

# New frontiers facing urban sociology at the Millennium

## ABSTRACT

The article examines some of the major challenges facing urban sociology at century's end given its traditions and lineages. These challenges arise out of the intersection of major macrosocial trends and their particular spatial patterns. The city and the metropolitan region emerge as one of the strategic sites where these macrosocial trends materialize and hence can be constituted as an object of study. Among these trends are globalization and the rise of the new information technologies, the intensifying of transnational and translocal dynamics, and the strengthening presence and voice of specific types of socio-cultural diversity. Each one of these trends has its own specific conditionalities, contents and consequences for cities, and for theory and research. Cities are also sites where each of these trends interacts with the others in distinct, often complex manners, in a way they do not in just about any other setting. The city emerges once again as a strategic lens for the study of major macrosocial transformations as it was in the origins of sociology. Can urban sociology address these challenges and in so doing once again produce some of the analytic tools for understanding the broader transformation?

**KEYWORDS:** Globalization; telecommunication; transnationalism; inscription; centrality

## INTRODUCTION

The city has long been a strategic site for the exploration of many major subjects confronting society and sociology. It would be impossible for an article to summarize the enormous scholarship urban sociology produced in the century coming to a close. But behind this sustained work lie marked shifts. In the first half of this century, the study of cities was at the heart of sociology. Since then urban sociology has gradually lost this privileged role as a lens for the discipline, as producer of key analytic categories. But now, at the end of this century, I want to argue that the city is once again emerging as a strategic site for understanding major new trends that are reconfiguring the social order. Can urban sociology seize the moment and once again produce path-breaking scholarship that will

give us some of the analytic tools for understanding the broader social transformation under way?

It is perhaps one of the ironies at this century's end that some of the old questions of the early Chicago School of Urban Sociology should re-emerge as promising and strategic to understand certain critical issues today, notably the importance of recovering place and undertaking ethnographies at a time when dominant forces such as globalization and telecommunications seem to signal that place and the details of the local no longer matter. Yet the old categories of analysis are not enough.

The invitation to write a think piece about urban sociology at the millennium frees the author to look forward, at what are some of the major challenges facing urban sociology, given its traditions and lineages rather than summarizing past accomplishments. I propose to examine some of the major conditions in cities today that are such challenges for theorization and empirical analysis. This is then a partial account, beyond the fact that questions of positionality are inevitable. It seeks to locate the new frontiers that demand new forms of theorization and research.

The challenges arise out of the intersection of major macro-social trends and their particular spatial patterns. The city and the metropolitan region emerge as strategic sites where these macrosocial trends materialize and hence can be constituted as an object of study. Among these trends are globalization and the rise of the new information technologies, the intensifying of transnational and translocal dynamics, and the strengthening presence and voice of socio-cultural diversity. Each one of these trends has its own specific conditionalities, contents and consequences for cities, and for theory and research. Cities are also sites where each of these trends interacts with the others in distinct, often complex manners, in a way they do not in just about any other setting. All three trends are at a cutting edge of actual change that sociological theory and urban sociology in particular need to factor in to a far greater extent than they have. By far the best developed and most studied is socio-cultural diversity as it lends itself to the micro-sociological treatments that prevail in much urban sociology. Thus as regards this subject I will confine my treatment here to those issues of socio-cultural diversity that are bound up with the other major trends I am focusing on here. There is a strong emerging literature on the first two trends, but mostly in disciplines other than urban sociology.

These trends do not encompass the majority of social conditions; on the contrary, most social reality probably corresponds to older continuing and familiar trends. That is why much of urban sociology's traditions and well-established sub-fields will remain important and constitute the heart of the discipline. Further, there are good reasons why most of urban sociology has not quite engaged the characteristics and the consequences of these three trends: current data sets are quite inadequate for addressing these issues at the level of the city. Yet, although these three trends may involve only parts of the urban condition and cannot themselves be confined to the urban, they are strategic in that they mark the urban condition in novel ways and

the latter is, in turn, a key research site for their examination. In thinking about the challenges facing urban sociology at the millennium, it is necessary to confront these strategic developments.

