

World Cities of Sex

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Introduction

Conventionally, the literature on world cities describes them as the global hubs that organise ever-more complex flows of information, money and people. Within this literature, it is the role of advanced producer services, transnational corporations and finance are considered as of crucial importance in articulating this space of flows, often to the neglect of the other cultural and social practices that give world cities their distinctive character. This Chapter redresses this balance by focusing on sex as one of the drivers of the global economy, arguing that world cities are not merely major markets for sexual consumption, pornography, and prostitution but are the hubs of a global network of sexual commerce around which images, bodies and desires circulate voraciously. As such, this Chapter brings the body into discussions of globalization not merely as a vector of disease transmission, an agent of cultural diffusion or a repository of tacit business knowledge, but as a sexualised and desiring body whose intimate geographies are integral to the reproduction of global economic systems which thrive on the commodification of desire.

World cities as sites of seduction

While the notion of globalization is relatively recent, the idea that there is a cadre of elite cities with global reach and influence has a more lengthy history. Indeed, the term 'world city' was first coined by Patrick Geddes in 1915 to describe cities in which a 'disproportionate' amount of the world's trade was carried out. Subsequent commentators on world cities have obviously refined this definition in various ways, yet all have concluded that there is a distinct set of cities (London, New York and Tokyo) which act as global 'command and control' centres. Beyond this, it is postulated that there is a second tier of cities which serve as major regional centres in key 'globalization arenas' (e.g. Los Angeles in North America, Paris and Frankfurt in Europe), and beneath that a third tier of cities of regional importance, such as Seoul, Madrid, Sydney or Singapore.

The basis for constructing such world city rosters has typically been the economic attributes of particular cities for which data are readily available to researchers in the urban West, such as the number of corporate headquarters, stock exchange activity and inter-firm flows of communication. While such indicators apparently reveal the most powerful world cities – rather than those which merely boast a large population – we need to be mindful of the limits of such statistics, which prioritize particular forms of work

over others, and generally ignore the embodied dimensions of urban life. The world city network is, after all, made not solely through flows of capital, ideas and information, but through flows of people. Yet in those accounts that have sought to reintegrate migration in the study of world cities (e.g. Malecki and Ewers 2007) there is rarely any consideration of sexuality. Indeed (Walsh et al. 2008) argue that studies of migration in general, let alone elite migration, have rarely considered sexuality.

An exception here is the work by Walsh (2007) which considers the heterosexualities performed by young British expatriate workers in Dubai. Having massively expanded since the discovery of oil in the 1960s, Dubai has become one of the most important cities on the Arab peninsula, its emergence as a world city associated with its growing role as a centre for financial services as well as its reputation as a luxury tourist resort. Significantly, it is also a city where 80% of the resident population are transnational migrants, including both low wage workers employed in construction and tourism work as well as higher paid workers in finance and advanced producer services. Focusing on the latter, Walsh reports that there is a tendency for young British expats to reject notions of coupledness and instead perform a transient heterosexuality focused on play, freedom and the pursuit of sexual pleasure. Significantly in a city where the consumption of alcohol is not publically tolerated by the indigenous Emirati, this means that a series of hybrid bars/clubs have become important in the social lives of the expats, with dressing up, dancing and flirting being almost daily activities for many of them. Walsh argues that most of the young (heterosexual-identified) expats she interviewed saw their time in Dubai as something of a working holiday, behaving differently than they might when in their 'home' country.

To suggest that some transnational workers perform different sexualities when working in foreign contexts is to highlight the importance of sexuality both in decisions to migrate and in migrant lifestyles within world cities. It is also to underline that sites of sociality and sexuality ('landscapes of desire', as Walsh terms them) are integral to world city formation, providing spaces where transnational elites can cement friendships with business contacts and work colleagues at the same time they pursue sexual pleasures. It is no coincidence, therefore, that leading world cities are known for red light districts and sexual entertainment aimed at business visitors as much as at 'local' consumers (e.g. London's Soho, the Times Square area of New York and Tokyo's Kabukicho). Even Dubai, where prostitution is illegal, has a thriving sex work scene focused on expatriate hotels and clubs, becoming known as the 'prostitution centre of the Arab world' in the process.

