Jean Gottmann
1915-1994

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1. EDUCATION, LIFE AND WORK

Born in October 1915 at Kharkov in the Ukraine, Iona (Jean) Gottmann was a member of an affluent Jewish family of industrialists with many international connections. He lost both his parents (Elie and Sonia-Fanny) who were murdered when their home was robbed in 1917, but was rescued by a widowed aunt who took him north to Saint Petersburg. They soon moved on to Moscow, and then to Sebastopol where his guardian married Michel Berchin, with whom they escaped to Paris through Constantinople and Marseille.

Berchin worked as a critic for a Russian journal and raised Jean in a polyglot household that welcomed distinguished artists, musicians, writers and politicians. The young man studied at the Lycées Montaigne and Saint-Louis, where one of his teachers was Dr Elicio Colin, a geographer who was a frequent contributor of notes and reviews to the Annales de Géographie and had many connections with the Sorbonne. Jean initially read law at university but was rapidly converted to geography, which he went on to study with history. His many interests extended into philosophy, political science and colonial affairs, and he was especially impressed by the ideas of André Siegfried and Emile-Félix Gautier. Training at the Institut de Géographie was delivered by the physical geographer Emmanuel de Martonne (son-in-law of Paul Vidal de la Blache), the human geographer Albert Demangeon, newcomer André Cholley (who specialised on regional geography) and the venerable Augustin Bernard, whose courses were devoted to French North Africa and colonial geography. It was the political and economic strands of geography that Gottmann found especially appealing, rather than the scientific principles of physiography.

Gottmann’s initial qualifications were in geography and history, and then he proceeded with a preliminary research degree (diplôme d’études supérieures) that was completed in 1934. Demangeon had wished his protégé to focus on the supply of
foodstuffs to the French capital, but the young man looked beyond France to the Middle East where he undertook fieldwork on irrigated farming in Palestine. His memoir based on this work was published in the *Annales de Géographie* in 1935, and his life-long fascination with Middle Eastern themes was set on course. From 1936 to 1940 he assisted Demangeon with two major projects financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. Both dealt with rural conditions in France during the depression years and involved major surveys of farm structures and the quality of housing in the countryside. (This work was not completed when Gottmann left Paris in 1940, and he only published the results in 1964.) Gottmann also researched for the *Atlas de France* and wrote many notes for the *Annales de Géographie*, as well as performing editorial tasks and acting as a research assistant for a variety of projects. He did not, however, take the highly competitive examination (concours) to become a lycée teacher or university lecturer, nor did he start work on a doctorat d’état that was a requirement for a chair in a French state university.

The German invasion of France in the summer of 1940 worsened conditions for Jews. Demangeon, in rapidly failing health, advised Jean to quit Paris for Montpellier (where his friend Jules Sion was Professor of Geography) and, if need be, leave Europe for the safety of the USA. After some time in Languedoc, Gottmann escaped first to Spain and then via Portugal to Britain, before sailing to North America in early December 1941. Japan attacked Pearl Harbour on the very day that he reached New York, where he had relatives and academic connections.

Poor health prevented military service but Gottmann, who later became involved in de Gaulle’s Free French organization, worked for the Construction Board for Economic Warfare (1942-44), and offered specialist advice on local geographical conditions prior to the Normandy landings. In 1944 he served as representative of the provisional French Republic in the French West Indies. At the same time, he entered into what would be a long-term association with the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton (1942-1965), and a shorter relationship with the new Department of Geography at the Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore) where Isaiah Bowman (formerly Director of the American Geographical Society) was President. Starting in 1943, Gottmann commuted by train between Princeton and Baltimore over a period of five years, which afforded him great familiarity with the urbanising seaboard of the north-eastern USA. (Smith, 2003, p. 267 – quoting George Carter, head of the Department of Geography at Hopkins – notes that Gottmann was sacked from his post there by Bowman for using it as a ‘stopover between trains’.) He was seconded back to France throughout 1945 to advise Pierre Mendès-France, Ministre de l’Economie, and his successor, René Pleven, where he gained his first experience of economic and spatial planning. He then became Director of Studies in the Research Unit for Social Affairs at the United Nations, located at Lake Success outside New York (1946-47), a position which involved travel to Central and Latin America.