#### CONCEPTUAL ELEMENTS

Among the dominant forces reconfiguring the social, the economic, the political, and the subjective at century's end are globalization and the new information technologies. The implications for the urban of these three trends are pronounced: globalization and telecommunications are about dispersal, transnational and translocal networks cut across the boundaries of cities, and much of the new cultural diversity is embedded in new subjectivities and narratives, not common foci for urban sociology. If one were to take the traditional tools of urban sociology and social science one could factor in some aspects of these trends. But theorization is lagging, even though there are important exceptions (such as Abu-Lughod 1999; Allen et al. 1999; Castells 1989; Rodriguez and Feagin 1986; Gottdiener 1985; Lash and Urry 1994; King 1990; Zukin 1991; Fainstein and Judd 1999; to cite but a few). Economic geography (such as Knox and Taylor 1995; Short and Kim 1999) and cultural studies (such as Palumbo-Liu 1999; Watson and Bridges 1999) have contributed rather more.

'Embedded statism', which has marked the social sciences generally (Taylor 1996; Brenner 1998), is one obstacle to a full theorization of some of these issues. We can characterize this in terms of the explicit or implicit assumption about the nation-state as the container of social processes and the national as the appropriate scale for studying major social, economic and political processes. These assumptions work well for many of the subjects studied in the social sciences. But they are not helpful in elucidating a growing number of situations when it comes to globalization and to a whole variety of transnational processes now being studied by social scientists. Nor are those assumptions helpful for developing the requisite research techniques. Further, while they describe conditions that have held for a good part of this century in much of the world, we are now seeing their partial unbundling. Their unbundling demands the introduction of additional qualifications to the major assumptions described above. Of particular interest here is the implied correspondence of national territory with the national, and the associated implication that the national and the non-national are two mutually exclusive conditions. We are now seeing their partial unbundling.<sup>1</sup> For instance, I have argued (Sassen 1996: chs 1 and 2) that one of the features of the current phase of globalization is that the fact a process happens within the territory of a sovereign state does not necessarily mean that it is a national process. Conversely, the national (such as firms, capital, culture) may increasingly be located outside the national territory, for instance, in a foreign country or in digital spaces. This localization of the global, or of the non-national, in national territories, and of

the national outside national territories, undermines a key duality running through many of the methods and conceptual frameworks prevalent in the social sciences, that the national and the non-national are mutually exclusive.

This partial unbundling of the national has significant implications for our analysis and theorization of cities, especially major cities where the forces of globalization and telecommunications come together. The city as an object of study has long been a debatable construct, whether in early writings (Lefebvre 1974) or in very recent ones (Brenner 1998). But the unbundling of urban space and of the traditional hierarchies of scale we are seeing today further raises the ante in terms of prior conceptualizations. Major cities can be thought of as nodes where a variety of processes intersect in particularly pronounced concentrations. In the context of globalization, many of these processes are operating at a global scale. Cities emerge as one territorial or scalar moment in a trans-urban dynamic.<sup>2</sup> This is, however, not the city as a bounded unit, but the city as a node in a grid of cross-boundary processes. Further, this type of city cannot be located simply in a scalar hierarchy that places it beneath the national, regional and global. It is one of the spaces of the global, and it engages the global directly, often by-passing the national. Some cities may have had this capacity long before the current era; but today these conditions have been multiplied and amplified to the point that they can be read as a qualitatively different phase. Pivoting theorization and research on the city might be a fruitful way of cutting across embedded statism and capturing the rescaling of some major social, economic and political processes at the level of the city.

