

# UC Santa Barbara

## Other Recent Work

### **Title**

Saskia Sassen and the Sociology of Globalization: A Critical Appraisal

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/44j854qc>

### **Author**

Robinson, William I.

### **Publication Date**

2009-03-01

# Saskia Sassen and the Sociology of Globalization: A Critical Appraisal

BY WILLIAM I. ROBINSON

## Abstract

A sociology of globalization has come into existence in recent years as both an umbrella for a number of traditional sub-fields and also as a theoretical enterprise. Social scientists have attempted to theorize worldwide social transformations in recent decades and to conceive of a global system with its own emergent properties. Among the most widely-cited scholars in this emerging field is Saskia Sassen, a Dutch-born sociologist and economist. This article charts and critically assesses Sassen's particular sociology of globalization. The main focus is on two interrelated topics for which she is best known: global cities and transnational migration. Ongoing and novel reconfigurations of time and space are central to many globalization theories as globalization redefines the relationship between production and territoriality, economic organization, institutions and social processes. Sassen is most concerned with the spatial, or scalar, realities of globalization as a process that restructures space and place, as evinced in her global cities thesis and her work on transnational migration, as well as in her more recent research on the state, global digital networks and emergent global formations

A sociology of globalization has come into existence in recent years as *both* an umbrella for a number of traditional sub-fields, among them, development studies, distinct area studies, and international studies, *and also* as a theoretical enterprise (Appelbaum and Robinson, 2005). Social scientists have attempted to theorize: a global system with its own emergent properties (e.g., Sklair, 2002; Axford, 1995); globalization as a new epoch in the history of world capitalism (Robinson, 2004) or a new age of postmodernity (Albrow, 1997); globality as "planetary consciousness" (Robertson, 1992); and the rise of a new social form, the network society (Castells, 1996).

WILLIAM I ROBINSON is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of several books, most recently of *Transnational Conflicts: Central America, Social Change and Globalization* (2003), *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class and State in a Transnational World* (2004), and *Latin America and Global Capitalism: A Globalization Perspective* (2008).

Among the most prominent social scientists in this emerging field is Saskia Sassen, a Dutch-born sociologist and economist, whose 2007 study, *A Sociology of Globalization*, provides an overview of this prolific scholar's three-decade research agenda. This article is an attempt to chart and to critically assess her particular sociology of globalization. The main focus of my critique is her work on two interrelated topics for which she is best known: *global cities* and *transnational migration*.

Sassen's first major book, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (1988) was followed by the modern classic, *The Global City*, first published in 1991 and updated in 2001. In these first two books she laid out a novel theory of the emerging global economic matrix. *The Global City* has had an exceptionally broad impact across the disciplines and left an indelible mark on the emergent field of globalization studies. Since its release she has continued to write widely on globalization from a political-economy approach. While these two topics have been her primary concern she has more recently attempted to theorize the state and globalization, has researched global digital networks, and made forays into the topics of global classes and emergent global formations (for summary discussion, see Sassen 2007). Nonetheless, in the corpus of her work Sassen tends to focus on various specific, often localized processes, so that there is no real encompassing overview of global processes or a theoretical conception of globality. Yet her remarkable analytical prowess and theorization of global economic transformation, particularly the socio-spatial dimension, constitute a formidable contribution to globalization studies and has made her one of the most cited scholars worldwide on the subject.

I have observed elsewhere that ongoing and novel reconfigurations of time and space are central to many globalization theories (Robinson, 2007). Globalization, as Crang notes, entails a spatial shift and "needs to be understood as acting through a variety of spatial categories" (1999:168). Most theorists concur that globalization redefines the relationship between production and territoriality, economic organization, institutions and social processes. But how so? What types of changing social cartographies can we map? How do transnationalized populations reorganize their spatial relations, from local to global scales? Sassen is most concerned with these spatial, or scalar, realities of globalization as a process that restructures space and place. She uses the city as an analytical lens through which to view and understand these processes. It is through her global cities thesis that she theorizes a transformation in the spatial dynamics of world capitalism and the institutional arrangements through which they unfold. Sassen proposes that a new spatial order is emerging under globalization based on networks of global cities connected by a digitalized infrastructure and involving new transnational flows of people, power, and culture.

Born in The Hague, Netherlands in 1949, Sassen grew up in Argentina and later Italy, and then went on to study in the United States and in France. She earned an MA in philosophy in 1974 at the University of Poitiers, France, writing a thesis on dialectic logic, and was awarded in that same year a Ph.D. in sociology and economics from the University of Notre Dame in the United States (Sassen, in Sica and Turner,

2005). She eventually spent 13 years in New York City, first at the City University of New York and then at Columbia University, before moving on in the late 1990s to joint professorships at the University of Chicago and the London School of Economics, only to return to Columbia in 2006. New York was an ideal location to research transnational processes and the rise of global cities. Her own transient immigrant background, political activism among immigrant communities and cultural involvement in the life of the city beyond the Ivory Tower - she became an accomplished musician, performing with a group that toured the urban grassroots (Sassen, in Sica and Turner, 2005) - provided a fitting mix of conditions for her to develop her ideas. Sassen's works are not easy reading for the layperson. This has less to do with the prose, which is often straightforward, than with the sheer amount of concepts she packs into her exposition and perhaps also to the complexity of her ideas, which assume a significant level of background knowledge in political economy.

### TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

During the 1970s and 1980s a growing number of scholars called for the study of transnational (as distinct from international) relations - emergent crossborder relations that did not involve national states as key actors: multinational corporations, tourism, international non-governmental organizations, religious associations, and so forth (see, inter-alia, Keohane and Nye, 1973; and for discussion, Robinson, 1998). As a postdoctoral fellow in the mid-1970s at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, Sassen insisted on the growing importance of crossborder migrations as an instance of such transnational relations. The latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century began a period of massive new migrations worldwide. Some of the largest labor flows were from Southern Europe and North Africa to Western Europe, from the Caribbean Basin and South-East Asia to the United States, and from the Middle East and South Asia into the Arab oil-exporting countries. In *The Mobility of Capital and Labor* Sassen attempts to account for this massive increase in transnational migration by linking analytically and theoretically two processes associated with globalization but traditionally treated as separate phenomena: the transnationalization of production and the transnational migration of labor.

The central thesis of *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* is that heightened capital mobility and the internationalization of production has created new conditions for the international mobility of labor. Globalizing technologies, state economic policies, and investor strategies contributed to the formation starting in the 1960s of a new "transnational space for the circulation of capital" (1988:1). This transnationalization of capital is not in itself an original observation and is a familiar theme in literature on the global economy. What Sassen is concerned with, however, is the relationship between this growing transnational expansion of capital and the changing character of international migration; the "impact of such a transnational space for the circulation of capital on the formation and directionality of international labor migrations"

(1988:1). In other words, what is the relationship between economic globalization and transnational migration? The answer Sassen provides lays the basis for her analysis of economic globalization and for her subsequent thesis on global cities.