The extent to which the governors of Dubai – like those of other world cities – turn a blind eye to sex work in the interest of cultivating a reputation that their city is a 'fun' place in which to live and work is open to question. However, the connection between sex and the economic growth of post-industrial cities is made explicit in the work of globalization 'guru' Richard Florida. Put simply, his thesis is that cities require a critical mass of creatives

to thrive, a class of workers whose job is to create meaningful new forms of work (Florida 2002). According to Florida, for a city to become a magnet for the creative class, it must be able to provide Talent (have a highly talented, educated and skilled population), Technology (have the technological infrastructure necessary to fuel an entrepreneurial culture) and Tolerance (having a diverse community, which has a 'live and let live' ethos). One way that Florida operationalises the latter is by a diversity index based on the proportion of coupled gay households in a region, which he sees as a good predictor of creativity and urban productivity, noting that eleven of the top 15 high tech metropolitan areas in the US also appear in the top 15 of his gay index (Florida 2002).

Despite critiques of the equation being made between gay (male) coupledness and creativity, the idea that there may be some connection between sexuality and world city formation is not easily ignored, and feeds into numerous policy initiatives designed to market 'wannabe' world cities as hip and happening gay capitals (Markwell 2002; Hughes 2003). Moreover, a rising number of city governors clearly recognise the importance of adult entertainment in attracting business tourists and conference travellers of all kinds (Sanchez 2004). Unsurprisingly, few surveys of business travellers suggest sex is a motivation for travel, but anecdotal evidence for this is legion, leading numerous commentators alleging that there is an explicit connection between business travel and sexual consumption, especially when such travel allows individuals to escape the confines of an existing, coupled relationship (Wonders and Michalowski 2001). While this can apply to women travellers, much commentary fixates on the business *man*, who is assumed to be a significant and sometimes voracious consumer of sexual services when away from his home country. For example, Marttila (2008) suggests that around 50% of clients of prostitutes in Estonia are Finnish men drawn to the city not so much because of the presence of sex work but because of its pivotal role as a 'crossroads' between East and Western Europe:

A majority of the Finnish men buying sex in Tallinn and Vyborg do not go there exclusively for that purpose, the trip in question often being a business or weekend trip during which paid sex services are used. Most of the Finnish men I encountered in brothels and sex bars in the region did not identify themselves as sex tourists. Many of them were on business trips...in downtown Tallinn people often offer to sell Viagra to groups of men looking 'businessmen-like' (Marttila 2008)

In Tokyo, visits to massage parlours and hostess bars appear to be as much a part of corporate hospitality as banqueting and karaoke are (Allison 1994), whilst in London there have been numerous cases where female employees have complained about the culture of entertaining foreign visitors by taking them to lap dancing and strip shows (Rutherford 1999). Drawing connections between sex entertainment and corporate cultures, Holgersson and Svanstrom (2004) likewise alleges that visits to strip clubs in Stockholm are homosocial occasions where men together confirm their gender identity and

superiority towards women, allowing them to develop forms of intimacy between men in a space of heteronormal consumption which effectively guarantees the men's heterosexuality (Liepe Levinson 2002). Beyond this, it is clear that hotels catering to business travelers are important sites for escort work and prostitution, while sexual consumption is normalized in the provision of hard-core porn on the pay-to-view channels that constitute part of the in-room entertainment. As Pritchard and Morgan (2006) argue, the 'very liminality of hotels—as crossing points into the unknown, as places of transition and anonymity, hidden from familiar scrutiny - makes them attractive as venues for sexual adventure'.

All of this is to insist on the importance of sex in the making of transnational business networks, and to problematise any neat distinction between business and sex tourism: Oppermann (1999) argues that the vast majority of tourists who visit prostitutes or sites of adult entertainment do not travel for that purpose alone. In most cases, this is a by-product or side attraction rather than the main and sole purpose of travel. (O'Connell Davidson 2001) describes these as *situational* sex tourists. Dispensing with clichés in which the sex tourist appears as a predatory and potentially paedophilic male, travelling solely to exploit and dominant economically subordinate young people, this notion of situational sex tourism suggests that sex and business entwine in a multitude of ways.

Erotic cities: globalization and the shadow economy

Acknowledging that business travel is (partly) motivated by sex provides one perspective on the importance of sex in the making of world cities. But to suggest that the sex industries simply follow existing flows of finance and business is to downplay the importance of the sex as one of the drivers of the global economy. Historically, the sex industry has been associated with centres of trade and finance, with sex workers catering to the wealthy, but sex tourism and adult entertainment has also developed in tourist areas, areas of seasonal employment, in border zones and in centres of conflict (such as occupied zones): in short, any areas where men have been present but where their normal partners have been absent (Ryder 2004). As such, there are many cities whose importance as centres of sexual commerce is disproportionate to their significance as centres of finance. This implies that whilst all world cities are seductive, some cities are more seductive than others, becoming de facto *erotic cities*.

