NEW YORK CITY

embracing the culture of congestion

Focus

Understanding how New York faced the drawbacks of Urbanization like population rise, homelessness, poor living conditions, unemployment, crime and yet somehow became 'home' to everyone who lived there.

Hypothesis

New York has been a global city for years because of embracing the 'Culture of Congestion'[1].

Objective

➢ To understand what truly makes a city global.

➢ To analyze how migratory patterns affect a city and its growth.

Study

➢ Understanding the developments in the city caused by –

▪ More people moving into the city leading to more Political, Economic, Social changes within the city

▪ Architectural / Urban design interventions

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[1] Koolhaas, Rem. 1994. *Delirious New York: a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan*. New York: Monacelli Press. Pg 7

Synopsis

From a city of 4000 people by the end of 17th century to a city of 8.2449 Million today, New York has evolved itself to accommodate for the people coming in. During this time frame the city saw Slavery, The New York Conspiracy of 1741, The Battle of Long Island in 1776, The American Civil War in 1861, formation of the Modern City of New York with the consolidation of Brooklyn (until then an independent city), Manhattan and other outlying areas in 1898, Introduction of Inter-borough Rapid Transit in 1904, World War I in 1914 (rising crime and poverty rates ended when disrupted trade routes), Great Depression preceding World war II, Robert Moses and Urban – Anti Urban - Renewal in 1960's, Blackout of 1977, Rebirth of Wall Street in the 1980's and The terrorist attack in 2001. New York City has been home to people from different ethnicities in these years, people of European origin (German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian), Hispanics (Mexican, Dominican, Ecuadorian, and Colombian), Middle Eastern and Asian origin. The fact that these people moved to this foreign land and made a life for themselves says something about the city; its accommodating nature has made it global. The various landmarks, tourist attractions and museums, The Wall Street and The United Nations headquarters, reaffirm that it is a world city. Over time it has evolved an easy way of navigation. It has somehow continued to be a commercial, economic, and a cultural melting pot. The people, the infrastructure, the job opportunities have contributed to its status. The statue of liberty is an icon of freedom and of the United States of America; it has also became a welcoming signal to immigrants after Lazarus's poem was engraved on its pedestal. I believe New York City has lived by it in spirit.

"Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door."[2]

Its survival as a major center of social, economic and cultural forces for over 400 years makes it a potential case study for understanding the dynamics of world cities in general.

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[2] Lazarus, Emma. 1883. *The New Colossus*

"If you imagine an ordinary moment at an intersection in New York City, a street light -- some people are stopped and others are in motion, some cars are stopped and others are in motion -- if you were to put that in film terms, in a freeze frame, and hold everything for a second, you would realize that there's a universe there of totally disparate intentions. Everybody going about his or her business in the silence of their own minds with everybody else, and the street, and the time of day, and the architecture, and the quality of light, and the nature of the weather as a kind of background or field for the individual consciousness. When you think about that, that's what happens in the city, in that somehow the city can embrace and accept and accommodate all that disparate intention at one and the same time. Not only in that corner, but in thousands of corners. It's really an astonishing thing"

– E.L. Doctorow

A World City in the making – New York City (1609 – 2013)

Around the time New York City was founded, London and Paris were already 1500 years old, Rome and Beijing were 2000 and Jerusalem was 4000 years old, yet somehow in the years to come this tiny Dutch colony in the edge of the world rose to become the biggest city on the planet. It grew into the cultural and economic capital of the world and the supreme laboratory of the modern life. By the end of the 19th century, New York City was the fastest growing city in the world. It encountered urban problems long before Athens or Beijing did.
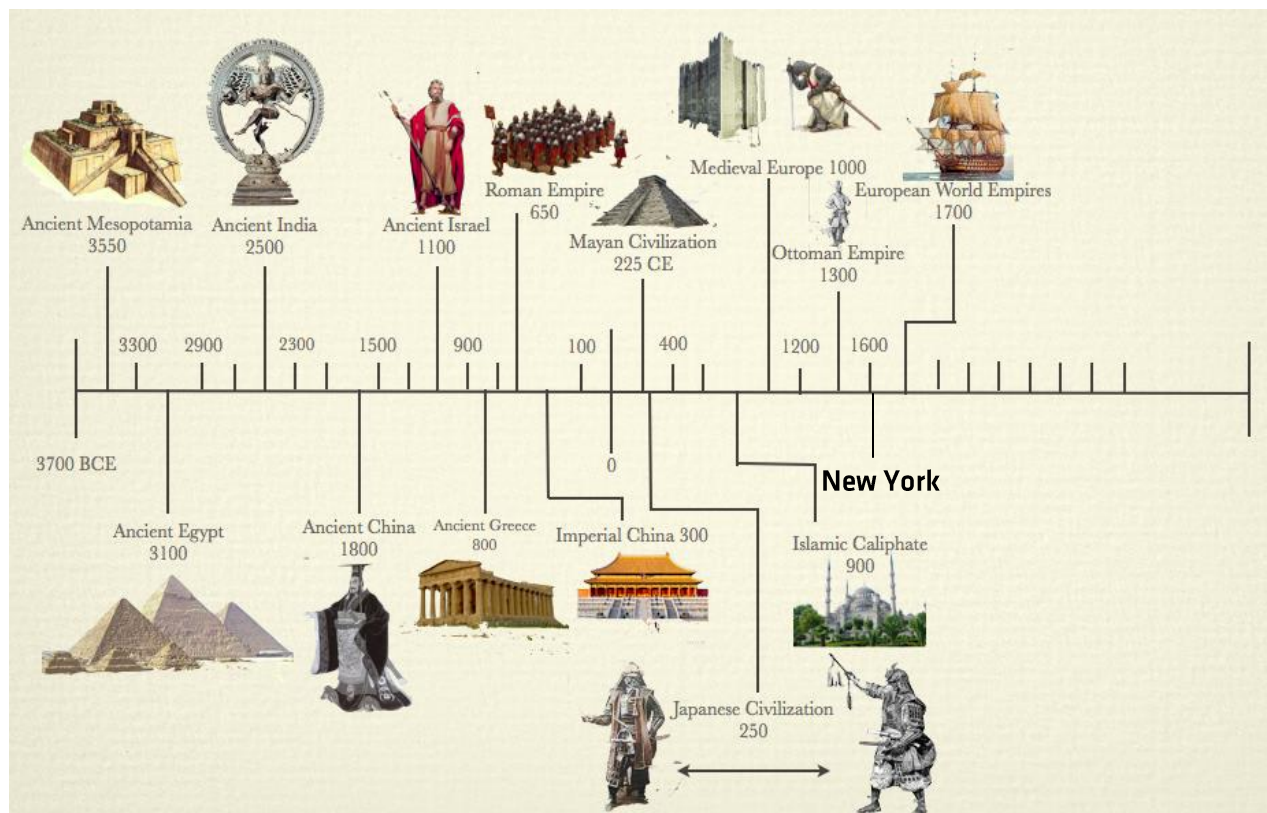
On September 2nd 1609 an English explorer hired by the Dutch to find a faster route to the riches of the orient found his way into a sheltered bay which later grew into New York City.

