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## Globalization of Cities: Towards Conceptualizing a New Politics of Place-Making in a Transnational Era

Şerife Geniş

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Gaziantep, 27310 Gaziantep, Turkey

**Abstract.** Within the past two decades, city has emerged as a critical site for analyzing dynamic and dialectic articulations of global and local processes. The proliferation of concepts such as “informational city,” “entrepreneurial city,” “transnational city,” “world city,” and “global city” reflect a growing concern in contemporary urban studies to understand and theorize the link between contemporary globalization and urbanization processes and the dynamic interplay between global and local forces in shaping cities. Among these frameworks, “world city/global city” approach played the leading role in providing a framework for recent research on the relationship between globalization and cities. “World city/global city” approach also became the main framework in shaping the urban policy agendas of many powerful public and private institutions and actors around the world. This article argues that the global prominence of this approach not only in academia but also in public debates attends to its significance and warrants a close inquiry of its claims and analyses. The article criticizes the world city/global city approach for its overly structuralist and top-down account of globalization of cities and for neglecting the interplay between the global and local actors. It attempts to develop an alternative approach that offers a historical, political, and actor-oriented perspective on globalization and global city-making in the major cities of the world.

**Key words:** Globalization, Cities, World city, Global city.

### Küreselleşen Kentler: Ulusötesi Çağda Mekan Siyasetine Kuramsal bir Bakış

**Özet.** Son yirmi yıldır kent küresel ve yerel süreçlerin dinamik ve diyalektik eklemlenmesini analiz edebileceğimiz önemli mekanlardan biri olmaya başladı. “Bilgi kenti”, “girişimci kent”, “ulusaşırı kent”, “dünya kenti,” ve “küresel kent” gibi ortaya atılan yeni kavramlar da günümüz kent çalışmalarının küreselleşme ile kentsel süreçler ve kentleri şekillendiren küresel ve yerel güçler arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamaya yönelik artan ilgiye işaret etmektedir. Bu kavramların arasında ise küreselleşme ve kentler üzerine yapılan çalışmaları en çok etkileyen “dünya kenti/küresel kent” yaklaşımı olmuştur. Dünya kenti/küresel kent kavramı sadece akademik çalışmaları etkilemekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda güçlü tüzel ve özel kurumların ve aktörlerin kent politikalarını belirleyen en önemli yaklaşım haline de gelmiştir. Bu makale, akademik ve politik olarak böylesine etkili hale gelmiş bir yaklaşımın kuramsal çerçevesinin ve iddialarının yakından incelenmesi gerektiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu çalışma, dünya kenti/küresel kent çalışmalarının aşırı yapısalcı ve küresel ve yerel toplumsal aktörlerin güç ve çıkar temelli mücadelelerini gözardı eden “yukarıdan aşağıya”

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*Corresponding author:* Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Gaziantep, 27310 Gaziantep, Turkey e-mail: [serifegenis@yahoo.com](mailto:serifegenis@yahoo.com)

küreselleşme yaklaşımını eleştirmektedir. Bunun yerine küreselleşmeye ve kentleri küreselleştirme çabalarına tarihsel, politik ve aktör odaklı bir yaklaşım sunmaya çalışmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Küreselleşme, Kentler, Dünya kenti, Küresel kent.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Within the past two decades, *city* has emerged as a critical site for analyzing dynamic and dialectic articulations of global and local processes. An expanding body of work has shown that an emerging global system of production, finance, telecommunications, culture, and politics is being socially and spatially articulated through a worldwide network of cities. In return, urban processes and politics are not only expressing but also re-working and re-shaping the processes of globalization on the ground. While cities are becoming more porous to global forces, national and local actors are taking an active interest and initiative in restructuring their cities as globally competitive places. This meeting of the global and the local has made cities mediums and arenas of globalization wherein global, national, and local processes and forces encounter each other, merge, and create a new politics of place-making under the conditions of globalizing capitalism.

The role of cities “as key nodes through which wider circuits of production, exchange, and culture have been coordinated” throughout history and in different geographies for centuries has been aptly documented in the literature (Abu-Lughod, 2001:400; Abu-Lughod, 1989; Arrighi, 1994; Braudel, 1986; Curtin, 1984). Until very recently, however, this insight has been confined to historical studies on cities, while scholars approached the contemporary city within and from the boundaries of the nation state, if not the city itself. Because of the pervasiveness of the state-centric approaches in social sciences in general (Agnew, 1996; Wallerstein, 1996), contemporary cities and urbanization processes, particularly in the developed world, have been rarely studied in relation to transnational political economic processes, supra-national dynamics, and inter-urban networks (King, 1989; 1990). An international perspective on urbanization meant comparative studies of cities still considered independent and separate units locked in their national borders and overlooked the cross-border processes that linked cities to each other. Dramatic changes in the world since the late 1960s – the rise and growing dominance of transnational corporations and the new international division of labor, the emergence of supranational economies, politics and institutions, and the intensification of transnational relations –, however, have made it increasingly difficult to sustain exclusively nation-state centric approaches not only to social processes at large but to cities and urbanization as well (Brenner, 1997a, 1997b; Sassen, 1991; Taylor, 1995; Taylor, 1996).

The proliferation of concepts such as “informational city” (Castells, 1989), “entrepreneurial city” (Tim and Hubbard, 1996), “transnational city”(Smith, 1999), “world city” (Friedmann, 1995a [1986]) and “global city” (Sassen, 1991) reflect this growing concern in contemporary urban studies about understanding and theorizing the link between contemporary globalization and urbanization processes and the dynamic interplay between global and local forces in shaping cities. Thus an ever-expanding body of work has drawn attention to the strategic role of cities in the processes of globalization, while, at the same time, attempting to understand how globalization transforms cities and cities re-work globalization.