Besides the challenge of overcoming embedded statism, there is the challenge of recovering place in the context of globalization, telecommunications, and the intensifying of transnational and translocal dynamics. One obvious tradition of scholarship that comes to mind in this regard is the old school of ecological analysis developed by Ernest Burgess and Robert Redfield as well as the work by Park and by Wirth (Park et al. 1967; see also Duncan 1959; Abbot 1999; Smith 1995). One might ask if their methods might be of particular use in recovering the category place. Robert Park believed the geography of the city was determined by the political economy and immigration. Louis Wirth stressed the ethnicity of geography at the expense of class analysis. Their students, such as Harvey Zorbaugh turned to fieldwork in an effort to understand the clashing interpretations of urban geography made by their teachers. They contributed many detailed studies mapping distributions and assuming functional complementarity among the diverse 'natural areas' they identified in Chicago.<sup>3</sup>

I would argue that detailed fieldwork is a necessary step in capturing many of the new aspects in the urban condition, including those having to do with the major trends focused on in this article. But assuming functional complementarity brings us back to the notion of the city as a bounded space rather than one site or scale, albeit a strategic one, where multiple trans-boundary processes intersect and produce distinct socio-spatial

formations. Recovering place can only partly be met through the techniques of research of the old Chicago School of Urban Sociology. I do think we need to go back to some of the depth of engagement with urban areas that the School represented and the effort towards detailed mappings. The type of ethnographies done by Duneier (1999), the scholars in Burawoy et al. (1991) are excellent examples, using many of the techniques yet working within a different set of assumptions.

But that is only part of the challenge of recovering place. Large cities around the world are the terrain where a multiplicity of globalization processes assume concrete, localized forms. These localized forms are, in good part, what globalization is about. Recovering place means recovering the multiplicity of presences in this landscape. The large city of today has emerged as a strategic site for a whole range of new types of operations – political, economic, ‘cultural,’ subjective (Abu-Lughod 1994; Watson and Bridges 1999; Yuval-Davis 1999; Clark and Hoffman-Martinot 1998; Allen et al. 1999). It is one of the nexi where the formation of new claims materializes and assumes concrete forms (Kempen and Ozuekren 1998; King 1996; Klopp 1998; Brewer 1998; Bobo et al. 1986). The loss of power at the national level produces the possibility for new forms of power and politics at the sub-national level (Allen 1999; Jessop 1999). Further, in so far as the national as container of social process and power is cracked (Taylor 1995; Sachar 1990; *Indiana Journal* 1996) it opens up possibilities for a geography of politics that links sub-national spaces across borders. Cities are foremost in this new geography. One question this engenders is how and whether we are seeing the formation of a new type of transnational politics that localizes in these cities (Sassen 1998: chs 1 and 10).

Immigration, for instance, is one major process through which a new transnational political economy and translocal household strategies are being constituted (Portes 1995; Bhachu 1985; Mahler 1995; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Boyd 1989; Georges 1990). It is one largely embedded in major cities in so far as most immigrants, certainly in the developed world, whether in the USA, Japan or Western Europe, are concentrated in such major cities. It is, in my reading, one of the constitutive processes of globalization today, even though not recognized or represented as such in mainstream accounts of the global economy (Sassen 1998: Part One; Skeldon 1997; Jacobson 1998).

This configuration contains unifying capacities across national boundaries and sharpening conflicts within cities. Global capital and the new immigrant workforce are two major instances of transnationalized actors that have unifying properties internally and find themselves in contestation with each other inside cities (Bonilla et al. 1998; Sassen 1991; 1998: ch. 1). Researching and theorizing these issues will require approaches that diverge from the more traditional studies of political elites, local party politics, neighbourhood associations, immigrant communities, and so on, through which the political landscape of cities and metropolitan regions has conventionally been conceptualized in urban sociology.

In the next three sections I focus on certain of these issues in greater detail.

#### GLOBALIZATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS: IMPACTS ON THE FUTURE OF URBAN CENTRALITY

The concept of the city is complex, imprecise, and charged with specific historical meanings (such as Park et al. 1967). A more abstract category might be 'centrality', one of the properties cities have historically provided and produced. Such a focus would not concern matters such as the boundaries of cities or what cities actually are. These are partly empirical questions: each city is going to have a different configuration of boundaries and contents. The question is, rather, what are the conditions for the continuity of centrality in advanced economic systems in the face of major new organizational forms and technologies that maximize the possibility for geographic dispersal, at the regional, national and indeed, global scale, as well as simultaneous system integration (Graham and Marvin 1996; Castells 1989; Castells and Hall 1994; Brotchi et al. 1995)? Historically, centrality has largely been embedded in the central city. One of the changes brought about by the new conditions is the reconfiguring of centrality: the central city is today but one form of centrality. Important emerging spaces for the constitution of centrality range from the new transnational networks of cities to electronic space.

A second major issue I consider essential for thinking about the future of the city concerns the narratives that we have constructed about the city and their relation to the global economy and to new technologies (for an explanation of issues concerning narratives in this domain, see Hannerz 1992; Appadurai 1996; Featherstone 1990; Sassen 1998: Chs 1 and 10). The understandings and the categories that dominate mainstream discussions about the future of the advanced urban economy signal that the city has become obsolete for leading economic sectors. We need to subject these notions to critical examination. There are instantiations of the global economy and of the new technologies that have not been recognized as such or are contested representations. I return to this in the last two sections of this article.

Finally, and on a somewhat more theorized level, there are certain properties of power that make cities strategic. Power needs to be historicized to overcome the abstractions of the concept, it is actively produced and reproduced. Many of the studies in urban sociology focused on the local dimensions of power (such as Logan and Molotch 1987; Porter 1965; Nakhaie 1997; Clark and Hoffman-Martinot 1998; Domhoff 1991; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1999) have made important contributions in this regard. Beyond this type of approach, one of the aspects today in the production of power structures has to do with new forms of economic power and the re-location of certain forms of power from the public political realm to the private

economic realm (Sassen 1991, 1996; Allen 1999). This brings with it questions about the built environment and the architectures of centrality that represent different types of power. Does power have spatial correlates, does it have a spatial moment? In terms of the economy this question could be operationalized more concretely: Can the current economic system, with its strong tendencies towards concentration in ownership and control, have a space economy that lacks points of physical concentration? I find it hard to think about a discourse on the future of cities that would not include this dimension of power.

To some extent, it is the major cities in the highly developed world which most clearly display the processes I discuss here, or best lend themselves to the heuristics I deploy. However, increasingly these processes are emerging in cities in developing countries as well (Santos et al. 1994; Cohen et al. 1996; Knox and Taylor 1995; Sassen 2000). But they are often submerged under the megacity syndrome (Dogana and Kasarda 1988; Cohen et al. 1996): sheer population size and urban sprawl create their own orders of magnitude. While size and sprawl may not much alter the power equation I describe, they do change the weight, and the legibility, of some of these properties.

One way of framing the issue of centrality is by focusing upon larger dynamics rather than beginning with the city as such. For instance, we could note that the geography of globalization contains both a dynamic of dispersal and one of centralization, the latter a condition that has only recently begun to receive recognition (Knox and Taylor 1995; Stren 1996; Castells 1989; Sassen 1991; Gravestijn 1998). Most of the scholarship on these issues, and it is vast, has focused on dispersal patterns (see e.g. Bonacich et al. 1994; Sklair 1991). The massive trends towards the spatial dispersal of economic activities at the metropolitan, national and global levels that we associate with globalization have contributed to a demand for new forms of territorial centralization of top-level management and control operations. The fact, for instance, that firms world-wide had half a million affiliates outside their home countries by 1997 signals that the sheer number of dispersed factories and service outlets that are part of a firm's integrated operation creates massive new needs for central co-ordination and servicing. In brief, the spatial dispersal of economic activity made possible by globalization and telecommunications contributes to an expansion of central functions *if* this dispersal is to take place under the continuing concentration in control, ownership and profit appropriation that characterizes the current economic system (Sassen 1991).

