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Glurbanization theory: an analysis of global cities

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This article analyzes glurbanization theory. The theory rests on the premise that major urban transformations and reconfigurations through interscalar strategies and rescaling processes are a good method of increasing the capacity and status of cities (and their regions) to develop global competitive advantages. This urban model stems from the fact that cities are increasingly exposed to global competition. An important tenet of glurbanization is that large cities worldwide, called ‘global cities’, come to share the same essential attributes (i.e., cityscapes, skyscrapers, financial markets, cultural centers, etc.). Another important tenet of glurbanization is that it collapses the global and the local: urban spaces are restructured so that globalization does not become just a top-down hierarchical design whereby the nation-state dictates how things work; rather, globalization is made to happen both from ‘below’ and from ‘above’.

Keywords: city; globalization; glurbanization; interscalar; scalar; urbanization

Introduction

This article analyzes glurbanization, a theoretical concept coined by Jessop (1997) based on the premise that major urban transformations and reconfigurations through interscalar strategies and rescaling processes are a good method of increasing the capacity and status of cities (and their regions) to develop global competitive advantages. This urban model stems from the fact that cities are increasingly exposed to global competition. An important tenet of glurbanization is that large cities worldwide, called ‘global cities’, come to share the same essential attributes (i.e., cityscapes, skyscrapers, financial markets, cultural centers, etc.). This occurs as a result of major urban transformations and urban boosterism that take place. Therefore, they are not only undergoing rather similar changes at economic, cultural, and spatial levels; they also create global networks. Another important tenet of glurbanization is that it collapses the global and the local: urban spaces are restructured so that globalization does not become just a top-down hierarchical design whereby the nation-state dictates how things work; rather, globalization is made to happen both from ‘below’ and from ‘above’. Thanks to this interscalarity, many local and regional cooperatives can stimulate competitiveness on a global scale. Conversely, urban centers can still play an essential role as hubs and gateways to influence the role of the region.

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This article begins with a definition of glurbanization theory and its two main tenets. Then, it goes on to explain how one of the main consequences of globalization is that global cities tend to share many attributes with each other. What follows is an explanation of how glurbanization increases competitiveness and collapses the global and the local, and how it does not simply mean ‘globalization’. Rather, it constitutes a phase beyond globalization. Then, this article proceeds to analyze two case studies of glurbanization happening in East Asia: China and Singapore. These two nations were selected in order to show that major interscalar urban transformations do not happen just in the western world. This article ends with a discussion that also offers suggestions for future research.

Glurbanization theory: a definition

Glurbanization is a theoretical concept coined by Jessop (1997). In and of itself, it is a portmanteau of the words ‘global’ and ‘urbanization’. The concept focuses on the relationship between what is global and urbanization (Hall et al. 2008). ‘Global’ is a synonym of ‘worldwide’ and means of, or relating to, or involving the entire world (Friedmann 2001). ‘Urbanization’ refers to the removal of the rural characteristics of an area, a process linked to the development of civilization and technology. From a demographic standpoint, urbanization indicates a redistribution of people from rural to urban settlements (Levy 2008). It emphasizes the importance of the metropolitan region as an essential unit of action in fast globalizing societies (Storper 1997, Scott 2001). More and more cities have become established as key nodes and vital powerhouses of the global economy (Yeoh 1999). Metropolitan regions have become critical grounds that supplant national, regional, provincial, state, and local governments as the centers of economic, spatial, and development decision-making (Katz 2000).

Glurbanization examines how global cities can be transformed from a ‘restructuring’ standpoint. In doing so, it explains the roles that cities (large cities in particular) play in globalization and whether (and how) a city can achieve global city status. By the same token, it explains how globalization affects different cities in different ways and how cities are related to others in a globalizing world (Hall et al. 2008). A first major tenet of glurbanization is that large cities worldwide, called ‘global cities’ (i.e., London, Shanghai, New York), although having each a distinctive history and unique socio-political system, share the same essential attributes, i.e., urban transformations – or, as Yeoh (2005) calls it, ‘urban boosterism’ – cityscapes, skyscrapers, centers of financial markets, and so forth. Global cities are not only undergoing fairly similar changes from economic, cultural, and spatial perspectives; they also form a global network (Sassen 2001).