Commitment to lecturing was just one of a growing array of responsibilities at this time, since he also became a Research Fellow of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (1948-1951), where he acted as chargé de recherches and at the same time entered into a long-term teaching arrangement with the Institut d’Etudes Politiques (1947-60) in Paris, where his mentor, André Siegfried, was Director. In addition, Gottmann held numerous positions as visiting professor in North American universities, dividing his life between a semester in Paris, a period in the USA, and
various international journeys every year. It is notable that he did not hold a post at the Sorbonne or in any other state university in France.

Between 1952 and 1955 Gottmann combined all these activities with research into the economy, society and geography of the state of Virginia, at the request of Paul Mellon, of Washington’s Old Dominion Foundation, and Abraham Flexner, founder of the Institute for Advanced Studies. In 1956, Robert Oppenheimer, a Director of the Twentieth Century Fund, invited 40-year old Gottmann to direct research on metropolitan studies based in New York. Jean accepted, got married to Bernice Adelson (who worked for Life magazine), and worked for five years with a team of researchers to produce a detailed study of the urbanized northeastern seaboard of the USA that became known as ‘Megalopolis’.

Gottmann’s expertise was sought ever more widely, notably by the Committee on Resources and Man of the United States’ National Academy of Sciences, which he joined in 1965. He worked closely with the Greek planner Constantinos Doxiadis in the field of ‘Ekistics’ (he was President of the World Society for Ekistics, 1971-1973 and a regular attender at its annual Delos symposium: Doxiadis died in 1976). Gottmann was a regular visitor to Italy, Japan and many other parts of the world. He also became involved in the work of the International Political Science Association, collaborating for some years with Jean Laponce, of the University of British Columbia, in the organisation of a political geography section, which included several small conferences. (An edited volume – *Centre and Periphery: Spatial Variation in Politics*, 1980 – was the outcome of one of these: it included two essays by Gottmann.) In 1960 he had accepted that title of professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (but not the Sorbonne) and held this in an on-leave capacity until formal retirement in 1983. He did not receive a French research doctorate until 1970, however, when he presented a formidable corpus of published work on Palestine and many other themes – curiously not to the Sorbonne but to the University of Paris X-Nanterre.

After a lifetime of ‘wandering’ and global activity, in 1968 Jean Gottmann applied for the Chair of Geography in the University of Oxford (with a Fellowship at Hertford College); he was successful and remained there for fifteen years until his formal retirement. Perhaps he was attracted by the global reputation of Oxford University, but he certainly was not prepared for its administrative particularities, the remarkably restrained powers of heads of department, and the formidable strength of the colleges in the delivery of teaching. However, he invited distinguished scholars to visit the School of Geography and supervised an important group of doctoral students with his concerned but characteristically light touch. They respected this stooped French scholar, who addressed them in heavily accented English, and they acknowledged the physical pain from which he was never free, having fallen and broken his neck in the United Nations building in 1952.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Jean worked incessantly, producing numerous reviews and critiques of global urbanization; he and Bernice travelled widely, even after his formal retirement in 1983 that was marked by an impressive Festschrift. He had been made Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur in 1974 and then Fellow of the British Academy in 1977. The Royal Geographical Society (1980) and the Société de Géographie de Paris (1984) honoured him with their highest awards, he received the
Daly Medal from the American Geographical Society (1964), a number of other awards and medals and several honorary doctorates were accepted from universities in three separate countries. (These are fully listed in Champion, 1995.)

For much of his career, Gottmann was something of an ‘outsider’; perceived to be ‘European’ in the UK and USA, but an ‘American’ in France, a ‘political scientist’ among geographers, and a ‘geographer’ among political scientists. His strong American connections had certainly not found favour among many French academics during the 1940s and 1956 when Marxist sympathies were widespread. Jean Gottmann died 28 February 1994 aged 78; he was buried in Oxford.

2. SCIENTIFIC IDEAS AND GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

Jean Gottmann was a prolific writer throughout his long career; his first paper appeared in 1933, and the last two (posthumously) in 1995 and 1996. In all, he produced some 400 items, including 14 books and monographs, two of which were published in several editions and translated into a number of languages. Most were written in either French or English – Gottmann was trilingual – but various items were translated into 14 different languages. (A full bibliography has been compiled by Luca Muscarà, 1998.)

