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# GLOBALIZATION, MIGRATION AND GLOBAL CITY HYPOTHESIS

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## **Abstract**

*Outside of population geography, migration as a process driving globalization has remained in the shadows of the literature. Migration has only really been acknowledged by other social scientists tendency in conceptualizing global cities. In this paper, I wish to extent our understanding of globalization and migration by linking together studies of transient professional migration, transnational corporations, and global city financial centers. First, I discuss transient migration as a process in the globalization debate. Second, I review a series of qualitative methods, which have extended our knowledge of globalization and transient professional migration. Third, I illustrate the importance of migration as a globalization tendency, through an analysis of official international migration statistics. Fourth, I respond to general question it has three aims. It redresses lack of focus on the relationship between immigration and the global city hypothesis. It evaluates the global city hypothesis in relation to immigration in primarily Europe's large metropolitan regions. I do this initially by discussing Sassen's thesis, and then follow with an exploration of the subsequent literature that has sprouted from her arguments. I maintain that such a critical analysis of Sassen's ongoing research project and the parallel issues of urban inequality. I call this a "renewal" of the "global city hypothesis."*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization is upon us, and we can't escape its unevenness around the world. Geographers, political scientists, sociologists and many others, have been debating the virtues of globalization since the 1990s (e.g. Allen and Hamnett, 1995; Allen and Massey, 1995; Amin and Thrift 1994; Castells, 1996; Cox, 1997; Dicken, 1998; Harvey 1996; Featherstone, 1990; Storper, 1997). For example, Amin and Thrift (1997) point to five globalizing tendencies: (1) globalization of money and financial capital; (2) importance of knowledge-structures as a factor of production; (3) internationalisation of technology; (4) transnational oligopolies; and (5) rise of

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transnational diplomacy between firms and states.

Work on international and domestic migration, however, has remained almost transparent in globalization tendencies (Lee and Wills, 1997): at both a theoretical and empirical level (but exceptions do include, for example Castles and Miller, 1993; Petras, 1981). We must acknowledge that international migration is a powerful process, and outcome, of the ages of internationalization and globalization, especially when we consider the emotive phenomenon of brain drain. It is widely accepted that brain drain, that is settler migration of professional, scientific, technical and/or post-qualified students, has caused severe leakage of skills and wealth generation, from both developed and developing states, and regional blocks of the world (Cohen, 1996a-b). What remains less identified by nation states and policy strategists in their analyses of brain drain, however, are the flows of temporary, or contracted, professional, scientific and technical migrants, who are not settler migrants, but may move quite often between nation states (Appleyard, 1989). Such professional migrants have been termed 'transients', and remain relatively 'invisible' in studies of both skilled international migration and brain drain (Appleyard, 1985, 1989; Findlay, 1988; Salt and Findlay, 1989).

Importance of transient professional migrants in the world system cannot be underestimated as we attempt to extend our knowledge of brain drain. 'Transient' professional migration has been fuelled by the organizational strategies of transnational corporations. During the last 30 years, economic restructuring, the rise of the new international division of labour and advances in information technology and travel, have all encouraged transnational corporations to fragment and extend their industrial activities offshore, from their host country (Dicken, 1998). Transient professional migrants are increasingly being used by transnational corporations, through Inter-Company Transfers, to manage, fill skill shortages and, or, represent their clients in the localised market (Brewster, 1988; Salt, 1988; Salt and Findlay, 1989), for periods anywhere between one and five years. It is, however, extremely difficult to obtain official data on professional inter-company transfers, especially with the European Union (Salt et al 1994). To obtain reliable data, one has to focus on firm case studies. For example, ABB, the Swiss-Swedish engineering company, had about 500 global managers working outside of their country of origin in 1997 (Financial Times, 1997). Moreover, as Findlay (1990, 15) suggests "Given the circulatory nature of these high level manpower movements, it has been suggested that these migration moves be seen as 'skill exchanges' rather than a 'brain drain.' Observers suggest that transient professional migration has not only accelerated between developing and developed countries, but also between developed states, at increasing rates (Salt, 1995).