Among these approaches, “world city/global city” concept played the leading role in providing a framework for recent research on the relationship between globalization and cities. This approach attempted to theorize the interplay between the dynamics of globalizing world economy, emergent global urban hierarchies, and the socio-economic and spatial trends within cities. On the one hand, world city/global city approach countered the prevailing representations of global economy as a placeless entity dominated by de-territorialized flows and footloose capital by showing the continuing, and, in some respects, increasing significance of cities. On the other hand, by linking the transformations in cities to the changing dynamics of the world economy, it contributed to a transnational/global perspective on urban processes and emphasized the role of cities as one of the strategic sites in the making of globalization. Thus by “placing” globalization in the cities, global city approach rendered the “local/urban” as a theoretically legitimate site for analyzing globalization and therefore contributed to the general and pervasive “problematique of global-local social relations” (Gille, 2001).

Yet there is more to “world city/global city” approach than a simple plea for attending to “the impassable dialectic of local and global” (Lipietz, 1993) and, from our perspective, the urban and the global. This approach played a prominent role in shaping not only the framework of much of the research on globalization and cities, but also the policy agendas of many powerful public and private actors and institutions. Like many other metropolises around the world (Machimura, 1998; Shachar, 1995; Todd, 1995), in Turkey too, the concepts of global or world cities have been taken up by national and urban actors as a basis for urban planning and growth policies, and in academic research and public debates for evaluating the potential and future of the Turkish cities, among them particularly Istanbul (Keyder, 1992; 1993; Komili, 1996; State Planning Organization, 2000; Tekeli, 1992; Toksöz, 1996). Thus the global prominence of this approach not only in academia but also in public debates attends to its significance and warrants a close inquiry of its claims and analyses.

In this article, I argue that although world/global city approach provided important insights on the relationship between globalization and cities, it suffers from several limitations. Firstly, this approach exclusively focused on major centers in the developed world and transposed them as models and norms for the globalization of cities elsewhere. Secondly, it univocally focused on the urban impact of economic globalization and theorized the interplay between global and local as a “top down” and unidirectional relationship from global to local within an overly structuralist framework. Although this approach importantly addressed the changing global context of urban processes, it neglected national/local initiatives, projects and politics of local and national actors simultaneously working to launch global networks and attempting to shape their cities. For that reason, it failed to analyze how global and local processes and actors are linked and continually created and transformed together. Lastly, contemporary studies on globalization, including the world/global city approach, have largely been “presentist” in their approach, or rather short in history. Theoretical and empirical imperatives demand that we take a long-term approach to globalization of cities to do justice to the historical depth of the field, but also to develop a critical yardstick to evaluate the transformation of the place over time and to assess contemporary claims of actors about their place.

This paper starts with a discussion of the writings of the two leading theorists, John Friedmann and Saskia Sassen, acknowledged as the architects of world city/global city theories respectively. The discussion of these theorists is followed by a critique that lays out their theoretical and methodological limitations. I then evaluate alternative perspectives and studies, and attempt to bring

them together in a framework which should provide a historical, political, and actor-oriented perspective on globalization and global city-making in the major cities of the world. Conclusion sums up the debate and proposes questions that could guide an alternative approach to studying globalization of cities in a transnational era.

### **The Development and Structure of the World City/Global City Approach**

While the use of the term “world city” has a long history (Geddes, 1915; Hall, 1966), contemporary research on world cities has been motivated and guided primarily by the writings of John Friedmann (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Friedmann, 1995a [1986], 1995b). The world city concept (a theoretical hybrid of the world system theory, theories of new international division of labor, urban growth and urban hierarchy), was initially formulated by Friedmann (1995a [1986]) as “the world city hypothesis,” consisting of a series of theses that later became the building blocks of the world city theory. The subsequent research on world/global cities and, more generally, on the relationship between globalization and urban processes has been an elaboration of these theses. The theses can be divided into two sets. The first provides a theoretical and methodological framework for approaching localities in general and cities in particular within the world economy and forms the explanatory basis of the theory. The second consists of statements about the main characteristics of contemporary world cities, the nature of their economic base, and their spatial, social, and political dynamics, and forms the descriptive part of the theory. I will consider here these components of the world city theory one at a time.

World city theory approaches cities (as well as national and regional systems defined as localities with respect to the world capitalist system) as parts of a single (spatial) division of labor. Cities are differentiated according to the form and extent of their integration into the world economy, the functions they perform in the existing spatial division of labor, and the scope of their spatial dominance/reach (such as global, regional, national, subnational) in the world system (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982). Furthermore, cities’ location and function in this spatial division of labor not only determine their status in the world economy but their internal structures as well. Structural changes occurring in cities are “for the most part a process of adaptation to changes that are externally induced” (Friedmann, 1995a [1986]:318). “[T]he mode of world system integration (form and strength of integration) will affect in determined ways the economic, social, spatial and political structure of world cities and urbanization processes to which they are subject” (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982:313, italics removed). The impact of these external economic influences and forces, in turn, can be modified by certain endogenous conditions, such as history, national policies and cultural influences, yet the former still “will be decisive for any structural changes occurring within” cities (Friedmann, 1995a [1986]:318).

