NEW YORK – A GLOBAL MEGA AND WORLD CITY

Introduction

New York along with Tokyo is one of an exclusive group of 2 cities which are not only mega cities (over 10 million people), but are also top rank World Cities (dominant World Cities). Note London, the third dominant World City is currently not a mega city although it will probably reach 10 million by 2020. Dominant world cities are global hubs, interconnected commercially, financially, and technologically around the world.

Fig. 1 shows the system of World Cities. All these cities exert socio-economic importance not only in their country but also regionally (for example Hong Kong and Singapore in the Far East, or Chicago and Los Angeles in the USA). World cities are well connected to each other via frequent international flights. In economic terms most have financial institutions/stock exchanges, and a centre of commerce, containing national headquarters of some TNCs.

Table 1 Top 10 Mega-Cities in 2006 and predicted growth by 2020.

2006				2020			
Rank	**City**	**Country**	**Pop. (m)**	**Rank**	**City**	**Country**	**Pop. (m)**
1	Tokyo	Japan	35.5	1	Tokyo	Japan	37.2
2	Mexico City	Mexico	19.2	2	Mumbai	India	25.9
3	Mumbai	India	18.8	3	Delhi	India	25.8
4	New York	USA	18.6	4	Dhaka	Bangladesh	22.0
5	Sao Paulo	Brazil	18.6	5	Mexico City	Mexico	21.8
6	Delhi	India	16.0	6	Sao Paulo	Brazil	21.5
7	Calcutta	India	14.5	7	Lagos	Nigeria	21.5
8	Jakarta	Indonesia	13.7	8	Jakarta	Indonesia	20.7
9	Buenos Aires	Argentina	13.5	9	New York	USA	20.4
10	Dhaka	Bangladesh	13.0	10	Karachi	Pakistan	18.9