Originally inhabited by the Lenape people, the island soon became a Dutch Trading post. The colony was called New Amsterdam. The early colonists included 110 men, women and children. It was called "Mannahatta" by the Native American Lenape tribe. It means "island of many hills." Later the name was altered to Manhattan. In the Southernmost tip simple bark cabins , a crude counting house and a stone and earth fort was built.

In 1626, Manhattan was officially bought by the West India company from the native Americans for 60 guilders. Little did anyone know that this island bought for 60 guilders which is estimated to be equivalent to about $25 in 1626 dollars, probably equivalent to about $500 in today's dollars, will grow up to become the economic and cultural capital of the world.

Unlike Boston or Philadelphia; founded by visionaries to practice their own version of religious freedom, New York on the other hand was a trading post established with the sole intention to make guilders.

Strategic geographical location - The original inhabitants of the island (Lenapes) were not present in many parts of America at that time but they were present on the Manhattan Island. It was a great location for a city. It was almost like the location was handpicked by nature itself.

This was a safe haven found by Henry Hudson. A sailor on the ship said "this is where a thousand ships, may ride in safely. " Of all the early explorers Hudson was the first to sense the potential of a remote and lonely harbor. Yet even he could have never foreseen the tremendous human forces it would one day unleash nor that the great city that would rise there would be dedicated to a crucial experiment one that would grow with every passing year the exhilarating often harrowing experience to see whether all the people of the world could live together in a single place.

Various individuals worked very hard to make New York a success. The first man in this list was Peter Stuyvesant. In 1647 he was chosen as the first governor of New Amsterdam. He was assigned the task "to clean the place up and make it pay". Until he took everything under his control, Beaver skin was the main profession – mink being shipped 4 times a year, but not many wanted to move to New York. Trade in Beaver skin was not considered as rewarding as the others. The city was extremely disorganized with the ratio of people to the number tavern being 120. It was under his guidance that the disorderly backwaters became a bustling town with piers , canals , windmills, schools, 300 row houses a population of 3000.