*Regional geography*

Many of Gottmann’s publications, especially the early ones, exemplified his view of geography – as expressed in his inaugural lecture at the University of Oxford (Gottmann, 1969, 4) – as the study of

... the concrete material space accessible to human activity. [Its] description enumerates a great diversity of characteristics for every region, large or small, that it attempts to cover; the region described is, of course, put on the map of the world, compared with others contiguous or distant, related to vaster systems of which it is a part. (His emphasis)

In this, he clearly followed the intellectual genealogy of his mentor – Demangeon (and, through him, Vidal) – but (as Buttimer, 1971, notes) he went further, claiming that (Gottmann, 1969, 7)

... geographers seek general principles in order to classify, at least in broad categories, all the variety of facts, features and trends they gather in their search for data. According to the classic scientific method they look for order, for regular series, for similarities and elements of uniformity

Nevertheless, he recognised that

... geographical regions are very seldom alike and never could two of them have been shown to be identical in all their physical and human characteristics. There are too many such characteristics and too few regions to allow for such an identity.

Although this approach to the study of regions underpinned his entire career, he published only one methodological essay and, apart from his Oxford inaugural, no overview of his modus operandi. In ‘De la méthode d’analyse en géographie humaine’ (Gottmann, 1947) he stressed the uniqueness – though not singularity – of regions, just as he did two decades later in his inaugural lecture. Regions are built on relatively stable, natural foundations but they differ because of how they are occupied
and organised by humans. The processes underpinning the continually changing patterns of occupation and organisation are perceptually based, so the core of understanding the nature of regions involves analysing the relevant 'vie psychologique' – a term that he preferred to 'genre de vie', commonly deployed by Vidalians.

Most of his early publications – all in French – were short notes describing recent changes in particular regions: many were published in the *Annales de Géographie* (edited by de Martonne and Demangeon). The first referred to areas within his homeland – Turkestan, Uzbekistan and Siberia (Gottmann’s first language was, of course, Russian) – and were followed by others on, for example, Palestine, Swedish agriculture, Arab nomadism, immigration to Paraguay and a storm in Poland: all but those on Palestine were based on secondary sources.

Gottmann first visited Palestine in 1933, on a travel grant obtained through Demangeon, where he undertook his first major piece of field-based research – on irrigation. The results were published in his first substantial paper in the *Annales de Géographie* (1935), alongside a number of notes on other aspects of that region. (His writings on Israel and Palestine were compiled into book form in 1959.) In conducting this research programme, Gottmann was much influenced by Isaiah Bowman’s (1931) recently-published monograph on *The pioneer fringe*, which Martin (1980, p. 208) quotes him as calling ‘one of the larger advances to human geography in the first half of the twentieth century’. It was the stimulus for his first paper in English, published in the *Geographical Review* in 1937. This inaugurated a close link with that American journal, for which Gottmann began to write short notes and reviews, paralleling his continuing stream of similar contributions to the *Annales de Géographie* and *L’Information Géographique*. (He also collaborated in the annual production of the *Bibliographie Géographique Internationale*, which was edited by his former lycée geography master, Elicio Colin.) Indeed, such short notes dominated Gottmann’s production prior to the Second World War, with very few pieces comprising more than a few pages. (They were undoubtedly not refereed, as the current practice is now understood.)

Following his move to the United States in 1941, most of Gottmann’s work was published in English. It covered a wide range of topics relating to parts of Europe and northern Africa, and was almost entirely based on secondary sources; the items were produced when he was extremely active on a variety of fronts, and exemplify his prodigious capacity for work. Immediately after the war he began writing again for French periodicals, including a number of pieces interpreting his new ‘second home’ to French readers. Gottmann became something of a pivot between the two communities of geographers, bringing new information about each other’s country to an audience on the other side of the Atlantic.

This role as a trans-Atlantic pivot culminated in a series of textbooks. The first – *L’Amérique* (Gottmann, 1949: see Camu, 1957) – interpreted his ‘new world’ to his old. Another – *A Geography of Europe* (Gottmann, 1950: revised editions were published in 1954, 1962 and 1969: he had earlier collaborated on *La Fédération* 1

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1 Interestingly, Gottmann (1951) wrote a pair of articles on the megalopolis area, writing about which was a major source of his reputation as a geographer and urbanist, as the ‘hinge’ between the USA and Europe.
Française: Gottmann and de la Roche, 1945) – undertook the opposite task of interpreting his ‘old world’ for his new. And then he published Virginia at Mid-Century (Gottmann, 1955: a second, much-enlarged, edition published in 1969 was entitled Virginia in our Century). This was undertaken at the request of Paul Mellon and Abraham Flexner, with research support from several foundations. It was based on extensive field-work (he claimed in the Preface to have visited every county and city in the state) and was presented as an application of the French school’s method in a new arena:

The French school of geography during the first half of the present century has produced a substantial number of regional monographs on various parts of the world. To my knowledge, that method of study has not heretofore been applied to any of the American states’ (Gottmann, 1955, v).