The classical theories of free trade and comparative advantage worked out by Adam Smith and David Ricardo assumed the international mobility of commodities (that is, world trade) but the immobility of capital and of labor; that capital and workers would stay put in their own countries and what would circulate around the world are goods. Later, political economists observed the rise of capital exports in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the colonial powers to their overseas territories. However, beginning in the 1960s there was a massive increase in global investment flows by multinational corporations and international subcontracting by industrialized countries, giving rise to the spread of export processing zones in Third World countries. Prefiguring globalization studies, a major area of research known as “new international division of labor” theory examined in the 1970s and 1980s the spread of foreign direct investment in developing countries, the shift in manufacturing from North to South, the spread of export processing zones, and the increasing international fragmentation and decentralization of production (Frobel, et. al., 1980). The penetration of foreign capital into Third World countries, often in the form of commercial agriculture, disrupted local communities and induced internal migration from rural areas to cities, producing a cheap labor force – disproportionately young women - that could be exploited in the new export processing zones (see, e.g., Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 1983).

Sassen takes these observations a crucial step further, linking this expansion of global investment and its disruptions of local communities to the upsurge in international migration. She argues that these two processes, traditionally studied as separate phenomena, or at best as connected at their margins, are in fact mutually constitutive as globalization unfolds. There emerges a transnational space within which the circulation of workers can be regarded as one of several flows, including capital, goods, services, and information.

The upsurge in transnational migrations starting in the 1960s cannot be adequately explained under the prevailing assumptions of why immigration occurs. Classical explanations identified overpopulation, poverty, and economic stagnation in the home country. But these explanations are not empirically adequate to explain the massive expansion of migration. Indeed, the data does not show any systematic relationship between emigration and what conventional wisdom holds to be the principal causes of emigration. There are plenty of countries that exhibit overpopulation, poverty, and economic stagnation yet do not register large-scale outmigration and there are other countries that do not exhibit these conditions yet have experienced such outmigration. Overpopulation, poverty, and economic stagnation, says Sassen, must be seen in relation to the massive influx of foreign direct investment from multinational firms and the disruption this causes among traditional economies and peasant and small holder communities.

However, this displacement does not account for *outmigration* as opposed to internal migration and nor does it explain the particular direction of outmigration. Only when this disruption is coupled with other objective and cultural-ideological linkages that are established between the sending and receiving countries can the new patterns of transnational migration be understood. Foreign investment in commercial agriculture and export manufacturing, while it generates market relations and disrupts the traditional work structure, also induces general cultural westernization and other cultural-ideological links with the country from where the investment originates. "The combination of poverty, unemployment, or underemployment with the emergence of objective and ideological linkages," says Sassen, "probably operates as a migration-inducing factor" (1988:9). Sassen shows how, beginning in the 1960s, there was a sharp rise of immigration into the United States largely from those Latin American, Caribbean, and Asian countries where the United States had undertaken major investments and/or political, military, or diplomatic involvement – Taiwan, Cambodia, Central America, South Korea, Vietnam, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and so on. U.S. business, military, or diplomatic activities were a strong presence in these and other countries that had significant migration to the United States. There is a causal relationship between immigrant receiving countries, foreign investment, and political-military and cultural involvement, on the one hand, and immigrant flows, on the other.

The emergence of a global economy therefore contributed both to the creation abroad of pools of potential emigrants and to the formation of linkages between industrialized and developing countries that subsequently were to serve as bridges for international migration, facilitated further by the liberalization of immigration policy in most developed countries. Paradoxically, the very measures thought to deter immigration – foreign investment and the promotion of export-oriented growth in developing countries – have had precisely the opposite effect. Indeed, in the case of the United States, those countries that were major recipients of foreign investment with some of the highest growth rates in the world in the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were simultaneously among the most important suppliers of immigrants to the United States – Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and so on.

The flip side to the set of conditions that induces outmigration from developing countries is the restructuring of the economies of developed countries. The decline of manufacturing, the growth of the service sector, the spread of temporary, part-time and other "casualized" forms of labor, and unconventional production processes such as sweatshops and industrial homework, all expanded the supply of low-wage jobs and the demand for working class immigrants to fill them. The transformations of the world economy generate a new role for major urban centers, particularly in the highly developed countries. In *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* Sassen first develops the concept of global cities. Global cities emerge as a new kind of economic center from which the world economy is managed and serviced. These globalized urban centers generate a strong demand for new immigrant labor. Thus, "the same set of basic pro-



cesses that has promoted emigration from several rapidly industrializing countries has also promoted immigration into several booming global cities" (1988:22).

This demand for immigrant labor in global cities is part of the larger restructuring of the production and labor process. As many scholars and analysts of global economic transformation have observed, there is a bifurcation of the labor force: an expansion of high-income professional and technical jobs, a shrinking of middle-income blue and white collar jobs, and a vast expansion of low-wage jobs, both in function of new growth sectors such as export-oriented services and declining industries in need of cheap labor for survival. This is the shift from a diamond to an hourglass structure of income distribution in the developed countries. The distribution of the population in the socioeconomic and occupational structure takes the shape of a diamond - with a bulky middle class in the middle and tapering off at both ends that represent the rich and the poor. When polarization sets in, the middle class is squeezed and the ends expand into the familiar hourglass shape. In the United States, for instance, nine out of ten new jobs created between 1965 and 1973 were in the middle-earnings groups. In contrast, between 1973 and 1986 only one in every two new jobs were in the middle-income category, while the proportion of part-time jobs increased from 15 percent of the total in 1955 to 22 percent in 1977 and over 33 percent in 1986 (Sassen, 1998:46),

In the context of this polarization, immigration provides labor for: 1) low-wage service jobs, including those that service the service sector and those that service the lifestyles of a growing top-level professional workforce, and; 2) a downgraded manufacturing sector (deunionized, low-wage, dead-end), including declining industries in need of cheap labor for survival and new dynamic industrial sectors such as electronics; 3) the immigrant community itself, in terms of a vast array of community and largely informal services that provide for the subsistence of these communities.

This latest phase in world labor migration needs to be seen in historical context. Securing a politically and economically suitable labor supply, Sassen notes, has been central to the development of world capitalism. Over the past centuries this has involved a variety of forms in which labor is corralled and apportioned out around the world in the process of capitalist economic activity. Migration is a global labor supply system. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the expansion of migration of groups from former colonial zones to the centers of the world economy which drew on ever-expanding labor pools in peripheral zones. State policies were developed to facilitate and regulate this supply of labor. "National boundaries do not act as barriers so much as mechanisms reproducing the system through the international division of labor" (1988:37), says Sassen, so that national borders are mechanisms for creating worldwide labor reserves for global capital. The state, therefore, Sassen argues, *creates* immigrant labor "as a distinct category of labor":

While the generalization of the labor market emerging from the consolidation of the world capitalist economy creates the conditions for international migrations as a world-level labor-supply system, the strengthening of the

nation-state creates the conditions for immigrant labor as a distinct category of a nation's labor supply. That is to say, immigrant labor is not any labor. It is a component in the labor supply with a distinct role in the labor process characterized by: (1) the institutional differentiation of the processes of labor-force reproduction and maintenance; and (2) a particular form of powerlessness, associated with formal or attributed foreign status, that meets the requirements of types of work organization based on direct rather than structural control over the workforce (1988: 37).

What is new in particular about immigrant labor under globalization, argues Sassen, is its increasing role in the tertiary (service) sector of the developed country economy, involving jobs that cannot be exported to cheaper wage zones, as well as its increasing role in the secondary (industrial) sector of developing areas to which manufacturing has been relocated. In other words, both global cities (largely in the traditional core) and export processing zones (largely in the traditional periphery) become magnets that draw in immigrant labor. The "growing concentration of immigrant labor in service jobs in developed countries can be viewed as the correlate of the export of jobs to the Third World" (1988:53); they are the "systematic equivalent of offshore proletariat."