Peter Stuyvesant served as the last Dutch Director-General of the colony of New Netherland until it was ceded provisionally to the English in 1664, after which it was renamed New York. Stuyvesant's accomplishments as director-general included a great expansion for the settlement of New Amsterdam beyond the southern tip of Manhattan. Among the projects built by Stuyvesant's administration were the protective wall on Wall Street, the canal that became Broad Street, and Broadway.
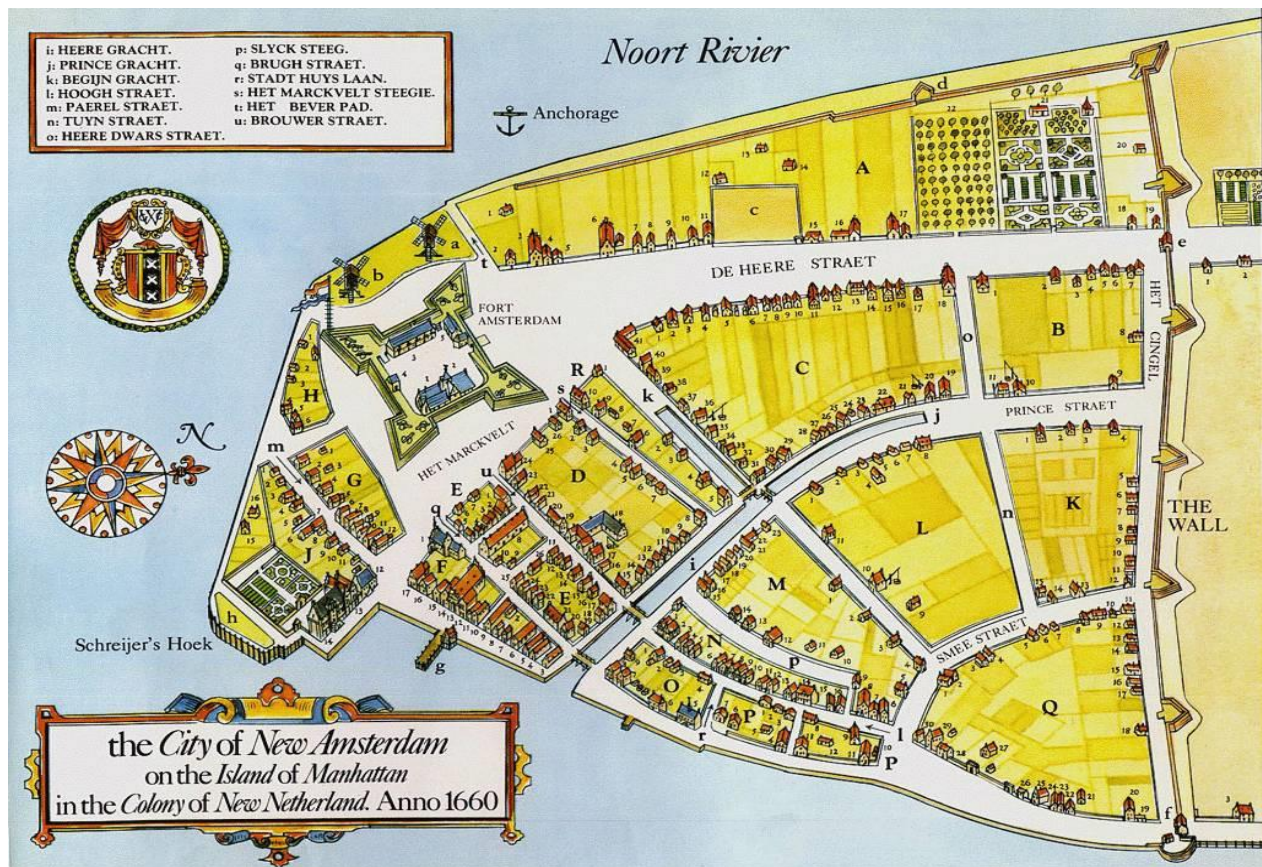
In 1626 the first ship of African slaves arrived from Angola. Apart from the trade of the Beavers skin, slavery was another major trade in New York. In 1654, 23 Sephardic Jews came in seeking rescue. Peter Stuyvesant's was not in favor of this and filed a petition against not having them but it was overturned by the Dutch, reminding him that he was running a business colony and not a religious establishment and for that reason no one should be turned away. As long as people continue peaceful and not hostile to government they should be accepted. It was in 1664 that the church and state were separated. The high density goes back to that time. By 1664, 18 languages were being spoken on the streets and the Dutch were already a minority. Diversity a very unique feature of a world city was seen in New York already.
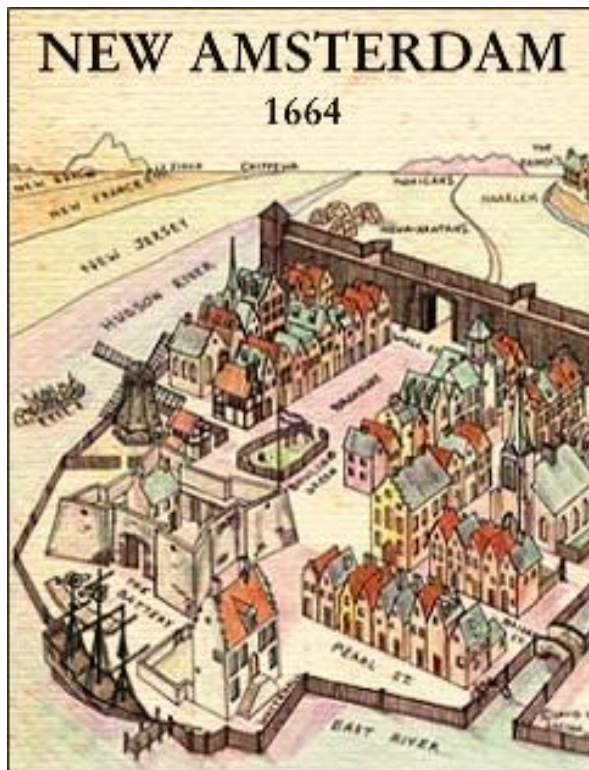
While New York was a British colony it became an important trade port and a manufacturing center. In 1699 the Dutch wall was pulled down to make way for more houses and a new lane paved over it was called The Wall street .By 1740 Manhattan was the 3rd largest port in the British empire, second only to Philadelphia and London.

Also By 1740, 1 in 6 New Yorkers were owned by other New Yorkers. The trade in African fresh provided the fundamental capital. IN 1741 a series of mysterious fires burnt a lot of buildings , the incident was called the New York Conspiracy.. Suspects were burnt alive – 16 people were hanged, 13 slaves had been burnt at the stake and 70 deported.