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It has been left to population geographers to study linkages between globalization and migration. Recently, we may draw on a rich vein of research investigating globalization tendencies in the context of diasporas, transnational communities, gender and international migration (Castles and Miller, 1993; Cohen, 1997; Conway and Cohen 1998; Findlay 1988; Gould and Findlay, 1994; Hardhill and MacDonald, 1998; Wong, 1997). In the context of highly-skilled migration, but beyond discussions of brain drain (Hague and Kim, 1995), an extremely fruitful analysis of globalization and migration has come from studies of 'transient' skilled migration within transnational corporations (TNCs) (Appleyard, 1991; Salt and Findlay, 1989), and especially the work of John Salt (Koser and Salt, 1997; Salt, 1988; 1992). But, transient migration still remains an 'invisible' phenomenon in both an empirical and theoretical sense (Findlay, 1996).

## **GLOBALIZATION, MIGRATION AND GLOBAL CITIES**

Migration has been central to the global city debate. As Friedmann and Wolff (1982, 322-23) and Friedmann (1986, 75), commented respectively: "Transnational elites are the dominant class in the world city, and the city is arranged to cater to their lifestyle and occupational necessities." "The world city hypothesis is about the spatial organization of the new international division of labour ... world cities are points of destination for large numbers of both domestic and/or international migrants." Saskia Sassen, has taken the lead in conceptualising the role of globalization and migrant labour in the global city. In (1988) *The Mobility of Capital and Labour*, (1991) *The Global City* and (1994) *Cities in a World Economy*, and numerous journal articles, she has emphasised rise of the low-waged immigrant sector, supporting the professional elite, as being crucial to global city (re)production (Sassen-Koob, 1986; Sassen, 1987). But, in all her work, Sassen consistently downplays the role of transient professional migrants in global city (re)production: and, thus, continues to reinforce their invisibility with both the global city context, and world-system. Building upon these seminal works, others have begun to investigate different ways migration as a globalization process is (re)producing the global city. Here, of particular importance, has been the collective work of: the Institute of British Geographers Limited Life Working Party on Skilled International Migration (Findlay and Gould, 1989); Beaverstock on world cities and advanced producer services (Beaverstock, 1994); Findlay, Jones, Jowett, Li and Skeldon on Hong Kong (Findlay and Li, 1997; Li, et al 1998); and studies of gender and immigration (Kofman, 1996). With very few exceptions, these studies theorised that migration as an integral globalization process, which has produced new geographies of migration, with respect to both process and pattern.

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## Transnational Corporations and Transient Migration

The TNC provides an enabling environment for the (re)production of transient professional migration in the world-system. TNCs use transient professional migrants in order to bring human capital and intellectual knowledge to their foreign operations (Beaverstock, 1994; Cormode, 1994; Perkins, 1997; Salt, 1984; 1988; 1992). Equally, such professionals are encouraged to enhance their career paths within such organizations by spending time working abroad (Beaverstock, 1996b; Salt, 1988). Further, given the disproportionate location of TNCs and specialised high-order service functions within global cities, substantial flows of transients occur between them (Economist, 1998). But these flows are very difficult to quantify given the paucity of disaggregated data from official sources and ICTs (Salt et al, 1994). Moreover, as globalization processes continue to concentrate and intensify, specialised service TNC functions within the financial spaces of global cities (Sassen, 1995), any analysis of transient professional migration must investigate them within the context of IFCs. If we are to explore transient professional migration between IFCs, we must go further than Sassen, and the work on TNCs. I should begin to link the globalization tendencies of professional migration with theories accounting for *financial geographies* within IFCs (Leyshon and Thrift 1997). In the following section, I discuss the symbiotic relationship that exists between globalization and transient migration in IFCs by considering two very important 'driving forces': producer service TNCs; and migrants' embedded geographies - their role in the accumulation of 'cultural capital'.

## **TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND TRANSIENT MIGRATION IN IFCS**

Transient professional migration remains an 'invisible' facet of globalization processes within IFCs (Beaverstock, 1996a). This is surprising, when we consider that London, New York, Tokyo and Singapore, have become 'global complexes' not only of economic power, but also social and cultural influences in the world economy (McDowell, 1997; Sassen, 1995; Thrift, 1994). Important constituents of this 'global complex' are those transient professional international workers who move within advanced producer service office networks in IFCs. Recent findings from Beaverstock's (1996a-c) analysis of transient professional migration in accountancy and investment banks in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed that TNCs continued to post staff to IFCs, despite improvements in information technology, high costs and real-time financial media networks. Staffs were posted to IFCs, because they had, or could obtain, the specific knowledge, expertise, and skills required to ensure efficient operation of the financial system and global reach of the TNC. In accountancy and banking, transient professionals performed important 'global face-time' processes, between firm and client, and international

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markets. However, an important function of transient professionals is also to network, and accumulate 'cultural capital' (McDowell, 1997), as a part of their everyday expatriate experiences.