By assessing the nature and scope of their integration to the world economy and the functions they perform, cities, in turn, can be ranked as a network reflecting functional as well as hierarchical organization of global (urban spatial) division of labor. In the contemporary era, cities’ integration to the world economy and the function they perform within it can be assessed by the direction and volume of transnational capital flows, but more important is the location of key functions and offices of transnational corporations. While each and every city might be integrated to transnational capital flows in some ways, there are “key cities throughout the world” that “are used by global capital as ‘basing points’ in the spatial organization and articulation of production and markets” (Friedmann, 1995a [1986]:139). These cities are called “world cities” which constitute the core theoretical and empirical object of the world city theory and research.

World city theory argues that following the form, magnitude and direction of the linkages created by transnational corporations; these cities can be mapped onto a spatial hierarchy. The initial version of this global map of world cities is a faithful replica of world system's tripartite map of world's economic geography: core countries, semi-periphery countries and periphery countries (Friedmann, 1995a [1986]). This corresponds to Friedmann's global urban hierarchy: primary and secondary world cities. With two exceptions all primary cities are located in the core, whereas secondary cities can be either in semi-peripheral countries or in core countries located down the hierarchy after the primary world cities. Thus, world cities are only to be found in the core and semi-periphery countries and a large portion of the globe is excluded from world city formation reflecting the structural and spatial hierarchies of the world economy and capital flows.

Friedmann (1995b:24) later slightly revised this hierarchical ordering and adopted a classification of world cities according to the cities' respective functions: global financial articulations, multinational articulations, and important national and subnational/regional articulations. These functionally differentiated cities again are mapped onto a hierarchical order. This time, however, function and geographical reach became more important than the cities' location within their respective countries and the status of that country within the hierarchy of world division of labor. The resultant map documents the existence of three distinct subsystems: The Asian sub-system centered on Tokyo, the American subsystem based on the core cities of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, and the Western European sub-system centered on London, Paris and the Rhine Valley.

This modification is reflected in the definition of world cities as well as the empirical criteria used to identify and rank them. World cities are now defined not only as "basing points" of global capital, but "control and command centers" that host globally oriented economic functions and actors which control and coordinate global economic flows. The driving force of the world city formation is no longer any type of global capital flows or the presence of transnational corporate functions (manufacturing, for instance) but a small number of rapidly expanding sectors that are assigned global orientation and function, control and command capability: TNC headquarters, international finance, global transport and communications, and high level business services (producer services). The top tier world cities (Friedmann later calls them global cities, influenced by the work and vocabulary of Saskia Sassen) host the top administrative and decision-making activities and actors. They also display greater degree of agglomeration of these globally oriented sectors, functions and actors than the other cities. As we go down the hierarchy, we see a lesser presence of these functions and actors, hence, a lesser significance of the city in articulating and controlling global capital flows and a smaller scale.

As noted above, Friedmann's world city conceptualization has been highly influential in the following research on global urban hierarchies and the effect of globalization on cities, including the work of Saskia Sassen. Sassen's writings, however, also played a significant role in the development of world city theory and the modification Friedmann's work undergone in time since from the very beginning (Sassen-Koob, 1984, 1986). However, it is with her book on New York, London and Tokyo that Sassen has been accepted as one of the leading theorists on globalization and cities and more particularly on what she has called "global cities" (Sassen, 1991). The book is important in several respects. It is the first comprehensive empirical study that applies world city theory to case studies in its entirety. Secondly, while it fine-tunes the arguments of world city theory, it also modifies them and puts forth the theory of the "global city model" (Sassen, 2001a). The characteristics of these cities, the roles that they play not only in control and command but also in the "production" of global economy, and the effects of this role on the socio-economic and

spatial dynamics of these cities constitute the main concerns of Sassen's research. Her argument that key cities around the world are demonstrating signs of convergence in terms of economic, social and spatial structure, that a "new urban regime" is emerging based on a globalized post-industrial service oriented urbanization, has been the basis for the "global city model."

One can easily discern Sassen's dialogue with Friedmann's world city approach in building her own conceptual framework in the *Global City*. Sassen's global city model is based on the background assumptions of world city theory, but in her work the language of world system approach is less pronounced and greater emphasis is put on the novelty of the trends that are summed up under the term global economy and the role cities play within them. The choice of the term "global city" rather than "world city" is explained as "an attempt to name a difference," the specificity of the world-wide processes that we came to call "global" and the dynamics that characterize these processes in the contemporary period (Sassen, 2001a:19):

The difference between the classic concept of the world city and the global city model is one of level of generality and historical specificity. The world city concept has a certain kind of timelessness attached to it whereas the global city model marks a specific socio-spatial historical phase. A key differentiating element ... is my emphasis on the 'production' of the global economic system. It is not simply a matter of global coordination but of the production of global control capabilities.

Sassen follows upon the world city research, but she targets a particular genre in the globalization literature. Her (1991; 2001a) central aim is to explain an anomaly, i.e., the continuing significance of cities in the age of accelerated globalization and digitalization of economy, despite the claims made to the contrary. According to her, the significance of cities did not vanish in the face of globalization and digitalization of economy. On the contrary, we see a renewed strategic role of major cities in the world economy. This is the outcome of the territorial dispersion of economic activity and restructuring of finance that "created a need for expanded central control and management if this dispersal is to occur along with continued economic concentration." It is through particular technologies and services produced in certain cities that the global capital gains the capability to control and coordinate capital flows, production, trade and marketing on a global scale and at an accelerated rate. All these mean that global economy needs places to be produced and the mobility of capital needs to be created and sustained.