Bangkok is a case in point. Positioned within East-West flows of tourism, a context of rural deprivation, gendered inequality and a predominant Buddhist attitude which is tolerant of many forms of sex working, Thailand has been a notorious centre for sex tourism since at least the 1960s, when US military en route to Vietnam stopped there for rest and recreation (Askew 1998). In some senses, this reputation is undeserved, for much of the sex work in Thailand caters for local populations, and the country has sought to discourage the package tour 'sex holidays' that were evidentially popular with

German and Japanese tourists in the 1980s. But if sex is not the motivation for all tourists to visit the country, Bangkok remains known as 'the brothel of the world' where Thai sex workers perform for male clients in a bewildering range of go-go bars, sex shows, and karaoke clubs where they do not merely sell sex but a fantasy of an Oriental woman who is not-only physically beautiful and sexually exciting but also caring, compliant, submissive and non-Western. Between them, the key 'red light areas' of Bangkok – Patpong Road, Nana Plaza, and Soi Cowboy – offer over three hundred bars and clubs where workers perform a variety of acts, with some estimates suggesting that there are as many as 200,000 employed in the city's adult entertainment sector (Babb 2007).

If Bangkok is the sexual playground of Southeast Asia, Las Vegas can certainly claim that title in North America. A nineteenth century frontier town, Las Vegas' remarkable expansion in the twentieth century relied upon the popularity of its night-time economy, meaning that it now boasts a unique high-wage, low-skilled economy based on gambling and tourism. The fact that Las Vegas is in the only state of the US where prostitution is legal has been an important factor in maintaining this growth, allowing Las Vegas to market itself as 'Sin City', a place where sexual fantasies and adult pleasures can come true. While prostitution per se is not (officially) part of the Las Vegas experience (all the licensed brothels are more than an hour's drive from the city) the resort industry has always relied upon sexual promise, embodied in the form of the Vegas showgirl, an idealized and glamorous dancer whose provocative form has entertained visitors since burlesque was introduced to the Strip in the 1950s at celebrated venues such as Minskys, Stardust and the Desert Inn.

Commenting on the iconic status of the Vegas showgirl, Riechl (2002) contends that the economy of Las Vegas depends not so much on the selling of sex but the production of desire, which draws people to the city in the pursuit of pleasure. Gambling, of course, remains the cornerstone of the economy, but even conservative estimates suggest there are more employed in the sex industry than are employed in the casinos. While street prostitution has long since been displaced from the Strip, a few blocks away from the main resort hotels, striptease and gentleman's clubs like Spearmint Rhino, Déjà Vu, Sapphire and Crazy Horse Too prosper (with something like 15,000 dancers having the sheriff's license needed to work such venues). Today, Las Vegas offers a sex-soaked world of lap dancing, stripping, swinging, and big casino topless showgirl revues, and it is perhaps unsurprising that up to 3,500 illegal prostitutes work in Las Vegas' at any given time (Brents and Hausbeck 2007). While some ply their trade discretely on the casino floor, escort work is massively important, and the majority of hotels appear complicit in arranging 'personal services' should guests request these.

Examples such as Bangkok and Las Vegas begin to imply that if we were to draw up a roster of erotic cities, it would appear somewhat different to conventional mappings and rankings of world cities. Cities including Bangkok

and Las Vegas, as well the European 'stag capitals' of Tallinn, Hamburg, Riga, Prague and Amsterdam, would all figure strongly, alongside tourist destinations like Havana and border cities such as Tijuana. However, the likelihood of being able to acquire reliable data on the size of these city's sexual economies is slim, as much of what occurs in the sex industries remains in the shadow economy given the majority of sex sold worldwide occurs within a context of quasi-legality. Penttinen (2004) has accordingly used the concept of *shadow globalization* when referring to the global flows of migrants who are employed in the sex industry. The extent to which sex markets are dominated by migrant workers varies massively, but there is certainly plentiful evidence to suggest that non-native and/or illegal migrant workers make up the majority of sex workers in major world cities. For example, Tokyo's sex market is thought to be dominated by indentured Thai and Filipino workers, while Amsterdam's licensed windows have large numbers of migrant workers from Dutch colonies (e.g. Indonesia, Surinam and Antilles). In the UK, some reports suggest 80% of workers in London's off-street brothels and massage parlours are migrants, from Latin America and South East Asia, but principally Eastern Europe.