A second major tenet of glurbanization is that it collapses the global and the local. What this means is that urban spaces are restructured through an interscalar division of global economy, whether through scaling or rescaling. From this point of view, globalization is not simply a top-down hierarchical design whereby the nation-state dictates how things work; rather, globalization happens both from ‘below’ and from ‘above’. Local and urban networks are increasingly becoming intermeshed (Read 2006). This weakens the ability of nation-states to exert wide influence on the outcomes and process of globalization. Thanks to these interscalar strategies, many local economies today can stimulate competitiveness on a global scale. Conversely,
urban centers are still playing a key role as hubs and gateways to influence the role of the region. This urban model emerged from the reality that cities are ever more exposed to global competition; they want to develop their place-based dynamic competitive advantages (Jessop and Sum 2000, Jessop 2003).

**Glurbanization: capturing the main attributes that global cities share with each other**

Mendieta (2007) predicts that, by 2015, there will be about 550 cities each with over one million people. In contrast, in 1950 there were only 86. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, 3.2 billion humans lived in cities. That was more than the total world population in the 1960s. Combined, they embrace half of the world population (Schultz 2007). For this reason, Sassen (2001) has referred to those large cities as ‘global cities’. Global cities share many functions of economic and cultural activity and high population density. In a similar vein, when coining the theoretical concept of ‘glurbanization’, Jessop (1997) was referring to the global city as not just a large city, but as a global ‘city-region’. A global city-region encompasses local, regional, and national domains and strategies to build global competitive advantages. For example, the Tokyo global city-region, with more than 40 million inhabitants, is one of the most powerful strongholds of the global economy (Rutherford 2003). For Jessop, the global city-region possesses the command points that organize and control the numerous global economic spaces and their business activities. For glurbanization scholars, the terms ‘global city’ and ‘global city-region’ are used interchangeably.

Before the terms ‘global city’ and ‘global-city region’ were coined, other scholars brought up similar concepts, such as ‘world city’ (Hall 1966), ‘technopoly’ (Castells 1989), ‘entrepreneurial city’ (Hall and Hubbard 1996), ‘transnational city’ (Smith 1999), and, recently, ‘megaurbanization’ (Mendieta 2007), all of which mirror a growing interest in modern urban studies. According to Paul (2004), the global city now occupies a central analytical position in the literature on globalization and the spatial organization of global capitalism. In fact, attracting global fixed capital investment (corporate headquarters, production facilities, downtown skyscrapers) and circulating capital (transport, tourism, cultural events) through an international identity has become a nearly universal economic strategy. (p. 572)

Part of what glurbanization examines are the main attributes of global cities, what they have in common, and how they follow similar patterns of urban transformations. By ‘global city’, for instance, Sassen refers to the colossal capitalist cities of the globe, such as London, Los Angeles, New York, and Tokyo. She also refers to ‘regional’ global cities which, from a structural standpoint, resemble one another (e.g., Buenos Aires, Chicago, Dallas, Hong Kong, San Francisco, Singapore, Sydney, Vancouver, and so forth). Castells (1996) refers to ‘global cities’ as ‘megacities’. Megacities are enormous concentrations of resources separated from local populations but centrally connected to markets that are integrated globally. Castells (1996) views these megacities as the ‘nodes of the global economy, concentrating the directional, productive, and managerial upper functions all over the planet: the control of the media; the real politics of power; and the symbolic capacity to create and diffuse meanings’ (p. 403).
Thirty years before Castells made this statement, Hall (1966) had already alluded to a ‘world city’, one that shared a cluster of attributes, such as centers of political power and government offices, headquarters of multinational firms, trade, a stock market, banking, and finance. Furthermore, global cities welcome the wealthiest people of nations, centers of art, culture, and museums, and destinations for tourists. In this sense, they have gained the status of global service centers (Derruder et al. 2003), of ‘nodes and hubs’ at the intersection of global circuits of individuals, information, capital, and the merchandise and commodities that traverse them (Melchert Saguas Presas 2004). The global city network, then, is an interlocking network (Derruder et al. 2003).

