization in the Eurasian and African arena, c. 1750–1850’, in A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History* (London, 2002), 47–73.

¹⁷M. Thomas and A. Thompson, ‘Empire and globalisations: from “high imperialism” to decolonisation’, *International History Review*, 36 (2014), 142–70; S.J. Potter and J. Saha, ‘Global history, imperial history and connected histories of empire’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 16 (2015); G.B. Magee and A.S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods, and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹⁸D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn (Princeton, 2008); K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, 2000). For a critique of urban studies scholars and their attitude towards the global urban south, see J. Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London, 2013).

connections in these places according to their wishes, they quite often failed in the face of the ambitions of local creole or non-European urban populations.

Having explained the ways in which looking at early modern cities as loci of globalization can contribute to the whens and the wheres of the process, we are of course left with the how. With interest among global historians recently falling on the relationship between small and large scales of activity, this is an issue that is drawing increasing amounts of scholarly interest. It is a topic that many have framed as the relationship between the global and local, while others have looked to Jacques Revel's idea of a 'jeu d'échelles' – a constant interplay between events and people operating on different planes of activity, going all the way from the street to the transnational. A third group of historians has honed closely to the idea of micro and macro, asking what place microhistory has in an age obsessed with documenting historical processes that unfold on a macro/global scale.¹⁹

Although Hein and her co-essayists focus overwhelmingly on port cities in the era after 1850, such insights can be critical for understanding the dynamic between cities and global forces in the early modern era too. Global currents washed up on the shores of our early modern port cities in the form of trade networks, but they also assumed a political character particular to the pre-modern era. Royal and national prestige were mutually sustaining in the eyes of contemporaries, and cities were universally imagined as the key to increasing authority through overseas ventures. Building cities claimed territory and provided a locus for repelling the military incursions of competitors. Towns could be a base for religious conversion of indigenous people. Cities could become a funnel for trade goods, and a way of ensuring that customs and duties levied by the monarch were efficiently collected. On the ground, the city itself and its 'civilized' population would ensure order and good government, as well as the enforcement of desired social and racial hierarchies; hierarchies that were often legible in the physical arrangement of the city.²⁰

Though cities were conceived by rulers as vital instruments of long-distance control, their increasing numbers of inhabitants often did not view them in precisely the same way. As the articles collected in this issue show, colonial settlers in various cities around the globe tended to obey royal and church authority only when absolutely forced to or when their interests were mutual. Similarly, the indigenous populations of recently claimed colonial territories, and individual migrants from other imperial dominions, who also made up the urban residents of early modern imperial cities, were not always beholden to their new overlords. Early modern cities that emerged in the context of colonial encounters, emerging mercantilist empires and political-religious conquests often flourished despite, and not necessarily due to, the best laid plans of ruling authorities. It was therefore amid the friction between imperial and ruling authorities, local elites and marginalized groups,

¹⁹See for example D. Arnold, 'Global goods and local usages: the small world of the Indian sewing machine, 1875–1952', *Journal of Global History*, 6 (2011), 407–29; F. Trivellato, 'Is there a future for Italian microhistory in the age of global history?', *California Italian Studies*, 2 (2011); B. Struck, K. Ferris and J. Revel (eds.), 'Size matters. Scales and spaces in transnational and comparative history', *International History Review*, 33, 4 (2011), Special Issue.

²⁰P. Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth: The Rise of Plantation Society in the Chesapeake* (Chicago, 2018); R. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493–1793* (New Haven, 2000); J. Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy, Potosi, 1545–1700* (Durham, NC, 2005).

who all sought from the urban environment the means to satisfy their ambitions, that global and transnational connections were elaborated and expressed in these cities.

In the articles included here, we access some of the ways local urban networks encountered global forces in the cityscape, negotiated particular local realities and shaped the role of the urban in articulating the global. The constant interaction between local city populations and urban expressions of imperialism fundamentally determined the role that these ports would play in the growing long-distance connections of the era. What is more, such connections did not emerge in an orderly manner, at the behest of empires, but were instead the product of complex negotiations on the ground, in and among the dense spaces that constitute the urban form.

