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THE GLOBAL MIDDLE CLASS AND URBAN MODERNITY: AN INSTITUTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE ON CITY MAKING

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis. This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

Tan Wei Xian, Alvin

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration i

Acknowledgements ii

Table of Contents iii

Abstract iv

List of Tables and Figures v

Chapter 1 Introduction: The global transformation of cities 1

1.1. The Third Urban Revolution 7
1.2. Global city isomorphism: cities of lifestyle and consumption 11
1.3. Theorizing global city isomorphism and urban change 15

Chapter 2 Gentrification, global cities and city making 19

2.1 From gentrification to global city formation: The emergence of political economy perspectives on city making 19
2.2 The sophistication of political economy perspectives 28
2.3 Political economy models and some of their blind spots 33
2.4 An institutionalist perspective on city making 37

Chapter 3 The global middle class as reference point in city making 41

3.1 The significance of the middle class 41
3.2 Key aspects of the global middle class 47
3.3 Lifestyle and consumption as institutionalized semantics 57
3.4 The global middle class as a reflexive construct 60

Chapter 4 Experts, city visions, and rationalization 66

4.1 The global middle class as professional experts 67
4.2 The scientization of city making 70
4.3 From centralized urban planning to global urban governance 81

Chapter 5 Conclusion: Observing city makers and city visions 93

5.1 Observing global cities as sites of circulation of the global middle class 93
5.2 Institutionalism and the city making approach in urban studies 96

References 101

ABSTRACT

This thesis departs from political economic explanations of global city making, proposing that social scientists adopt an institutionalist perspective to make sense of the current phase of global city development, characterized by policy concerns with consumption and lifestyle. Using the concept of city making as a broad label for organized activities that shape cities, I argue that city making has undergone a qualitative shift in the last few decades, driven by two interrelated trends, the proliferation of diverse formal organizations and the rise of the global middle class. While organizational interests are diverse and not necessarily economically driven, they converge on the global middle class as a major reference point. The global middle class enters into city making in two ways, 1) acting as a "constituted actor," framed by marketing, media and market research organizations that observe the rise of the global middle class consumer through their data and reports; 2) as professional experts – including obvious ones such as policymakers, architects, urban planners, scientists, but also less obvious ones, such as journalists, market researchers, business executives, social activists – who occupy professional roles at organizations which contribute to the rationalization of city visions. The result is an emergent global field of organized city making, which is constituted around the rationalization of models of how cities ought to be in an age of global modernity. By focusing on the role of the global middle class as a major reference point for city making, this work aims to expand the notion of city making beyond the traditional focus on economic processes and economic actors in shaping cities.

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.1: World total, urban and rural populations, 1950-2050 (projected) 2

Table 1.2: Megacities, 1970-2011 (pop. in millions) 3

Table 2.1: Three waves of gentrification 31

Table 4.1: The 2008 Global Cities Index 77

Figure 3.1: Global tertiary education enrolment 53

Figure 3.2: Global distribution of tertiary education, 1970-2007 54

Figure 3.3: International tourist arrival by region (in million), 1970-2020 56

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

THE GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION OF CITIES

> Two hundred forty-three million Americans crowd together in the 3 percent of the country that is urban. Thirty-six million people live in an around Tokyo, the most productive metropolitan area in the world. Twelve million people reside in central Mumbai, and Shanghai is almost as large. On a planet with vast amounts of space, we choose cities. Although it has become cheaper to travel long distances, or to telecommute from the Ozarks to Azerbaijan, more and more people are clustering closer and closer together in large metropolitan areas... Despite the technological breakthroughs that have caused the death of distance, it turns out that the world isn't flat; it's paved… The city has triumphed.
>
> (Glaeser 2011:1-2, *Triumph of the City*, *New York Times* bestseller)