To this view, Castells (1997) adds a technological component, implying not only the existence of post-Fordist industries but also a force of urban transformation associated with the shift from long-established manufacturing to modern information and service industries. Glurbanization's most pictorial signifier draws on the highly contemporary imagery of business skyscrapers and the skylines created by those skyscrapers. City skyline imagery symbolically encapsulates the key attributes of entrepreneurial strategies and, as Paul (2004, 2005) has called it, the ‘imagineering’ of the world city, which is a political and economic model in which particular agents, classes, and coalitions pursue lofty goals of reaching global status and connectivity. This conceptualization of global cities that possess such attributes – the ones described by all the scholars aforementioned in this section – has an admirable feature: one can measure and compare various world cities according to the presence or absence of those attributes (Earnest 2007). Hall’s, Castell’s, Sassen’s, and others’ perceptions of global cities constitute the very acknowledgement that many of those cities – even if they each possess a unique history and socio-political system – are undergoing rather similar changes (i.e., economic, cultural, spatial). This view lies at the heart of glurbanization.

**Glurbanization: increasing competitiveness and collapsing the global and the local**

It was emphasized in the previous section that, worldwide, large cities share and undergo similar processes and outcomes of globalization. They are axes of innovation because they produce the very forces that both shape and drive globalization. Global cities are arenas for the increasingly complex, intensified worldwide networks of businesses, markets, culture, and even (non)governmental organizations to develop (Hall et al. 2008). This breeds ground for competitiveness between cities. Since cities are the engines of the global economy, competition between them is harder and harder (Kearns and Paddison 2000). For these reasons, Jessop (1997) thought that a model of urban transformation had to be conceived. With the increasing pressure on competitiveness between large cities, the conception and enhancement of urban competitiveness have become a fundamental goal for urban scholars and policy-makers.

Jessop (1998) came up with the model of glurbanization and its ‘global city-regions’ to highlight the joint local, regional, and national domains and strategies that can yield global advantages. It is done by restructuring urban spaces to better international competitiveness (Hodson and Marvin 2007). In just four words, glurbanization focuses on ‘urban spaces of globalization’. How does this occur? Global cities can articulate larger local, regional, national, and global economic
units with one another by embedding themselves in a hierarchy of spatial articulations (Brenner et al. 2003). Jessop (1997) refers to this as the interscalar division of global economy. Scaling refers to ‘the establishment of geographical differences according to a metric of scales – etches a certain order of empowerment and containment into the geographical landscape’ (Smith 2000, p. 726). It is a method of both containment and empowerment.

‘Interscaling’ has multiple intersections. Glurbanization denotes this spatially-bound process of multiple intersections, thanks to which global cities can increase their dynamic competitive advantages, even those that are at the bottom of the hierarchy; that is, that are locally-based. The objective is to capture mobile forms of capital, from bottom to top (and vice versa), and to fix local capital in space (Shen 2004a, So and Shen 2004). Yeoh (1999) calls it a hierarchical articulation of global space. The global city, then, is ‘mega-cephalic’; it has commercial, financial, political, and cultural centers that serve as ‘basing points’ for capital accumulation (Yeoh 1999).

From this vantage point, glurbanization collapses the global and the local into a singular scale-of-measurement (Read 2006). It is a space-shrinking of global dispersal of economic activities. Global city-regions, then, constitute the new leading sectors of the globalized economy, where urban competitiveness is seen in all those spaces that can attract investment (Brenner 1999, Zhu 1999). And this happens across various sectors: industry, corporate headquarters, governments, cultural centers, and business services, e.g., accounting, advertising, consulting, financial, and legal services (Sassen 2002). One of the corollaries of glurbanization is not just a series of socio-spatial transformations within nations worldwide; it is also that many cities have adopted this model which, in and of itself, is an innovative institution that challenges the very meaning of the ‘nation’ (Earnest 2007).