#### THE GLOBAL CITY

Cities are where impacts of globalization are most keenly felt. They provide opportunities for the study of local change linked to global change. While the literature of cities is vast urban theory has traditionally focused on the old nation-state spatial order. Cities were seen to develop in the modern era as commercial, industrial and administrative centers as part of the development of national markets and the consolidation of nation states. Capital cities linked up with major regional cities that drew in local hinterlands, so that these urban networks promoted the territorial integration of national economies. Those studies of cities that took an international approach tended to be comparative and to assume an international system of discrete nation states in which cities were nested.

But it became increasingly untenable to limit urban studies to a national framework. Urban ethnographers, most notably Janet Abu-Lughod, argued – and demonstrated in her own work – that it was impossible to study the city isolated from the international system (1971, 1989, 1994). In the 1970s and 1980s other scholars influenced by world-system theory wrote about "world cities" (see, e.g., Hall, 1984; Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Friedmann, 1986; Knox and Taylor, 1995). Earlier urban hierarchy theory had argued that cities could be grouped into hierarchies – first tier, second tier, and third tier – at the national level. The "world cities hypothesis" took this perspective to the international level, suggesting that international hierarchies of cities had come into existence. It viewed major cities as sites of production, finances, or coordination of the world economy within an international division of labor.



There were core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral cities, reflecting the international division of core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral countries. Although a few studies pointed to the growing contradiction between globalizing production with the political framework of nation-states and territorial interests, the world cities hypothesis operated largely within the nation-state/interstate system framework.

Sassen's thesis of the global city developed in the context of this evolving emphasis in urban studies on an international focus and built on Castells' notion of the "informational city" (1989). But Sassen took the project of "internationalizing" the study of cities much further, moving the whole focus from international to transnational, or global. She theorizes a new global spatial order founded on global flows of money, information, and people through transnational networks of cities, coining the term "global city" in 1984 (Sassen, 1984) in order to move beyond the nation-state/inter-state system as the unit of analysis and to distinguish the "specificity of the global as it gets structured [in cities] in the contemporary period" (2001:xix). A new spatial order is emerging under globalization based on a network of global cities and led by New York, London, and Tokyo. There is a "transformation in the spatial expression of the logic of accumulation, and in the institutional arrangements through which it takes place" (1991:20). Four types of places above all, for Sassen, symbolize the new spatial forms of economic globalization: export-processing zones (e.g., maquiladoras along the U.S.-Mexico border); offshore banking centers (e.g., Cayman Islands, Bahrain); high-tech districts (e.g., Silicon Valley); and global cities.

In developing her thesis, Sassen emphasizes the duality to the global economy: there is an ever-more spatially *dispersed* yet globally *integrated* organization of economic activity. Transnational production involves a vast fragmentation across the globe of functionally-integrated economic activities, or chains. How are these multi-tiered and globally-dispersed economic processes associated with the global economy coordinated? It is this combination of spatial dispersal and global integration that has created a new strategic role of major cities. These interlinked cities become the mechanism for coordinating the global economy.

Sassen's thesis involves some hard-core political economy. To grasp her argument it is helpful to recall the central role of financial expansion in the emergence of the global economy. Much research into globalization has shown the hegemonic role played by finance capital, the most mobile fraction of capital - what some have referred to as the "financialization" of the world economy. Since the 1970s cross-border bank lending has skyrocketed. It rose between 1980 and 1990 from \$324 billion to \$7.5 trillion (Robinson, 2004:26). By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, several trillion dollars were being traded in currency speculation and other financial operations around the world each day. As early as 1994, daily turnover at the ten largest stock markets was estimated at one trillion dollars, compared to the daily world trade in goods that year of ten billion dollars, so that real trade in actual goods and services was only one percent of fictitious trade (Pettman, 1996:158). As the volume, intensity, and complexity of such global financial transactions have increased many times over,

finance has in effect become decoupled from production.

This financial globalization was greatly facilitated in the 1980s and 1990s by governments around the world that deregulated their banking systems and financial and stock markets as part of the reorientation of state policies in favor of an open and expansive global economy. Equally as important, one of the mechanisms that has allowed for this global financialization is the creation of new financial instruments known as “derivatives.” A financial derivative is a way of converting money into instruments that can be traded as a commodity, such as stocks and bonds in international equities markets, institutional investment (e.g., insurance companies, pension funds, investment managers, trust banks), syndicated finance in syndicated loan markets, and other forms of the “securitization” of finance. Securitization means that different forms of debt (e.g., mortgages, government debts) can be transformed into tradable (i.e., profit-making) instruments. These varied instruments can be considered non-bank financial activities in that they are not supplied by banks but by new financial institutions, such as brokerage houses, that have proliferated with the rise of the global economy. Any concentrated pile of money becomes attractive to traders, whether it is negative (debt) or positive (a pension fund). This is one of the major accomplishments of innovations in finance in the 1980s.

If all this is confusing, let us say that as transnational investors accumulate money which they cannot or do not wish to invest in new material production such as a factory or commercial establishment, they turn to investing their money in the financial sector. This can and often does involve currency speculation but more often than not it involves investment in financial derivatives, which burst on the global economic scene starting in the late 1970s and has boomed ever since. These financial derivatives in turn are supplied by new financial institutions set up to make a profit out of managing the global circulation and accumulation of money. In this way, there is a vast new infrastructure for recycling and further accumulating the vast quantities of money circulating through the global economy – new forms of financial profit-making associated with global capitalism.

All of this is background to understanding the rise of global cities as centers for global finance. The vast growth and importance of the finance industry under globalization requires a massive infrastructure of specialized services that become headquartered in global cities. New finance capital complexes have emerged in major urban areas to coordinate the vast globally-integrated financial system. Global cities are sites providing specialized services for transnational finance capital, specialized production of financial innovations (derivatives or instruments). But also, because transnational corporate activity in general is so dependent on and integrated into the global financial system, global cities also become providers of a vast array of service inputs for these transnational corporations that are often headquartered in these same cities.

In particular, the type of specialized services headquartered in global cities is known as *producer services*. Producer services are services and inputs that are con-

sumed not by the public but by corporations for the purpose of further productive and commercial activity. They are intermediate outputs provided to producers; services inputs for firms rather than material inputs. Producer services include: financial services (e.g., banking), accounting; advertising; insurance; management consulting; research and development; engineering and architectural services; design; administration and personnel; legal services; public relations; production technologies, communications and telecommunications; maintenance; cleaning services; security, and so on. In turn, these producer services have become commodified, where utility lies in sale and resale of instruments. "At the core of analysis," says Sassen, "is emphasis on an increasingly service-intensive mode of production and on the modernization and industrialization of service technologies" (1991:95).

Sassen shows in her empirical data how the largest global banks, security houses, legal, accounting, and other financial and producer service firms are concentrated in the major global cities. Producer services need not be proximate to clients but they need to be contiguous to related services – i.e., accounting firms need to be close by to legal firms, to management services, etc. – hence the tendency for *agglomeration* in global cities. Producer services, concentrated in cities, are the fastest growing sector of most developed national economies and are rapidly growing in developing regions. Sassen documents how in country after country there is a sharp growth in producer services. A fundamental reason for this growth lies in increased service intensity in the organization of all industries and in the economy in general. All these producer services become "networked" in global cities. In sum, says Sassen, the spread of transnational corporations, foreign direct investment, and the internationalization of production have created the need for the international supply of producer services to service the global economy: the things a global city markets are services and financial goods, especially producer services.