War In 1758 brought 25,000 British troops and 14000 marines to New York, Money was pouring into the economy. But when the British troops left in 1763 the city fell into an economic depression. The British posed high taxes to recover from war which formed the Background for the road to revolution. It was in 1778 that British surrendered to the Americans inside the old fort in the foot of Manhattan where Peter Stuyvesant had surrendered the Dutch colony to the British 119 years ago.
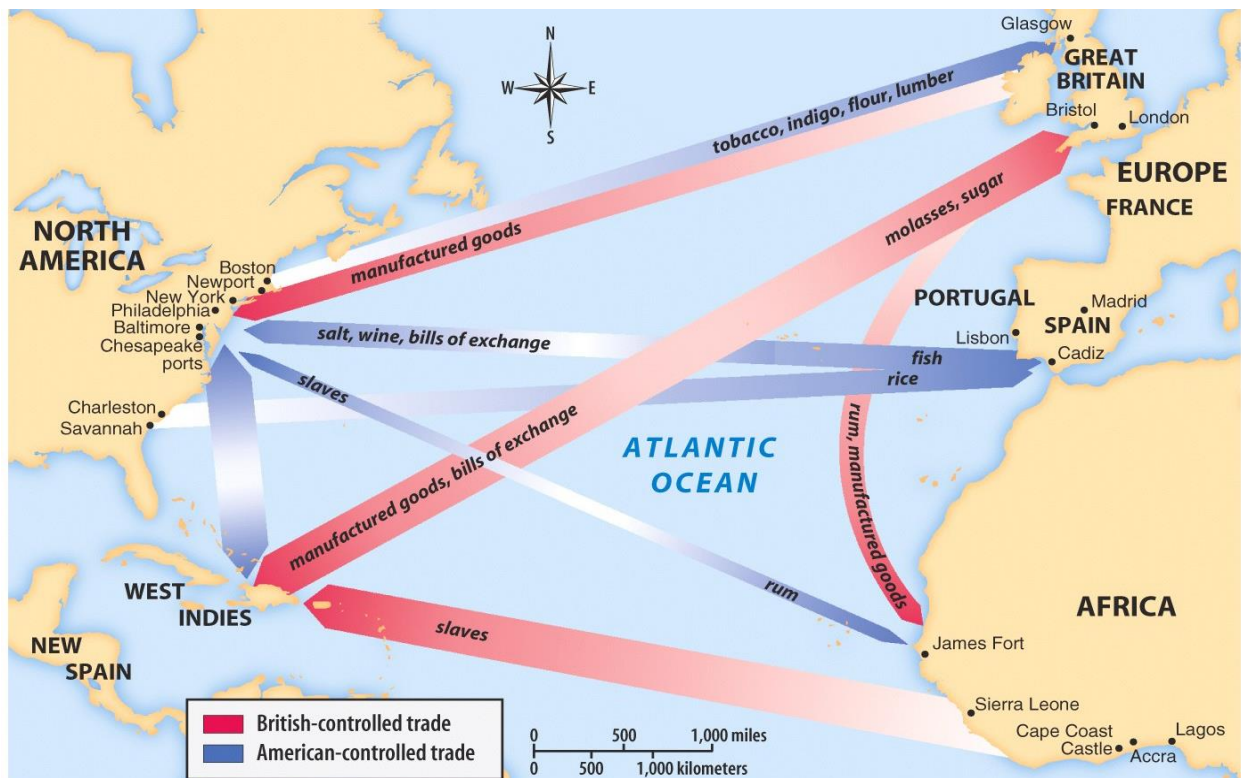
Very little survived from the 17th and 18th century which helped the city rise to be the great metropolis of the world. It was small, depopulated and it wasn't tied down with the shackles of the past.By Noon on April 30h George Washington was sworn in as the first President - Thomas Jefferson the Secretary of State and Alexander Hamilton named the first Secretary of Treasury.

Hamilton began to work on a blueprint for a new kind of nation, A nation not based on plantation and slavery but on manufacturing and immigrant toil. He began to map out the future of New York with banking, taxes, industrialization as its main components for a country that was few decades old.

New York not being the capital worked in its favor in the long run. The city did not have to built an image or live upto the requirements of a capital. It had a clean canvas to draw a glorifying image of itself.

Almost 200 years had elapsed where they imagines almost 1000 ships to find their way into the bay with safety. By 1804 New York's population was 80,000 it had surpassed Philadelphia. It became the land of opportunities. In 1807 entrepreneurs and inventers from all over the country converged on the island city. A strong urban Intervention was needed, A method to direct the growth of the city and to accommodate for the increasing population and the development.

From 1807 – 1825, Dewitt Clinton, an admirer of Hamilton, worked on two major aspects –

- A new city plan that would change the geography of the city .