Source: UN

Fig. 1 The system of world cities.
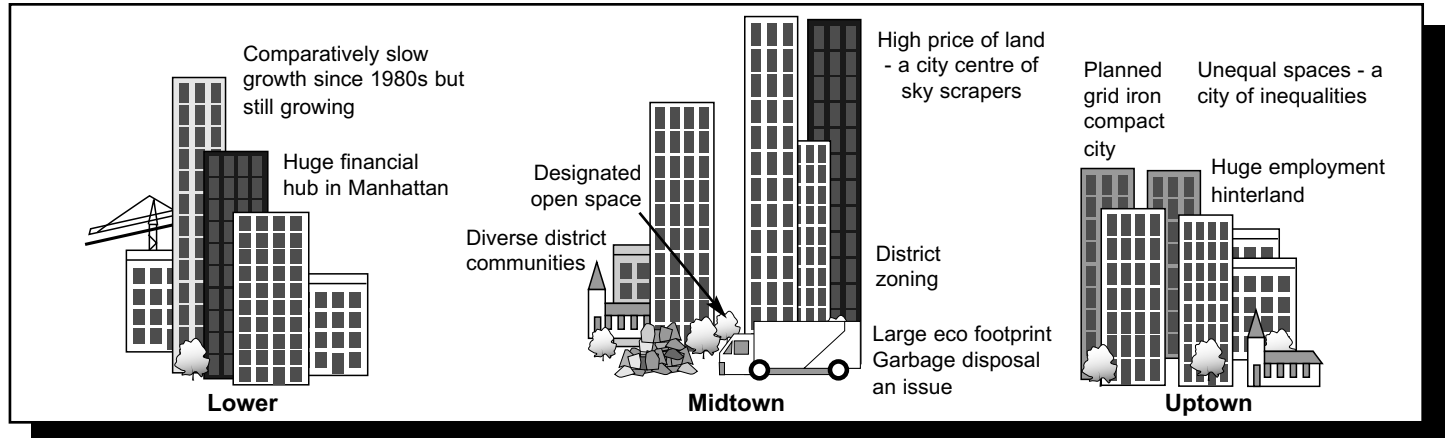

Key:
- Dominant world city
- Major world city
- Secondary world city
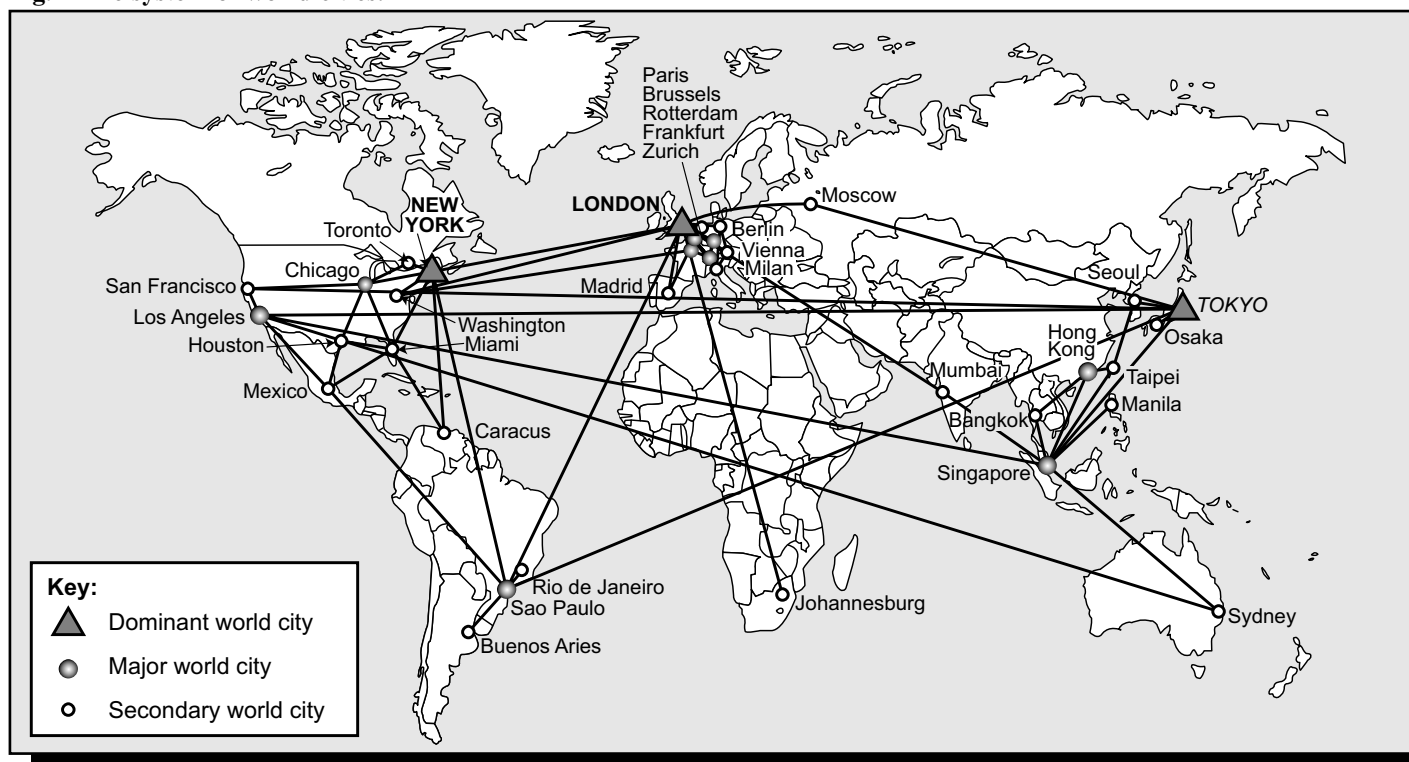
Introducing New York

Fig. 2 shows some of the key features of New York. Some features result from its growth as a top 10 mega city, fuelled by waves of migrants and others results from its status as a dominant top 3 world city.

Fig. 2 Key features of New York.

Comparatively slow growth since 1980s but still growing

Huge financial hub in Manhattan

Designated open space

Diverse district communities

High price of land - a city centre of sky scrapers

District zoning

Large eco footprint Garbage disposal an issue

Planned grid iron compact city

Unequal spaces - a city of inequalities

Huge employment hinterland

Lower   **Midtown**   **Uptown**

Manhattan – The Heart of New York

Manhattan is a major commercial, financial, and cultural centre of the United States and to varying extents, of the world. Most major radio, television, and telecommunications companies in the United State are based here, as well as news, magazine, book, and other media publishers. Manhattan has many famous landmarks, tourist attractions, museums, and universities. It is also home to the headquarters of the United Nations. Manhattan has the largest central business district in the United States, is the site for Wall Street Stock Exchange and is the home to the largest number of corporate headquarters in the USA. Perhaps the World Trade Centre attack in September 2001 was targeted due to the status of capitalism, modernity and wealth that the twin towers represented. Manhattan is indisputably the centre of New York City and the New York metropolitan region, holding the seat of city government, and the largest fraction of employment, business, and recreational activities amongst the 5 boroughs (Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, *see Fig. 3*). New York's modern cultural history is second to none, being the creative force behind many artistic scenes such as the Greenwich Village folk music scene in the 1950-70s , the 'Beat' scene (1950s) and graffiti art and hip-hop culture (emanating from the Bronx, 1970s-present) to name but a few.