Sassen wants to emphasize the capacity of global cities to *produce global control*. She says that the power of large corporations is insufficient to explain the capability for global control. The territorial dispersion of economic activity that is the hallmark of the global economy creates a need for expanded central control and management, leading to "agglomeration," or a new logic for concentration. The network of global cities is a new system of coordination for the global economy. The global economy, in other words, has involved the global decentralization of production *simultaneous* to the centralization of command and control of the global production system within global cities. Here Sassen draws on the basic insight from the sociology of organization that any increase in the complexity of something involves a concomitant increase in the mechanisms of coordination. Global cities linked to one another become "command posts" of an increasingly complex and globally fragmented production system. It is in these cities that the myriad of inputs, services, and amenities are to be found that allow centralization in these global "command posts." The trend towards "multisite manufacturing, service, and banking firms creates demand for producer services and global nodes of control" and brings about "a

redeployment of growth poles" in the global economy (1991:11).

Sassen identifies four key functions of the global city: 1) they are highly-concentrated command posts in the organization of the world economy; 2) they are key locations for finances and specialized service firms providing "producer services" (professional and corporate services, i.e., services inputs for TNCs), to the leading global firms; 3) they are sites for the production and innovation of these producer services and also headquarters for producer-service firms; 4) they are markets for the products and innovations produced and in these cities. Global cities are no longer linked to a national hinterland but to other globalized urban centers around the world and to global peripheries, or transnational hinterlands, so to say. There is a "systemic discontinuity between what used to be thought of as national growth and the forms of growth evident in global cities" (1991:7). Sassen documents how the three most important global cities in her analysis – New York, London, and Tokyo – restructured from manufacturing cities in the previous period to concentrated producer service centers supplying producer services to the global economy. The network of interlinked global cities constitutes a system rather than a complex of centers competing with each other.

Sassen is as much concerned with changes in the social and cultural order of cities and their peripheries brought about by globalization as she is with economic and financial transformation. Global processes impact the social structure of cities, transforming the organization of labor, the distribution of wealth, class relations and consumption, and bring about new social hierarchies and power relations. The social order of the global city shatters the illusions of the affluent service economy proposed by such commentators as Bell (1976) and Toffler (1980). Sassen observes that producer service jobs are global economy jobs. A producer service economy involves a new class and spatial polarization. On the one side are new high-income sectors involved in professional work such as investment management, research and development, administration and personal, and so on, and enjoying affluent lifestyles – the class of "young urban professional" (yuppies) so talked about when they made the scene in the 1980s. On the other side are low income groups providing low-skilled services such as clerical, janitorial, security, and personal services.

There is a key theoretical point that Sassen introduces here – a new valorization dynamic in global cities, whereby some workers, firms, and sectors are "overvalored" and others are "undervalored." The implantation of global processes and markets, says Sassen, has imposed this new valorization dynamic – a new set of criteria for valuing or pricing various economic activities and outcomes (2000:60). This means that high prices and profit levels of the globalized sector and its ancillary activities, such as top-of-the-line restaurants and hotels, have made it increasingly difficult for other sectors to compete for space and investments. Neighborhood shops and eateries tailored to local needs are replaced by upscale boutiques and restaurants catering to the new high-income urban elite. Anyone who has experienced how prohibitively expensive it is to travel through New York, London, Tokyo and

other global cities – let us not talk about low-income communities resident in these cities who must struggle to survive – will recognize this phenomenon – outrageous housing costs, expensive public transportation, prohibitive restaurant prices, etc.

Yet, high-income gentrification, and the valorization dynamic that pushes prices upward to the purchasing power of the upper strata rests on a vast supply of low-wage workers. The concentration of high-income workers in major cities has facilitated rapid residential and commercial gentrification, which in turn has created a need for legions of low-wage service workers – residential building attendants, restaurant workers, preparers of specialty and gourmet foods, dog walkers, errand runners, apartment cleaners, childcare providers, and so on. The fact that many of these jobs are “off the books” has meant the rapid expansion of the informal economy. The low-paying, dead end jobs are tied to four types of activities: (1) producer services themselves (e.g., clerical, janitorial); (2) servicing the affluent lifestyles of the high-paid professional workers; (3) services internal to new low wage communities; (4) downgraded manufacturing jobs now competitive with Third World offshore production centers.

Sassen wants to bring together here her discourse about global capital and about transnational migration – which she later reconceives as the globalization of labor (1998). The two are brought together in the duality of the glamorous renovated downtowns and central business districts of global cities with impoverished inner city zones. The low-income groups and legions of low-wage service and downgraded manufacturing workers are largely constituted by transnational migrants drawn from Third World zones. The immigrant labor market rests on casualized, and often informalized, work relations. Let us recall here how the shift to post-Fordism and flexible accumulation has entailed a change from stable and regulated forms of work to casualized (deregulated) and often informalized work – temporary, part-time, contract, and so on, with job instability and few or no benefits the norm. The globalization of labor flows is part of the same process as the development of global finance and the global circulation of capital, so the worlds of difference represented in the global city spring from the same global processes.

Thus a global city’s “glamour,” observes Sassen, is often supported by large populations of immigrant workers who perform the blue-collar, industrial, low-wage, menial – in short, the “dirty work” – of the global economy. The cultural split between the well-off professional workers, typically 20 percent of a global city’s population, and the rest of the workforce servicing them – has led to what Sassen terms the “unbundling of the national unit,” and the emergence of subnational units that are transnationally integrated. The downtown section of New York City, for instance, is more deeply connected to the downtown section of Sao Paulo, than either city is to its own periphery. Global cities are new surplus extracting mechanisms vis-à-vis transnational hinterlands. “The spatial and social reorganization of production associated with dispersion makes possible access to peripheralized labor markets, whether abroad or at home, without undermining that peripheral condition”



(1991:31). The decline in wages “has reached the point where sweatshop production in New York or London has become price competitive with cheap imports from Asia” (1991:282).

In these global cities, therefore, we see a concentration of new gendered and racialized transnational labor pools facing the casualization and informalization of work. The social geography of the global city is one of a spatial and class apartheid, so vividly captured by Mike Davis in his modern classic on Los Angeles in the global age, *City of Quartz* (1992). Global cities exhibit a new territorial complex: state-directed redevelopment, downtown urban renewal, a complex of luxury offices and housing, a new commercial culture and conspicuous consumption. Yet there is a sharp increase in spatially concentrated poverty, the gentrification of earlier urban ghettos the ghettoization of early suburbs, escalating poverty, homelessness, and social decay alongside rising affluence for upper strata.

### TRANSNATIONAL URBAN SYSTEMS

In focusing on New York, London, and Tokyo, Sassen argues that in the 1980s a “triadic” relationship developed between these three. Tokyo “emerged as the main center for the export of capital; London as the main center for the processing of capital...; and New York [became] the main receiver of capital, the center of investment decisions and for the production of innovations that can maximize profitability” (1991:327). In *Cities in a World Economy* (2001) and other later works Sassen shifts the focus from a handful of the top cities in the global hierarchy to the notion of a “transnational network of cities” and “transnational urban systems.” These new “geographies of centrality” link together into an integrated system the major international financial and business centers in both North and South – New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Dublin, Budapest, Los Angeles, Toronto, Sydney, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Seoul, Taipei, Mumbai, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Santiago, Buenos Aires, and Johannesburg, among others. In this way, Sassen conceptualizes the architecture of the global economy as a network of some 40 interconnected global cities (Gane, 2004:126) characterized by world market orientations and significant concentrations of company headquarters, specialized corporate services, and asset-management institutions.