- The artificial waterway that would connect the Hudson with the remote waters of the west
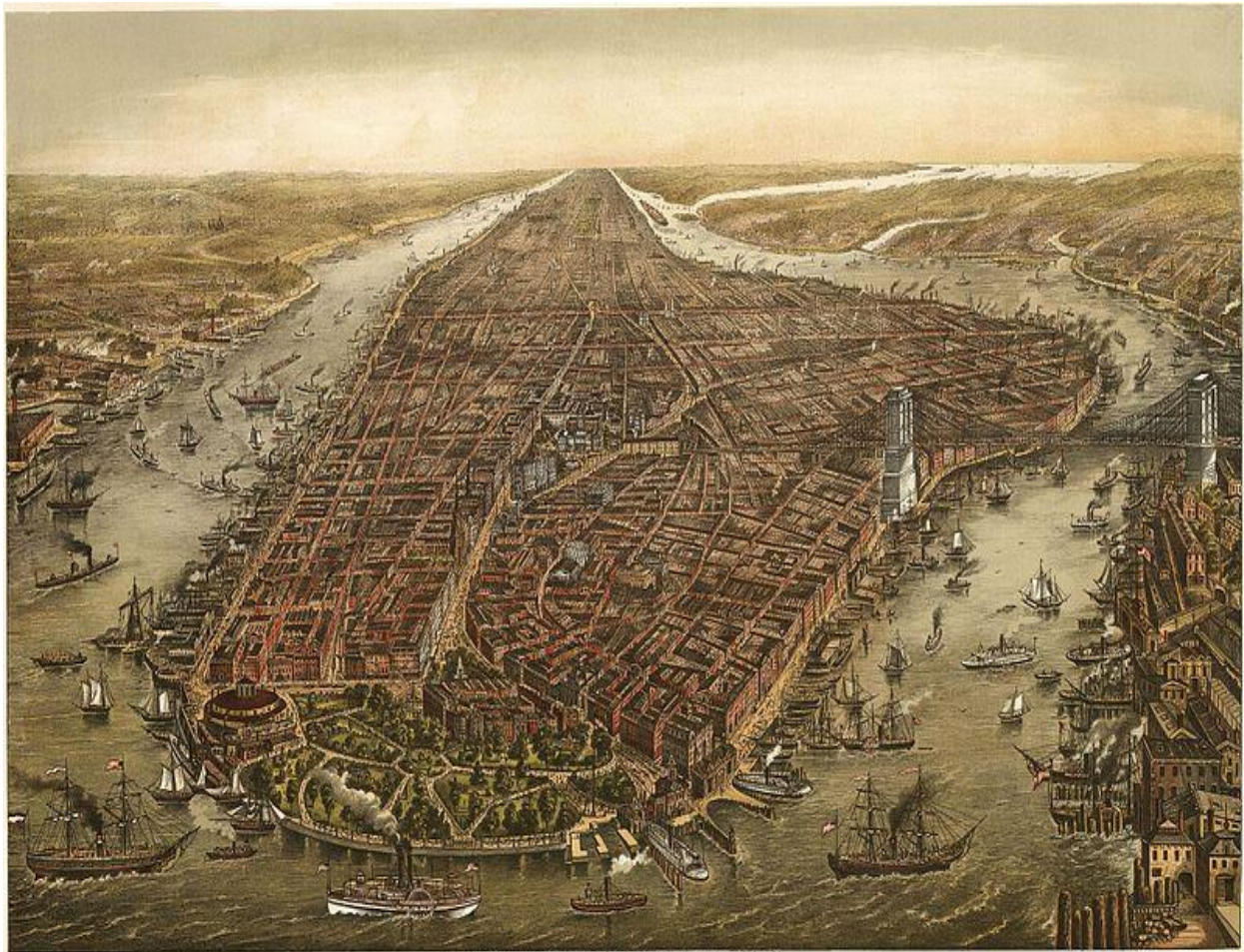
Clinton's commissioners proposed leveling the entire natural geography of the island and replacing it with a single massive grid, 12 avenues wide and 155 streets long covering 11000 acres with more than 2000 blocks.

"The land it divides, unoccupied, the population it describes, conjectural; the buildings it locates, phantoms…." – Ram Koolhaas

The uniformity of blocks, Koolhaas argued, demanded that architecture provide variety. Eventually the grid became the fertilizer to the star system of the skyline. At a time when the city had a population of fewer than a 100,000 people the plan envisioned a giant place for more than a million , if realized it would transform Manhattan into the most populous city on earth .It would be the most manmade artificial places in the history of the plan.

The grid was imperial, democratic, efficient, and comfortable for the real estate market and was a sign of total triumph over nature. The grid was a powerful under order for a city with so much anarchy. Long avenues that run north south were a symbol of American limitlessness.

In 1817 state of NY issued the biggest public works project in American history until the interstate highway program was passed in 1956 and the construction of Erie Canal began. Within some time small manufacturing places sprouted every 15 minutes by the canal. Waters of Hudson met with the water of remote west. The harbor became the connection between the continent and the European cities on the other side. From 1825 – 1860 New York grew as no city had grown before with layer upon layer of physical growth. Commercial activity in lower Manhattan exploded. This was a transformation of the historic city – the "journey to work", began. People stayed away from the commercial hub and travelled to their work places now. There was no police force or a fire department, no public transportation, a primitive sewage system, handful of public schools and flickering gas lamps at night. No city had experienced so much diversity ever before. Economic revolution started by Erie Canal – transformed New York overnight into a funnel. New York grew 10 miles of street per year in 1930's 40's 50's. Various cities struggle with this issue in today's times. Economic boost requires people but pulls more people into the city as well. To accommodate for this population is the challenging part, a part that New York was able to resolve eventually.