Indeed, the interscalar division of global economy is not simply a top-down hierarchical design whereby the nation-state dictates how things work. Rather, as Guarnizo (2001) argues, it is both globalization from ‘below’ (at the local level) and from ‘above’ (at the systemic level). This weakens the ability of nation-states to have extensive control of both the outcomes and process of globalization. Thanks to this interscalarity, many regional economies today can invigorate competitiveness on a global scale. Conversely, the leading role of urban centers as hubs and gateways can affect the role of the region (George and Kirkpatrick 2007). Global cities are prone to displaying many of the characteristics of what Amin and Graham (1997) call the multiplex city; that is, a city typified by ‘the co-presence of multiple spaces, multiple times and multiple webs of relations, tying local sites, subjects and fragments into globalizing networks of economic, social and cultural change’ (p. 417).

Without a doubt, global competitiveness gives rise to a scalar configuration rearticulated by glurbanization (Shen 2007), but global competitiveness between cities is not just about large urban centers; it is also about the capabilities of local economies (Fry 1995). In the Western world, local governments have emerged as major agents in urban restructuring. In the United States, ‘urban regime’ is a concept used to describe local growth coalitions in its cities (Lauria 1997). Theorists such as Hall and Hubbard (1996) would call this emerging urban model ‘entrepreneurialism’, which erodes the traditional notion of managerialism. The entrepreneurial city adopts the attitude that a city is a product that needs to be marketed. The weight on
marketing promotes the restructuring of cities so that they appeal to global investors. For this reason, entrepreneurial strategies will turn the most beneficial insertion of the city into a changing interscale division of global economy (Jessop 2003).

**Glurbanization as a phase beyond globalization**

An important argument that needs to be made in this article is that the theoretical concept of ‘glurbanization’ does not simply mean ‘globalization’. Rather, it constitutes a phase beyond globalization. To begin, globalization is more general. By and large, it refers to global interconnectedness (Roudometof 2005) or the worldwide diffusion of practices (Lechner 2005). Globalization, in and of itself, does not attempt to exert a homogenizing influence that, in order to improve global competitiveness, forces local zones and regions into adopting its norms, practices, and values (Amin 2002). Globalization can be regarded as a worldwide space of flows that give shape to a network society and that allows an immense diffusion of flows of capital, information, and other types of streams around the world (Melchert Sagus Presas 2004). Lo and Yeung (1998) put forward a similar argument when they assert that globalization increases flows of goods, services, capital, technology, and ideas.

It is a truism that both globalization and glurbanization are long and deep processes. As a theoretical concept, glurbanization does not deny that large cities have been heavily influenced by globalization. Yet, glurbanization recognizes that globalization has more of a tendency of leading to greater global interconnectedness among cities (Lefèvre 2007) than to profound changes in urban reconfigurations of those cities (Hall et al. 2008). A key focus of glurbanization is on one of the major end-states of globalization: since many cities are going global, it is the role of glurbanization theorists to develop a model that helps understand how cities can be made more capable of competing globally. As we have seen, Jessop (1997) has introduced a framework of restructuring urban spaces to capture the transformation of cities driven by the process of globalization (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000). This can be possible thanks to the ‘global city-region’, which collapses local, regional, and national domains and strategies in order to yield higher global advantages (Brenner et al. 2003). From this perspective, glurbanization adds a special connotation to the meaning of globalization because it is much more specific and complex than globalization and constitutes ‘a new form of urban landscape’ (Friedmann 2001, p. 123). Glurbanization theory indicates a qualitatively new phase in urban development (Taylor and Williamson 2006).

In line with these contentions, glurbanization contributes towards theorizing the urban space reorganization as a global constructed course of action. Through urban transformations, glurbanization articulates processes and outcomes of globalization. Global city-regions contribute a lot to the success of glurbanization because they come to the fore; they perform special functions in the new global economy and they are axes of innovation because they produce the engines that shape or drive globalization (Lo and Yeung 1998). Unlike globalization, glurbanization embodies more than the insertion of the global in the national; it is a partial and incipient denationalization. Glurbanization is a groundbreaking institution that challenges the very meaning of the ‘nation’ (Earnest 2007). It is a highly specialized institutional model that becomes denationalized, giving more power and ability to actors at the
local and regional levels (Sassen 2001). A glurbanized city, then, is more than a globalized city. It is an entrepreneurial city, a site where urban policy becomes a matter of facilitation of the ‘growth machine’ and neo-liberalized urban authoritarianism (Andersen and Pløger 2007).