In other words, flows presuppose places, mobility presupposes fixity, reterritorialization presupposes reterritorialization, and circulation production. It is due to this dialectic, the need for infrastructures to create, control and coordinate mobility that instead of becoming obsolete, cities have continued their strategic significance in the functioning of the global economy. Thus while the current round of capitalist globalization is characterized by an ever increasing mobility of capital and its control on a global level, the expansion of such capacity has been partly premised upon certain major cities where the work of globalization gets done, i.e., where the technological, institutional and social infrastructure of globalization is secured. These cities are called global cities. They function

first, as highly concentrated command points in the new organization of the world economy; second as key locations for finance and for specialized service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors; third as sites of production, including production of innovations, in these leading industries; and fourth, as markets for products and innovations produced. Thus a new type of city has appeared. It is the global city. Leading examples now are New York, London and Tokyo. (Sassen, 1991).

Thus while Sassen's description of global city is similar to that of world city, as control, command and coordination centers of global capital, she attributes these characteristics of global cities not to localization of TNCs per se, as did the world city theory, but to agglomeration of

producer services, which are seen as the leading sectors of global economy. Hence global cities are command and control centers not necessarily because they host headquarters of TNCs and their top administrative and decision-making activities, but because they host the strategic sectors, capabilities, and labor force that produce these control and coordination capacities. The analytical and political advantages of this conceptualization, according to Sassen, is that it directs our attention to the production processes and sites and whole array of practices and actors that take part in these processes and are located in the cities. In turn, the focus on production and actors enable us to capture the “social thickness” of the global in the local that a mere focus on locational strategies of TNCs would fall short of. Hence, we recover the “place” in the global (Sassen, 2000, 2001a). Sassen attempted to substantiate these arguments by looking at the emerging economic, social, and spatial dynamics in New York, Tokyo and London which are, in turn, linked to their new role and status in the globalizing economy. In later studies, she extended her argument to other cities as well (Sassen, 1994).

The work of both Friedmann and Sassen has not only been limited to establishing the criteria for determining the world/global cities but also assessing the impact of economic globalization on the socio-spatial dynamics of these cities. The kernel of the argument put forth by Friedmann is that globally oriented sectors, which constitute the upper circuits of economic activity in global cities, shape the social, demographic, spatial, economic, and political structures and relations within these cities. Global cities are highly polarized places, while the politics of the city is caught up between the dilemma of mediating the growing discrepancy between the needs of “economic space” of capital and the demands of transnational elite on the one hand, and the “life space” of the residents, on the other. Sassen expanded on this thesis and provided extensive empirical evidence on how the global capital and the producer services impinge on the demographic, socio-economic and spatial dynamics of the three global cities, London, New York and Tokyo, which she studied. This argument came to be known as the socio-spatial polarization of global cities thesis and widely contested by the subsequent research.

Although the terms world and global city are used interchangeably in the literature, Sassen’s description of the global city has become the dominant reference in subsequent research on globalization and cities, and the world city theory has evolved into the global city model (A summary of the development of the world city/global city approach is presented in Table 1)

The majority of the subsequent global cities research attempted to develop the arguments of the global city thesis, strengthen its conceptual apparatus, and expand its empirical basis through countless case studies. Within the existing literature, one can trace several different strands of research that followed upon different aspects of Friedmann’s and Sassen’s work. Some sought better ways to define and measure global cities’ characteristics by building more sophisticated methods to identify global cities and their global ranking. Researchers located in Britain and organized in the Globalization and World City Study Group and Network (GaWC) played a leading role in this type of research.<sup>1</sup> By adopting Sassen’s definition of global cities as centers of global producer services and by producing the most detailed and extensive maps of global cities in the world, GAWC researchers attempted to challenge the critiques claiming that the definitions of world/global cities are theory- rather than data-driven and that the lack of comparative empirical evidence weakens the claims of global city thesis (Markusen, 1999; Short et al., 1996). Building on these maps, more recent and related contributions argued that global city formation can be better conceived as a network of globalized urban centers cutting across a larger geography rather than as

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<sup>1</sup>For selected examples of this research, see Beaverstock, et al., (1999); Taylor (1999); Taylor and Walker (2001); Taylor, at al., (2002); Taylor and Hoyler (2000).

a phenomenon limited only to London, New York and Tokyo, and conceptualized in the form of a global urban hierarchy (for example, Smith and Timberlake, 1995)

Table 1. Evolution of the World/Global City Concept-Approach

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Selection, Classification, and Ranking Criteria</b>
<b>Friedmann (1995a [1986])</b> World cities as 'basing points' for transnational firms and their control and command functions.	Major financial center; # of headquarters for TNCs (including regional headquarters); international institutions; high level business services; and major transportation and communication node. Cities ordered according to economic power and scale they command and integrate into global economy: global cities with global reach and control capacities; secondary world cities (sub-global cities) with regional reach and control capacities, third-order cities with national reach and control capabilities.
<b>Sassen (1991, 2001)</b> Global cities as production sites and market places for globally oriented finance and advanced producer services.	Presence of globally oriented advanced producer service and finance firms; significant export of producer services; significant foreign firm headquarters; and integration into global property markets. No classification and ordering is provided but a distinction is made between "global cities" and 'cities carrying out global functions.'" While the former has a global reach capability (such as London, New York and Tokyo), the latter works within and through sub-global space and scope of global control capability is limited.
<b>Beaverstock et al. (1999)</b> <b>Taylor (1999)</b> Global cities as post-industrial global service centers.	Depth and scope of advanced producer services (accounting, advertising, banking, law) measured by the # of major (global) corporate service firms present in the city. Functional classification based on the dominant type of service produced and hierarchical classification based on the depth and scope of services produced. Cities ranked as 'Alpha', 'Beta', and 'Gamma' world/global cities.

