

**Saskia Sassen**

**March 2018**

Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and a Member of its Committee on Global Thought, which she chaired from 2009 till 2015. She is a student of cities, immigration, and states in the world economy, with inequality, gendering and digitization three key variables running through her work. Born in the Netherlands, she grew up in Argentina and Italy, studied in France, was raised in five languages, and began her professional life in the United States. She is the author of eight books and the editor or co-editor of three books. Together, her authored books are translated in over twenty languages. She has received many awards and honors, among them thirteen doctor *honoris causa*, over 25 named lectures, named one of the hundred women in science, the 2013 Principe de Asturias Prize in the Social Sciences, election as a Foreign Member of the Royal Academy of the Sciences of the Netherlands, and made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French government.

In each of the four major completed projects that comprise her 30 years of research, Sassen starts with a thesis that posits the unexpected and the counterintuitive in order to cut through established “truths.” These projects engendered four major books and a new major project “*An Ethics of the*

*City.*” There are also a few smaller books and about 40 academic articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Her first book was *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (Cambridge University Press 1988). Her thesis went against the established notion that foreign investment would prevent emigration from less developed countries. She posited and documented that foreign investment in less developed countries actually tends to raise the likelihood of emigration *if* that investment goes to labor-intensive sectors and/or devastates the traditional economy. In brief, her thesis went against established notions that such investment would retain potential emigrants.

In *The Global City* (Princeton University Press 1991; 2nd ed 2001) her thesis is that the global economy needs very specific territorial insertions, notably in cities. This went against the dominant notion that leading sectors could locate anywhere given digitization. Further, in a counter-intuitive move she posits that this need for well-defined urban insertions is at its sharpest with highly globalized and digitized sectors such as finance –precisely those sectors seen as not needing cities. This went against established notions at the time (the 1980s and 1990s) that the global economy transcended territory and its associated regulatory umbrellas, and that the most advanced sectors would leave cities. At its tightest, her proposition is that global cities are shaped/fed by the rise of intermediation functions at scales and in ways that go well beyond what we saw in earlier phases of capitalism.

In *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press 2006), her thesis is that today's partial but foundational global transformations, from economic to cultural and subjective, actually take place largely inside thick national settings and institutions. But they do so in ways that *denationalize* the national. She conceptualizes denationalizing dynamics as operating in the shadows of the more familiar globalizing dynamics. This denationalizing of what was historically constructed as national is more significant than much of the self-evidently global. A guiding question running through this book is how complex systems change. One key finding is that in complex systems such change is not necessarily highly visible: it often consists of existing systemic capabilities shifting to a new set of organizing logics -- in ways that make those capabilities look as more of the same.

Her most recent project is developed in two books: *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Harvard University Press/Belknap 2014), and the forthcoming *Ungoverned Territories?* (Harvard University Press 2018). The organizing thesis in *Expulsions* is that our global modernity is marked by systemic expulsions of all sorts. Such systemic expulsions go well beyond simply *more* inequality, poverty, refugees in the global south, and so on. It is often our complex intermediary processes, requiring admirable types of talents and knowledge, which are facilitating brutal, often elementary, expulsions. This book also calls for a rethinking of the knowledge silos we have produced. In

*Expulsions*, she posits that we need to de-theorize in order to re-theorize. In *Ungoverned Territories?* she examines the making of ambiguous jurisdictions that escape the grip of existing national and international institutions. This volume will include The 2012 Storrs Lectures in Jurisprudence and Philosophy she delivered at the Yale University Law School.

She has completed *Cities at War: Global Insecurity and Urban Resistance*, a book co-edited with Mary Kaldor (London School of Economics), forthcoming with Columbia University Press in 2019. It is based on fieldwork by a team of researchers in 8 major cities with high levels of conflict, ranging from Ciudad Juarez to Baghdad. It is funded by a large grant from the European Union Research Council.