The first slums emerge during this time. On June 2nd 1836, 15825 passengers came into New York City – A "Little Germany "came into being. Greater number migrated from Ireland – by 1842, 100,000 Irish immigrants had moved in .Now there was a white, English speaking immigrant group that was essentially seen as another race. The great migration began in 1845 – 1855. There were 300 people per acre living in slums. Soon the Black and the Irish started competed for jobs.. Racism was built into the structure and culture of the city.

All big cities need to address the issue of finding homogeneity in heterogeneity. Death rate at the slums was 3 times higher than the rest of the city. New Yorkers blamed the new comers for their misery. 10,000 children growing up in the slums were almost sure to be prostitutes and drug addicts. Streets at night were bad, had no security, and riots of all kinds could occur. It was a time of municipal war.

For the countries growing urban population the panic was nothing less than a disaster. In New York alone more the 25000 people were out of jobs and 100000 more facing hardship and starvation. This was a time with no social security and no safety net. In fall 1857 the banks failed and so did the business.

There was no place to enjoy the city, to stop, no green patch, no park space. Lower Manhattan had become a congested wasteland of factories, warehouses and tenements with no escape.

This is when Mayor Fernando Wood announced a competition for central park, a man made nature to rediscover a common humanity. This was an attempt to look at urban design as a tool to fix a social and an environmental problem.Nonetheless the civil war followed, Post the civil war it was time to rebuild again – Soon The Fire Department (1865) , The Board Of Health (1866) and The New Tenement Law (1867) was passed.

Different descriptions of the city from 1890 to 1924- for example in late 19th century it was described as a city divided into areas of " darkness and daylight "- the depraved and the demure, the ghastly and the glamorous. By later 19th century it updated those views with making use of technology such a documentary photography .Between 1890 and 1924 New York City became the nation's metropolis the de facto capital of the US. The city's natural geography and earlier 19th century industrial and infrastructural developments had established the foundations for the cities early 20th century dominance.

For a long time people had trouble navigating through New York , It was from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920's that guidebooks, stereographs, postcards and tourist maps and brochures gradually made the city visually practically available to American tourists. Producers of tourist ephemera simplified the city into a set of convenient itineraries and sites,
By the mid 1920's tourists could certainly experience NY as a coherent place, Choosing from a range of ternaries drawn from guidebooks and other publications that provided colorful descriptions of the pleasures offered by NYC.
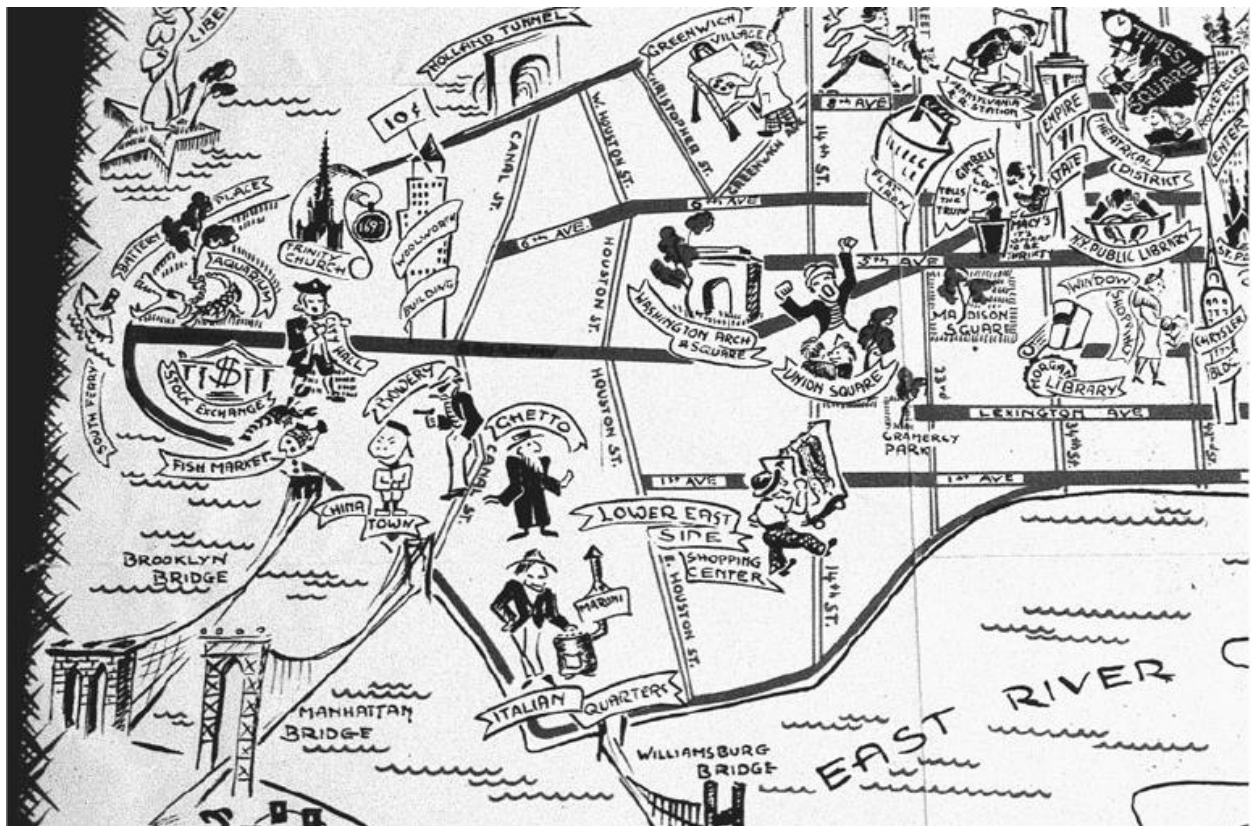
Later New York saw the prohibition era with an underground renaissance in the city, bring them together in an unusual way.
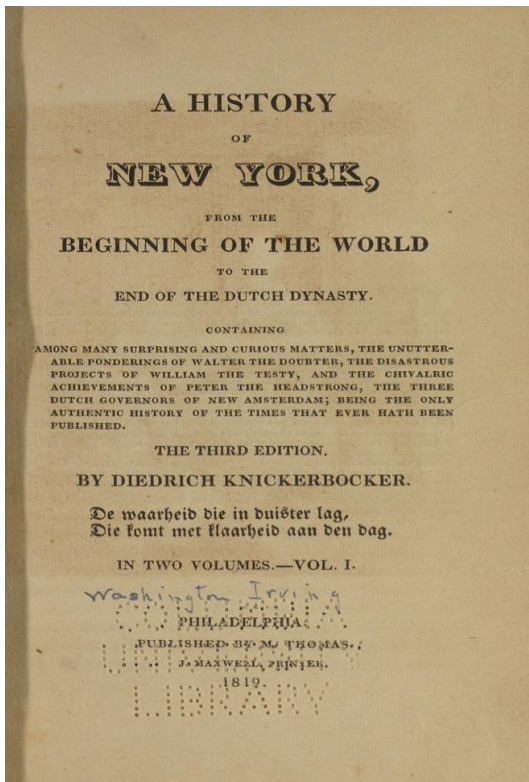
Literary work from different times had a major role to play in the image building of New York City. Starting from the "A history of New York – Beginning of the world " to The New York Times and The New Yorker. Every piece had a very important role to play in how the world looked at New York.
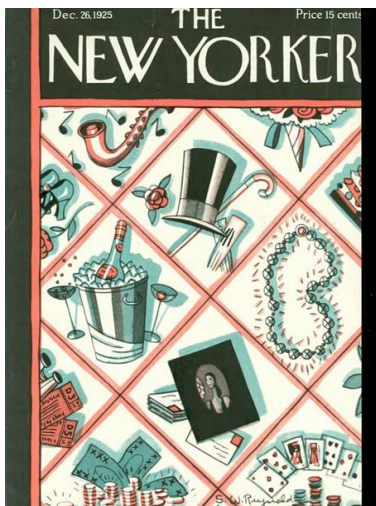
Harlem Renaissance was The zenith of the "flowering of Negro literature", as James Weldon Johnson preferred to call it. Placed between 1924 (the year that *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* hosted a party for black writers where many white publishers were in attendance) and 1929 (the year of the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression).