Fig. 3 New York City.

Key:
Boroughs of New York City:
1 Staten Island
2 Manhatten
3 Brooklyn
4 Bronx
5 Queens

━━━ New York Metropolitan area
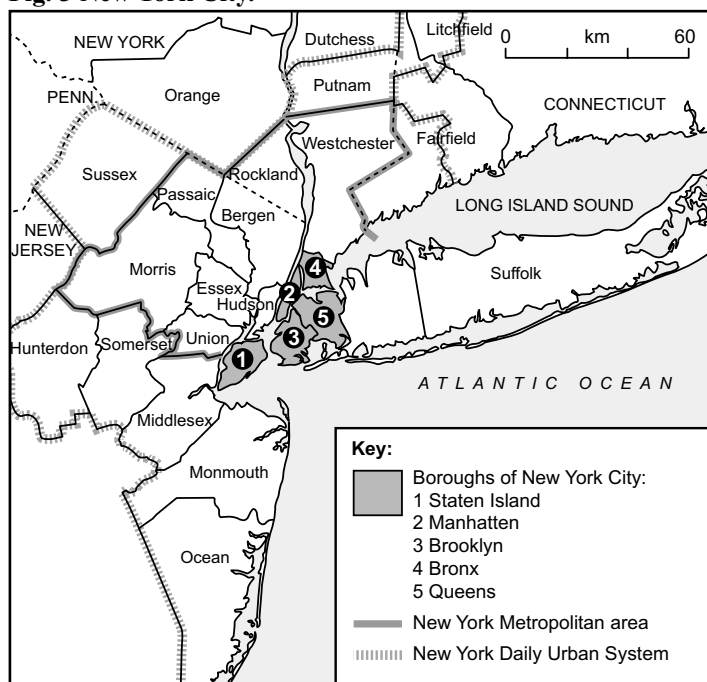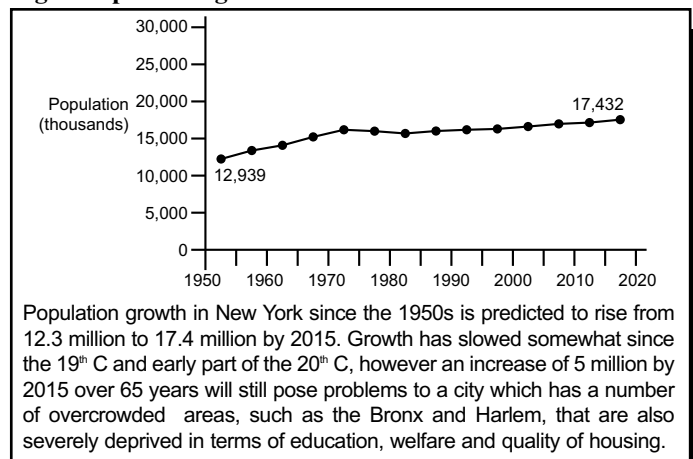▓▓▓ New York Daily Urban System

Fig. 4 Population growth in New York

Population growth in New York since the 1950s is predicted to rise from 12.3 million to 17.4 million by 2015. Growth has slowed somewhat since the 19th C and early part of the 20th C, however an increase of 5 million by 2015 over 65 years will still pose problems to a city which has a number of overcrowded areas, such as the Bronx and Harlem, that are also severely deprived in terms of education, welfare and quality of housing.

Source: United Nations

The planning laws of 1909 forced slum clearance, ridding the city of many unplanned, poorly-constructed, overcrowded and disease-ridden settlements. Herbert Asbury's 'Gangs of New York' (1927) refers to 'The Bowery' in Lower Manhattan as being such a place. The area now contains many of New York's major financial and administrative institutions, well planned grid system streets and connections to the extensive underground network. Similarly, the areas above the Lower East Side and Greenwich Village are grid systems with mainly, high rise accommodation and workspace. This means that many areas of the city have high population densities, many apartment blocks housing over 1000 residents in relatively few, albeit built-up, square metres. Most residents and workers have access to the extensive underground system which has stations every few blocks. As a result there is considerably less poverty of access to jobs, health care and education in New York than in other world cities such as Sao Paulo, Brazil or Lagos, Nigeria, where growing slum areas create an urban sprawl that makes many residents isolated from any form of transport.