Sassen has now started a new project on what an “*Ethics of the City*” would actually consist of. She posits that it will inevitably be quite different from our much-admired classic texts on ethics, which hover safely above the inequities of daily life in a large city. An ethics of the city is perhaps inevitably a bit of an ugly-duckling ethics, an imperfect ethics. The working thesis is that it is an ethics where social justice, rather than a purer and more elevated notion of ethics, becomes as strong as all the forces aligned against it. Cities are sites of inequality and indifference. Therein resides the challenge and the necessity to understand when do inequality and indifference become profoundly unjust and destructive of people, their efforts, and the city itself.

Her first three sites for research will be New York City, Tunis, and Beijing.

She also continues her work in a large collective project, *The Urban Age*, focused on extreme urbanisms. The main funder over ten years has been the Herrhausen Foundation (Berlin). She has now completed a three-year project on *Mobilities*, supported by a research gift from AUDI.

Besides the already mentioned books, she is the author of *A Sociology of Globalization* (Norton 2007); *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (The Schoff Lectures of Columbia University, published by Columbia University Press in 1996, with a new edition in 2016); *Globalization and its Discontents. Essays on the Mobility of People and Money* (New Press 1998); *Guests and Aliens* (New Press, 1999), *Cities in a World Economy* (Pine Forge/Sage, 1994; coming out in its 5<sup>th</sup> updated edition in 2018). Her edited books are *Deciphering the Global: Its Scales, Spaces and Subjects* (Routledge 2007), *Human Settlement and the Environmental Challenge* (Oxford: EOLS 2006), *Global Networks/Linked Cities* (Routledge 2002), and the co-edited *Digital Formations* (Princeton University Press 2005).

All her edited books are based on larger collective research projects, sponsored by funding entities. *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (London and New York: Routledge 2002) is based on a large multi-year UNU based and sponsored project with researchers in six countries. A second edited book recently completed is *Human Settlement and the*

*Environmental Challenge* (Oxford: EOLS 2006), one of the 14 volumes in the UNESCO Encyclopedia on the Environment; this involved setting up a network of researchers and activists in over 30 countries. The co-edited *Digital Formations: Information Technologies and New Architectures in the Global Realm* (Princeton University Press 2005) is based on a four year project she chaired for the Social Science Research Council, with support from the Ford Foundation. Finally, *Deciphering the Global: Its Scales, Spaces and Subjects* (Routledge 2007) is based on the Transnationalism Project set up and run by Sassen at the University of Chicago, 1998-2007.

She regularly writes for general audience publications. Her comments have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Le Monde*, *Vanguardia*, *Clarín*, *Die Zeit*, *Newsweek International*, *The Financial Times*, among others.

Her recent professional activities include the following completed projects: Member of the Board of Directors, IBA (an initiative supported by the German Government with 300 million Euros for the upgrading of a vast poverty area in the North of Germany); Member, International Advisory Board chaired by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, for the Mayor of Rotterdam, Ahmed Aboutaleb, at the time the first elected Muslim Mayor of any major city in Europe; Member of the Panel on Urban Population Dynamics, Committee on Population of the National Academy of Sciences; Chair, Information Technology and International Cooperation Committee of

the Social Science Research Council; Director, Transnationalism Project of the University of Chicago; and co-Chair of the economy section of the Global Chicago Project. She was one of eight experts on the Mastercard Worldwide Centers of Commerce Index, a vast project involving 60 variables, from economic to social, covering 75 major and minor global cities around the world.