It is at this point that the city enters the discourse. Cities regain strategic importance because they are favoured sites for the production of these functions. National and global markets as well as globally integrated organizations require central places where the work of globalization gets done. Finance and advanced corporate services are industries producing the organizational commodities necessary for the implementation and management of global economic systems. Cities are preferred sites for the production of these services, particularly the most innovative, speculative,

internationalized service sectors.<sup>4</sup> Further, leading firms in information industries require a vast physical infrastructure containing strategic nodes with hyper-concentration of facilities; we need to distinguish between the capacity for global transmission/communication and the material conditions that make this possible. Finally, even the most advanced information industries have a production process that is at least partly place-bound because of the combination of resources it requires even when the outputs are hypermobile. The tendency in the specialized literature has been to study these advanced information industries in terms of their hypermobile outputs rather than the actual work processes which include top level professionals as well as clerical and manual service workers.

Further, when we start by examining the broader dynamics in order to detect their localization patterns, we can begin to observe and conceptualize the formation, at least incipient, of transnational urban systems. The growth of global markets for finance and specialized services, the need for transnational servicing networks due to sharp increases in international investment, the reduced role of the government in the regulation of international economic activity and the corresponding ascendance of other institutional arenas with a strong urban connection – all these point to the existence of a series of transnational networks of cities. The data are still inadequate; one of the most promising data sets at this time is that organized by Taylor and his colleagues (*Globalization and World Cities Study Group and Network* 1998; see also Meyer 1991; Smith and Timberlake 2000; for various types of networks, see also Sassen 2000). But much remains to be done in this field, and I think it is worth pursuing this work. To a large extent it seems that the major business centres in the world today draw their importance from these transnational networks. I have long argued that there is no such thing as a single global city, and in this sense there is a sharp contrast with the erstwhile capitals of former empires.

These networks of major international business centres constitute new geographies of centrality. The most powerful of these new geographies of centrality at the global level binds the major international financial and business centres: New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Sydney, Hong Kong, among others. But this geography now also includes cities such as Bangkok, Seoul, Taipei, Sao Paulo, Mexico City. The intensity of transactions among these cities, particularly through the financial markets, trade in services, and investment has increased sharply, and so have the orders of magnitude involved. There has been a sharpening inequality in the concentration of strategic resources and activities between each of these cities and others in the same country. This has consequences for the role of urban systems in national territorial integration. Although the latter has never quite been what its model signals, the last decade has seen a further acceleration in the fragmentation of national territory. National urban systems are being partly unbundled as their major cities become part of a new or strengthened transnational urban system.



But we can no longer think of centres for international business and finance simply in terms of the corporate towers and corporate culture at their centre. The international character of major cities lies not only in their telecommunication infrastructure and foreign firms: it lies also in the many different cultural environments in which these workers and others exist. This is one arena where we have seen the growth of an enormously rich scholarship (King 1990; Zukin 1991; Ruggiero and South 1997; Skillington 1998; Dawson 1999; McDowell 1997). Today's major cities are in part the spaces of post-colonialism and indeed contain conditions for the formation of a post-colonialist discourse. It seems to me that this is an integral part of the future of such cities. I turn to these types of issues in the next two sections.

#### A NEW TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

The incorporation of cities into a new cross-border geography of centrality also signals the emergence of a parallel political geography. Major cities have emerged as a strategic site not only for global capital, but also for the transnationalization of labour and the formation of translocal communities and identities (Smith 1995; Mahler 1995; Boyd 1989). In this regard cities are a site for new types of political operations. The centrality of place in a context of global processes makes possible a transnational economic and political opening for the formation of new claims and hence for the constitution of entitlements, notably rights to place. At the limit, this could be an opening for new forms of 'citizenship' (see Klopp 1998; Dawson 1999; Holston 1996; Torres et al. 1999; Mayer and Ely 1998). The emphasis on the transnational and hypermobile character of capital has contributed to a sense of powerlessness among local actors, a sense of the futility of resistance. But an analysis that emphasizes place suggests that the new global grid of strategic sites is a terrain for politics and engagement (King 1996; Abu-Lughod 1994; Copjec and Sorkin 1999; Berner and Korff 1995; *The Journal of Urban Technology* 1995; Dunn 1994).