As Geniş (2007) puts it, glurbanization theorizes the link between modern globalization and urbanization processes. It also adds to the understanding of the dynamic interplay between global and local forces in shaping city-regions (Hall et al. 2008). By regulating the relationship between cities and the global economy, glurbanization introduces interscalar strategies; that is, new forms of metropolitan governance and urban autonomy in an effort to rescale state power downwards and de-link local governance from pressures exerted by nation-states and other once-dominating urban politics and institutions (Geniş 2007). Put it another way, glurbanization encapsulates the qualitatively new forms of governance both in the urban and through the urban.

**Glurbanization in East Asia**

The glurbanization process occurs worldwide. Indeed, both East Asian cities, such as those in China, Singapore, and Japan, and Western cities share similarities in the broad process of urban transformations (Wu 2004). The concepts and theories of urban reconfiguration developed in the US context are also relevant to East Asian cities (Zhu 1999, Zhang 2002). Most studies that have been conducted on the urban changes in East Asia have essentially been about globalization in a non-scalar language (Chan and Zhao 2002, Ma 2002, Shen 2004a, 2004b). Therefore, the author deems it important to examine urban changes in East Asia from a glurbanization perspective.

Today, Tokyo is undeniably a massive ‘global city’, with Hong Kong being not far behind (Jessop 1997, Hall and Hubbard 1998). The emergence of entrepreneurial cities in many East Asian regions has taken place since the end of the twentieth century (Jessop and Sum 2000, Wu 2003), a time during which East Asian economies became ever more integrated into regional and global networks and rose to global prominence. East Asian cities have established an entrepreneurial regime and experienced dramatic transformations – both from the top of the urban hierarchy to the bottom, and vice versa – as they felt the need to live up to new, accompanying economic imperatives based on the demands imposed by globalization.

Now, East Asian cities are producing institutions, symbols, and values of high modernity, mega-development, top-notch urbanity, and imaginative urban futures (Yeoh 2005). As Kelly (1997) puts it, ‘the “global” has become an “icon” or a spatial metaphor with considerable political power’ (p. 168). So, as the old millennium closed, urban regeneration programs were developed in foreseeing the dawn of the East Asian age. For about a decade, cityscapes there have been amazingly transformed by the construction of mega-projects, such as long and well-decorated waterfront cities, first-rate convention centers, cultural centers with global urban-national visibility, and world-class office buildings and mixed-use commercial developments (MXDs) (Bunnell et al. 2002). What the next two subsections emphasize is how China and Singapore (one of the Four Asian Tigers) have undergone a specific process of glurbanization: the collapsing of the global and local through interscalar urban strategies.
The concept of glurbanization can be used to illuminate current entrepreneurial strategies by city-regions in China. Urban transformation in modern China has been the focus of previous studies (Shen 2004a, 2004b, 2006, Shen et al. 2006). Yet, it is only recently that the impact of globalization on the restructuring of Chinese cities has been examined more in detail (Batisse et al. 2006, Cook 2006, Hsing 2006, Wei et al. 2006, Wu and Ma 2006). Furthermore, the glurbanization model per se has been examined primarily in the context of US and European capitalist cultures to illustrate the scalar organization of their cities, without paying sufficient attention to the urban transformation in China (Shen 2007).

During Mao Zedong’s regime, from 1949 to 1976, the government’s policies of ‘no contact with the outside world’ industrialized some larger cities, but pushed the rest of the country (i.e., local cooperatives) to the wayside. In the 1980s and 1990s, China began to grant an ‘open door’ policy to boost global trade (Brandt and Rawski 2008). Currently, many places in China are undergoing radical urban structural changes through broad-based interscaling efforts from local zones up the hierarchy (Brandt and Rawski 2008).