Unlike many academic monographs, however, it was only lightly referenced but had a large number of maps (many drawn by the research assistants employed on the project) and unattributed photographs. (All of Gottmann’s texts, including Megalopolis, were heavily illustrated with maps.)

The Virginia book ended the phase of Gottmann’s career in which regional studies dominated, and also the end of his prolific writing of notes on items of contemporary interest. He did occasionally return to the regional theme, however, notably in a 1977 essay written as part of the USA’s bicentennial celebrations. In this, he interpreted America’s changing landscapes to his audience, predating others in comments on the role of corporations in the organization of urban America:

… modern technology formed a lore common to mankind as a whole. The use of its products was largely a matter of organizing production, distribution and the markets. The American contribution was often in the organizational area. The large industrial corporation, the development of advertising as a mass medium in itself, the retailing networks aimed at reaching the mass consumer were important parts of the American way of life. (Gottmann, 1977, 26).

This was not his first essay into what became known as the field of spatial organization, however. France had enthusiastically embraced spatial planning as part of its post-war reconstruction programme, in which Gottmann had been involved at the outset during his secondments to the office of the Ministre de l’Economie Nationale; one of his tasks involved evaluating potential sites for a new international airport, located at Orly, south of Paris. In 1952 he collaborated with an international group of scholars in the production for the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, and presented to the 1952 International Geographical Congress in Washington, of L’Aménagement de l’Espace: Planification Régionale et Géographie. (A later book – 1966 – was entitled Essais sur l’Aménagement de l’Espace Habité.)

Political geography

One of Gottmann’s mentors, André Siegfried, was a well-known political geographer who strongly influenced much of his career. Gottmann’s major interests within political geography were in the partitioning of space and the associated concepts of territory and territoriality – an issue first raised in a 1948 review of a book by Cooper (1947) on the law of the air, which led to several conversations with Cooper and a long footnote in his 1951 World Politics paper. Several essays published in the 1940s, in both France and the United States, established this area of work, and in 1952 he
published a textbook based on his own seminar series (La politique des états et leur géographie: an English version was prepared but never published).

The core of Gottmann’s approach was set out in two articles published in *World Politics* (Gottmann, 1951, 1952: *World Politics* was edited and published at Princeton University, with which Gottmann was associated for over 20 years. Gottmann’s most important essays in this field were however written while he was associated with Siegfried at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques). He opened the first – ‘Geography and international relations’ – with the statements that:

The world we live in happens to be a diversified, highly partitioned space. The surface of the earth is partitioned in a great many ways: politically and physically, economically and culturally. The political divisions are the raisons d’être of international relations; the variety of the different parts is the raison d’être of geography. (Gottmann, 1951, p. 153)

Those political divisions are regions but, because regions are produced via ‘la vie psychologique’, then ‘regionalism has some iconography as its foundation’ (p.163: emphasis in the original). States are regions, and claim sovereignty over their territory, thus:

Linking sovereignty to the right of regional differentiation, to a freedom of ways of life, may perhaps help formulate a ‘spatial’ principle of sovereignty … Sovereignty may well be the legal tool through which people attempt to preserve their right to differentiate themselves from their neighbors (p. 172).

The partitioning of space – what he termed cloisonnement politique du monde – lies at the core of Gottmann’s political geography. Each partitioned unit is unique, with its iconography provided by people ‘who record the past and choose the form in which this historical background is conveyed to growing generations’ (Gottmann, 1952, p. 514). This national iconography comprises a combination of self-image, spatial identity and territorial belonging involving one or more of religious creed, social viewpoint and political memory. The territorial definition of a state, with its associated sovereignty and deployment of territoriality practices, is thus fundamental to its people’s physical, economic and socio-cultural security:

The concept of territory expresses the recognition of the fact that a group of people is at home in and has safe control of only a fraction of the total area that may be generally open to the wanderings and enterprises of its members. The concept connotes a certain reasonableness of human communities in their acceptance of geographical limitation for certain purposes, the foremost of which has been security (Gottmann, 1973, p. 7).

This was the theme of several other essays, and also his book on The significance of territory (Gottmann, 1973), based on a lecture series at the University of Virginia in 1971. In it, he developed his ideas regarding the role of a partitioned spatial unit as the foundation for a people’s security: focusing entirely at the scale of the nation-state, he placed control over the national space as a prerequisite to the ‘search for happiness’.