"The city has triumphed," declares urban economist Edward Glaeser in his *New York Times* bestseller, celebrating the well-known fact that the contemporary age is an age of cities. Taken at face value, the meaning of this statement is simply that the number of people living in cities is unprecedented. In 1950, 730 million people – or a little under 30% of the world population – was classified as urban, and the developed west accounted for close to 60% of this share. By 2011, the world urban population had increased nearly fivefold to 3.63 billion people, 52% of the world population (UN-DESA 2012; see Table 1.1). But beyond the obvious fact that more people than ever before are living in cities, there are also substantial qualitative, fundamental changes which Glaeser is alluding to. Hall et al. (2008) go so far as to claim that we are witnessing the "Third Urban Revolution[1]." What sets the current

[1] In Hall et. al (2008)'s usage, the first urban revolution refers to the Neolithic revolution, which gave birth to agriculture. The second urban revolution was closely connected with the industrial revolution and the birth of capitalism.

phase of urbanization apart from previous urban revolutions are the scale of change, the emergence of megacities and massive metropolitan areas, its global, post-western, poly-centric nature, and the rescaling of cities vis-à-vis nation-states (Hall et al. 2008:6-8).

Table 1.1: World total, urban and rural populations, 1950-2050 (projected)

	Population (billion)				
Development group	*1950*	*1970*	*2011*	*2030*	*2050*
Total population					
World……………………………………..……	2.53	3.70	6.97	8.32	9.31
More developed regions………………….	0.81	1.01	1.24	1.30	1.31
Less developed regions…………………..	1.72	2.69	5.73	7.03	7.99
Urban population					
World……………………………………..……	0.75	1.35	3.63	4.98	6.25
More developed regions………………….	0.44	0.67	0.96	1.06	1.13
Less developed regions…………………..	0.30	0.68	2.67	3.92	5.12
Rural population					
World……………………………………..……	1.79	2.34	3.34	3.34	3.05
More developed regions………………….	0.37	0.34	0.28	0.23	0.18
Less developed regions…………………..	1.42	2.01	3.07	3.11	2.87

(Source: UN-DESA, 2012:4)

The rapid growth in urban population has not been evenly distributed across the world. Rather, the current state of the world population is characterized by the agglomeration of large populations into vast megacity regions, defined as metropolitan regions with 10 million inhabitants or more. In 1970, there were only two megacity regions in the world, Tokyo and New York. By 1990, there were ten, and by 2011, this number had doubled to 23. From 1970 to 2011, the number of people living in megacities increased nearly tenfold from 39.5 million to 359.4 million. Most of these megacities are located in Asia, and projections indicate a "clear trend of accelerated urban concentration in Asia (UN-DESA 2012:6, also see table 1.2). These trends even point, tentatively, to the formation of mega-

metropolitan regions, such as the one encompassing Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Macau, resulting in spatial formations that challenge our understanding of cities as bounded territorial entities (Castells 2010). While population size is a relatively crude indicator of urbanization, the figures do make the point that unlike the previous wave of urbanization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where most of the urbanization was concentrated in Western Europe and America, the current wave of urbanization – while concentrated in Asia – is post-western and poly-centric. In this sense, the current phase of urbanization is a truly global phenomenon.

Table 1.2: Megacities, 1970-2011 (pop. in millions)

1970		
Rank	*Urban agglomeration*	*Pop.*
1	Tokyo, Japan	23.3
2	New York-Newark, USA	16.2

1990		
Rank	*Urban agglomeration*	*Pop.*
1	Tokyo, Japan	32.5
2	New York-Newark, USA	16.1
3	Mexico City, Mexico	15.3
4	São Paulo, Brazil	14.8
5	Mumbai, India	12.4
6	Osaka-Kobe, Japan	11.0
7	Kolkata, India	10.9
8	LA-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	10.9
9	Seoul, Republic of Korea	10.5
10	Buenos Aires, Argentina	10.5

2011		
Rank	*Urban agglomeration*	*Pop.*
1	Tokyo, Japan	37.2
2	Delhi, India	22.7
3	Mexico City, Mexcio	20.4
4	New York-Newark, USA	20.4
5	Shanghai, China	20.2
6	São Paulo, Brazil	19.9
7	Mumbai, India	19.7
8	Beijing, China	15.6
9	Dhaka, Bangledesh	15.4
10	Kolkata, India	14.4
11	Karachi, Pakistan	13.9
12	Buenos Aires, Argentina	13.5
13	LA-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	13.4
14	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	12.0
15	Manila, Philippines	11.9
16	Moscow, Russian Federation	11.6
17	Osaka-Kobe, Japan	11.5
18	Istanbul, Turkey	11.3
19	Lagos, Nigeria	11.2
20	Cairo, Egypt	11.2
21	Guangzhou, Guangdong, China	10.8
22	Shenzhen, China	10.6
23	Paris, France	10.6