A last group of researchers concentrated on case studies and tested the socio-economic and spatial restructuring argument of the global city theory for different cities. With regard to economic restructuring and the emergence of new and extreme forms of socio-economic inequality in global cities, for instance, researchers confirmed the existence of a strong and secular trend towards socio-spatial polarization and emergence of "dual cities," particularly in New York, Los Angeles, and London (Mollenkopf, 1991; Soja, 1989).<sup>2</sup> As anticipated in the theory, the main causes of this trend was attributed to the localization of global economic actors and flows and their concomitant

<sup>2</sup>This is not surprising as LA and New York were the implicit cases for Friedmann and Wolff's initial formulation of world city hypotheses (Keil, 1998). Several researchers studying European and Asian cities have challenged the projection of these socio-economic patterns observed in these cities to a global city model. The explanatory framework too has been questioned. For example, see Storper (1997) and Allen (1995).



restructuring of these cities, or the new functions these cities perform in the global economy and their structural position in the new spatial division of labor.

Since Friedmann's formulation of world city hypotheses (1986) and Sassen's publication of the *Global City* (1991), the concepts of "world city" and "global city" are widely accepted and cited in the literature urban and regional planning (Scott 1998), urban politics (Hall and Hubbard, 1996), and the question of urban citizenship and inequality (Holston, 2001; Işın, 2000) among others. The influence of these concepts, however, is not limited to urban sociology. They are omnipresent in a wide range of academic writings on globalization (Featherstone, 1995; Castells, 1997; Short and Kim, 1999; Beck, 2000; Lash and Urry, 1994). The following section will make the argument that this ready acceptance of the global city concept and approach is problematic.

### **The Limits to World/Global City Approach**

The global cities literature effectively provided a critique of the discourses of economic globalization that posit the annihilation of "spaces of places" by the "spaces of flows" (Castells, 1989; 1997). It bracketed this contrast between place and space by showing expanding transnational linkages between particular cities and their role in the production of the global economy. It also alerted us not only to the networked places of global economy, but also to the hierarchies among cities in terms of their position in the global economy. Yet, as in the case of economic discourses of globalization (Robertson and Khondker, 1998), the global city theory constructed globalization as a macro and top-down process, missed the play of agency, the role of power and ideology, and rebuilt global-local dualisms anew.

Taxonomies of urban networks and global city hierarchies reveal important insights about the ever-expanding transnational linkages between cities, but ultimately reify the space they attempt to describe: studying globalization becomes mapping the global economic geography. Studies on the urban impact of economic globalization miss the political and ideological dimensions of this process, i.e., the role of national and local actors in shaping urban dynamics, contesting boundaries of the urban scale, and employing policies and discourses to strategically position their cities within global processes and flows. Such approaches reify globalization and render global and local processes as mutually exclusive if not inherently antagonistic forces of urban change. At best, they reduce localities to passive recipients, transmitters of or reactors to global economic forces (Cox, 2001; Douglass, 2000; Smith, 2001). They neglect the global city making processes on the ground, the ways in which contemporary "global-local interplay" (Dunford and Kafkalas, 1992) is "embedded within, mediated through and actively promoted by" states and strategic actors to position themselves and their cities as "strategic sites" in the field of global flows (Brenner, 1998a).

In the global city framework, then, the economics of globalization takes precedence over the politics of globalization, as do urban economics over urban politics. Storper (1997), a student of local and regional economies and an ardent critique of world/global city theory, captures the essence of the problem with the global city approach and is worth quoting at length:

They all conceive of the city as a machine, by which is meant a geographically dense socioeconomic system that functions according to the laws of a kind of urban-economic physics. The changes with which urbanists are concerned – in economy and society – are then viewed as the result of a change in the motive power of the machine, from national capitalism to global capitalism, and from manufacturing to service industries. Via the intermediation of particular factors, these forms of motive power "produce" cities, which are seen as subassemblies in the overall mechanical structure of the forces and flows of global capitalist society.

This is a misleading metaphor of the economics and social dynamics of cities in high-income countries (and some middle-income countries) in today's global economy. The economic role of these cities is

not as a mechanical node in a bigger machine; the society of cities, likewise, while altered by urban economic forces beyond the control of urban citizens, is not a simple outcome of economic change’.

By approaching globalization and global city formation from a structural and top-down perspective, global city theorists ignored the fact that globalization at large and globalizing of cities in particular, are projects, as much as processes. These projects are constructed within wider discourses and are promoted by social forces at local, national as well as global levels (Machimura, 1998; McMichael, 2000; Robertson and Khondker, 1998; Smith, 1999). By neglecting social actors and their projects, the global city theory inevitably, if unwittingly, contributed to the dominant discourses of globalization as a monolithic and unstoppable force imposed by “external forces” rather than debunking them (Olds, 2001).

Furthermore, as I will discuss below, the global city theory itself has become part of the global discourse on globalization and urbanization. The centrism (and, for some, the Anglo-Americanism) of the global city theory has promoted leading centers as models and norms for globalizing cities elsewhere. The global city model has been adopted by various regional, national, and local actors in different parts of the world as blueprints to be implemented. As Anthony King (2000:266) notes, “the effect of the ‘world’ and ‘global’ city paradigm”, as that of the earlier Chicago School of urban sociology, has “been to prompt scholars as well as municipal officials worldwide to ask, ‘Is this, or is this not a ‘world city’?” Likewise, Hill and Kim (2001) have argued that the global city theory has become a global city ideology.