Gottmann’s innovative ideas regarding spatial partitioning, territory and political geography were undoubtedly produced ‘before their time’ and had little impact on the geographical community either then – he had relatively little contact with it at the time – or later: neither the *World Politics* papers nor his *Significance of Territory* book got more than a cursory mention when political geography was revived in the 1970s-1980s. And although he occasionally returned to the theme – he wrote the
essay on ‘Géographie politique’ in the 1966 Géographie Générale-Encyclopédie de la Pléaide, for example and during his retirement years participated in the work of the Commission de Géographie Politique of the French Comité National de Géographie – his interests had turned elsewhere, to the study of cities and what undoubtedly became his most influential contributions to the geographical (and wider) literature.

*Megalopolis and urban geography*

In the mid-1950s, Gottmann began to publish on cities and urban geography. This was not altogether a new interest, since it had been suggested to him as a research field by Demangeon in the 1930s, and his work on spatial planning in the 1940s-1950s meant that he was continually aware of urban issues. His first publication in this field on ‘La ville américaine’ appeared in 1955 in the Paris journal Geographia, but the more important appeared two years later in the American journal Economic Geography – ‘Megalopolis, or the urbanization of the northeastern seaboard’: it was accompanied by an interview in the periodical Challenge on ‘Megalopolis: the super-city’. These were the prolegomenon to his most cited book, Megalopolis: The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States, which was published by the Twentieth Century Fund in 1961. From then on, cities and urbanization dominated his academic agenda. (Interestingly, a review of his 1949 text on America by Jan Broek – a Dutch geographer working at the University of California, Berkeley – criticised it for over-emphasising social and especially urban issues, to the detriment of physical geography.)

The origins of this magnum opus lie in Gottmann’s contacts at Princeton with the nuclear scientist, J. Robert Oppenheimer, who became Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in 1947 and was also a Director of the Twentieth Century Fund (which describes itself as a non-partisan foundation which since 1919 ‘has been at the forefront researching and writing about progressive public policy’). Oppenheimer suggested the term to Gottmann somewhen in the late 1940s (Gottmann used it in his 1949 book on L’Amérique), though it had previously been used by other scholars (see Baigent, 2004). It was revived in 1956 when Oppenheimer persuaded Gottmann to become research director for metropolitan studies at the Fund’s New York base. The study was well-funded, and Gottmann had a research team working with him.

The core concept underpinning Megalopolis was of a new form of urbanization, comprising a functional but not a physical unit: the area from Boston to Washington comprised a single functional region but not a continuous urban sprawl. Gottmann describes this in the introduction to his Economic Geography paper as ‘the most striking impression he had had as a geographer in his first months’ in the USA ‘“The density of great cities along this coast, from Boston to Washington” (p.189). In the French tradition, he saw this as a region ‘endowed with some unity and originality’, and he set out to answer questions regarding its origins and contemporary functions, the problems of its internal organization, and the nature of any attempted solutions to them. For him, the region was of interest not just for itself, but because he saw it as a paradigm of the future, a

… pioneering area in terms of urbanization [and its problems]. What is observed and experimented with here may serve, though on a smaller scale

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2 It is now called The Century Foundation (http://www.tcf.org/AboutUS/AboutUs.html).
and in many cases only after some time, to avoid delays and errors in other
growing urban areas. It may help improve our management of the intricate
process of urbanization (p. 197).

In line with his experience of French post-war spatial reconstruction, Gottmann was
increasingly concerned with planning matters.

The book expanded on the basic theme, in great deal and with much illustration – it
includes 227 figures (many of them maps, all specially drawn for the project) and 27
tables. Having described the historical geography of the region as it developed into
‘The continent’s economic hinge’ set within its ‘Earthly bounds’ (the titles of
Chapters 2 and 3), it turns to the consideration of such topics as ‘How the cities grew
and the suburbs scattered’ and ‘The symbiosis of urban and rural’. Yet despite his
explicitly-stated concern with planning problems and solutions, relatively little
attention is given to these – especially the latter. He describes problems such as those
of water supply and fragmented government (a ‘nebulous structure’), for example, but
goes no further: the (penultimate) chapter on ‘Sharing a partitioned land’ ends with a
paragraph on the growing problems of increased crowding into the megalopolitan
region which includes (p.769)

To provide for all of this, a good deal of foresight is necessary now. More
people will be sharing more actively in this increasingly partitioned land.
Governments, community leaders, and the general public will all have to
cooperate in coordinated action to keep the problems of crowding and the
inheritance of the past from interfering with the indispensable process of
growth. The traditions inherited from its history have been a great factor of
strength in Megalopolis and they ought to support the forthcoming endeavors
to solve the new tide of problems.

