Abstract. The main objective of this paper is to develop an integrated conceptual framework in which relationships among globalization, spatial allocation of resources and spatial impacts are constructed. The paper begins with debates on globalization and summarizes persistent problems of the world and new trends of globalization. Then it observes the historical transformation of industrial cities and investigates the factors affecting the spatial allocation of resources which create spatial impacts. The overall framework can be used as a basis to create and define research tasks about globalization and urban spatial development.

1. Introduction

Globalization has become one of the most frequently talked about subjects in academia, the mass media and the public policy arena in recent years. And yet, what it means is not clear. Proponents of globalization argue that it brings positive benefits to people, while critics claim that it damages the well-being of the poor.

Globalization brings about benefits and costs, and there are winners and losers in the globalization process. Globalization hurts societies not able to compete with larger forces originating in the global scene. Societies which lack political cohesion, social justice, knowledge and ethical norms can easily fall prey to global forces. Some countries in Asia and Latin America have proven this thesis. Societies which possess these positive qualities are able to respond to global challenges and capture new opportunities for further social progress. Proponents of globalization are knowledgeable professionals, large businesses, advanced nations and international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Opposition comes from those individuals and entities that suffer monetarily or mentally from the globalization processes. Businesses and organizations under protective policies are likely to oppose globalization.

These observations imply that in order to make reliable observations about the impact of globalization, in general or on a specific aspect of a
society, it is necessary to have a broad conceptual understanding about the nature of globalization and its impacts.

This paper examines the relationship between globalization and urban spatial development. In Sect. 2, I first discuss the arguments for and against globalization. Section 3 presents persistent global problems and new trends that may directly or indirectly affect the spatial allocation of human activities. Section 4 makes an historical observation on urban development, describing the transformation of industrial cities. In Sect. 5, I list factors that may affect the spatial allocation of resources and variables with which spatial impacts can be measured. In Sect. 6, I present an integrated conceptual framework to analyze the relationship between globalization and spatial impacts. This framework can be used to develop research tasks for geographers, planners, regional scientists and policy analysts interested in spatial aspects of human activities.

2. Globalization: Proponents and opponents

The debate on globalization usually surrounds economic globalization. In this line of thinking, it refers to an integration of the world economy, removing trade barriers and allowing freedom of interaction. International organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO are leading proponents of globalization. Multinational corporations also are in favor of global integration of economic affairs, because they gain from freer transactions in international markets.

However, trade liberalization in general hurts employees in traditionally protected sectors. Under economic globalization, new factories are set up abroad, and cheaper imported goods and services threaten domestic producers. Proponents of economic globalization argue that, in the long run, free trade will increase the overall output of the world and that of the poor nations, eventually making all nations and people better off.

Nonetheless, liberalization has negatively affected certain sectors of the population in rich as well as poor nations. This explains why massive and violent protests break out against major international agencies and their meetings. In recent years, we have seen people rallying against the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the World Economic Forum in Washington, D.C., Seattle, Davos, Prague, Cancun and Savannah, Georgia.

2.1. Proponents: The case of the World Bank

The World Bank is one the most influential proponents of globalization. A recent study by the World Bank (Dollar and Collier 2002) makes the following observations on globalization:

- Globalization reduces poverty.
- Globalization generally reduces inequality between nations.
- 3 billion people live in 24 “new globalizing” developing countries. They recorded an average 5% growth rate in the 1990s. Growth reduces poverty.
- Populations living on less than $1 per day have decreased from 1.4 to 1.2 billion since 1980.