Given the feminization of poverty, gender discrimination and emerging 'migration cultures' in the countries of origin (Mai 2009), the increasing involvement of Eastern European women in Western European sex markets is not hard to understand. These migratory factors are not only confined to women, with the male sex work scene in London significantly populated by migrant men who arrive from places such as South America and Eastern Europe to become involved in the male sex work industry (Sanders 2008). In a contemporary context, there is much concern that a large proportion – and maybe even a majority – of these men and women will have been trafficked for the express purpose of sexual exploitation. This is tied into the identification of trafficking as a significant byproduct of the thickening of global networks, with 'the growth of shadow economies and transnational criminal networks' a 'negative manifestation of globalization, arising from expanding economic, political and social transnational linkages that are increasingly beyond local and state control' (Goodey 2003: 417). Sex trafficking is obviously not a new phenomenon, yet contemporary commentators accordingly suggest it far exceeds the levels that prompted (for example) the formation of a League of Nations Committee in 1933 to address 'a certain movement of occidental prostitutes to the Orient' (Self 2003: 78). Indeed, it is estimated somewhere between 400,000 and 1,000,000 people are trafficked globally annually, with a significant – but ultimately immeasurable – number ending up working as prostitutes (see Hubbard et al. 2008).

Such estimates are highly-suggestive of global patterns of trafficking, but a major issue clouding the trafficking debate is the uncertainty about the proportion of prostitutes who have been trafficked and those who have migrated voluntarily. Particularly problematic here is the distinction between migration via smuggling networks and enforced migration at the hands of

traffickers – a distinction many human rights organizations and feminist activists claim is in any case irrelevant given those seeking to migrate with the aid of people smugglers do so in desperate circumstances and with little knowledge about potential opportunities for employment (Hughes 2002). However, others reject this to posit a more complex range of scenarios situated at different points on a continuum of voluntary and involuntary migration. For example, Agustin (2007) argues that the poor pay and conditions in caring and servicing work means that many migrants prefer to sell sex or sell it as a second job, despite the stigma attached to it. The sex industry thus provides a paid occupation for many millions of people worldwide, providing much higher wages and often more freedom and flexibility than other jobs available: Mai (2009) found that migrant sex workers in London reported better working and living conditions than those they encountered in other sectors of employment (mainly in the hospitality and care sectors). Tellingly, only a handful (around 6 per cent of female interviewees) in his sample felt that they had been deceived and forced into selling sex in circumstances within which they had no share of control or consent.

In spite of such evidence, the conflation of migrant sex work and trafficking continues, and continues to inform governmental policies. Trafficking panics, such as those concerning the potential rise in sex trafficking associated with major urban spectacles and sporting events such as the 2006 World Cup in Germany, the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and 2010 World Cup in South Africa, have proved to be largely unfounded (see Hennig 2006; Bird 2009) but this has certainly not prevented the introduction of highly symbolic acts designed to prevent the 'penetration' of Western cities by a seemingly unstoppable influx of 'Eastern girls' (Berman 2003). Irrespective, it is clear that the movements of men and women employed in the sex industries represents an important form of 'globalization from below' (Benton-Short 2005), albeit one that is unacknowledged in world cities research, which has fixated on the service rather than the servicing class.

Pornoeconomies and world cities

Irrespective of moral arguments about the uses and consequences of pornography, its *availability* has changed in profound ways thanks to the growth of the worldwide web. Even in nations where governments have sought to block adult content and prevent peer-to-peer file sharing of pornography, it remains relatively easy to access sites where sexual imagery can be freely viewed (and posted), whilst there are thousands – perhaps hundreds of thousands – of sites where video content is available to download on a subscription or a pay-to-view basis. Such sites have fundamentally transformed the geographies of pornographic consumption, effectively domesticating pornography and in the process, prompting moral panics about the erosive effects of pornography on domestic and family life (Juffer 1998).