High population densities and a built up environment also encouraged the innovative creation of green spaces in the city, such as Central Park and community spaces (where cultural events take place) such as Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. Such spaces are vital to the well-being of the population and within them contain facilities for sport and leisure, even to the extent that a zoo takes up a corner of Central Park, near the main shopping district of 5th and Park Avenues. Many of these public spaces (after they became illegal zones for drug abuse, vandalism and vagrancy in the 1970s) have been recently regenerated.

Migrant Flows the cultural building blocks of New York

New York at the end of the 19th century was the largest city in the world. The reasons for growth were multiple. Western European migrants came initially with the Dutch, Swedes and Germans in particular claiming their status at the top of the immigrant hierarchy, immediately exerting an influence; New York was initially New Amsterdam; Stuyvesant, Harlem, Vanderbilt Park and Bronx all take their names from the first Western European communities to arrive in Manhattan. The 19th century living conditions in many European cities prompted further migration to the land of opportunity. The potato famine in Ireland during the earlier part of the 19th century saw large numbers of Irish migrants enter New York. Similarly, poor yields in farming areas of southern Italy saw large numbers of Italian migrants arrive at New York's Ellis Island immigration control centre. In Russia and Eastern Europe the persecution of Jewish communities had started long before the emergence of Nazism in Germany, forcing them to seek refuge in New York. Throughout this period up until 1949, the flow of Chinese migrants to New York was unrivalled (due to the opium wars and western invasion, bubonic plague and famine in China), creating the largest Chinese diaspora outside of their country of origin.

> **Key Term: Diaspora -** Migrants of similar ethnic origins that have become residents in places often far removed from their homeland, who have created a community that maintains some of the attributes of 'home' such as religious centres and restaurants.

By 1893, New York had become for many migrants a worse place of squalor, crime, hunger and poverty than their place of origin. In 1909, reforms were passed in America, forcing city governors and developers to adhere to planning laws, carry out major slum clearance in the Lower East Side and Bowery and implement plans for infrastructural developments such as sewers and transport routes. The physically built and well planned environment that we know today as Manhattan was borne out of these laws. However, slum areas still existed as migration to New York continued, largely unabated. Afro-Caribbean communities emerged in numbers, during the Great Migration in the 1920s, many moving from the southern states of the USA (having inhabited this region after generations of forced migration during the slave trade) in the early part of the 20th century. Prior to and after WWII, many Europeans, particularly Jewish migrants were forced to seek refuge in the USA, many to the long established Jewish communities in Brooklyn. Similarly, during the cold war many Russians, Cubans have claimed political asylum, residing in New York. Many communities have developed through a desire to migrate and better their economic status, with Middle Eastern (including Lebanese, Pakistani and Indian), Mexican and Greek communities all represented strongly, by their religious temples and traditional cuisines in the Lower East Side, Queens and Harlem.

Diaspora Communities and Cultural Development

Diaspora development and culture is often different from that within their country of origin. Many communities keep some traditions such as maintaining religious practice and building temples and churches to do so. However, many diaspora often merge with other communities who share a similar religious, economic or linguistic background. As such each take on characteristics of the other, usually fused with large cultural elements of the host society. This is often termed a 'hybrid culture'. Manhattan, New York has many examples hybrid culture and examples of new forms of art and cuisine, even languages that have emerged from such a diverse society. Conversely, there are many diaspora communities that maintain their original identity very well, yet still show elements of the host society, often exemplified by the language spoken by second and third generation migrants being that of the host.