(Source: UN-DESA, 2012:6)

On a deeper level, what makes the current phase of urbanization "global," is the fact that at the core of this new spatial formation is a growing number of what can be called global cities. Ever since Saskia Sassen's (1991, 2001) work on New York, London and Tokyo as production, innovation and market centres of global financial and advanced producer services, the imaginary of the global city has spread beyond academia and become ubiquitous in popular usage, especially within the realms of business and policy. Yet, even before the popularization of the term, almost half a century ago, Peter Hall (1966) had already described a global network of cities within which a few cities were rising to international importance, becoming the centres of political, financial, medical, legal, higher educational, scientific, and mass media organizations. Today, we can see the results of these trends – the formation of global cities which are connected through organizational linkages, communications and transport technologies, in a spatial articulation of a global urban network (Taylor 2004).

Global cities are considered to be global for a few reasons. First, global cities share institutional characteristics that transcend traditional notions of territoriality and national cultures. Second, they are connected with each other through organizational, communication and transportation links. Third, they are also global in the sense of having relevance for other cities, even for those do not particularly aspire towards the top of the urban hierarchy. Global cities are not simply centralized sites for coordinating global capital and production; neither are they simply concentrated centres of work and production. They are also centres of consumption, leisure, and lifestyle pursuits. Many people in such cities share similar consumption activities, or at the least, aspire towards such an urban, modern lifestyle. They not only share a common urban habitat, but perhaps, as importantly, share similar levels of formal education, work, lifestyles, values, and are exposed to globally produced

media content and consumer goods. And thus, global cities are also global in the sense of producing a global lifestyle – and providing the resources for living it – that transcends narrowly defined ethno-nationalistic ways of life.

One observable indicator of the convergence in urban lifestyles is the uplifting of many old city centres and neighbourhoods across the world, where former industrial spaces have been transformed into loft apartments, fashionable boutique hotels, shops, restaurants, pubs, museums, and other similar spaces of consumption (Zukin 1998). This phenomenon, first observed in inner London and given the label "gentrification" by the sociologist Ruth Glass, has now been observed to varying degrees in major global cities around the world, constituting a generalized global phenomenon (Smith 2002). A generalized uplifting of cities on an even more massive, organized scale is the sprouting up in major cities of "grand projects" and "flagships", which includes the construction of new cultural attractions or by hosting major events and festivals (Smith 2007). Many of these projects are based on spectacular architecture, and has today been dubbed the Bilbao effect, named after the Guggenheim museum in the city of Bilbao, Spain. The museum was designed and built for its "wow factor", in order to promote tourism to the city. Closely related to this is the striking parallel, global re-development of former docks, ports and waterfronts, modeled after the success of the "Central Waterfront" model that was formulated in the USA during the 1970s – exemplified by the now famous "Baltimore model", which, in the aftermath of its success, quickly spread to the UK and other western cities (Smith and Ferrari 2012, Jones 2007, Ward 2006). Yet, beyond worn and inaccurate notions of such strategies being limited to western cities, it is clear that such waterfront urban redevelopment have spread to Asia as well, especially in port cities like Dubai, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Shanghai Singapore and Tokyo (Giblett and Samant 2012). The Marina Bay Sands complex in Singapore is a

striking example that encapsulates all these separate observations. It not only combines spectacular architecture with consumption – housing a shopping mall, casino, theatre, and hotel all within the same integrated complex – and waterfront development, but also demonstrates the diffusion of such strategies beyond the west.