City spaces and global scales

The articles in this Special Issue invite us to consider how the trajectories of early modern cities shaped a multi-scalar, multi-spatial, and diachronic process of globalization prior to the early nineteenth century. Through rich local histories, the authors uncover ties between urban places, people and practices, and broader historical processes with global repercussions. Key to each analysis is a discussion of the actions of economic elites, imperial agents, indigenous communities and ambitious newcomers that sometimes coalesced, sometimes collided to direct their city's engagement with the broader world. This approach avoids a teleological narrative of globalization. Sixteenth-century London, seventeenth-century Bombay, eighteenth-century Manila and New York and late colonial Montevideo are featured not as precursors to or the beginnings of the modern global city, but as places where the conditions for the formation of global networks of contact and exchange emerged.

Sarah Ann Milne offers a close reading of the architectural history of the Erber, a building with its adjacent courtyard owned by the Drapers' Company, one of several livery companies in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London. The city's participation in an expanding global trade 'was intimately connected to locally-embedded urban infrastructures' such as the Erber. As she demonstrates, the formation of commercial networks that linked England to the world and London to internal English markets required storage space, housing and the tradesmen and goods that supported their activities. The transformation and adaptation of the Erber's built structures and open spaces over a period of 80 years ensured its tenants regular access to those very resources. The story of the Erber thus reveals further how specific urban sites contributed to the city's economic stability and relevance at a time of important changes in worldwide economic practices. Milne's work highlights the incremental efforts by 'a range of urban actors who not only responded to global economic forces but negotiated them at intensely local scales'.

Margaret R. Hunt and Philip J. Stern's exploration of seventeenth-century Bombay reminds us that, although it has become a global city, its beginnings were uncertain. In particular, the city's origins exemplify how imperial, elite and local interests collided and conflated to create globalizing urban places. Bombay's spatial and political history was defined by 'centuries of maritime and territorial

conflict and competition on the part of both South Asian and European powers in the Indian Ocean world'. It was the almost obsessive determination of East India Company officials to transform Bombay into their own Indian Ocean enclave that ensured the city's survival. Through the transformation of its built environment, topography, military defences and urban identity the Company consolidated power over the population and land resources in Bombay. The dramatic lengths East India Company men went to protect English trading interests eventually led to the incorporation of Bombay as a city with marked political and economic influence in the region. But it is the city's uncertain trajectory and human-driven urban history, not its future centrality, that merit early modernists' attention. For, as the authors stress, 'Bombay, as both global and a city, was made, not born.'

The Manila that Kristie Patricia Flannery uncovers through the story of César Falliet reveals a city similarly shaped by the actions of local actors in pursuit of global mobility and influence. Falliet, a merchant and mercenary of Swiss origin, embodies an early modern urban type. Through an account of his encounter with the Spanish Inquisition and his maritime career, Flannery uncovers both Falliet's ambiguous relationship with Spanish Manila and that relationship's relevance to Manila's global character. Falliet's Inquisition trial records reveal that he had enjoyed a comfortable existence in the city as a result of his activities on behalf of Spanish interests. It also highlights his participation in a network of exchange that tied Manila, Madras, Batavia and Mexico City together through mercantile and imperial explorations. His military career and connections ultimately helped him survive the Inquisition to preserve his place in Manila society.

The trial reveals, nevertheless, the mechanisms globalizing imperial states employed to preserve their prerogatives amid increasingly diverse bodies of subjects: while Falliet stands in for Manila's heterogeneous population, his legal difficulties reflect Spanish intent to protect and promote the supremacy of its monarch and most loyal subjects. Manila's cityscape, with its walled Spanish quarters and segregated suburbs, was one urban strategy aimed at managing the impact the city's global connectivity had on colonial rule. The operation of the Spanish Inquisition in cities like Manila, encouraging denunciations of neighbours for acting outside imperial Catholic norms, was another way Spain mobilized urban resources to safeguard its global power.