Stirring words, perhaps, but little help in providing lessons that can be deployed in
planning other urbanizing regions. And the final brief chapter – ‘Conclusion: novus
ordo seculorum’ – is of no greater value in that sense.

Urban geography was a small sub-discipline in the 1960s, which was rapidly
expanding as it was in the vanguard of the ‘quantitative and theoretical revolutions’
then sweeping through geography as a whole. But Gottmann was not part of that
movement, and his work on depicting the megalopolitan functional region did not
embrace the new techniques. His work was firmly based – as in all that preceded it –
in the French regional tradition, and alongside its many maps and tables were cultural
and historical insights. But it was conducted in a very different – at that time North
American – way. The French regional monographs were the work of single authors –
many seeking a doctorat d’état – who spent many years (part-time) on the fieldwork
and writing, with no funding other than their own. Gottmann’s monographs (on
Virginia and Megalopolis) were very different enterprises: several of the chapters of
Megalopolis were drafted for him by others (including individuals such as Edward
Higbee, Pierre Camu and Morton White, who were – or became – distinguished
scholars in their own right), and other parts were prepared by postgraduate students
working on summer placements. Although North American in its production,
however, Megalopolis was not linked to the revolutionary changes then sweeping
through geography: it was a ‘period piece’, addressing issues of contemporary

3 Indeed, his work was criticized by ‘quantifiers’ for its lack of what they saw as methodological
rigour, something which upset Gottmann who was used to much less confrontational modes of
academic debate.
concern but in a traditional way. Thus although the Economic Geography paper was reprinted in Mayer and Kohn’s (1959) early reader on urban geography as introducing a ‘new concept’, it got short shrift in a comparable book published a decade later (Berry and Horton, 1970, 54): for its authors, Gottmann’s concept ‘lacking precision as well as generality, has frequently been misapplied’. It was not even referenced in major surveys of urban geography and its research frontiers (Mayer, 1965; Berry, 1965).

Gottmann was outside the urban geography mainstream from the outset of his work in the sub-discipline, therefore, somebody whose major work was sometimes cited but, save for by a small group of aficionados, rarely used as the foundation for further work. Nevertheless, the thirty years after the publication of *Megalopolis* saw a major stream of essays on aspects of urbanization from him, many prescient in their identification of emerging trends and forms, as with papers on the skyscraper and ‘ways of life in the modern metropolis’, both published in 1966, and the growing predominance of the service sector in major cities – first identified in *Ekistics* in 1970 and the *Bulletin de l’Association de Géographes Français* in 1971. Although some of these essays appeared in geographical journals – as with that on ‘The dynamics of large cities’ published in the *Geographical Journal* in 1974 – Gottmann favoured a wide range of outlets, reflecting his multiple contacts well beyond the normal range of most academic geographers at the time. Some appeared in the journal *Ekistics*, with which Gottmann developed close links. As a consequence, his ideas on such concepts as ‘the quaternary sector’, ‘the transactional city’, the ‘interweaving of economic activities at city cross-roads’ and ‘the role of the university in regional development’ were not as influential as they might have been, and indeed most of them were ‘re-invented’ by others – in somewhat different forms in some cases – a few years later.

Gottmann’s relationship with the Ekistics movement, founded and led by the Greek planner Constantinos Doxiadis and which was influential in the professional planning world in the early and mid-1960s, like so many of his other relationships seems to have been rather superficial and transitory. He contributed a short article to the magazine *Ekistics* in 1963 (Gottmann 1963) on “Economics, esthetics and ethics in modern urbanization”; it carries the note that ‘The paper from which this article is abstracted was published as an afterthought to Gottmann’s major work *Megalopolis* (1961)’. It is a somewhat discursive essay, unaccompanied by any references, on the question of whether it is possible to develop high-quality urban aesthetics in the modern high-consumption society. Gottmann is not listed as one of the “Delans” who met at the first Delos symposium in July 1963, to produce the “Declaration of Delos”, but did attend the second session a year later (*Ekistics* 16 (1963), 222; 18 (1964), 258).