In the past, she has directed and been a member of several research projects. She directed a two-year Volkswagen funded project on cities and global governance, and a five-year multi-country project on global cities and cross-border networks for the Institute of Advanced Studies, United Nations University (Tokyo). In the 1980s and 1990s she co-directed the Hispanic Women in the Garments and Electronics Industries in New York and California, supported by the Tinker and Ford Foundations, was a member of the Japan-based project on Economic Restructuring in the U.S. and Japan, sponsored by the United Nations Center on Regional Development and MIT (1988-1990); the SSRC (Social Science Research Council) Working Group on New York City, sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation (1985-1990); the SSRC Committee on Hispanic Public Policy, sponsored by the Ford Foundation (1987-1991); the New York-London Comparative Study sponsored by the Economic Social Research Council of the United Kingdom (1990-1995). She also was a member of the Ford Foundation Task Force for Research on Hispanics; the Research Working Group on the Informal Sector, supported by the Ford, Tinker, and Rockefeller Foundations; the Stanford University Project

on Mexico-U.S. Relations; the Immigration and Economic Sociology Project sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation (1992-1995); the Comparative Urban Studies project at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington DC (1992-1993); The Group of Lisbon sponsored by the Science Program of the European Union and the Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal 1993-1998).

She has served on several scientific juries for, among others, the French Government's Ministry of Urban Affairs and the Belgium Government's Agency on Science and Technology in the Office of the Prime Minister. She has often served as an advisor, including to Queens Borough President Claire Shulman's Blue Ribbon Panel on Government; the New York State Industrial Corporation Council; Global Chicago; the LSE Mayors Project of the Cities Programme; and the World Economic Forum's Club of Mayors. Over the years she has served on the board of diverse professional journals and organizations. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Sociological Research Association, the European Academy of Sciences, The Royal Academy of Sciences of the Netherlands, and the Atheneum (UK).

She has received multiple research grants and awards. Besides the already mentioned grantors, they include the Ford Foundation, Tinker Foundation, The Mellon Foundation, The Revson Foundation, Chicago Institute for Architecture and Urbanism, Twentieth Century Fund, American Academy in Berlin. A studio she co-directed won the national prize of the American Institute of

Certified Planners. She was a Fellow at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, Germany; Distinguished Lecturer at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, Austria; Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Law School of the University of Toronto; Visiting Fellow of the American Bar Foundation. She has been a Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (Palo Alto). She has served as visiting professor in large number of institutions; most recently she was named the 2012 Luhmann Visiting Professor at the University of Bielefeld, Germany.

She has received Doctor Honoris Causa from DePaul University (Chicago) where she also gave the commencement address, Delft University (Netherlands), Universite de Poitiers (France), the Royal Stockholm Technical University (Sweden), Ghent University (Belgium), Warwick University (UK), Universidad de Murcia (Spain), European University Institute (Florence), Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires and Universidad Nacional de Cordoba (both from Argentina), Universidad de Valencia (Spain), Universidad de Guadalajara (Mexico), Ecole Normale Superieure (Paris).

She was awarded the Prince of Asturias Prize in the Social Sciences in 2013, elected as a Foreign Member to the Royal Academy of the Sciences of the Netherlands, and made a Chevalier du Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French Government. Other honors and prizes from bodies

representing diverse disciplines in the social sciences, include most recently Honorary Geographer (2011) by the American Geographers Association, Eminent Development Scholar (2012) by the International Studies Association, Eminent Scholar in Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Migration Studies (2014) by the International Studies Association. She has delivered many named lectures, among them the 1994 Henry Luce Lecture at Clark University, the 1995 Memorial Schoff Lectures at Columbia University, the 1997 LeFrak Lecture at the University of Maryland, the 1999 Georg Simmel Lectures at Humboldt University (Berlin), the 2000 Theodore Hesburgh Lectures on Politics and Ethics at the University of Notre Dame, the 2005 Sherril Lecture at the Yale University Law School, the 2010 Coulson lecture at Oxford University, The Luhman Lecture at Bielefeld University, The Storrs Lectures in Jurisprudence and Philosophy at the Yale University Law School, and multiple named lectures at universities worldwide.

Besides English, she is fluent in Spanish, Italian and French, and good in Dutch and German. She also studied Russian and Japanese.

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