Fig. 5 Timeline of New York's development.
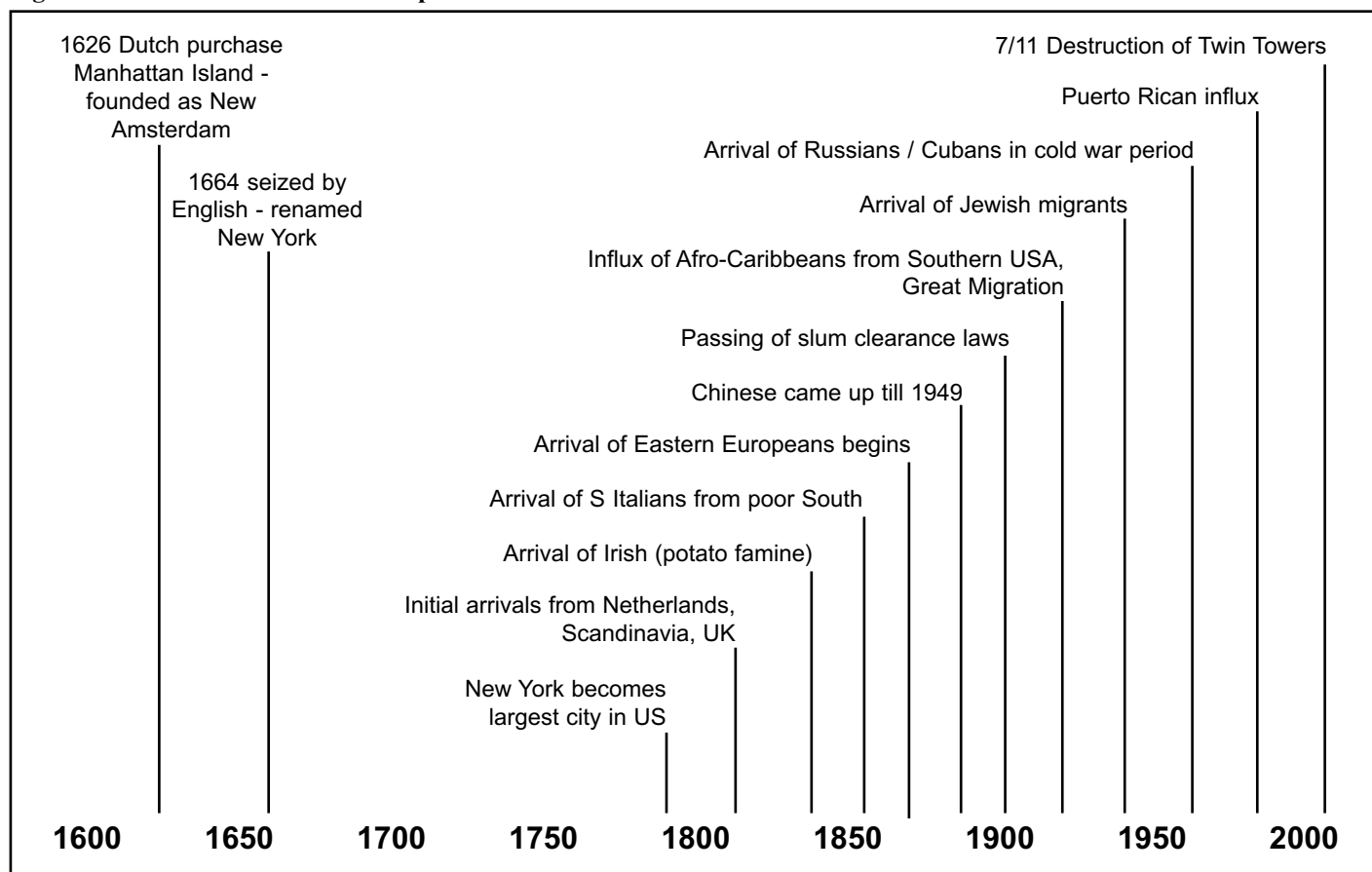
Examples of Diaspora Communities and Hybrid Cultures in New York