Some scholars even go so far to argue that all of this constitutes the emergence of the postmodern city, to be distinguished from modern cities. The implication is that modern cities are cities of industrial production, and postmodern cities are hedonistic cities of pleasure, leisure, entertainment, and consumption (Hannigan 1998, Zukin 1998, Clarke 1997). In a crude sense, "postmodern cities are cities of consumption, rather than of production; cities of the shopping mall rather than of the factory" (Glennie 1998:927). From a spatial perspective, the postmodern city is set apart from the modern city by the clustering of leisure amenities, waterfront regeneration, and a general emergence of mixed-used urban clusters that are "characterized by a mixture of distinctive avant-garde design schemes and heritage buildings" (Gospodini 2006:314). These developments are so similar and homogenized across much of the world that they have drawn criticism from architectural critics and scholars and alike for being inauthentic and "placeless", or more crudely, engendering in users that "could-be-anywhere" sense of space (Smith 2007, Miles 2010).

This dissertation developed out of an attempt to make sense of these urban transformations. Specifically, I deal with the common assertion that contemporary cities are defined and driven by consumption, leisure, and lifestyle. What does this notion really mean? Does it have any conceptual or empirical purchase? And how does this relate to the current phase of urbanization and emergence of global cities, and more broadly, to the specific character of our times? These are the questions I deal with in this work.

1.1. The Third Urban Revolution

It is easy to see the abovementioned changes simply as logical extensions of the tendency for cities to develop consumer cultures. While consumerism and consumer culture is often thought of as a twentieth century development, historically, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, towns and cities of the Eurasian continent were already market centres of a vast merchant network, where goods and services were traded and consumed (Braudel 2000[1979]:479-588, Goody 2008[2004]:126-160). Other scholars have also noted the flourishing of consumer goods, fashion, and the arts – hallmarks of consumer culture – in seventeenth to eighteenth century Europe, as well as in the cities of Ming China and Tokugawa Japan (Clunas 2012, Trentmann 2009, Featherstone 2007). Urban environments have also historically been the contexts of the learning and practice of consumption, through participation in dense interactional communities, utilizing various sorts of urban spaces such as fairs, markets, and so on (Glennie and Thrift 1992). Cities have also been places where new retail formats and new ways to consume were invented. The department store, for example, was invented in the nineteenth century in Europe, US, and Japan. It was a physical embodiment of democratized luxury, since shoppers were able to walk through stores without necessarily buying anything, and these innovations helped institutionalize a nascent consumer culture (Tamari 2006, Laermans 1993, Williams 1982). Thus, the availability of avenues for consumption has, at least since the early modern period, been one of the defining hallmarks of cities, and thus, the expansion of such avenues in cities today does represent a historical continuity with previous forms of urban consumption. Nevertheless, the evidence that I have presented above points at the qualitative newness of some of the features – including that of urban consumption – we now routinely associate with globally modern cities.

For one, much of the social change in the last twenty to thirty years – which has proceeded at staggering speed and magnitude – are spatially centred in cities. In this sense, urbanization and globalization are simply two sides of the same coin, and these two terms merely reflect the growth of cities as spatial embodiments of nodes in the flows of people, capital, goods, and culture. This means going beyond understanding urbanization simply as the growth of absolute and relative urban populations, to seeing urbanization as an intensification of these different types of connectivity, mobility and communication (Taylor 2004). This massive urbanization of the world is significant for a few reasons. First, it creates developmental problems for transnational organizations like the United Nations, governments, NGOs, and so on. Since cities, as physical entities, consume a lot of energy and produce vast amounts of waste, one can imagine that issues of urban sustainability will become more important as cities increase in population, geographical size and build more modern infrastructure.

But beyond all of these valid, practical concerns, the rapid urbanization of the world also has deeper sociological implications. First, the built environment of most modern cities, but especially salient in global cities – skyscrapers, monuments, bus and subway systems capable of transporting millions of passengers a day, and other physical infrastructure – stand as material symbols of modernity and act as a major source of reference for cities around the world. Second, as sites of concentrated connectivity and mobility, cities provide radically new ways and opportunities of being individuals. Georg Simmel (2002[1903]), in his famous essay, *Metropolis and Mental* Life, noted the anonymity, fleeting encounters, and ceaseless stimulation afforded by metropolitan Berlin that gave rise to new possibilities of fashion, interaction and movement. In a similar fashion, drawing on the work of the modernist poet, Charles Baudelaire, cultural critic Walter Benjamin described the

ephemerality of urban experience, encapsulated in the *flâneur* – the wanderer who was most at home navigating through and observing urban life, simultaneously adopting a detached and involved attitude in the process (cited in Featherstone 2007:69-72).