### Transient Migrants as Cultural Capital

Couched within the new economic geography (Lee and Wills 1997), there has been a myriad of work discussing 'embedment', knowledge, expertise, and networks, as 'global' processes, which accumulate cultural capital within IFCs (Amin and Thrift, 1997; Leyshon and Thrift 1997; McDowell 1997). In this work, emphasis focuses towards investigating organizational cultures of professional staff, their knowledge, and the production/circulation of that knowledge. In the City of London, they argue that such knowledge and reflexivity is achieved through an individual's: involvement in business and social networks; cultural life experiences; gender relations; wealth; 'meeting places'; and, reaction/involvement in the day-to-day financial atmosphere, tacitly couched in story making and rumour. Equally, we would like to suggest that the performance of a financial TNC is also very much linked to the success and speed with which their transient migrants, accumulate/circulate knowledge, expertise and 'intelligence' in, and out of, the institutional workplace. As Thrift (1994, 336) argues, an important element of the City of London's 'global corporate network' is its 'constant through-flow of workers' from other IFCs. Or to put it another way, competitiveness of a financial TNC in New York City is just as dependent upon success of its transient professional migrants in creating cultural capital, than creating capital from conventional financial transactions (Beaverstock, 1996b), as a reading of Nick Leeson's (1996) *Rogue Trader* highlights. Moreover, cultural capital obtained from overseas postings is highly prized amongst individuals. As one foreign banker states: "From the late 1960s or early 1970s, it is possible to trace people sent to run the London branch for two or three years who ended up a few years later being the chairmen ... of the top US investment banks" (The Financial Times, 1997, 25). Drawing upon the major contextual material discussed above, I now explore the linkages binding together globalization and migration, as process, with reference to transient professional migration geographies within TNC commercial banks. First, I briefly qualify our methodology, and reflect upon the approach of recent research investigating globalization, TNCs transient professional migration and global cities.

### **THE GLOBAL CITY HYPOTHESIS**

In this section, I briefly outline Sassen's contribution in *The Global City* (1991) with respect to immigration. She offers at least two arguments here. First, Sassen explains why global cities are witnessing large-scale immigration and second, why they necessarily involve increasing income *and* occupational

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polarisation. She claims that so-called ‘producer services’ (law, accountancy, management and financial consulting, and so forth) drive immigration through a demand for low-paid jobs. However, her argument is not exclusively demand-driven, because she insists that migration to rich countries is partly set in motion by FDI flows into poorer countries. Nonetheless, Sassen develops her argument further by focusing on the processes of ‘informalisation’ in global cities (see also Sassen, 1996). She claims that ‘Third World’ immigration does not lead to the informalisation of global city economies, but that informalisation has been a permanent feature of such economies. Instead Sassen asks, is what role immigration plays or does not play in this process? She argues that increased earnings inequality together with the inability of some producers to compete for the requisite resources in the context of sharply inflated prices for commercial space, business inputs, related services, and labour, have led to informalisation, often under ‘sweatshop conditions’ – what she refers to as ‘down-graded manufacturing.’ Sweatshops and even industrial home-work have *grown* over the last decade, especially in large cities, such as New York and London" (1991: 218, my emphasis; see also Sassen, 1996).

Market fragmentation means that immigrants and other ethnic minorities cannot afford luxury goods that are offered in global cities. They then seek goods from ‘co-ethnic’ producers, and/or from other low-cost immigrant-run shops – what she calls ‘down graded mass consumer services’. Similarly, the type of niche-market small-batch goods aimed at more affluent consumers associated with the gentrification of large cities – what she calls upgraded ‘non mass consumer services’, leads to labour-intensive, small-scale sub-contracting which itself is concentrated in these cities and dominated by migrant labour (Sassen, 1991, 1996, 2000, chapter 6; see also earlier Soja and Scott, 1986). But in Sassen (1996) her argument begins to adopt a more pronounced ‘supply-side’ perspective. Growth of the migrant population in global cities has led to an expansion of small-scale producers that can effectively compete with large chain stores and supermarkets, although competition is intense, returns are extremely marginal, and this in turn drives the demand for ever cheaper labour.