Harlem Renaissance sowed seeds of a different culture in the city. Art was looked at as means to get out of great depression. Various WPA- Art projects that were meant to generate jobs were initiated.

This was the phase when New York began to explore its potential beyond a commercial hub. Robert Mosis and Jane Jacobs, Greenwich village – and Washington square and various Civil rights movements further enhanced New York .

Now, I do not know New York. I cannot interpret it. I do not know what its "message" is. New York is too large to know. Too many things are simultaneously true of it.
Franklin P Adams, Everybody's Magazine December 1916.

2006-2008 American Community Survey for the U.S. Census:

Race		%
White		44.6%
Hispanic or Latino (Of Any Race)		27.5%
Black or African American		25.1%
Asian		11.8%
American Indian		0.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander		0.1%
Other races		16%
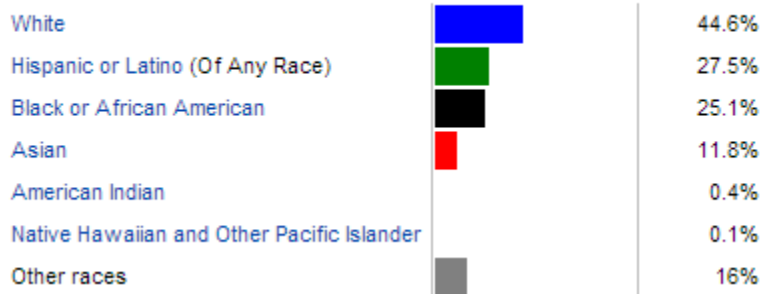
The city of New York has a population of 8,336,697, it covers 303 miles. The numbers in the image show the population distribution. The city is rich in culture with people from different parts of the world calling it home

From top left- 1) Chinatown in NYC, 2) West Indian Parade in Brooklyn, 3) Little Italy today,
 4) Little Italy in 1990

The skyline of Manhattan has evolved over time and the city boundaries have grown way beyond Manhattan, adding more culture and complexity. Every city grain of NYC has been enriched with history and culture. Every architectural piece gives a narrative of the life the city has lived and what it aspires to become.