His concept of megalopolis and the notion that what he identified and mapped in the northeastern United States represented the urban form of the future was the basis of frequent invitations to write about its continued evolution, both there and elsewhere, and about planning strategies that might be deployed to direct the evolving urban form. Aspects of megalopolis were explored in a 1967 book edited with Robert Harper – *Metropolis on the Move: Geographers Look at Urban Sprawl*; he re-

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4 Gottmann used that as the title for a lecture given in geography departments and elsewhere at the time, but the Geographical Journal paper was not read to the Royal Geographical Society prior to its publication.
examined the area in a 1987 monograph – *Megalopolis Revisited: Twenty-Five Years Later*; and Harper brought together some of his writings in *Since Megalopolis: The Urban Writings of Jean Gottmann* (1990). Further, as a consequence of this work, Gottmann was widely acknowledged as an expert on urban issues and was asked to review studies and plans, which generated many more essays in a wide range of outlets. Once the major work – for whose detail he relied on the efforts of others working under his direction – was completed, his role became that of the informed commentator, therefore: no further major research was undertaken.

3. **INFLUENCE AND SPREAD OF IDEAS**

As the history of geography as an academic discipline is re-written to bring it up-to-date, it is unlikely that Gottmann’s name will feature very large. For a few decades in the late twentieth century he was well known (or at least cited) for one major work – *Megalopolis* – but apart from that little of his published work is enduring (a fate that he shares with the vast majority of other academics!): he almost certainly was not considered for a volume about *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*. His work on political geography has been ‘re-discovered’, however, and has influenced political and cultural geographers in France and elsewhere (as in Bruneau, 2000).

The reasons for this are several. First, and of considerable importance, is Gottmann’s wanderlust. He not only moved around a great deal during the early decades of his career but did so between two very different cultures – French and North American – and academic ways of life, in neither of which he became established in the normal sense through permanent academic appointments: he had no academic base once he left France at the onset of the Second World War until he moved to a third cultural realm with his appointment to the Chair of Geography at Oxford in 1968. He remained there for fifteen years, and made it his post-retirement home, but travelled a great deal internationally during that period; as Peach expresses it, he was ‘a cosmopolitan but an outsider in each of the countries in which he held his major positions’.

Associated with this wanderlust was the lack of an academic coterie associated with him. Until his arrival at Oxford, Gottmann was not involved in the supervision of graduate students, and even there his métier was a very paternalistic one of sympathetic oversight rather than in any way advancing a coherent programme; there is no school of urban scholars associated with Gottmann’s years in Oxford although

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5 In what might be termed a hagiographic essay introducing his *Festschrift* for Gottmann, however, Patten (1983, xi) refers to him as ‘one of the Olympian figures of mid twentieth century geography’. Corey – 1995, 356 – thinks this an under-statement of his ‘global influence and significance, which included but far exceeded the boundaries of modern professional geography’. Interestingly, although some at least of the thirteen essays in that book were ‘themselves inspired or influenced by Gottmann’s work’ none of the authors was a student of Gottmann and there are only five references to separate items by Gottmann throughout the entire book – and there is none to his work in Pinchemel’s (1983) essay on the history of French urban geography. Patten also refers to *Megalopolis* as ‘one of the most important single geographical ideas of the mid twentieth century’ (p. xv) and claims that his two regional texts – *L’Amérique* and *A Geography of Europe* – ‘had a great influence on the teaching of geography on both sides of the Atlantic’ (p.ix).

6 Based on Gottmann’s own records, Champion (1995) indicates that he held temporary positions at twenty universities-institutes and gave lectures on at least one occasion in 248 different places. Corey (1995) also gives an extensive list of his travels and honours.
many who were students then and enjoyed his hospitality and interest went on to senior positions in a number of universities. He certainly succeeded in revitalising the graduate school, however, even if not in his own image.