The above discussion is certainly an abbreviated and stylised account of Sassen’s GCH, but it allows us to capture the main theoretical assumptions and tenets of her argument in order that we can understand some of her critics.

## **THE GLOBAL CITY HYPOTHESIS IN QUESTION**

Sassen’s arguments have been endlessly scrutinized. While it is not my intent to cover the broad spectrum of these criticisms (for reviews, see Short and

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Kim, 1999; Yeoh, 1999), below I outline four reservations..  
Global Cities and the Expansion of Labour Migration?

The first reservation is Sassen's apparent assumption that because of 'globalization' (or at least a growth in FDI flows to Third World countries), global labour migration is expanding and therefore accompanying, if not necessarily driving, growth of global cities. Yet, it should be pointed out that there is unreliable evidence regarding the massive expansion of 'low-skilled' labour migration on a *global scale* since the 1970s (and by labour migration I mean migrating under the rubric of a formal job contract). This indeed may be happening, but again the international statistical evidence is difficult to assess (Zlotnick, 1998). In Europe, low-skilled labour recruitment has certainly been reduced to a trickle with a few notable exceptions such as construction workers in Berlin, or temporary labour migration into French and Spanish agriculture, for example. Family reunification continues and spouses and dependants may certainly search for work in these large metropolitan areas, but it too is limited in European countries (IOM, 2000; SOPEMI, 2000). Thus, given restrictions on labour recruitment, asylum, and even family reunification, linking labour migration to the growth of global cities implies that much of the migration is undocumented. Anecdotal and patchy statistical evidence suggests that a significant proportion of migration to or immigration within Europe's largest cities is in fact undocumented (see e.g. Burgers and Engbersen, 1996; SOPEMI, 1999, 2000; Black, 2001; Samers, 2001). But again comparative data, especially across European countries is problematic given the legal dynamics of immigration policy. In short, if social scientists draw a link between the expansion of migration and growth of global cities, then it rests on speculation.

#### Increasing Informal Employment?

There seems to be an implicit assumption. that globalization means a dangerous cocktail of de-regulation and increasing global competition, and hence the growth of informal employment. Thus, there is a considerable literature (mostly in the US and *not* in the European Union), which argues that global cities together with their respective immigrant/'ethnic minority' concentrations account disproportionately for the dynamism of these activities. And so emerges a second question about the GCH. As Williams and Windebank (1998) point out, "The inevitable result is that they [research in the global city vein] identify what they seek: that informal employment is closely associated with such groups [immigrants/ethnic minorities] and that these groups engage in organised forms of exploitative, low-paid, informal employment" (p. 83). Regardless of the merit of these studies, Williams and Windebank insist that informal employment is not necessarily increasing in advanced economies (note that their arguments are not discussed uniquely in the context of global cities). They insist further that

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immigrants do not dominate this work, even though the majority of immigrants, according to some studies anyway, are concentrated in informal activity (see e.g. Reyneri, 1998; Solé, 1998; Wilpert, 1998 for evidence from the European Union). If one is to believe in the generality of the anecdotal evidence, it would seem that in many cases, immigrant employment in informal economic activity has been falling rather than growing throughout the 1990s in Europe (Solé, 1998; Marie, 1999, 2000). Nonetheless, other studies point to wide spread sexual trafficking prostitution and a growth in number of unrecorded (female) domestic workers (Kofman, 1999; Anderson, 2001). In this sense, the contribution of immigrants to informal economic activity should not be seen as exclusive to 'global cities' as the research from Southern Europe and especially Italy demonstrates (see e.g. Quassoli, 1999). Furthermore, there is little evidence that informal economic activity is confined to global cities. For example, building and maintenance work in the city of Liverpool (hardly in anyone's imagination, a global city) functions with a veritable army of informally employed builders, plumbers, electricians, and decorators. And El Paso, Texas with its concentration of undocumented Mexican workers constitutes the sixth largest garment district in the US (Spener and Capps, 2001).

