The literature on world cities has had an enormous influence on urban theory and practice, with academics and policy makers attempting to understand, and often strive for, world city status. In this groundbreaking new work, David A McDonald explores Cape Town’s position in this network of global cities and critically investigates the conceptual value of the world city hypothesis.

In some respects, Cape Town is an ‘ideal’ world city, reflecting the service-oriented spatial economies of new global systems of production and consumption. And yet, the world city framework is an inadequate tool for understanding uneven capitalist development. Drawing on marxist urban theory, McDonald argues that Cape Town must be understood as a neoliberal city, wracked by the socio-spatial inequalities inherent to market-oriented reforms. Despite the pro-poor rhetoric of local and national government in post-apartheid South Africa, Cape Town has arguably become the most unequal city in the world, due in part to a ‘world city syndrome’ that deepens these inequalities and plagues its urban planning.

Drawing on more than a dozen years of fieldwork, McDonald provides a comprehensive overview of the city’s institutional and structural reforms, examining fiscal imbalances, political marginalization, (de)racialization, privatization and other neoliberal changes. The book concludes with thoughts on alternative development trajectories.
"This is a theoretically pathbreaking, if politically heartbreaking, account of post-apartheid Cape Town and the betrayed promises of integration and equality. It also offers a formidable, often brilliant, overview of the debate on neoliberalism."

Mike Davis, author of *Planet of Slums*, Professor of History, University of California, Irvine.

“McDonald’s aim of merging his scholarship with the concerns of real people, struggling over real issues, is impressive. In this book he advances our understanding of the challenges facing a new Cape Town in a new South Africa by eloquently exemplifying the sensitivity and insight that sustained commitment and rich experience on the ground can give rise to. A sobering but deeply illuminating account.”

John Saul, Professor Emeritus, Social and Political Science, York University, Canada.

“With rigour and precision, McDonald takes apart the neoliberal model that dominates Cape Town’s post-apartheid trajectory. He shows how this so-called development strategy sets us on the path to increased social, spatial and economic inequality. But it is really in the alternatives that the book comes to the fore. Drawing on a sophisticated reading of Marxism in conversation with Keynesianism, McDonald presents an agenda for reforming Cape Town that directly challenges the present received wisdom and foregrounds a raft of eminently sensible strategic counter-hegemonic interventions. The book is at once compelling as it is intellectually courageous and builds on McDonald’s pioneering theoretical expose on urban neoliberalism in South Africa”.

Ashwin Desai, Research Fellow, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, South Africa.

**David A McDonald is Associate Professor and Director of Global Development Studies at Queen’s University, Canada.**