One of those local sites is Pudong, a district of Shanghai (Eichengreen et al. 2008). In the past eight years alone, Pudong has witnessed such a profound urban transition through both interscalar and spatial restructuring that the city of Pudong is now called the ‘Pudong New Area’ (Marcotullio and McGranahan 2007). In the 1990s, Pudong was still a poor agricultural area on the eastern margins of Shanghai (Carrillo 2005). Today, the Pudong New Area, just like Shanghai, not only has glittering skyscrapers, five-star hotels, and fashionable leisure spaces that reflect an urban dream-come-true reality (Huan 2006); it also benefits from much superior self-governance and urban autonomy. Until the dawn of the twenty-first century, Pudong was heavily under the control of the city-state of Shanghai. At the present, it can hold its own, so much so that it has already been considered one of the fastest-growing competitive markets of eastern China (and let us keep in mind that eastern China alone represents about 10% of the world population). Now, it is a high-tech park and can meet global competitive demands (Carrillo 2005). How could this happen? Thanks to glurbanization.

What this anecdote illustrates is that the Pudong New Area epitomizes a transnational space created within a gigantic urban center (Shanghai). With such a local–global interconnection, interscalar strategies and urban restructuration have given Pudong a new shape, which allows it to intertwine with global economy and competition. The impact of globalization has been strongly felt in other entrepreneurial glurbanizing cities in China, such as Beijing, especially since China joined the WTO in 2001 and prepared for the Olympic Games in 2008 (Wu and Ma 2006). Shanghai has undergone similar urban reconfigurations as it is gearing towards hosting World Expo 2010 (Hsu 2008). Shanghai’s ‘urban spaces of globalization’ – from the development of the Pudong New Area to World Expo 2010 – express how local institutional structures are restructured to concretize Shanghai’s aspiration of becoming an ever newer global city (Olds 2001).

In a similar fashion, Shenzhen is already considered an ‘international’, ‘world-class’, and ‘global’ city (Cartier 2002). Shenzhen’s urbanization landscape has been
one of the most rapidly ingrained within globalization processes (Friedmann 2006). Its coastal region, the second-largest in China after Shanghai (United Nations 2005), has become a yardstick for successful glurbanization in the entire East Asian region. Shenzhen has not only earned the name of world factory for global commodity production (Wu and Ma 2006); it has also been drastically reorganized from local cooperatives up to the top of the hierarchy. Indeed, with a constant adjustment of Shenzhen’s city boundaries, thereby encompassing regions that were previously considered immaterial or unimportant areas (e.g., Buji, a suburb), Shenzhen’s role and function, as a city-state, have lost power to the benefit of areas located on its margins. Since 2001, the entire Shenzhen city-region has been reconfigured as a consequence of various spatial levels (Shen 2007).

**Glurbanization of Singapore**

Singapore is one of the Four Asian Tigers, also known as the East Asian Tigers or Asia’s Four Little Dragons, which also include Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan (Schultz 2007, Hsu 2008). Singapore is an island nation and one of the surviving city-states in the world and the smallest nation in East Asia (Johnson 2008). Singapore is an exemplary entrepreneurial city. As an entrepreneurial city, it has become known as a driving force able to mobilize an entire island by transforming social, political, and economic resources into a coherent interscalar framework. It has not only achieved ever-increasing development of a solid urban strategy; it has also carried it over to other neighboring nations that have modeled what they nickname the Lion City (Adekola and Sergi 2007).

As a free-trade zone making successful adjustments for optimal performance and effectiveness in the global realm, Singapore has managed to develop a strong export-oriented manufacturing industry that includes electronic products, IT equipment, petrochemical products industries, and various services from telecommunications and logistics to currency trading and similar financial transactions (Schultz 2007). Singapore’s success would not have been possible without the glurbanizing process started in the 1960s. During that time, the city-state put forward a scheme to develop and exploit areas that were previously neglected. Those areas were transformed into ‘New Towns’ that gave shape to a circle around the center of the island. Those New Towns started to have their own governance and transport system and their local businesses developed, grew, and contributed tremendously to the economic powerhouse and global business hub that the city-state of Singapore has become (Kong et al. 1997). For the past four decades, Singapore has attracted high-growth investments, financial markets, and value-added services (Pow 2002).