### The Growth of Sweatshops?

A third and related reservation stems from the debate which surrounds the alleged growth since the 1970s of 'sweatshops'/'down-graded manufacturing' in global cities. On the one hand, Waldinger and Lapp (1993) use an innovative methodology to show that there is little evidence of the growth of such 'sweatshops' in the New York apparel industry, even if they acknowledge the presence of numerous garment contractors who violate a range of labour laws. Thus, studies of New York (by Waldinger and Lapp) and Randstad, Holland (by Kloosterman *et al*, 1998) conclude that in these cities, there is little change in their 'post-Fordist economic structure.' Rather immigrants find employment in sectors where there are 'vacancy chains' (as in bakeries in Amsterdam or Rotterdam) or in garment manufacturing (in New York or Los Angeles). In other words, in some sectors, high rates of forced shop closure and/or voluntary exit among natives combined with lower rates of 'start-up', offering a space for 'Third world' migrants to literally set up shop. This implies out-migration of natives from certain economic activities and migrant in-migration without a necessary expansion of sweatshop activity. On the other hand, Robert Ross' (2001) historical and contemporary study of sweatshops in the United States demonstrates that there has in fact been a steady increase in garment-related sweatshops since the 1970s in New York, Los Angeles/Southern California, and San Francisco. The result, he argues, of a combination of processes associated with a new phase of global capitalism. These processes include "the declining capacity of the state to enforce labour laws, the increasing market power of retailers through concentration of sales; the competitive



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pressure brought about by massive imports from low-wage export platforms; and finally, the availability of a large pool of vulnerable immigrant labour" (p. 28). Ross' thoughtful diachronic analysis seems more convincing than that of Waldinger and Lapp, but there is a glaring paucity of similar cross-national and inter-urban studies in the context of the European Union over the last decade. Claims for the EU-wide growth of sweatshops since the 1970s require considerably more empirical demonstration.

### The Explanatory Bias of the GCH

A fourth reservation is the exogenous explanatory bias within the GCH debate. That is, there is too much focus on economic globalization as *happening to* cities, and not enough on what might be considered endogenous processes – or for example, how immigrants themselves structure the labour markets of large metropolises. There is an enormous literature on 'immigrant entrepreneurship', ethnic enclaves, immigrant/ethnic economies, migrant day labourers and so forth which runs in parallel to the GCH, but which has not been the subject of any sustained synthesis. And notwithstanding some major world cities that do not have comparatively high levels of immigration like Tokyo, it may in fact be the presence of such large-scale immigrant economic 'communities' (with their attendant global financial remittances and their ability to incubate small business growth, rather than simply their complementarity to producer services employment) which partially distinguishes mega-cities from other more nationally-oriented urban centers.

## **POLARISATION AND INEQUALITY GLOBAL CITY STUDIES**

The 1990s witnessed a veritable explosion in global city research. In this paper, however, I want to focus on only one central aspect of it –the considerable theoretical, methodological, and empirical *mêlée* around Sassen's 'social polarisation thesis' (see *inter alia* Hamnett, 1994, 1996a, 1996b Baum, 1999; Body-Gendrot, 1996; Bruegel, 1996; Kloosterman, 1996; Gibson, 1998; Hamnett and Cross, 1998; Kofman, 1998; Rhein, 1998; Kesteloot and Meert, 2000; Wessel, 2000; Walks, 2001:). Such an analysis is necessary insofar as the polarisation debate is one of the chief attributes of the GCH that has direct relevance for immigrants/ethnic minorities (i.e. chronically low wages, underemployment, job insecurity, 'downward mobility', etc.).

Let us begin with Hamnett's (1994, 1996) request for clarity concerning Sassen's use of the term polarisation (is it absolute or relative?). Hamnett asks whether this is a matter of occupational or income inequalities? While he suspects that Sassen is referring to absolute occupational polarisation, he finds only limited evidence for such polarisation in his analysis of the Randstad Holland. Instead, he

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argues, what is happening are processes of ‘professionalisation’ and the growth of an unemployed population supported by the state. Similarly, Hamnett and Cross (1998) make us aware of the conflation of polarisation and inequality, and find that earnings *inequality* has increased between 1970 and 1995 in London and Great Britain as a whole. They also find limited support for Sassen’s *earnings* (as opposed to *occupational*) polarisation thesis in the service sector. Across a range of large metropolitan areas, evidence for at least income polarisation is rather mixed, and by no means convincing. Absence of such polarisation may be explained by certain ‘cultural particularities’ such as active protest and other ‘path-dependencies’ that help sustain relatively strong local and national welfare systems, ‘adequate’ social housing and more worker-favourable labour market institutions. These then mediate ravages of market processes (Body-Gendrot, 1996; Hamnett, 1996a, 1996b; Kofman, 1998). In other words, the nature of European societies precludes the kind of inequality found in US cities. Using Esping-Andersen’s work as a guide, Hamnett (1996a) concludes that, "We have to bring the state, the structure of civil society and political strategy back into discussions of polarisation alongside economic restructuring" (p. 1429). Nonetheless, as Wacquant (1999) and certainly many feminist analyses are right to point out, states are also generative of inequalities, especially, but not exclusively, along gender lines.