This is a space that is both place-centred in that it is embedded in particular and strategic locations; and it is transterritorial because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other. Is there a transnational politics embedded in the centrality of place and in the new geography of strategic places, such as is for instance the new world-wide grid of global cities? This is a geography that cuts across national borders and the old North-South divide. But it does so along bounded 'filières' (Bonilla et al. 1998). It is a set of specific and partial rather than all-encompassing dynamics (Sassen 1998: ch. 10). It is not only the transmigration of capital that takes place in this global grid, but also people – both rich – the new transnational professional workforce, and poor, most migrant workers. And it is a space for the transmigration of cultural forms, the re-territorialization of 'local' subcultures.

If we consider that large cities concentrate both the leading sectors of global capital and a growing share of disadvantaged populations – immigrants, many of the disadvantaged women, people of colour generally and in the megacities of developing countries, masses of shanty dwellers – then we can see that cities have become a strategic terrain for a whole series of conflicts and contradictions (Fainstein et al. 1993; Wilson 1997 and 1987; Green et al. 1998; Hutchinson 1997; De Sena 1990; Comstock 1991; Massey and Denton 1993; Allen et al. 1999; Brar et al. 1993; Gans 1995). We can then think of cities also as one of the sites for the contradictions of the globalization of capital, even though, heeding Katznelson's (1992) observation, the city cannot be reduced to this dynamic.

One way of thinking about the political implications of this strategic transnational space anchored in cities is in terms of the formation of new claims on that space. The city has indeed emerged as a site for new claims: by global capital which uses the city as an 'organizational commodity', but also by disadvantaged sectors of the urban population, frequently as internationalized a presence in large cities as that of capital. The 'de-nationalizing' of urban space, and the formation of new claims by transnational actors, raise the question *Whose city is it?*

Foreign firms and international business people have increasingly been entitled to do business in whatever country and city they chose – entitled by new legal regimes, by the new economic culture, and through progressive deregulation of national economies (Sassen 1996: chs 1 and 2). They are among the new city users (Martinotti 1993). The new city users have made an often immense claim on the city and have reconstituted strategic spaces of the city in their image. Their claim to the city is rarely contested, even though the costs and benefits to cities have barely been examined (Burgel and Burgel 1996). They have profoundly marked the urban landscape. For Martinotti (1993), they contribute to change the social morphology of the city; the new city of these city users is a fragile one, whose survival and successes are centred on an economy of high productivity, advanced technologies, intensified exchanges (Martinotti 1993). It is a city whose space consists of airports, top level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants, in brief, a sort of urban glamour zone.

Perhaps at the other extreme, are those who use urban political violence to make their claims on the city, claims that lack the *de facto* legitimacy enjoyed by the new 'city users'. These are claims made by actors struggling for recognition, entitlement, claiming their rights to the city (Body-Gendrot 1993; Fainstein 1997; Wacquant 1997). These claims have, of course, a long history; every new epoch brings specific conditions to the manner in which the claims are made. The growing weight of 'delinquency' (such as smashing cars and shop-windows; robbing and burning stores) in some of the uprisings over the last decade in major cities of the developed world, is perhaps an indication of sharpened socio-economic inequality – the distance, as seen and as lived, between the urban glamour zone and the urban war zone. The extreme visibility of the difference is likely to

contribute to further brutalization of the conflict: the indifference and greed of the new élites versus the hopelessness and rage of the poor.

There are two aspects in this formation of new claims that have implications for the transnational politics that are increasingly being played out in major cities. One is the sharp and perhaps sharpening differences in the representation of claims by different sectors, notably between international business and the vast population of low income 'others' – immigrants, women, people of colour generally. The second aspect is the increasingly transnational element in both types of claims and claimants. It signals a politics of contestation embedded in specific places but transnational in character. One challenge for urban sociology is how to capture such a cross-border dynamic with existing or new categories and, in doing so, how not to lose the city itself as a site.