Sassen defines a transnational urban system as “a system wherein cities are crucial nodes for the international coordination and servicing of firms, markets, and even whole economies that are increasingly transnational” (Sassen, 2000:33). The global financial system has reached levels of complexity that require the existence of a cross-border network of financial centers to service the operations of global capital. Specifically, Sassen demonstrates that the cities that make up this expanding transnational urban system are linked together institutionally by transnational service firms in banking, investment, law, accounting, advertising, consulting, management, public relations, engineering, and other corporate and investor services, that



maintain a global network of affiliates throughout the system, so that customers can operate across these cities. An expanding number of global cities created stock markets in the 1980s and 1990s or integrated existing ones into a global stock market network so that publicly listed shares circulated around the globe in seconds.

These “international financial centers” of many countries around the world, says Sassen, will increasingly “fulfill gateway functions for the ‘in and out’ circulation of national and foreign capital....Each of these centers is the nexus between that country’s wealth and the global market and between foreign investors and that country’s investment opportunities” (2000:104). Moreover, she says, these gateway functions “will be their main mechanism for integration” into global circuits (2000:104). The structure allows transnational capital to pump capital in and out of specific countries and regions through the infrastructure of the network. In this way we can get a glimpse of the theoretical picture Sassen is painting of the spatial organization of a global economy and society that has moved beyond its earlier national form of organization and interconnection. Global cities networks are seen as the operational scaffolding of the global economy that moves capital and goods around the world.

This new transnational structure creates new forms of articulation between different geographic regions and transforms their roles in the global economy. Some regions become export processing zones, others labor reserves or offshore banking centers, and so on – each region managed, articulated to and coordinated with the global economy via the command structure of the network of global cities. These global cities, then, become catalysts and nodal points for the penetration of global processes locally and facilitate the globalization of each country and region. This conception of a transnational urban system is quite distinct from the traditional study of dominant cities in the world system. The leading global cities are not capitals of commercial empires, as were historical world cities such as Rome, Cairo, London, or Amsterdam in earlier ages of capitalist and pre-capitalist empires. Nor are these cities in competition with one another. What is important is not any one city or the nation-state to which it belongs but the transnational network of cities itself that provides the structure control and coordination in the global economy as a whole.

These networked global cities are new growth poles around the world that often displace traditional nationally-integrated cities as countries and regions become globalized. They absorb migrant population flows from surrounding national and transnational peripheries. “The implantation of global processes seems to have contributed to increasing the separation, or disarticulation, between cities and sectors within cities that are articulated with the global economy and those that are not,” notes Sassen. “The organizational and spatial implications of the new economic trends assume distinct forms in various urban systems. Some cities become part of transnational networks, whereas others become unhinged from the main centers of economic growth in their regions or nations” (2000:41, 44).

In her case studies, Sassen shows how Rio de Janeiro has become increasing-

ly disconnected and displaced by Sao Paulo in the context of Brazil's integration into the global economy. In other countries, the earlier urban centers organizing national economic activity have been displaced by emerging global cities facilitating the transnational linkage. In Australia, Sydney has eclipsed Melbourne. In Canada, Montreal has been overtaken by Toronto. In India, Mubai is displacing New Delhi and Calcutta. In these cases, the emergence of a leading financial and producer service center linked to the global economy, says Sassen, is a function of rapid growth in this sector, not of decay in the losing cities. In Europe, Marseilles has been left behind by Rotterdam as a leading regional port; and Budapest has become the porthole for global capitalist penetration and transnationalization of Eastern Europe. Still other cities, such as Vienna, Berlin, Lille in France or Glasgow in the United Kingdom, re-emerge with new functions linking them no longer to national or regional structures but to the global system.

Sassen points out that globally-oriented financial elites are evident in the less developed world and in the highly developed countries. As noted earlier, a number of globalization theorists, (see, e.e.g, Castells, 1996; Cox 1989; Hoogvelt, 1997; Robinson, 1998, 2002, 2003) argue that under globalization the concepts of core and periphery, or of North and South, need to be reconceived in transnational social and class rather than in national, geographic or territorial terms. Sassen's theory of the global city concurs with this transformation in the geography of center and periphery and provides us with a structure through which to conceive of new forms of centralization and peripheralization, or what she terms "new geographies of centrality and marginality" that cut across national boundaries and the old North-South divide.

Yet in making reference to globally-oriented financial elites Sassen does not refer to a transnational elite or capitalist class as an emerging class or status group. Indeed, as with Castells, she does not engage in class analysis and nor does she investigate the social groups and forces involved in globalization, their composition, agency, contradictions, political configurations, and so on. Her units of analysis are firms, markets, and industries, along with sectors, institutions and functions. Still, the study of global cities provides valuable analytical and conceptual inputs for understanding how transnationalized populations reorganize their spatial relations on a global scale, a topic taken up, and from quite a different perspective, by theories of transnationalism and transnational communities (see, inter-alia, Khagram and Levitt, 2008).

#### THE STATE, REGULATION, AND GOVERNANCE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Sassen turns in other studies to analyses of various aspects of the new global political economy. In *Losing Control* (1996), she takes up the well-traversed theme of a decline in power and significance of the nation-state in the face of economic globalization. Here her analysis is less developed, more ambiguous, even confusing at times. The new global economic system has affected two distinctive features of the

modern state: political sovereignty and exclusive territoriality. The modern political notion of state sovereignty, constructed historically through a process of “nationalizing territories,” is undergoing a major new transformation under globalization. Globalization brings about new spatial economies beyond the regulatory capacity of a single state or political jurisdiction. It therefore reconfigures the territorial exclusivity of sovereign states, as many scholars of globalization have noted. What does this imply for the system of rule that in the modern era has been based on sovereign states? In attempting an answer to this question, Sassen elaborates on the notion of a “new geography of power” that involves four components.

The first of these is the “footloose” nature of transnational corporate activity. As others have noted, states can no longer regulate capital that is transnationally mobile and operates across and outside of formal state boundaries. This “offshoring” creates a space that goes beyond the regulatory umbrella of the state and in this regard the significance of the state is declining.

The second component is a new kind of territoriality where globalization materializes in specific institutions and processes. Much of what we describe as globalization is grounded in national territories, says Sassen, but in such a way that it constitutes a sort of “extraterritoriality” that affects the sovereignty of the state. The most extreme example of the denationalization of actual pieces of territory are free trade zones, where firms can locate production facilities without being subject to local taxes and various other regulations. These areas appear as embassies of sorts, in the sense that local laws do not apply, but neither does any particular state law. Global cities represent another case in which global processes become territorialized in ways that modify traditional notions of state power and sovereignty. The global financial, stock, foreign exchange and other markets in these cities constitute deterritorialized activities that do not fall under the regulatory umbrella of the states in which these cities are located.