According to Işın (2003:3) the global city theory provided us not only with “geographic metaphors” to think about the emerging social world, “but also the concrete sites in which to investigate the complex relays of postmodernization and globalization that engender spaces for new identities and projects which modernization either contained or prohibited.” Along the same lines but from a different angle, I will argue that the global city theory provided us with a “site” but not with a “place,” for it overlooked the political construction and production of global cities and the role of social actors within it. “Place” is rendered oblique the moment it is recovered in the theory’s framework. Recovering place, conceptually and empirically, while studying globalization of cities, requires not only that we trace the localization of global economic forces and their impact, but also that we analyze how national and local actors themselves engage in politics of globalization to launch *global connections* and *networks* (Buroway et al., 2000) as they attempt to transform their locality into a global city. In this approach, actors do not become an afterthought and politics is not treated as the after-effects of globalization. They are but part and parcel of the globalization of the place.

### **National and Local as Sites and Agents of Globalization**

The worldwide rise of urban entrepreneurialism, of entrepreneurial cities along with competitive states (Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Jessop, 1997), is an indication of the presence of national and local globalizing forces which formulate and implement “ground up” political projects. A cursory glimpse at policy documents and master plans of any major city today would show that tapping into the advantages of globalization, promoting international competitiveness, becoming international hubs, gateways, world cities, global cities and so on, have become hegemonic arguments in many cities and constituted the major concern and agenda of urban and state actors. To give some examples, Singapore wants to be an “Intelligent Island”, a “smart city,” a global center for science, technology and commerce, communications and information networks. For this, not only are policies devised and new urban development and infrastructure investments made, but also world city experts, such as Friedmann himself, are invited to speak on how to become a world city (Friedmann, 1995b). Kuala Lumpur is another “global city wannabe” (Bunell, at al., 2002).

Among the development program of Malaysia, establishing Kuala Lumpur as the “information hub” of East Asia in the twenty first century occupies the central place. For this, 50 kilometers Multimedia Super Corridor is currently under construction from scratch (Corporation, 1998). According to Montreal’s political and economic elites, as the cities and city regions are becoming new players in a global economy, the question for Montreal is whether it wants to be global player or not? Similar questions are asked in Turkey for Istanbul, while leading figures of global city studies are invited to the city for consultation by the local political and economic elites.

Global cities have also entered the agenda of supranational institutions, becoming a policy tool for geo-political and geo-economic competition and struggles. A recent report titled *Global Cities Dialogue* sponsored by the European Union and the Mayors of Barcelona, Stockholm, and Rome calls Europe to be the driving force behind a dialogue and cooperation between “global cities.” The initiative is promoted not only to raise major cities of Europe to global city status but also as a channel to communicate the “European Way” to the world (Molina, 2000). Europe is increasingly imagined and reworked as Europe of cities and regions. There are growing struggles and pressures to introduce new forms of metropolitan governance and urban autonomy in the EU in an attempt to “re-scale” state power downwards and de-link local governance from popular pressures through privatization of urban politics and institutions. Political strategies and economic policies, in return, have started pitting regions/cities against each other, paving the way for demands by the wealthy regions and cities for local and regional autonomy around imagined and re-invented identities and newly emerging coalitions (Agnew, 1996; van Houten, 2003). Economic disjuncture between the nation and the city, therefore, do not come naturally as the global city theory assumes (Sassen, 1991) but is a politically mediated and contested process.

Thus, a growing literature is attempting to understand and tackle the transformation of urban politics, of the relationship between city and state, and urban and national actors under contemporary globalization. The role of the nation-states and state actors in globalization and the relationship between the nation-state and globalization has been a contested issue. More refined analyses, however, challenge the blunt state-decline thesis that the world/global city theory has taken for granted. States vary tremendously in terms of power and position vis-à-vis global actors, institutions, and processes (Mann, 1997; Smith et al., 1999; Held and McGrew, 1999), yet most of them have been acting as sites and agents of the globalization process as well (Brenner, 1998a, 1998b; Dittmer, 2002; Panitch, 1994). While this process is reworking state structures, functions, and state territoriality (Shaw, 1997), states still continue to regulate their territory in significant(ly transformed) ways, manage the economy, control and coordinate in and out flows, and provide the necessary infrastructure for both national and foreign capital. Furthermore, most states see economic globalization not only as an impinging force but also as a space of opportunity, and attempt to compete for, rather than clash with transnational capital as the world city hypothesis posits (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Friedmann, 1995 [1986]). As recent studies of cities particularly in Europe and Asia have shown, states’ role in promoting their cities as strategic sites (regional or global) has gone far beyond deregulating and liberalizing their economies. States in different countries have engaged in a complex array of practices: they have rescaled central state’s responsibilities and rights downwards to local governments, or, in contrast, overridden autonomy and rights of local governments; forged public-private partnerships; formed and circulated global city discourses and discourses of entrepreneurship and competition; initiated and established state of the art transportation and communication systems; built mega and landmark projects to restructure their cities as “spaces of accumulation” to attract foreign investment and expertise; engaged in “entrepreneurial diplomacy” to transnationalize indigenous capitalists; and promoted cultural

politics to forge new images and identities compatible with this global vision locally and globally (Brenner, 1997b, 1998a; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Machimura, 1992; Yeung and Lo, 1998; Yusuf and Wu, 2002; Wu, 2000). The re-scaling of economic, political and social relationships, in turn, have generated a whole array of socio-political interests, conflicts, and struggles played out at increasingly relativized and overlapping scales (urban-national-regional-global) (Brenner, 1998a; Smith, 1999; Swyngedouw, 1997).