Despite claims that 'sex' and 'porn' are the two most popular search terms used on Internet search engines, most estimates suggest that adult content is found on only a small proportion of all websites – around 1-2% of the total (Zook 2007). This said, the rise of the Internet and the putative pornification of society are often seen to be intimately connected, with pornography producers being early innovators in the use of online and visual technologies to disseminate adult content. Industry statistics suggest that around one-third of Internet users are now regular visitors to online porn sites, and that although the majority visit free-to-view websites (such as Pornhub, the 50 th most popular website in the world, and YouPorn, the 57th), annual subscriptions create an annual revenue in excess of \$2.5 billion (Edelman 2009). Such figures may well be unreliable given the tendency for the adult industry to exaggerate its own significance, but are certainly indicative of the importance of pornography as a virtual business given it accounts for around 70% of all purchases of online Internet content, outstripping sports, news and video games. Online sex is clearly big business.

Within porn studies there is thus much talk of the 'end of geography' as barriers to the consumption of pornography are effectively obliterated. The public space of the Internet is characterised by (relative) anonymity, affordability, and accessibility, allowing those in peripheral and poorer regions – especially those outside major metropolitan cores - to become active consumers of adult content (Jacobs 2004). This implies that pornography has undergone a shift towards decentralization and heterogeneity as a wider variety of producers and consumers participate in globalized sex markets. Adult content has been effectively 'democratized' (McNair 2002): the sexual marketplace becoming more global as it extends its 'sticky web' to capture the 'curious clicker' (Johnson 2008). For Jacobs (2004), any contemporary study of pornography needs to capture this dispersal, recognizing that the form, content and meaning of pornography in contemporary culture results from 'a network of different factors including (but not limited to) porn performers, producers and distributors, legislation, media, economy, research and various forms of expertise, politics, popular culture and hierarchies of taste' (Paasonen 2009: 564) which can stretch across time and space.

Yet even if pornography is consumed as a transnational commodity, this should not imply that the geographies of pornography are disorderly or amorphous (Jacobs 2004). Indeed, any notion of geographic disembedding is illusionary, as the Internet adult industry operates in a space of flows that offers new possibilities for pornographic distribution but remains anchored in a space of places. In this sense, it is possible that some of the arguments deployed in economic geography about the embedded nature of production and the importance of tacit knowledge are relevant to pornography production. Voss (2007) makes such connections when she suggests that within this relatively stigmatized sector, it is extremely difficult for individuals who work in firms to negotiate trust with people who work outside the industry, suggesting that the construction of strong ties is vital *within* the industry to create new packages of adult entertainment. To some extent this

explains why the adult industries have tended to be innovators in the use of online and IT technologies: unable to access existing media channels, they have developed their own platforms of dissemination. Inter-firm knowledge flows have been vital here, with adult entertainment trade fairs (e.g. Venus Berlin, the AVN Expo held in San Francisco, Erotica LA and Shanghai's Adult Toys Exhibition) being important spaces where reputations and trust are negotiated between individuals in the industry, and where knowledge about varying facets of the industry and its markets are shared (Comella 2008). As Voss (2007) notes, a key role of such fairs is to encourage *global* copping: firms display their latest products, only for other companies to seek to imitate these – something that firms see as inevitable and even beneficial given the lack of patented protection in the sector.

To date there have been few studies of these economic geographies of pornography. The pioneering work of Zook (2003; 2007), however, suggests that it might be possible to 'map' the Internet adult industry by specifying the interaction between three sites, namely: the locations where content is produced; the locations where the websites which distribute this content are authored and locations where these sites are hosted. In broad terms, the identification of these three key sites corresponds to the vertical integration of production within the pornography industry, from production through to marketing. Typically, some firms focus on production of the underlying adult media, others bundle materials into websites, and still others provide Internet marketing, billing, and customer support (Edelman 2009).

The first of these relates to the content that adult websites buy to host on their websites (the most common practice for pay-to-view providers). Though the creation of content is now relatively easy (in the sense that it merely requires relatively cheap camcorder and willing participants), the acknowledged centre of porn has, since the 1970s, been San Fernando (or Silicone Valley, as it is sometimes dubbed), which currently accounts for around two-thirds of listed adult entertainment production studios (being home to around 150 companies). This remarkable agglomeration economy developed by virtue of the fact that San Fernando offered abundant low-rent industrial spaces and warehouses where Hollywood wannabee actors and directors utilized ex-studio equipment and expertise to create the first wave of adult videos (as distinct from *films* - see Simpson 2004). Today, it persists in spite of higher rentals because of the type of factors Voss (2007) identifies, representing a notable cluster in which technical know-how and embodied are shared through established networks and inter-firm socialities (notably, the industry newsletter Adult Video News, is based in the Valley). Emphasizing the continued dominance of the US in studio-produced pornography Danta (2009) notes that an additional 12 percent of adult film studios worldwide are located in other parts of Los Angeles; 15 percent are found in other cities (notably New York, Miami and Las Vegas); and only 2 percent of studios are located in other countries (mainly Russia, Czech Republic, and Hungary). The 'off-shoring' of pornography production to Budapest has certainly been a noted phenomena, its dominance in European porn production thought to

relate to the availability of 'camera-compatible women' and low production costs in the aftermath of the collapse of the Eastern bloc (see Milter and Slade 2005 on 'Budaporn'). Irrespective, the geography of porn production remains distinctive in terms of its highly uneven nature (at least in terms of that content sourced from 'professional' studios).