The third component is the rise of new legal regime for governing cross-border economic transactions. Firms operating transnationally need to ensure functions traditionally exercised by the state, such as property rights and contracts. These needs have resulted in new legal regimes and practices and the expansion and renovation of some older forms that bypass national legal systems, argues Sassen, citing examples of such legal innovations as international commercial arbitration, which grew exponentially in the 1980s and 1990s, debt security, and bond ratings by Moody’s Investor Service and Standard and Poor’s Rating Group. Sassen notes that in 1983 these two formidable agencies had no analysts outside the United States, yet ten years later they each had about a hundred in Europe, Japan, and Australia. These agencies exercise distinct “gatekeeper functions,” in that a low rating can assure that transnational investors stay away from a particular country and a high rating facilitates capital inflow, and operate therefore as an important private government mechanism. Sassen also argues that U.S. legal devices such as franchising and other aspects of U.S. corporate law are being diffused throughout the world,

part of what many, Sassen included, view as globalization through Americanization. Sassen sees these different instances as representing “the formation of transnational legal regimes which have penetrated into national fields hitherto closed” (1996:17).

The final component is the sharp rise in the number of economic activities taking place in electronic space that overrides all existing territorial jurisdiction. This “virtualization of economic activity” challenges not only existing state regulatory apparatus but also private sector institutions dependent on new technologies, and “may signal a control crisis in the making, one for which we lack an analytical vocabulary” (1996:22). Most notable and oft-cited are foreign currency markets where some \$2 trillion are digitally traded every day, leaving central banks without any ability to exercise influence on exchange rates but also going beyond the control capacities of non-state systems of coordination.

In the face of these four components of the new geography of power, Sassen argues that the state is being reconfigured and becoming involved in this emerging transnational governance system. The state has been a key agent facilitating global processes and has emerged altered in the process. Yet she does not push the argument as far as I do; I have theorized the rise of a transnational state (2001, 2004). Instead, Sassen argues that we have seen “a more specific process, one that along with the reconfiguration of space may signal a more fundamental transformation in the matter of sovereignty, pointing to new contents and new locations for the particular systemic property that we call sovereignty” (1996:14). Sovereignty is not eroding as a consequence of economic globalization and supranational organizations but being transformed. “There is plenty of it around, but the sites for its concentration have changed over the last two decades” (1996:31).

Hence, sovereignty and territory remain key features of the international system. “But they have been reconstituted and partly displaced onto other institutional arenas outside the state and outside the framework of nationalized territory....sovereignty has been decentered and territory partly denationalized” (1996:29-30). Sovereignty is now located in a multiplicity of institutional arenas – transnational private legal regimes, new supranational organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the European Union, and various international human rights codes – all of which constrain the autonomy of national states. However, nowhere does Sassen provide a definition of sovereignty – is it the monopoly of legitimate coercion?; The ability to impose decisions?; The exercise of social power?; The rule of law?

Sassen argues that global forces, by challenging the authority of the state, transform the notion of citizenship. There are enormous problems, she notes “of state membership for aboriginal communities, stateless people, and refugees” (1996:38). But she is more concerned with what she terms a new type of “economic citizenship” exercised not by people but by global firms and markets. This economic citizenship is exercised by the formation of new claims on national states to guarantee the domestic and global rights of capital. The power to influence state policies

has thus shifted from national political electorates to global firms and markets who become economic citizens, in that these global economic actors are the ones that find themselves empowered by global processes to demand accountability (for their interests) from governments. These de facto “economic rights” of global financial markets make them the new citizens that that enjoy rights that in the welfare state were seen as citizen rights. This is not an original argument. Numerous accounts of globalization note that global financial markets are able to exercise a disciplining function on national governments and pressure them to become accountable to the logic of these markets.

Sassen’s political analysis of the state, in my view, does not break with nation-state centrism, despite her emphasis on the global and the transnational, and is also deficient because it lacks any analysis of the class or social composition of states and of economic groups. At the political level the analysis remains framed with the state-interstate system. Indeed, her lack of class analysis or focus on social groups and forces – i.e., the relations between social and class groups operating in the economy and those operating in the state – leads to a dualism between the economic and the political in the globalization process. The economic and the political are externally related, separate and even oppositional, spheres, each with its own independent logic. Private economic agents attempt to accumulate capital and national state agents to produce governance. National states interact externally with markets and state managers confront (attempt or fail to manage) the implications of economic globalization and footloose transnational capital as an external logic. This has become the dominant framework for analysis of globalization and the state, as I have harshly criticized elsewhere (Robinson, 2004), from which Sassen does not depart. She also consistently employs the term *international* interchangeably with *transnational*, which lends itself to confusion.

In *Globalization and Its Discontents* (1998), Sassen links the discussion of sovereignty to transnational migration. The displacement of governance functions away from the state to non-state entities affects the state’s capacity to control its borders and to exercise its powers inside its borders. Specifically, immigration provides the crucial nexus in the tension between denationalizing economic space and renationalizing political discourse in most developed countries. Sassen argues that an emergent international human rights regime, centered in international agreements and conventions as well as in various rights gained by immigrants is central to understanding the impact of immigration on questions of sovereignty and territoriality. “Human rights are not dependent on nationality, unlike political, social, and civil rights, which are predicated on the distinctions between national and alien,” she states. “Human rights override such distinctions and hence can be seen as potentially contesting state sovereignty and devaluing citizenship” (1996:95) and in this way affect the configuration of international order. Under human rights regimes states must increasingly take account of persons qua persons, rather than qua citizens. Human rights, hence, begin to impinge on the principle of nation-based citizenship and the boundaries of



the nation. Under these conditions, she asks, "what does it mean to say that the state is sovereign in the control of its borders vis-à-vis people?" (1996:xv).

Economic globalization denationalizes national economies and in contrast immigration renationalizes politics. "The existence of two different regimes for the circulation of capital and the circulation of immigrants, as well as two equally different regimes for the protection of state sovereignty, poses problems that cannot be solved by the old rules of the game" (1996:xvi-xvii). Sassen calls for a reformulation of the immigration policies of developed countries (1998; 1999). A "post-national" regulation of migration, she says, might come to seem as central a political project as the "post-national" regulation of trade and finance. "There is a lack of new legal forms and regimes to encompass the crucial counterpart [to the transnationalization of capital]: the transnationalization of labor," a process that reflects the shifting sands of citizenship and identity and is often narrated in the language of immigration and ethnicity:

Nor are there new forms and regimes to encompass transnationalization in the formation of identities and loyalties among various population segments which do not regard the nation as the sole or principal source of identification, and the associated new solidarities and notions of membership. Major cities have emerged as a strategic site not only for global capital but also for the transnationalization of labor and the formation of transnational identities.....For instance, through immigration a proliferation of originally highly localized cultures now have become presences in many large cities, cities whose elites think of themselves as cosmopolitan, as transcending any locality. Members of the 'localized' cultures can in fact come from places with great cultural diversity and be as cosmopolitan as elites. An immense array of cultures from around the world, each rooted in a particular country, town, or village, now is reterritorialized in a few single places [global cities]...Too often immigration and ethnicity are constituted as otherness. Understanding them as a set of processes whereby global elements are localized, international labor markets are constituted, and cultures from all over the world are de- and reterritorialized, puts them right there at the center along with the internationalization of capital as a fundamental aspect of globalization" (1998: xxx-xxx).