It is not only the state actors (local and national), however, who promote globalist strategies for their cities. From business elites to intellectuals, from middle classes to high professionals, a variety of social actors do design and support global city projects and, in some cases, contest each others' plans. Jessop and Sum (2000), in their study of socio-economic and spatial restructuring in Hong-Kong within the past two decades, have shown how globalization constituted the common terrain for the city's future plans. Yet, it was also a contested terrain wherein different fractions of capital and a whole array of urban actors developed competing visions for the future of the city in a globalized world. While commercial and finance capitalists propagated a vision of the city's new identity as a "business/service/financial center" with a "trans-regional hub" functions, industrial capitalists with certain sections of bureaucracy promoted a vision of the city as a "high-tech manufacturing center." These two visions involve competing imaginations of globalization/global economy on the one hand, and politics of place on the other. Thus taken together they entail contestations of the character of place and negotiations of its external relations.

The paradigmatic cases of the global city model (i.e. Tokyo, London, and New York) have also been subjected to similar social constructionist analyses that pay due attention to place-based processes of global city making and its politically contested nature. Keil's (1998) study on Los Angeles and Abu-Lughod's (2001) comparative work on New York, Chicago and Los Angeles are the best examples. Both show how the development of what has been called the global city functions in each of these cities and the concomitant economic, social and spatial structuring they underwent was initiated by the decisions of key institutional, economic and political actors and shaped by complex political struggles and conflicts.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Chris Toulouse's (1991) analysis of the development that made London a global financial center counters narratives that explain urban restructuring as a process imposed by the global finance capital. Instead, she explains how urban restructuring was led by the Thatcher government's use of state power to shape and internationalize the city for particular class-based ends. Asian scholars make similar arguments particularly emphasizing the role of the state and political actors and the relationship between the state and capitalists for the unfolding global city projects in different Asian cities.<sup>4</sup>

These studies reveal politically constructed and contested nature of urban restructuring initiated by global city projects. They show how the twin processes of globalization and neo-liberalization have transformed the context of local and national politics, while national and local actors not only have responded or reacted to global forces but also have actively engaged in global city making practices. By bringing out the political nature of global city making, these studies open an avenue to

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<sup>3</sup>On Los Angeles, see also Davis' (1990) vivid historical account of how L. A. has taken on the properties of the so called world city status as described in the literature through the visions and practices of cultural elites, local politicians, and capitalists attempting to capture the opportunities offered by overseas capitalists and wealthy immigrants. In return, the city has risen on the shoulders of lower classes that have been incarcerated, ghettoized and excluded from the glossy "image" of L. A.

<sup>4</sup>Asia, following the developmentalist state tradition, has been the region wherein the states have taken the most forceful initiatives for top-down state-initiated globalization projects. Accordingly, Asian scholars have frequently engaged in debates with the global city model and its explanatory framework. For an example, see the debate between Hill and Kim, (2000; 2001); Sassen, (2001b); Friedmann (2001).

critically engage with global city projects on the ground, and to reveal and criticize their economic, social, and political implications.

Despite their insightful approach to socio-political construction and production of cities in the age of contemporary globalization, however, none of these studies explicitly treat history of a place as part of their account of the global-local interactions as played out in the cities. Yet history matters socially as well as politically: It marks the shifts in the identity of a locality, which is always already a product of historically changing local and global relations (Gille, 2001). It provides the context as well as legitimacy for global city projects. It shapes how a particular locality and the social actors within it respond to and construct globalization in their discourses. It influences their discourses and the strategies through which they seek to shape their cities and contest the place of their cities in relation to the national, regional and global levels. Thus, a historical perspective provides us with a critical vantage point to see how places are formed and transformed through evolving global-local interactions; how new social relations and actors emerge in places; and how history provides both the context and resource for their actions, networks and imaginations.

### **Global-Local Interplay as a Historical Process**

While contemporary globalization is unprecedented in terms of the speed, scope and density of long-distance relations, the emergent institutional arrangements to regulate, control and coordinate the interactions between different scales, and the growing consciousness of the world as a global space, globalization understood as long-distance social interactions is not a new phenomenon. Neither is the role of certain cities as central nodes in the wider networks peculiar to contemporary era. The latter is aptly documented in historical studies of cities, long-distance trade, empires, imperialism, colonialism, and so on. In fact, the function of cities as nodes has always been essential and distinctive characteristic of cities (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Massey and Jess, 2000).

Yet it is only recently that such an analytical angle on cities have been established within contemporary urban studies and researchers started to consider major cities in relation not only to their immediate hinterlands, but also within a global context tied to transnational circuits of capital, technology, commodities, information, ideas, images and people. World/global city theory has played a pioneering role in this regard. However, despite their intellectual debt to world-system theory, whose minimal prerequisite was merging a global perspective with a *longue durée* approach, global city studies have predominantly been “presentist.”<sup>5</sup> As King (1990; 1989) noted, a lingering West-centrism begets this temporal shortsightedness in the literature, in that globalization enters the agenda of urban studies only when the cities of the advanced countries confront intensified transnational flows and forces.

Only when the economic bases of cities in “advanced economies” in the core was affected, have many urbanists in those countries looked beyond national boundaries to the larger economic system that supported them. Yet the inhabitants of that “external world” have long been aware that their urban situation has been affected by core societies, except that this was seen as part of a larger process that went by another name (King, 1989:7)

Diane Davis (2003: npa) makes a similar point:

As an urbanist who has studied third world cities for decades, ... I find the recent turn of events rather amusing. Or then again, troubling might be just as a good word, because the recent “discovery” of the impact of globalization on cities and the rise of global city paradigm, at first glance, holds all trappings of just another form of first-world hegemony. Perhaps the relationship between globalization and cities

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<sup>5</sup>See, however, Frank’s (1998) and Abu-Lughod’s (1989) critique of world system theory, its temporal and spatial Eurocentrism.

is the academic rage these days because scholars and residents in America and Europe have suddenly realized that global forces are central to the growth and transformation of their lives. ... And with the affluent world suddenly recognizing the important connections between cities and globalization, the subject is at once legitimate, not to mention down right popular, and ensconced at the center of worldwide debate.