This case study exemplifies global connections established by the city-state of Singapore after promoting nationalist sensibilities at the local level (the neglected areas on the margins of the city center). It took concrete shape on the urban landscape in the structure of immense urban projects, or what Olds (1995) calls ‘urban mega-projects’. These projects were set up by significant, high-profile, and self-contained developments that proved to be the major catalysts for Singaporean urban regeneration (Beazley et al. 1996).
Discussion and future directions

What this article has demonstrated is that, worldwide, glurbanization has achieved the status of exemplary framework in urban development strategy. This happens not only in the United States and Europe; it also happens, for instance, in East Asia. Both China and Singapore have undergone unprecedented urban spatial transformation and reconfiguration through interscalar strategies and rescaling processes. The urban becomes an innovative site of discussion. Thanks to glurbanization, the distinction between the global and the local has been given a new angle. As glurbanization implies that the global and the local get collapsed, it follows that cities become groundbreaking arenas of globalization in which national, regional, and local processes and forces encounter each other, complement each other, and even merge. This urban transformation, in turn, yields a new approach to global capitalism and global competitiveness (Geniş 2007).

In line with these contentions, glurbanization adds to the understanding that globalization and urban changes in cities, or city-regions, are mutually constitutive (Hall et al. 2008). Urban and global networks are increasingly becoming intermeshed (Read 2006). Jessop and Sum (2000) have already put forward the argument that glurbanization designates strategies that are carried out by cities under conditions of global competition. The formation of the global city is an example of the penetration of global forces into the urban scale. It is a process that takes place not just within the city boundary, but also within areas and levels found at the bottom of the hierarchical scale (Brenner 1999). It is a sheer scale of restructuration that gives more governance and autonomy to regions, local cooperatives, and areas once dominated – entirely or to a great extent – by the nation-state (Wu and Ma 2006).

Consequently, many cities have experienced a transition in the policies of urban government from managerialism to entrepreneurialism. Entrepreneurial cities are now key actors of globalization, not just as hubs in the global economy, but also because the urban transformations in global cities are real and can alter the very meaning of nation-states themselves (Earnest 2007). Cities are not merely epicenters of capital transactions; they are ‘going global’ thanks to what Yeoh (2005) calls an ‘urban regeneration strategy’. Glurbanization theory makes an invaluable contribution to both globalization and urban studies. It offers a solid framework for theorizing the interplay between the dynamics of global economy, emergent global urban hierarchies, and the social, economic, and spatial trends within city-regions (Geniş 2007).

Future research should focus on the sustained urbanization of cities at the global scale. There has been an issue that the overwhelming emphasis placed by globalization scholars on metropolitan or mega cities (e.g., London, New York, and Tokyo) could misdirect our understanding of the impact of glurbanization on other cities (i.e., emergent global cities such Atlanta and Vancouver). As Hall et al. (2008) argue, the economic aspects of city life needs not be excessively emphasized. Therefore, various other consequences of urban restructuration, such as culture, class, and identity, should not be neglected. For instance, in what ways and under what conditions do the processes of glurbanization interplay with existing and emergent class and cultural divisions?

In addition, we have seen that glurbanization in East Asia implies that most of its large cities have become ‘international’ or ‘global’ by following the urban model laid
out in this article. For instance, as a world city, Shenzhen has all the features of a US
city. Likewise, Hong Kong has absorbed influences from Western cities (Teo 1997).
However, it might be interesting to examine cities that have grown tremendously but
that have not followed such an urban model. In the United States, Houston is widely
regarded as the paradigm of a city that has not followed a drastically urbanized plan
or planning culture (Neuman 2007). In other words, what about non-glurbanized
large cities?

Finally, when a city grows global by importing ideas from abroad, does it always
advance the city or can it retard the city? An analysis on planning in one
metropolitan region, for example, demonstrated that the frequent importation of
ideas from abroad over 150 years which were incorporated into a new milieu in a
manner that was not culturally or institutionally responsive had the reverse effect of
retarding or hindering the development of planning tools, processes, and organiza-
tions (Neuman 1996a). It did not have a stimulating effect (Neuman 1996b). From
this vantage point, outcomes of glurbanization span the range from success to failure
(de Jong et al. 2002).

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