Global cities may provide a space for a "new transnational politics." Global capital and the new immigrant workforce "are two major instances of transnational categories/actors that have unifying properties across borders and find themselves in contestation with each other inside global cities," says Sassen. "The leading sectors of corporate capital are now global in their organization and operations. And many of the disadvantaged workers in global cities are women, immigrants, and people of color, whose political sense of self and whose identities are not necessarily embedded in the 'nation' or the 'national community.' Both find in the global city a strategic site for their economic and political operations (1998:xxi).



AGENCY, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND GLOBAL CITIES  
IN THE SOUTH: CRITICAL DEBATES

Sassen's work continues to inspire new scholarship and avenues of research on global cities (see, e.g., contributors in Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000; in Sassen, 2002; in Scott, 2001) relabeled in the literature as "globalizing cities." There has been significant amount of critical debate on the global city, much of at a high level of technicality (in her 2001 updated edition of *The Global City*, Sassen offers a useful epilogue in which she addresses the chief debates). Here I highlight four of the more prominent critical issues: the empirical accuracy of Sassen's thesis on social polarization in global cities and other questions of measurement; the matter of social agency and how it fits into Sassen's construct; globalizing processes in cities of the South; and the impact of local places and the "lived experience" of global cities.

Perhaps the most elaborated critique has come from Michael Storper, a well known economic geographer. In his survey of recent theorizing on globalizing capitalism and cities (1997) Storper claims that the dominant narratives cannot account convincingly for why cities should continue to be the geographical foci of capitalist economic activity in a period where the constraints of proximity seem to be disappearing. The different approaches, top among which is Sassen's, he says, "share a fundamental theoretical lacuna" based on the misleading metaphor of the (global) city as a machine:

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 (1997:222).

Storper goes on to state that Sassen's notion of the "global-dual city" – based on global economic activities and characterized by a dual occupational structure of high-wage professional workers and low-wage immigrant workers – has some "core elements of truth" but exhibits problems of measurement, evidence, and conceptualization. I highlight here three of his objections.

First, it cannot stand as a theory of urban growth since the tendencies toward growth of financial and advanced service industries, as well as their urban agglomeration, can be found "much further down the urban hierarchy" and seems to be a general characteristic of urban centers in the current era. Storper is suggesting that if the basis for the global city's growth is to be found more generally in urban centers throughout the developed world then the notion of a global city as some special sort of city would seem to lose something of its meaning.

Second, says Storper, "there are ambiguities in the definition of 'globalness'" (1997:224). Defined as the dependence on international transactions in the inputs and outputs of a city's economic base, globalness in financial services is more pronounced in any of the major urban centers of developed countries than in these countries as a whole, according to data presented by Storper. And "if internationalization of exchanges as a whole is considered - in all manufacturing and service sectors - then it appears that New York, for example, is not more dependent on international exchanges than are Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, or Minneapolis" (225). Storper is insinuating, in other words, that globalness may simply be cityness in the contemporary era, and "the sectoral basis and territorial diffusion of the effects of globalization is greater than announced by the theory" (226).

Third, the dualness (social polarization) present in global cities is equally present in big cities in general, and for that matter in entire national economies, argues Storper. In fact, the occupational structure in the U.S. economy as a whole, and more generally in those of developed countries, does mirror that of the global city, as numerous studies in recent decades have shown. Moreover, studies of the shifting occupational structure in the United States, for instance, show a wage split for all industries, not just financial and other advanced services. Thus, he insists, the "yuppie plus servant class" analysis of inequality does not work" (232).

Hamnett also objects to the polarization thesis. He claims that the pattern of social polarization that Sassen identifies may hold true for some global cities, such as New York or London, but not for others. He presents evidence from several Dutch cities of an alternative pattern in which the shift to financial and producer services generates a "professionalization" of the workforce and a new middle class, corresponding more to the thesis first introduced by Bell (1976) of an affluent service economy. Hamnett then claims that polarization only occurs when there is high levels of low wage immigrant labor supply, whereas in areas lacking such a large supply of cheap labor, such as the Netherlands, firms invest in capital intensive processes and hire well-paid skilled labor. However, Burgers (1995) observes in a respite that Hamnett leaves out the unemployed and informal-sector workers in his study of Dutch cities, and says that if they were included one would find the same telltale pattern of growing income inequality and polarization alongside professionalization of a portion of the labor force. Second, observes Burgers, in the case of the Netherlands a particularly strong national welfare regime has partially insulated low-skills casualized workers. Global processes that produce global cities are filtered through particular national and regional histories, he says, that constitute important mediating variables in particular local outcomes to global economic restructuring.

A number of scholars have criticized Sassen for her unquestionable focus on cities in the developed world. Dawson and Edwards (2004) argue that "global cities of the developed world are an increasingly anomalous embodiment of the urban realm and public space" (2004:1). Ninety-five percent of urban population growth in the first few decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they note, will occur in the cities of the devel-

oping world (by 2010, for example, Lagos is projected to become the planet's third-largest city, after Tokyo and Mumbai). It is therefore inadequate "to theorize globalization by focusing on cities in the developed world" (2004:1). Such an approach "is limited by assuming that the telos of economic dominance and centralization defines all activity within globalization; moreover, it evaluates global cities in relation to a normative model defined by the handful of cities that are 'most advanced' in their roles in economic globalization" (2004:2).

Dawson and Edwards also object to the almost exclusive focus on economic explanations in Sassen's work, claiming that the phenomenon of global cities can only be grasped by attending as well to "cultures of globalization" and to "the dialectic relationship between 'economic global city functions' and 'political global city functions'" (2004:2). It becomes clear in the study of global cities in the South, for instance, how urban spaces also channel such transnational flows of religious fundamentalism or political solidarity. Oncu, Weyland, and their colleagues (1997) attempt to shift the attention from First World to Third World urban centers, and to study such globalizing cities as Istanbul, Beirut, Singapore, Manila and Cairo, identifying how globalization intersects at the grassroots level in these cities with distinct ensembles of local class, cultural, and power relations.

In a related vein, a number of critics have called for shifting the focus to the "lived experience" of global cities. Eade and his colleagues, while taking their cue from Sassen, criticize what they see as her neglect of the local (1997). A major theme in globalization studies, recall, is conceiving the interpenetration of the local and the global. In taking the global city "to mean more, and rather more interesting things, than simply a concentration of command and control functions (Crang, 1999:173), they examine a variety of lived experiences and hybrid cultural processes in London, and in doing so make clear how global cities are about the everyday lived experience of a globalized world. The attention to the lived space of the global city, in Crang's assessment, "forms a suitable corrective to the urge that so often accompanies globalization - for global theorizing. Here a world city is a matter of the internationalization of daily life rather than a statement about power and control" (1999:174).

For others, the overemphasis on issues of centrality, the power of footloose capital, and macrostructures encourages of view of the labor force in global cities as playing a passive role in globalization and of these cities as containers instead of active agents (Sun, 2001:109; Rushing, 2004). Different social and cultural groups participate actively in the process of globalization. They mobilize to recreate local spaces and strategically formulate new localities in response to global changes (see, e.g., Alleyne-Dettmers, in Eade, 1997). This points to what in my view is a (perhaps *the*) major limitation to Sassen's work: *its lack of attention to agency, especially that of subordinate groups*. There is no analysis of the class groups and social forces that operate in global cities, their composition, agency, contradictions and struggles with one another, their social and political mobilization, and so on. What of urban social movements, trade unions, neighborhood assemblies, immigrant organizations, capi-

talist associations, municipal managers and politics?