### The Weaknesses of the Polarisation Debate

While I do not intend to evaluate empirically evidence for social polarisation in large European cities, it may be useful to offer some critical comments. To this end, there are at least three glaring weaknesses emerging from the polarisation debate with respect to immigration. Relevant studies do not or cannot capture statistically those immigrants who are deemed to be undocumented. In no subsequent discussion of Sassen’s work have I noted any comprehensive recognition of the problems of statistical evaluation of income or occupational polarisation in this regard. It is in fact Sassen (1991) herself who must be one of the few to point out this issue, especially in relation to informal labour markets (p. 245). If we can concede that many of the immigrants living in these putative global cities are undocumented (see the discussion below), then using the available statistical data is not likely to be a very robust measure of inequality, whether occupational or income-based. Furthermore, the argument that European welfare states soften the hard edge of their market-oriented societies (at least relative to the United States) makes little sense for undocumented immigrants. In fact, evidence from London shows that undocumented immigrants are quite critical of the benefits system, and will do their most to avoid detection by not relying on social entitlements (Jordan, 1999).

The second weakness, following from Peter Taylor’s critique of the

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‘evidential structure’ of the world cities literature, is whether evidence for income polarisation is really sufficient given the transnational nature of economic activity among migrants. Taylor claims that the global city literature is based on nationally-gathered statistics, inadequate for assessing how cities are networked transnationally in the global economy. For example, in Chinese communities, many individuals and families rely on the *hui* (or the inter/intra-family pooling of money in the form of a savings bank) in order to facilitate business expansion, or just quotidian survival (White, Winchester, and Guillon, 1987). As the *hui* and certainly other potentially transnational sources of income beyond employment exist, this is not easily captured by existing urban or national-level data. Needless to say, the implications here for urban policy are legion.

A third conceptual and methodological limitation is lack of specificity about the timing (to not mention the spacing) of these ‘causal’ (supply/demand) relationships as suggested by Sassen’s original thesis (for exceptions, see Howell and Mueller, 2000; Ley and Smith, 2000). For example, Wacquant’s (1999) otherwise wide-ranging overview of urban inequality seems to reference work from different moments of capital accumulation, job expansion and so on, without adequately addressing how the timing of these various studies might shape the relationship between cities, inequality, and immigration. Indeed, as Gordon and Richardson note about urban income data, “The most important insight to be sought from income distribution data is this: What are the odds that any individual will remain at the bottom (or at the top or anywhere in between) and for how long? Social mobility is the real news” (p. 577).

## **RENEWAL OF THE GLOBAL CITIES LITERATURE**

By cobbling together criticisms of Sassen’s GCH, as well as those of the polarisation debate, we can move toward five propositions for a modified GCH. The theoretical and empirical results might translate into different and more appropriate urban policies. Indeed, a major difficulty with the GCH is its policy relevance. In other words, following Smith’s (1998) intervention, we can ask why ‘global cities’ should be an object of research? I argue that the longevity of Sassen’s approach rests on its ability to provide insights either into exposing inequalities, or ways of addressing these inequalities. Otherwise, I do not see merit in pursuing this line of enquiry. Might ask more specifically then how Sassen’s research and similar work contributes to urban policy? If Sassen is correct and the nature of immigration is related to just another round in the urbanization of global capitalist accumulation, what can or should be done about it? There are a number of axes in which urban governments can intervene. These include immigration policy, so-called ‘integration’ policy, and employment policy. Rather than discuss contours of appropriate policy, which would require a much longer and different

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paper, let me add that since global cities are not isolated entities, urban governments might impose these together and uniformly through a *network* of global cities. A salient example is the 'Urban League' with its headquarters in New York, and which is concerned with the problems and possibilities of African-Americans. And I use the term 'network' expressly for reasons that I discuss in the section on 'Reformulating the GCH'.