#### GLOBALIZATION AND INSCRIPTION IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

Although globalization as a process involves multiple economies and work cultures, it is in terms of the corporate economy and the new transnational corporate culture that economic globalization is usually represented in the urban landscape.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the city concentrates diversity. Its spaces are inscribed with the dominant corporate culture but also with a multiplicity of other cultures and identities, notably through immigration (King 1996; Watson and Bridges 1999; Zukin 1991; Dawson 1999). The slippage is evident: the dominant culture can encompass only part of the city. And while corporate power inscribes non-corporate cultures and identities with 'otherness,' thereby devaluing them, they are present everywhere. The immigrant communities and informal economy in cities such as New York and Los Angeles are only two instances.

How can we expand the terrain for this representation so as to incorporate those other conditions? And how can we make a new reading of the locations where corporate power is now installed, a reading that captures the non-corporate presences in those same sites? Once we have recovered the centrality of place and of the multiple work cultures within which economic operations are embedded, we are still left confronting a highly restricted terrain for the inscription of economic globalization. Sennett (1990: 36) observes that 'the space of authority in Western culture has evolved as a space of precision'. And Giddens notes the centrality of 'expertise' in today's society, with the corresponding transfer of authority and trust to expert systems (1991: 88–91). Corporate culture is one representation of precision and expertise. Its space has become one of the main spaces of authority in today's cities. The dense concentrations of tall buildings in major downtowns or in the new 'edge' cities are the site for corporate culture – though as I will argue later they are also the site for other forms of inhabitation, but these have been made invisible. The vertical grid of the corporate tower is

imbued with the same neutrality and rationality attributed to the horizontal grid of American cities. (For a critique see Marcuse 1987.)

Through immigration a proliferation of, in their origin, highly localized cultures now have become presences in many large cities, cities whose élites think of themselves as cosmopolitan, that is, as transcending any locality. Cultures from around the world, each rooted in a particular country or village, now are reterritorialized in a few single places, places such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, and most recently Tokyo.<sup>6</sup>

The space of the immigrant community, of the black ghetto, and increasingly of the old decaying manufacturing district emerges as the space of a compound other, constituted as a devalued, downgraded space in the dominant economic narrative about the post-industrial urban economy (King 1996; Body-Gendrot 1999). Corporate culture collapses differences, some minute, some sharp, among the different socio-cultural contexts into one amorphous otherness, an otherness represented as having no place in the economy, or, supposedly, only marginally attached to the economy. It therewith reproduces the devaluing of those jobs and of those who hold such jobs. By leaving out these articulations, by confining the referent to the centrally placed sectors of the economy, the dominant narrative about the urban economy can present the economy as containing a higher order unity rather than as segmented.

The corporate economy evicts these other economies and its workers from economic representation, and the corporate culture represents them as the other. What is not installed in a corporate centre is devalued or will tend to be devalued. And what occupies the corporate building in non-corporate ways is made invisible. The fact that most of the people working in the corporate city during the day are low paid secretaries, mostly women, many immigrants, is not included in the representation of the corporate economy or corporate culture. And the fact that at night a whole other work force installs itself in these spaces, including the offices of the chief executives, and inscribes the space with a whole different culture (manual labour, often music, lunch breaks at midnight) is an invisible event.

Another dimension along which to explore some of these issues is the question of the body. The body is citified, urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body (Grosz 1992: 241; Sennett 1994). The particular geographical, architectural, municipal arrangements constituting a city are one particular ingredient in the social constitution of the body. For some scholars (such as Grosz 1992), they are by no means the most important one. She argues that the structure and particularity of the family and neighbourhoods is more influential, though the structure of the city is also contained therein. 'The city orients perception insofar as it helps to produce specific conceptions of spatiality.' (Grosz 1992: 250). The city contributes to the organization of family life, of work-life in so far as it contains a distribution in space of the specific locations for each activity; similarly, architectural spatiality can be seen as one particular component in this broader organization of space. I would add to this that the structure, spatiality and concrete

localization of the economy are also influential. In these many ways the city is an active force that 'leaves its traces on the subject's corporeality'.