Fig. 6 Manhatten.
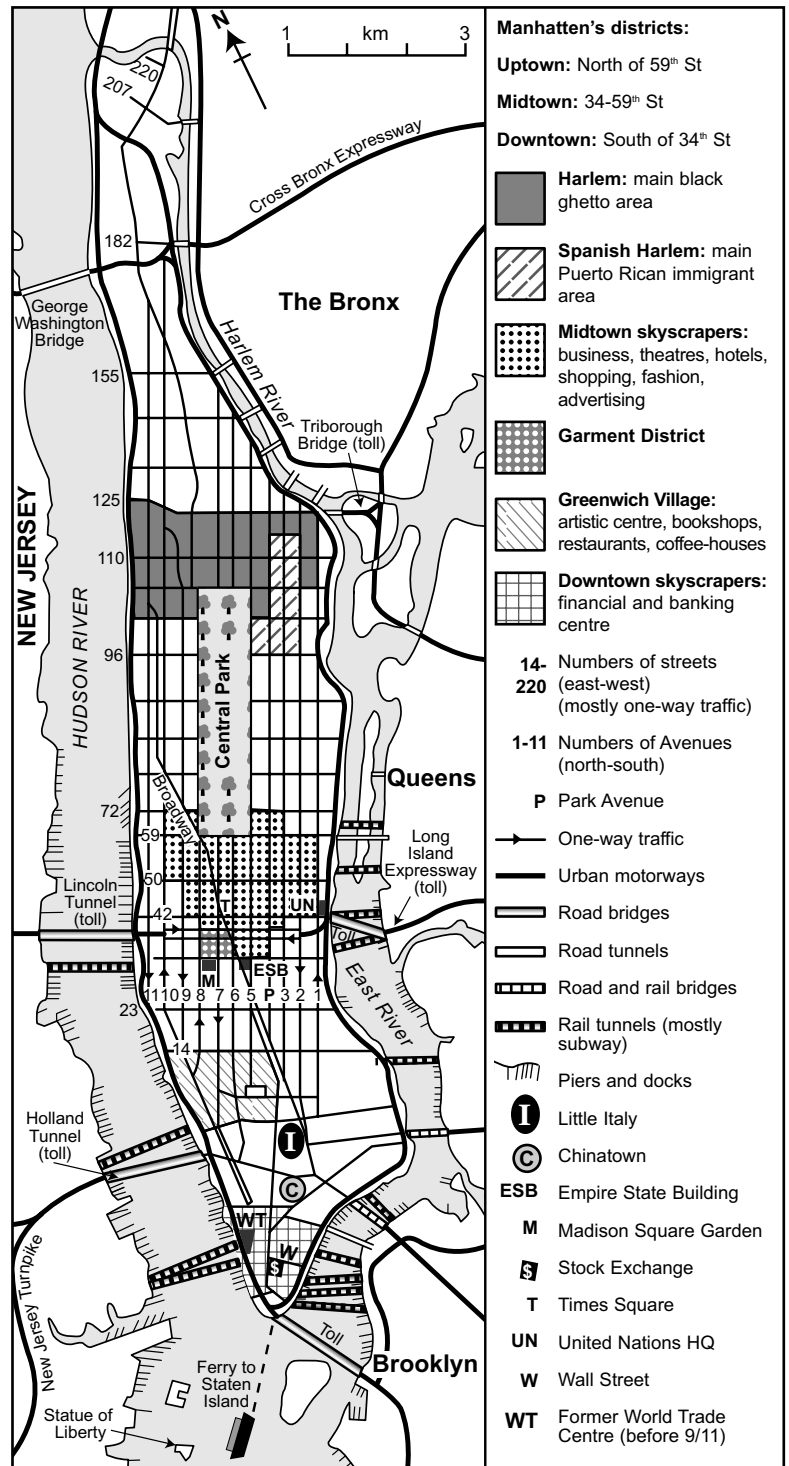
Case Study 1: Little Italy

Little Italy was, along with the Bronx and Brooklyn, the hub of the Italian migrant community from the mid-1800s until 1970s. It is depicted in many Italian-American films such as the Godfather Trilogy. Up until the slum clearances in the early 1800s, Italians lived in cramped tenement buildings, often one family to a room. Frequently, they shared their accommodation and religious centres with other catholic groups such as Irish and Polish. The area was inhabited by large numbers of Italians until the late 1970s, many in tenements or in poorly constructed and planned high rise buildings.

Maintaining Italian Culture

The Mafia was formed initially to protect Italian residents and preserve their culture and to aid the import of Italian goods from the homeland. The community was still prominent in the 1970s, and continued to celebrate Italian festivals and maintain culture through the churches, restaurants and even place names such as St. Marks Square. The infamy gained by association with more notorious Mafia activity throughout the 20th century brought about a cult status to the area and made it a must-see place for passing tourists, meaning that it will always maintain some sense of Italian culture. Many shops with ethnic names such as Katz's Deli (Jewish) and Chinese restaurants show a number of other migrant communities have settled here.

Loss of Italian Culture?