Flannery's analysis, much like Hunt and Stern's, explains the uneasy negotiation between imperial and local agents over political influence and economic opportunities which produced globalizing urban places in the early modern period. Manila and Bombay emerge in these articles not as the cosmopolitan global cities they eventually became, but rather as provincial towns that acted as gatekeepers to the resources of empires. Yet, in individuals like Falliet, who strove to survive and prosper in such environments by cultivating economic, military, social and cultural connections, we find explanations for how cities became nodes in complex global networks.

Andrew Wells' examination of the urban British Atlantic explores further the analytical potential contained within the intersection of local and global developments. Wells observes how the global flows of people and animals always had connections to local urban spaces. His article accesses that multi-scalar process in urban projects that sought to separate, control and regulate human-animal

interactions. His discussion of the fur trade and global consumption of beaver fur hats, moreover, illuminates how human–animal relationships, and the transnational laws, policies and trade that mediated them, could bestow a particular identity to a city and connect it to a global consumer culture.

Human–animal interactions in the early modern British Atlantic can thus serve as yet another lens through which to understand the emerging global urban. The beaver fur trade, sustained by a few urban communities' exploitation of the commercial potential of a local animal species, gave way to a global trade and consumer culture that made New York, Bristol and other cities into distinct nodes within a complex global network of markets, manufacturing industries and centres of fashion.

Fabricio Prado, in the final article of this issue, introduces us to another urban hub of the early modern era. Montevideo's position at the mouth of the La Plata river, its natural port, its proximity to Portugal's colony of Brazil and its location along profitable South Atlantic trading routes attracted commercial investments by both imperial authorities and local elites eager to capitalize on its advantages. But it was the (sometimes illegal or subversive) actions of local merchants that strengthened the city's standing as a commercial port and facilitator of imperial and trans-imperial connections across the Atlantic. Key to Prado's analysis were the manoeuvrings of Montevideo's mercantile and legal communities, who sought to skirt 'prescriptive mercantilist policies dictated by the Spanish metropole' and develop their own terms to trade with Luso-Brazilian and other Atlantic merchants. In pursuit of profitable networks of trade, these local actors – like the officers of the East India Company in Bombay – shaped the commercial operations, political economy and even urban form of the city. Moreover, by aligning and articulating their interests to those of the Spanish empire, they helped to make late eighteenth-century Montevideo central to commercial, political and military projects of global proportions.

Late colonial Montevideo illustrates how local strategies of commercial networking contributed to the creation of a distinctive port city with global influence, even when the region's imperial powers had different ambitions for the town. The trajectory of Montevideo, like that of London, Bombay, Manila, New York or Bristol, was thus shaped by the push local actors made to benefit from emerging economic, social, political and cultural opportunities. These local efforts, as much as those efforts made by regional, imperial or trans-imperial actors, define the scale of analysis historians adopt to understand the early modern city. But to understand the common role urban actors and places played in the configuration of early modern global exchanges and practices, we have to embrace the multi-layered and multi-scalar analyses these articles introduce.

These articles thus enrich our understanding of global urban history in two important ways. First, they underline the necessity of extending the field backwards in time to the pre-1850 era. Cities were essential nodes of global connectivity in the early modern era. As such, they shaped the character of these connections, which quite often failed to conform to the boundaries and dynamics – global north and global south, for example – that circumscribe our current understandings of the global urban. Second, the work that follows universally gestures toward the potential of a multi-scalar approach to global urban history, the likes of which has been

strongly advocated by Carl Nightingale and others. Indeed, it is abundantly clear that the interplay between the large scale and the small scale in the imperial global city is an essential dialogical force in the formation of each city's relationship to the wider early modern world. Indeed, early modern global urban history can help explain the creation of spaces that facilitated connections between distant, global locations, as well as illuminate the emergence of networks of exchange between city communities around the globe. Yet, it also reveals the tense, messy negotiation of the meaning of these urban spaces, and the incredibly diverse communities they harboured.