#### Re-assess the Relationship between Labour Migration and Labour Markets

Comparative national-level data on migration is too incongruent and lacks sufficient disaggregation to draw a relationship between a growth in labour supply and expansion of global cities. And it is the ambiguity and hyperbole of statements about global labour migration that require us to relate the status of immigrants (undocumented, refugee/asylum-seeker, family member with or without the right to work, student, entrepreneur, etc.), and their background (skills, education, financial and commercial resources, and so forth) to labour market entry and the structure of urban labour markets. And this in turn must be combined with sensitivity to the timing of these migrations. In other words, one must be attentive to the relationship between changes in immigration policy and the growth of global cities.

#### Re-assess the Relationship between Informal Employment and Global Cities

By its very nature, informal employment is exceedingly difficult to capture in a quantitative sense, not least because businesses and employment are so ephemeral. And here we need a more precise notion of what constitutes informal economic activity (is it the 'drug economy', prostitution, domestic labour, or simply the illegal production of textiles?) (Samers, 2001). For example, it may be female prostitution and domestic work in the EU, rather than an illegal garment industry that marks the informal character of economic activity in European global cities at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kofman, 1999; Anderson, 2000). Nonetheless, if there is a strong relationship between mega-cities, immigration, and the growth of informal employment, then this must be demonstrated rather than simply asserted. And it must be shown why informal economic activity is relatively unique to these cities. Otherwise, informal economic activity as a defining characteristic of global cities cannot be assumed. Thus, anecdotal qualitative evidence (and not quantitative estimations) is likely to provide valuable insights into processes at work, and therefore help to sustain dynamic and appropriate urban policies with respect to potential employment regulations, job training, language training, and housing.

#### Evaluate Critically the Growth of Sweatshops and Down-graded Manufacturing

Like many forms of informal employment, statistical evidence across large

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metropolitan regions with regard to sweatshops/down-graded manufacturing is likely to prove elusive. Yet, again, qualitative case studies may offer a useful service in terms of public policy. They will not, on the other hand, help to assess whether these kinds of employment units grow or decline, unless studies are carried out *en masse*. And as suggested in the previous proposition, there has been a tendency to focus disproportionately on garment manufacturing (surprising given the diminished fortunes of this industry in the advanced economies of Europe (Iskander, 2000), and this may obscure the importance of other kinds of down-graded manufacturing. Again, specific links between a growth in sweatshops/down-graded manufacturing (including how one might delineate such economic units) and how this is specific to global cities should be articulated.

#### Match Exogenous and Endogenous Processes in Global Cities

There is a need to construct a sustained synthesis between processes of economic globalization and the way in which these processes both provide space for and constrain economic activity of immigrants in urban labour markets (so-called endogenous processes). To this end, a dialogue between GCH and entire literature on 'immigrant entrepreneurship', ethnic enclaves, immigrant/ethnic economies, day labouring and so forth, could prove enormously fruitful. Perhaps a combination of Kloosterman, Rath, and Van der Leun's (1999) concept of mixed embeddedness, an alternative conception of entrepreneurship based on day labourers as low-skilled entrepreneurs (Valenzuela, 2001), and a sophisticated labour segmentation theory for understanding wage labour (see e.g. Peck, 1996) might prove to be one valuable path for research? Yet the point is not to substitute one discourse for another (i.e. endogenous processes for exogenous), but to show how the world's largest cities differ from other urban centers. How do the disproportionately large numbers of immigrants help to shape the urban labour markets of these largest cities, and what implications does this have for urban policy?

#### Re-think Polarisation and Inequality

I have argued that the polarisation debate suffers from a number of conceptual and empirical weaknesses having significant implications for both the GCH debate and urban policy. These include the 'fuzziness' of the terms polarisation and inequality, national bias of statistics, inattention to undocumented immigration, and lack of temporal specificity. Thus, with regard to addressing these issues simultaneously, a starting point is an estimation of undocumented immigration. Notwithstanding the potentially insidious political and ethical implications of gathering or applying such statistics, and regardless of how paradoxical such measurements may seem (because they appear to officialize the