The area has gained many inhabitants throughout the 20th century of other nationalities and ethnicities. Those with cultures akin to the Italians, such as the Irish, have lived side by side, though not always peacefully throughout their history in New York. As the Italians gained economic success, many families left for the suburban boroughs such as Queens and even to parts of neighbouring state New Jersey (demonstrated in recent TV series 'The Sopranos'). However, it could be argued that since the openings of pizzerias, restaurants and shops and demand for Italian goods by the wider community during the first few waves of Italian migrants, as well as the necessity of those migrants to learn to speak the English language, Italian culture in the USA was that of a typical diaspora – one that retains many symbols of and ties to the homeland, but which takes on many characteristics of the host country. This is confounded by the fact that subsequent generations have taken English as a first spoken language having attended American schools and have immersed themselves in wider American culture in order to progress and assimilate. We have therefore the successful migrant, hybrid culture, the Italian-American; a community that is schooled in American tradition and history; supports American football and baseball teams; is entertained and dressed according to American youth culture; smaller families to suit the cramped living conditions of American cities. Yet the group still retains links to Italy and symbols of that culture; a catholic upbringing; regular family gatherings; Italian food.

Manhatten's districts:

Uptown: North of 59th St

Midtown: 34-59th St

Downtown: South of 34th St

Harlem: main black ghetto area

Spanish Harlem: main Puerto Rican immigrant area

Midtown skyscrapers: business, theatres, hotels, shopping, fashion, advertising

Garment District

Greenwich Village: artistic centre, bookshops, restaurants, coffee-houses

Downtown skyscrapers: financial and banking centre

14-220 Numbers of streets (east-west) (mostly one-way traffic)

1-11 Numbers of Avenues (north-south)

P Park Avenue

→ One-way traffic

Urban motorways

Road bridges

Road tunnels

Road and rail bridges

Rail tunnels (mostly subway)

Piers and docks

I Little Italy

C Chinatown

ESB Empire State Building

M Madison Square Garden

S Stock Exchange

T Times Square

UN United Nations HQ

W Wall Street

WT Former World Trade Centre (before 9/11)

Map labels: The Bronx; NEW JERSEY; HUDSON RIVER; George Washington Bridge; Cross Bronx Expressway; Harlem River; Triborough Bridge (toll); Central Park; Broadway; Queens; Long Island Expressway (toll); Lincoln Tunnel (toll); East River; Holland Tunnel (toll); New Jersey Turnpike; Ferry to Staten Island; Statue of Liberty; Brooklyn; 220, 207, 182, 155, 125, 110, 96, 72, 59, 50, 42, 23, 14; 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 P 3 2 1

Case Study 2: Harlem

Consisting of Harlem and Spanish Harlem or 'El Barrio', slum clearance and regeneration started in earnest in 2000, however, the area is still largely deprived in terms of housing, education and health.

**Ethnicity.** The population of Harlem through the 20th Century has largely been associated with Afro-Caribbeans. It contains communities and religious symbols from all over the world including Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, many Muslim Mosques, the Ethiopian Abyssinian Baptist Church in El Barrio there is the rich diversity of Latin Americans, most recently migrants from Puerto Rico, Cuba and El Salvador.

**Cultural Diversity.** Harlem has been the cultural hot-bed for Jazz and Blues since the 1930s. Undertones of traditional African rhythms can be heard in Jazz and Blues pieces fused with lyrics that describe New York Life, such as Duke Ellington's 'Take the (subway) A-Train'. Many blues and soul pieces have a gospel feel to them, referencing their African and South USA origins. Many Harlem land marks are named after the leaders of culture from the Afro-Caribbean diaspora – Duke Ellington Circle is one example. Politically and religiously, Harlem has always supported a counter-culture – The Black Panther Islamic group led by Malcolm X aired their views from Harlem, Revolutionaries such as Castro and 'Che' Guevara resided here when visiting for UN conferences.

Case Study 3: Bronx

The Bronx is connected to Upper Manhattan and as such has followed a similar pattern of wealth then deprivation. In the 19th century the area was home to wealthy landowners and green space. As migrant groups moved with a degree of success, from Lower to Upper Manhattan, so to did the wealthy to New York State. By the 1970s the Bronx had long been a deprived borough of the city. It was home to many 'housing projects' or large, dilapidated apartment blocks harbouring many of New York's gangs; a culture of drugs, unemployment, poor education and deprivation.

- **Ethnic Diversity across 'Walled Communities'**
  True to many New York Neighbourhoods, the Bronx houses many ethnic groups. Afro-Caribbean, Italian and Chinese groups have had a strong presence here since the 1920s. Again, they are represented by their religious and cultural centres. However, communities here have sometimes been 'walled' as opposed to typical diasporas in Manhattan. In the 1950s–70s there were racial tensions between the Italian and Afro-Caribbean communities and other communities such as Chinese Buddhists, confined their religious activities to Bronx housing projects, many unable to speak the host language.