Thus for urban historians, dependency and world system scholars, and students of colonialism and imperialism, among others, the central role of cities in trans-territorial processes of various kinds is as an old phenomenon as are the cities themselves. In fact, many documented the role of cities "as key nodes through which wider circuits of production, exchange, and culture have been coordinated" throughout history and in different geographies (Abu-Lughod, 2001:400; Arrighi, 1994; Barduel, 1986; Curtin, 1984; Frank, 1998; King, 1989, 1990). According to Abu-Lughod (1989:401), for instance, the role of urban centers as nodes that knitted large regional zones into each other could be traced back as far as second millennium BC with periodical trends of expansion and contraction in the longevity, velocity and density of their networks. For Abu-Lughod (1989), therefore, "world cities," defined as centers of inter-regional and in some cases inter-continental trade, long predated the European world system and the rise of capitalism, and constituted the socio-spatial formation that linked larger areas of Europe, the Middle East and the Far East through material and non-material flows. This historical background should be taken into consideration when dealing with global connections and networks particular cities and the imaginations and efforts of local and national actors in globalizing their localities.

There are, however, broader gains to harvest from a historical perspective than by treating it only as a necessity implied in the case itself. History can have theoretical as well as political implications for understanding processes of globalization and global-local relations as they take place over time and in different geographies. First, it can sharpen our sense of different forms of globalization through time and help us understand what is peculiar to contemporary globalization (Held and McGrew, 1999; Frank, 1998; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004). Furthermore, from a place-based analytical approach to globalization, history matters for the present identity of a place, which is always already a hybrid of past local and trans-local social relations (Massey, 1994; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). These past global-local interactions do not only transform a locality in time and produce it in the sense of giving its socio-spatial form, but also shape different local/national actors' responses to contemporary globalization. Identities embedded in prior socio-political orders "may be critical to the experience and politics of contemporary globalization" (Gille and O'Riain, 2002:281). The weakening of the national state can help and promote the awakening of pre-national local identities through which local actors attempt to reinvigorate/reinvent local histories and identities. Through these histories and identities they can attempt to claim local autonomy against the "nation" and the "state" as well as allegiance to transnational entities, as has been documented for Northern League of Italy (Agnew, 2002; Giordona, 2001) as well as in other parts of Europe (Passi, 2002). Nation-states themselves can engage rigorously in transnational projects for which past connections and identities provide context and legitimacy. With contemporary globalization, the cultural and political projects of nation-states increasingly extend beyond borders as they vie for "hegemony in relations with other nation-states, with their citizens and co-ethnics beyond their borders" (Kearney, 1995:548). Past linkages can also shape the form of globalization in different localities in the sense that previous linkages that were dried out can be reactivated through new networks thanks to present technological capabilities and political institutions. These, in turn, can have significant implications for global imaginations and political struggles within places. A historical approach thus gives us at once a perspective to discern the transformation of places over time, and a critical angle to assess the contemporary claims of people within them.

## CONCLUSION

“World city/global city” approach played a leading role in providing a framework for recent research on the relationship between globalization and cities. It offered a powerful conceptual agenda to theorize the interplay between the dynamics of globalizing world economy, emergent global urban hierarchies, and the socio-economic and spatial trends within cities. Global city theory made two invaluable contributions to both globalization and urban studies by fixing its gaze onto cities as one of the strategic sites where globalization gets to be produced, lived and experienced. Firstly, it offset the prevailing representations of global economy as a placeless entity dominated by de-territorialized flows and footloose capital. Secondly, it encountered nation-state and local-centric studies of cities and contributed to the development of a transnational/global perspective on cities and urbanization.

The world city/global city paradigm, however, also suffered from certain shortcomings. It theorized the interplay between the global and the local as a “top down” and unidirectional relationship from the global to the local within an overly structuralist framework. Although this approach importantly addressed the changing global context of urban processes, it overlooked the national/local initiatives, projects and politics of local and national actors simultaneously working to launch global networks and attempting to shape their cities. This article argued that globalization of the cities is produced not only economically but also politically and not only by the global actors but also with the participation and initiatives of the national/local actors. It also emphasized the significance of a historical perspective against the “presentist” focus of the global city approach and much of the recent research on the relationship between globalization and cities. A historical perspective is essential to harvest the depth of the field, to evaluate the transformations of places over time and to appraise the claims of contemporary actors about the identity and future of their cities.

This article ends with a series of question that I think could guide us to a research agenda that aims to develop a sociologically thick and politically tuned understanding of globalization of cities and the global city politics on the ground: What happens to urban politics, if globalization takes place within the cities, is embedded in them, and produced in and through them, as the global city theory argues? How are “global” or “globalizing cities” linked to the policies of the state, politics and coalitions on the ground, and discourses and strategies of contending actors in these cities? How do these actors attempt to shape the city as well as its relationship to national/regional/global processes? In what ways and on what terms do the processes of globalization interconnect and intertwine with existing and emergent class and cultural divisions? In return, how these divisions play into politics and discourses of globalization on the ground? Finally, perhaps, we should ask not only “Whose city is it?” as Sassen does (1999), but also “Whose project is the global city?” Only if we seek answers to these questions than we might be able unmask the representations of globalization of cities as an unstoppable force and develop alternative globalization projects.

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