This citified body is inscribed by the many socio-cultural environments present in the city and it, in turn, inscribes these (Bourgeois 1995; Wright 1997; Sennett 1994). There are two forms in which this weaves itself into the space of the economy. One is that these diverse ways in which the body is inscribed by socio-cultural contexts that exist in the city works as a mechanism for segmenting and, in the end, for overvaluing and devaluing, and it does so in very concrete ways (Anderson 1990; Snow and Anderson 1993; Feagin and Vera 1996; Yuval-Davis 1999).

The other way in which this diversity weaves itself into the space of the economy is that it re-enters the space of the dominant economic sector as merchandise and as marketing. Of interest here is Stuart Hall's observation that contemporary global culture is different from earlier imperial cultures: it is absorptive, a continuously changing terrain that incorporates the new cultural elements whenever it can. In the earlier period, Hall (1991) argues, the culture of the empire, epitomized by Englishness, was exclusionary, seeking always to reproduce its difference. At the same time today's global culture cannot absorb everything, it is always a terrain for contestation, and its edges are certainly always in flux. The process of absorption can never be complete (Appadurai 1996).<sup>7</sup> Today's large cities are a strategic site where these diverse dynamics materialize in concrete patterns.

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#### NOTES

1. There have been many epochs when territories were subject to multiple, or at least more than one, system of rule. In this regard the current condition we see developing with globalization is probably by far the more common one and the period from World War I – when we saw the gradual institutional tightening of the national state's exclusive authority over its territory – the historical exception. However, the categories for analysis, research techniques and data sets in the social sciences have largely been developed in that particular period. Thus we

face the difficult and collective task of developing the theoretical and empirical specifications that allow us to accommodate the fact of multiple relations between territory and institutional encasement, rather than the singular one of national state and sovereign rule.

2. I have theorized this in terms of the network of global cities, where the latter are partly a function of that network. The growth of the financial centres in New York or London is fed by what flows through the world-wide network of financial centres given deregulation of national economies.

The cities at the top of this global hierarchy concentrate the capacities to maximize their capture of the proceeds, so to speak.

3. We can see this in early works such as *The Taxi Dance Hall* and *The Gold Coast and the Shum* and later in for example, Suttles (1968).

4. For instance, only a small share of Fortune 500 firms, which are mostly large industrial firms, have their headquarters in NYC, but over 40% of firms who earn over half of their revenues from overseas are located in NYC. Furthermore, even large industrial firms tend to have certain specialized headquarter functions in NYC. Thus Detroit-based GM, along with many other such firms, has its headquarters for finance and public relations in Manhattan.

5. Globalization is a contradictory space; it is characterized by contestation, internal differentiation, continuous border crossings (Appadurai 1996). Globalization is a process that provides differentiation, only the alignment of differences is of a very different kind from that associated with such differentiating notions as national character, national culture, national society.

6. Tokyo now has several, mostly working-class concentrations of legal and illegal immigrants coming from China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines. This is quite remarkable in view of Japan's legal and cultural closure to immigrants. Is this simply a function of poverty in those countries? By itself it is not enough of an explanation, since they have long had poverty. I posit that the internationalization of the Japanese economy, including specific forms of investment in those countries and Japan's growing cultural influence there have created bridges between those countries and Japan, and have reduced the subjective distance with Japan (See Sassen 1991: 307–15; 1998: ch. 4).

7. One question is whether the argument developed earlier regarding the neutralization of space brought about by the grid, and the system of values it entails or seeks to produce in space, also occurs with cultural globalization. As with the grid, 'global' culture never fully succeeds in this neutralization; yet absorption does alter the 'other' that is absorbed. In the case of culture one can see that the absorption of

multiple cultural elements along with the cultural politics so evident in large cities, have transformed global culture, even though it remains centered in the West, its technologies, its images.

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