Despite the wanderlust, however, Gottmann did not participate in the normal academic round of disciplinary conferences. He was rarely seen at the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers and the Institute of British Geographers, for example, preferring small, invited meetings involving his wide range of esoteric international contacts. (One of his few formal institutional roles within geography was his chairmanship of the International Geographical Union’s Commission on Regional Planning between 1949 and 1952.) Similarly he rarely published papers in the leading journals: there are none in either the Annals of the Association of American Geographers or the Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, for example, and only a small number in the Geographical Review (he was a friend of the long-time editor, Wilma Fairchild) and the Geographical Journal. He was more a known than a cited scholar; more revered than read, in Peach’s words. Furthermore, many of his publications were relatively ephemeral. The early output was dominated by short notes on ‘the changing world’ and, after Megalopolis, much of his work comprised reviews (of planning documents as well as books) and essays rather than research papers. Nevertheless, a trawl of his works – especially those published in the 1950s and 1960s – indicates a scholar who on some issues was well ahead of his time, as with the essays on territory and political geography and his ideas regarding evolving urban forms and functions. They repay reading for their insights, as well as raising questions regarding how ideas are circulated and taken-up within academia – or not.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Gottmann’s legacy is that of a prolific scholar-essayist who was trained in, and remained very largely loyal to, the French regional tradition throughout what Peach terms his cis-and trans-Atlantic career. He will be longest remembered for his magnum opus on megalopolis and the associated essays on emerging forms of urbanization, though he published many provocative essays on a range of topics – some of them ‘way ahead of his times’ – which were characterized more by their ‘big pictures’ than by concrete detail. But he did not join the main currents of academic geography in his adopted North American and United Kingdom homes, and was marginal to developments in French universities as well (Claval – 1998, 292 – referred to him as an ‘isolé’ in France: ‘the works of Gottmann are quoted but because of the information they provide much more than for their theoretical depth. They do not make a contribution to a notable restructuring of the discipline’.). He associated with no substantial school of workers and did not establish his own at Oxford, although he had a considerable impact there in opening-up a relatively moribund and introverted School of Geography.

Acknowledgements

7 The only large conference that any one of us can recall him attending was the 1975 meeting of the Institute of British Geographers at the University of Oxford, for which – as Head of the School of Geography – he was the ‘host’.
We are grateful to Tony Champion and Hugh Prince for comments on a draft of this memoir. The picture of Gottmann is reproduced by kind permission of the British Academy.

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3. *UNPUBLISHED SOURCES ON JEAN GOTTMANN.*
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Hugh Clout (1944- ) is a Professor in the Department of Geography at University College London; Sir Peter Hall (1933- ) is a Professor in the Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning at University College London; and Ron Johnston (1941- ) is a Professor in the School of Geographical Sciences at the University of Bristol.

Chronology

1915  Born on 10 October 1915, Kharkov, Ukraine
1917  Parents murdered, flees with aunt to St Petersburg, Moscow, and Constantinople, before eventually settling in Paris.
1932-  Student at the Sorbonne.
1934  Receives diplôme d’études supérieures (history and geography) for memoir on ‘Irrigated farming in Palestine’.
1934-1939  Undertakes various items of research for Albert Demangeon, especially on farm structures and rural housing in France.
1940  Leaves Paris to work at Montpellier.
1941  Flees from France to the USA (reaching New York on 7 December 1941).
1942-44  Involved with the Construction Board for Economic Warfare.
1942-1965  Association with the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.
1943-48  Appointed lecturer and subsequently Associate Professor of Geography at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.
1945  Returns to France for one year as chargé de mission advising the Ministre de l’Economie Nationale.
1947-60  Teaches a semester each year at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques, Paris.
1948-51  Research Fellow of the Comité National de la Recherche Scientifique.
1949    Publication of *L’Amérique* (runs to 3 editions)
1950    Publication of *A Geography of Europe* (runs to 4 editions).
1952    Publication of *La Politique des Etats et leur Géographie*.
1952    Publication of *L’Aménagement de l’Espace: planification régionale et géographie*.
1955    Publication of *Virginia at Mid-Century*.
1956    Becomes Research Director for Metropolitan Studies, for the Twentieth Century Fund, New York.
1957    Publication of *Les Marchés des Matières Premières*.
1957    Marries Bernice Adelson.
1961    Publication of *Megalopolis, the urbanized northeastern seaboard of the United States*.
1963    Elected Honorary Fellow of the Royal Netherlands Geographical Society.
1964    Awarded the Daly Medal by the American Geographical Society
1968    Appointed Professor of Geography in the University of Oxford, with a Fellowship at Hertford College.
1968    Made Chevalier des Palmes Académiques
1969    Publication of *Virginia in Our Century*.
1969    Receives research doctorate from the University of Paris X for published works.
1972    Elected Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences
1973    Publication of *The Significance of Territory*.
1974    Made Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur.
1976    Made honorary citizen of Yokohama
1977  Elected Fellow of the British Academy.
1978  Made honorary citizen of Guadalajara
1983  Publication of Festchrift, *The Expanding City: essays in honour of Professor Jean Gottmann* (edited by John Patten).
1983  Formal retirement from Chair of Geography, Oxford.
1984  Receives the *Grand Prix de la Société de Géographie de Paris*.
1987  Publication of *Megalopolis revisited: twenty-five years later*.