- **A Hybrid Culture Evolves**
  Whether or not some communities are more open to influence on their culture is open to debate. However, in the late 1970s, a collection of black musicians from a Bronx housing project, called 'The Sugar Hill Gang' released from their community a record called 'Rappers Delight'. Many other records followed from similar groups, classified under the genre of 'Hip-Hop'. Together with 'Graffiti' art, borne out of the same area and urban influences as 'Hip-Hop' it became a global artistic phenomena. Hip-Hop uses elements of many of these sounds gathered in the USA from all over the world and fuses them with lyrics that depict urban deprivation, celebrity culture, fashion and gang warfare, all of which could be experienced in the Bronx in 1970s and in most US cities still today. Subconsciously, it traces the migration of Africans and Caribbean peoples from homeland, to the experiences today of many urban dwellers and to an extent, integration with the host society and other migrant communities in New York and abroad who feel represented by that genre of music and art.

Conclusion

A Summary of the Development of Migrant Communities Living in World Cities such as New York:

Table 2 shows that Manhattan has a very high population density, largely due to a combination of tall buildings housing dwellers and workers from one of the largest, long-established migrant communities in the world.

Table 2 Manhattan Compared.

2000 US Census	Manhattan	New York City (5 Boroughs Fig.3.)	New York State
Total population	1,537,195	8,008,278	18,976,457
Population density	66,940.1/sq mi	26,403/sq mi	402/sq mi
Foreign born	29.4%	35.9%	20.4%
White	54.4%	44.7%	67.9%
Black	17.4%	26.6%	15.9%
Hispanic (any race)	27.2%	27.0%	15.1%
Asian	9.4%	9.8%	5.5%

Source: US Census Bureau.

Positive Outcomes of Migrant Communities in World Cities:

Cosmopolitan urban areas, characterised by many traditions, art forms, musical genres, religious symbols and centres, cuisines, restaurants and architectural achievements. A welcoming base is created for new, but similar migrants to more established communities, enabling easier assimilation. Furthermore, hybrid cultures emerge, often displaying new hybrid creations through artistic and other means. Societies may become more tolerant and broadminded and aware of the wider world and its problems from where their neighbours originate. Similarly, ethnic rights are recognised and equality can be achieved over time.

Negative Outcomes of Migrant Communities in World Cities:

Walled communities reduce chances of assimilation and create multi-ethnic, but segregated societies. Migrants, particularly new waves of first generation immigrants suffer poor living conditions, are inhibited initially in terms of economic progress and can be isolated if no prior community has been established. Much of the Bronx in the 1960s and 70s saw tension between different ethnic groups. Today Jewish and Lebanese communities may feel tension due to ongoing issues in Israel and Gaza. Often issues in countries of origin or between ethnic groups abroad can spill over into the host city. For some first and second generation migrants, their sense of traditional homeland culture becomes more diluted as they immerse themselves in host society.

Sample Question

Describe and evaluate New York's importance as a 'world city' and its status as a 'cultural melting pot'. *(15)*

Answers should include:

- Definition of a world city. Reference to New York's importance as a world city – economic status, Wall Street, headquarters of many financial institutions, cultural and artistic contributions.
- Migrant flows and brief reasons for migration to New York
- Definitions of assimilation and diaspora, examples of ethnic groups in named areas of New York
- Discussion of what is meant by cultural melting pot and contribution to this using some examples of ethnic communities where hybrid cultures have developed and assimilation has taken place.
- Balance for evaluation should include issues experienced by migrants (social conditions, deprivation and loss of culture) and issues posed by migrant communities within host society such as racial tension, walled communities and conflict influenced by homeland issues.

Further Reading

Alfonso, C. (2004) *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research.* Routledge

Asbury, H. (1927) *Gangs of New York.* Penguin, USA.

Karim, H.K. (2006) *The Media of Diaspora: Mapping the Globe.* Routledge

McBride, J. (2007) *'Hip Hop Planet'. In: National Geographic.* April 2007. National Geographic Society, USA.

Osofsky, G (1963) *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto. Negro New York, 1890-1930.* Penguin, USA.

Rath, J. (2006) *Tourism, Ethnic Diversity and the City.* Routledge