‘Globalist’ versus ‘Globalized’ Cities: Redefining Urban Responses to Globalization

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What is a Global City? One answer is that a Global or World Class city is an international business city or globalized world economic centre. In that case cities in Canada, Australia and many other countries will hardly qualify. An alternative would include commitment to and evidence of a broader and deeper global citizenship. Here, cities in countries like Canada have a better claim. Indeed such cities are already undertaking what might be termed a broader ‘globalist’ stance. The central question regarding these essentially contesting globalized vs globalist options is which is most likely to prevail as an urban response to globalization into the twenty-first century.

Some analysts suggest that there is a link between a capacity to play a major economic role globally and qualifying for ‘International’ or ‘World Class’ city status.¹ This seems too narrow a view; it misses much of what is at play in subnational, urban settings in a global age. Cities in countries like Canada and Australia can play inclusive globalist World City roles in several ways – both as models and by taking broader globalist policy stances. The experience of many city-regions supports the possibility of this emerging globalist stance of urban solutions to global problems.² Examples from cities such as Vancouver and its suburban neighbours in Canada offer evidence for such an urban globalist citizenship,³ just as the experience of many so-called ‘world class cities’ presents a much more negative, less inclusive interpretation.⁴ The tally to date suggests that the experience of ‘world cities’ exhibits both globalized and globalist responses to globalization.

This chapter addresses the two conflicting definitions of city responses to globalization through an assessment of municipal international
activities in the metropolitan Vancouver region. Both globalized and globalist city policy stances are evident, but city responses to globalization increasingly demonstrate characteristics of a globalist citizenship broader than that contained in narrower, economic or globalized definitions.

Definitions

Part of the discourse on globalization focuses on the emergence of a New International Cities Era. New notions are emerging which suggest more fundamental shifts in understanding the impacts of, and urban responses to, globalization. These include:

1. The argument that major urban city-regions, having become dominant explanators of national economies (Jacob), are now coming to dominate as ‘the core locations of the global system’; here, as Friedmann has suggested, the network of world cities is continuously ‘under tension’, and the order of world cities can undergo significant changes in less than a decade. There are 5 elements in Friedmann’s world city definition:
   - they serve as economic centres;
   - they provide space for global capital accumulation;
   - they are more than cities – they are urban regions;
   - they constitute a hierarchy of spatial articulations, tied to their economic power;
   - their dominant culture is cosmopolitan.

There are at least four variants of ‘world cities’:

Global Financial Articulations – the ‘command and control’ forms (London, New York, Tokyo);
Multinational Articulations (e.g., Miami, LA, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Singapore);
Important National Articulations – such as Paris, Zurich, Madrid, Mexico City, Sao Paolo, Seoul, Sydney;
Subnational/Regional Articulations – such as Osaka, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago, Boston, Seattle/Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Hong Kong, Milan, Lyon, Barcelona, Munich, the Rhein-Ruhr.

2. The counterpoint that an understanding which limits definitional aspects of world class cities to the economic omits at least half, perhaps two-thirds, of the globe, referred to variously as ‘techno-apartheid for a global underclass’, and the ‘20:80 Society’. 