Whatever the particular limitations, much if not all of this critical debate on Sassen's work tends to involve less a refutation than an ongoing refinement of her theses on the global city and transnational migration. By 2007 more than half of the world's population came to inhabit cities (Davis, 2007). Urban spaces have become cosmopolitan entrepôts through which vast quantities of capital, goods, information, people, and cultural representations flow daily. No scholar of globalization studies can afford to ignore Sassen's work, which continues to be a pacesetter for a growing body of literature by sociologists, geographers, urban planners and others on cities and globalization.

## REFERENCES

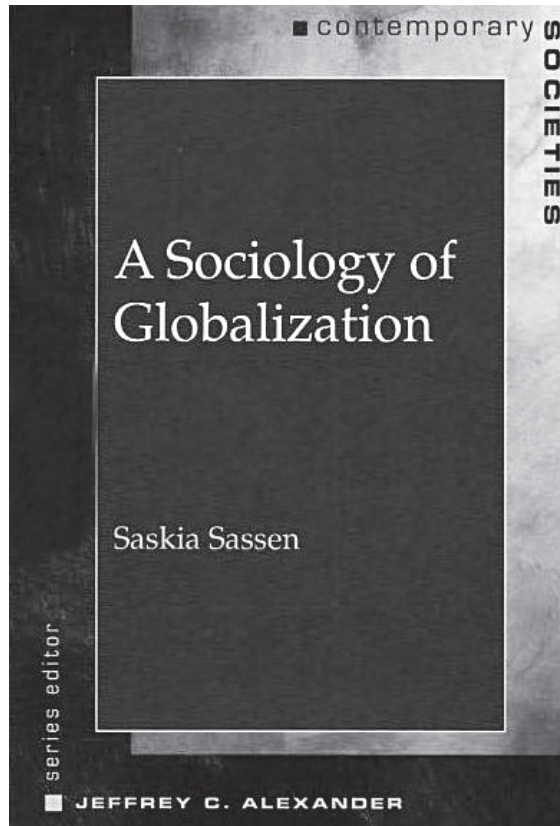
- Abu-Lughod, Janet. 1999. *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. *From Urban Village to "East Village": the Battle for New York's Lower East Side*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. *Before European Hegemony: The world System, AD 1250 to 1350*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1971. *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Albrow, Martin. 1997. *The Global Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Alleyne-Dettmers, Patricia. 1997. "'Tribal Arts': A Case Study of Global Compression in the Notting Hill Carnival," in John Eade. 1997. *Living the Global City: Globalization as a Local Process*. London: Routledge, 163-180.
- Appelbaum, Richard and William I. Robinson, 2005. *Critical Globalization Studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Axford, Barry. 1995: *The Global System*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Bell, Daniel. 1976. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Burgers, J. 1995. "No Polarization in Dutch Cities?: Inequality in a Corporatist Country," *Urban Studies*, 33(1):99-105.
- Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society, Vol. I: The Information Age: Economy, Society, Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Cox, Robert, W. 1987. *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Crang, Mike. 1999. "Globalization as Conceived, Perceived and Lived Space." *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16(1):167-177.
- Davis, Mike. 2007. *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles*. New York: Vintage.
- Dawson, Ashley and Brent Hayes Edwards. 2004. "Introduction: Global Cities of the South," *Social Text*, 22(4):1-7.
- Eade, John (ed.). 1997. *Living the Global City: Globalization as a Local Process*. London: Routledge.
- Folker Frobel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye. 1980. *The New International Division of Labor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Friedmann, John. 1986. "The World City Hypothesis," *Development and Change*, 17(1):69-83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. and Goetz Wolff. 1982. "World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and Action," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 6:309-344.

- Gane, Nicholas. 2004. *The Future of Social Theory*. London/New York: Continuum.
- Hall, Peter. 1984. *The World Cities*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Hamnett, Chris. 1994. "Social Polarization in Global Cities: Theory and Evidence," *Urban Studies*, 31(3):401-424,
- Hoogvelt, Ankie. 1997. *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Keohane, Robert and Joseph Nye (eds.). 1973. *Transnational Relations and World Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Khagram, Sanjeev and Peggy Levitt. 2008. *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections and Innovations*. New York: Routledge.
- Knox, Paul, L. and Peter J. Taylor (eds.). 1995. *World Cities in a World System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marcuse, Peter and Ronald van Kempen. 2000. *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order?* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Nash, June and Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly (eds.). 1983. *Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Oncu, Ayse, and Petra Weyland (eds.). 1997. *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities*. London: Zed.
- NOTE TO EDITORS: [Ayse Oncu is Turkish and the name is spelled with accent marks: a "5" below the "s" in Ayse and two dots above the "O" and the "U" in Oncu]
- Pettman, Ralph. 1996. *Understanding International Political Economy*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Robertson, Roland. 1992. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Robinson, William, I. 2007. "Theories of Globalization," in George Ritzer (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Globalization*. London: Blackwell.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class and State in a Transnational World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003. *Transnational Conflicts: Central America, Social Change, and Globalization*. London: Verso.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2002a. "Remapping Development in Light of Globalization: From a Territorial to a Social Cartography," *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 23, No. 6:1047-1071.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. "Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies," *Sociological Forum* 13 (No. 4):561-594.
- Rushing, Wanda. 2004. "Globalization and the Paradoxes of Place: Poverty and Power in Memphis," *City and Community*, 3(1):65-81.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2007. *A Sociology of Globalization*. New York: W.W. Norton
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). 2002. *Global Networks, Linked Cities*. London/New York: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001 (revised edition). *The Global City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Cities in a World Economy*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. *Guests and Aliens*. New York: The New Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. *Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*. New York: The New Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Losing Control? Sovereignty in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. *The Mobility of Capital and Labor: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. "The New Labor Demand in Global Cities," in M.P. Smith (ed.), *Cities in Transformation*. Beverly Hills: Sage:139-171.
- Scott, Allen (ed.). 2001. *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

*Saskia Sassen and the Sociology of Globalization*

- Sklair, Leslie. 2002a. *Globalization: Capitalism and Its Alternatives*. New York: Oxford.
- Storper, Michael. 1997. *The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Sun, Ruei-Suei. 2001. "Review Essay: Exploring Critical Approaches to Global Cities Studies," *Critical Planning*, Summer:108-112.
- Toffler, Alvin. 1980. *The Third Wave*. New York: Bantam Books.





What does “globalization” mean? In her groundbreaking book, illustrious sociologist Saskia Sassen identifies two sets of processes that make up globalization. One is the set of global institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, global financial markets, the War Crime Tribunals, and the new global cosmopolitanism. There is a second set of processes that are frequently ignored by most social scientists and take place inside territories and occur on the national and local level. These can include state monetary and fiscal policy, networks of activists engaged in local struggles that have an explicit or implicit global agenda, and local and national politics that are unknowingly part of global networks containing similar localized efforts. Sassen’s book focuses on the importance of place, scale, and the meaning of the national to study globalization. By emphasizing the interplay between the global and the local, *A Sociology of Globalization* introduces readers to new forms and conditions such as global cities, transnational communities, and commodity chains that are increasingly common. Sassen’s expanded approach to globalization offers new interpretive and analytic tools to understand the complex ideas of global interdependence.