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unofficial), they are likely to provide a more robust measure of at least occupational, if not income polarisation/inequality. Yet this assumes that social scientists become more creative and look elsewhere for the relevant statistical sources. In fact, some complex statistical procedures have been adopted by various countries to measure the number of undocumented immigrants and/or undocumented immigrants working informally (SOPEMI, 1999). This data would have to be combined with more conventional occupational, income, employment and micro-census statistics, and less conventional (*transnational*) data such as measurements of remittances, capital flows, intra-ethnic pooling of capital, and other financial activities between the largest cities and the countries of emigration (see e.g. Benbouzid, 1999). Finally, this would have to be analysed through the lens of changes in immigration policy over at least a census period (i.e. roughly 10 years) to tease out the temporal dynamics of inequality/polarisation. In sum, I have pointed to 5 ways in which we can ‘renew’ the GCH and parallel studies. These propositions together represent a considerable challenge to social scientists working in this vein, but it is my argument that if these are not addressed, then future studies into global cities are likely to be inadequate assessments of urban inequalities in the world’s largest cities.

## **FROM RENEWAL TO A REFORMULATION OF GCH**

There is something distinctively victimising about the global city literature with respect to immigrants, and there will be those who see such studies as empiricist and the inequality of cities as an ineluctable feature of capitalist urbanization without any possible remedy. Perhaps the most ardent supporter of this view is Gibson (1998). I argue in this section that for the more sceptical observers, abandoning GCH need not be a necessary consequence. Therefore in moving from ‘renewal’ to ‘reformulation’, I shift roughly from a critical discussion of largely economic assumptions within the GCH to thinking about how we might nurture GCH’s political implications. This is less of a giant step than one might think, if, we imagine that the enormous sums of money that migrants remit to their countries of origin from employment in global cities, allows for the development of what has been called political transnationalism. In other words, it would make more sense to view global cities not so much as the transnational loci of inequality (which they seem to be), as in looking at global cities as offering a different set of networks that are envisioned by a research project in the UK (for which Sassen herself is a regular contributor). These alternative ‘networks’ *may* contribute to ‘new’ forms of democratic participation in the countries of destination, as well as in the countries of origin. How might this be conceptualised?

I would defer here to Michael Peter Smith’s research on ‘trans-localism’ (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998). This is an idea which grew out of his research on the

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movement of the entire inhabitants of villages in Mexico to their localised re-grouping in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, but also in many other smaller Californian suburbs and agricultural towns. Thus, we can speak of a network of global cities in two senses, one in the types of networks that we associate with transnational communities (largely south-north, but also intra-national and intra-European networks) *and* the kinds of networks which global cities afford through the concentration of NGOs and other political organisations. Concentration of immigrant communities in these global cities, together with the headquarters of transnational migrant associations, such as the *Amicale des Travailleurs Marocains en France* (ATMF) in Paris, may provide the opportunities for the mobilisation of immigrants/ethnic minorities in large metropolitan areas. This would transform the 'global city hypothesis' from one that concerns victimisation to one that concerns political hope – a sort of 'transnationalism from below' (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999). True, research on immigrant communities in European cities has revealed that formal political representation remains the domain of migrant elites rather than strictly 'grassroots political mobilisation' (e.g. Boussetta, 1997). And more generally, there is little certainty as to whether such 'transnationalism' reconfigures or reaffirms existing class, racial, and gender power relations (Mahler, 1998), or that it does not also bring with it 'less progressive' processes to migrant communities both in the 'North' and in the 'South' (Mattei and Smith, 1998). In the end, 'transnationalism from below' may only be a very crude metaphor that begs the question as to what other kinds of 'spatialities' will be necessary for building a progressive immigrant transnational politics. I leave this as a potential research.

Thus, two networks discussed above facilitate (although do not guarantee) mobilisation of 'grassroots' migrant interests where their disadvantaged status (and often their undocumented status) may not ensure political participation and/or the delivery of rights. Such rights are extended to those migrants living outside global cities, but further research might seek to reveal how the largest metropolitan regions form the epicenter of the definition and delivery of migrant and ethnic minority rights. This is especially the case in Paris where the nature of the relatively centralised political system allows Paris-based Moroccan and other Maghrebini associations to wield considerable power over other non-Paris based organisations (Poinset, 1993). In contrast to the 'network-driven' research of GaWC, such research may then also reveal how hierarchies still matter. Specificity of the global city (in other words a new 'global city hypothesis') might involve thinking of global cities as the locus of trans-national political mobilisation and its effects on the welfare of migrants.

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