"City centers embody notions of modernity. Historically the jewels of nations the centers of cultural production and consumption, the highlights of civil pride, and currently the command and control centers of the globalizing economy, cities fit perfectly into the narrative of progress, modernity and to use a loaded old fashioned term – civilization."[3]

As citizens of the Global world, we are a community that shares the same issues, the same requirements and the same aspirations. We might have had different histories but the future we are hoping for is the same. We live in cities built out of our need for speed, our demand for higher densities, our love for the car and our negligence towards the ones under the poverty line. Global city has room for everyone; it accommodates and gives a sense of freedom, it is polycentric, it has neighborhoods with people from all over the planet, it is a city formed by cars, pedestrian friendly sidewalks and thoughtful public transportation network. It is a city for today, for people who share their lives on facebook and network on LinkedIn. It's a city that absorbs - adapts - transforms. Global cities are a cross section through history, culture, people, infrastructure and ideas. Social, political and economic circumstances have a continuous impact on this cross section.

"Globalization is heterogeneous, diachronous, polyvocal and uneven. Cities with their economic and cultural center their complexity and their ultimate strangeness offer the most compelling site for realizing the potentialities of the present."[4]

Global city is a land of opportunities, it is where people go to earn a living, and it is where people move to translate their ideas into reality. But the capital, people, ideas and goods do not dissolve community in a global city rather these factors help create a certain kind of culture. The large population, the economic inflow, people as representatives of different cultures/countries; together add culture to a global city. This cultural edge also makes a global city a tourist spot for people to come and experience it.

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[3] Krause, Linda, and Patrice Petro. 2003. *Global cities : cinema, architecture, and urbanism in a digital age*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.pg 51

[4] Krause, Linda, and Patrice Petro. 2003. *Global cities : cinema, architecture, and urbanism in a digital age*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.pg 2

The desire to explore the potentials of a global city makes people move to these economic/cultural centers. Hence migration and Global cities go hand in hand, they share a symbiotic relationship. Migrants provide a city with a part of the labor force upon which these cities build their competitiveness. It is the migrants that also become the historical agents in a city. They act as agents for urban restructuring by contributing to the positioning of neighborhoods and cities. Their presence adds a social vision to the City.

"From the early days of European migration to America, in the 17th Century, the prototype of buildings was based on English precedent, even if mostly translated into the locally available material in abundance: timber." - Harry Seidler

Migrants contribute to the way of living, the architecture, the culture and eventually the transnationality of cities. Migration leads to assimilation, integration and diversity of a lot of Pre-existing conditions. Migration is not only international but local as well. People from smaller towns move to bigger cities and make it home. Neither opposing nor privileging the nation-state, Locating Migration provides ethnographic insights into the various ways in which migrants and specific cities together mutually constitute and contest the local, national, and global. Cities are approached not as containers but as fluid and historically differentiated analytical entry points.[5]

Witold Rybczynski notes in city life - "every historical period has its urban bellwethers- the cities that command attention because they embody the value of their particular epoch....appreciated for their culture, envied for their prosperity and admired for their dynamism."

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[5] Locating migration [electronic resource] : rescaling cities and migrants / edited by Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Çaglar. Pg 6

In the book Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan, Rem Koolhaas celebrates and analysis's New York. He depicts the city as a metaphor for the vast variety of human behavior. At the end of the nineteenth century, population, information, and technology explosions turned Manhattan into a laboratory for the invention and testing of a metropolitan lifestyle "the culture of congestion" and its architecture.

He writes that Manhattan is the 20th century's Rosetta Stone, occupied by architectural mutations like the Central Park and the Skyscraper, the utopian fragments in form of Rockefeller Center and the U.N. Building, and irrational phenomena like the Radio City Music Hall. The Manhattan grid, the creation of Coney Island, and the development of the skyscrapers have a major role to play in the lifespan of New York as a city as it helped the city acquire an image and a character.

The customs, arts, architecture, social institutions, and achievements of a particular city and its people can be defined as the culture of that city. Hence it is the culture that forms an invisible bond between the people and the city. It is this Culture that gives the inhabitants of a city a background, a reference and also a sense of belonging. Another unique factor that affects Culture of big cities is transportation. How you navigate through a city directly translates to how you experience that city which is why it is a crucial factor.

Conclusion

Defining world city would be like defining the complexity of New York, it's a city that forms an important node in the global economic ecosystem. A city with corporate headquarters, diverse demographics, good quality of life, renowned cultural institutions, several influential media organizations, a strong sporting community, educational institutions, Tourism, and an advanced transportation system could be an explanation of a World city or New York itself. **Cities are a complex synergy of social, political, economic and cultural factors. New York City is a living and thriving example of this complexity.** It is a city that has rebuilt itself various times and has only improvised, it has only moved forward. It is a unique city that was never tied down with its past. The fact that it wasn't the capital of United States of America helped it become what it is.

New York is a unique case study for urban designers. Although it is a very young city as compared to Rome, Beijing or Jerusalem it has expanded and accommodated like no other. It addressed the issues of slums and increase in population very early as compared to other cities and formed prototypes to follow. It's a city that went beyond its geographical constraints and manipulated nature itself for its benefit,

New York was a trading post of the Dutch established with the sole intention to make guilders. **It was a city born out of pragmatic attitude, a city that didn't focus on building an image but only its economy. The "Culture of Congestion" in New York feeds on the "Culture of Commerce."** New York is a city created by the people who moved into it looking for better opportunities. It is a great example of people and a city forming a symbiotic relationship and only progressing and benefitting with time. **The traditions brought by the people who moved in along with the congestion within the city created a unique culture, the culture of New York.** Little architectural and capital injections at right places at right time created an image of New York in the global world, an image that attracts more people to move into the city or explore as tourists. It is truly a city of the world.

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