The second location considered by Zook is the website itself. Whilst these can be fee-paying, by far the largest number are free, sometimes offering limited or low-res content as a bait to encourage the 'curious clicker' to explore. Perhaps paradoxically, much free online content is more hardcore and 'gonzo' than that available through subscription services: paid websites like Penthouse, Hustler and Playboy have relatively soft-core content and make claims to corporate social responsibility so that they can be accessed via as many search engines as possible, and their content downloaded to iPhones and third generation mobiles. Such sites are also massively important for Internet providers given on-line high res content uses up vast amounts of bandwidth, at great cost to the website providers. Mapping domain names of membership websites, Zook (2003: 1272) concludes that the 'UK, Germany, France, and Spain all have a relatively small number of top membership sites compared with their overall presence [on the web] whereas other countries such as the US, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Australia have a specialization in adult sites': in absolute terms, the US dominates with around 60% of all paid membership sites, though this figure declined by around 5% between 2001 and 2006 (Zook 2007). One particularly interesting finding here is that a number of adult content sites are registered in locations (such as Antigua, Saint Kitts, the Turks and Caicos Islands) that are otherwise unimportant in domain hosting terms. This points to an off-shoring tendency that might bear some comparison to trends in banking for high net worth individuals (and perhaps reflects a desire to escape intrusive governmental surveillance).

The third site mapped by Zook is the location of the website itself. In theory, this is the easiest location to map as it can be traced via identification of the IP address of the computer on which the website is hosted. While these could in theory be anywhere in the world, (Zook 2007) again suggests that most are hosted in the US, the nation through which the majority of the world's Internet traffic passes. The map of the top 100 Internet websites (measured in terms of Internet traffic, 2009) confirms Zook's observations, and reveals a continuing clustering of IP addresses on the West coast of the US, with other significant hubs in Europe (Amsterdam, Budapest, Paris, London and Brussels): in the Americas beyond the US, only Havana and Buenos Aires feature (see Figure One).

Figure 1: map of the top 100 Internet websites (measured in terms of Internet traffic, 2009).

While analyses based on searching for domain names and IP addresses need to be treated with caution given the regional packaging of IP addresses, it is possible here to discern a global geography of porn that remains resolutely routed through particular world cities in the US globalization arena. The evident inertia in the geography of pornography is surprising given the rapid technological changes in the sector as well as the low start up costs associated with pornographic production and uploading. However, the shifts that Zook (2007) discerns, in terms of a gradual movement away from US cities towards European cities, suggest there are specific 'pull' factors diffusing the Industry adult industry into world cities in other globalization arenas. What is of course missing here is reliable data on the real flows of Internet traffic that constitute this form of underground globalization: we need to know more about who is viewing what, when and where.

Conclusion

World city research has said little about matters of sexuality, despite the evidential importance of sex to the economies of world cities and, conversely, the importance of world cities in articulating networks of sex. In this Chapter, I have offered a broad overview of some of the ways in which world cities research might further engage with themes of sex and sexuality, suggesting that both licit and illicit commercial sex markets have been stimulated by the enhanced flow of people, goods and images between cities across the world. Cities are, perhaps more than ever, contact zones where people of different social and cultural backgrounds mix. In such cities, sex and bodies become 'commodities that can be packaged, advertised, displayed, and sold on a global scale' (Wonders and Michalowski 2001: 117). The visibility of commercial sex at the heart of those world cities most central to global flows

of business and finance (i.e. the major 'decision making centres' of the global economy) is thus connected to their status as spaces in which migrants constitute a significant share of the workforce, whether as members of the transnational elite class or as those who work in the brothels, clubs, bars, discotheques, cabarets, peepshows, sex shops, parlours, saunas, hotels, flats, parks, and streets which act as sites of sexual-economic exchange.

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NOTE

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