Today, even an activity as mundane as walking around in a city is construed as the individualized and agentic consumption of urban experience (de Certeau 1984). The possibilities for interaction are reinforced by the numerous amenities available to city users, such as restaurants, pubs, cafes, museums, movie theatres, urban parks and so on. Furthermore, as places where modern retailers – ranging from convenience stores to massive shopping malls and mega-marts – are to be found in dense concentration, cities also provide its many inhabitants access to globally produced consumer goods, which are themselves signifiers of a modern and urban lifestyle. With more than half of the world population now living in urban areas, urbanization is bringing more people in touch with the symbols of (urban) modernity than ever before. Yet, they are not passive consumers of modernity, but rather, active participants in the modern condition. Since cities are also sites of institutional, cultural and technological innovation, they are also, by implication, places where the project of modernity is enacted and played out. This happens chiefly via specialized organizations such as corporations, states and NGOs, research centres and universities, as well as looser interactional urban communities based on common values and interests. For these reasons, many of these organizational and individual actors will be involved in re-defining a post-western, poly-centric, global modernity.

Finally, the current phase of urban development is global in the sense of being transnational, even post-national. Nowhere is this more visible in the proliferation of think tanks, global policy networks and similar initiatives dedicated to thinking about cities and urban solutions. Many of these organizations are regional or global, and

the increasing capacity of these specialized organizations which are not necessarily extensions of nation-states increasing problematizes state centred notions of urban planning and governance. Obviously, states, especially developmental states continue to play important roles in managing and shaping the cities which are located within their territorial boundaries (Hill and Kim 2000, Olds and Yeung 2004). Even so, the general trend is towards the increasing significance and importance of cities in their own right, and perhaps even the "the creation of informal city-states within different countries… de facto city-states" (Short 2012:7-8). There are indicators that such claims may not be far off. For one, while comparative academic studies still continue to be operationalized at the level of the nation-state, there are signs that a revival of comparative urban research is underway (Nijman 2007, Ward 2008). This has also been fuelled partly by the growing awareness and critique of methodological nationalism in social science – where the nation-state is taken as the de-facto context and boundary of society for study (Wimmer and Schiller 2002).

While the concerns of these organizations are diverse, they share a common action-oriented focus on identifying urban problems and prescribing urban solutions. Organizations that focus on less developed cities might have to deal with slums, pollution, congestion, hygiene and so on, problems that the first industrial cities in Europe, struggled to deal with. Then there are organizational networks and initiates that aim to provide platforms for urban planners and politicians to share urban best practices in developed cities. Some examples include the attempt to generate reliable and universally agreed criteria for benchmarking cities. Such widespread discussions about how modern cities ought to look like not only circulate at the expert level, but also in popular media. Popular articles are devoted to ranking cities with the coolest nightlife or best cultural experience. Terms such as creative cities or liveable cities, have been popularized by an ever increasing number of semi-expert and popular city

ranking reports. In this sense, what Hall et al. (2008) refer to as the Third Urban Revolution is not simply a case of global urbanization, in numerical terms, of the human population. It also includes a reshaping of how we understand, think about and reflect on cities and their role in society.

As an illustration, it is often claimed that "postmodern cities are cities of consumption, rather than of production; cities of the shopping mall rather than of the factory" (Glennie 1998:927)[2]. Part of this claim has some metaphorical validity, especially in cities that have seen the decline of manufacturing industry and have reinvented themselves as postindustrial cities (Bell 1973, Savitch 1998, Miles 2010). That cities are centres of consumption is obvious, but what is more interesting is that the *meaning of city-ness* is increasingly linked to such consumption. I am speaking of a general emergence of what can be referred to as a "dominant global city imaginary," one in which "cultural concerns now play a significant role in urban development issues… and where cities are now the stages for the presentation of culture, leisure, cosmopolitanism, and postmodernism" (Short 2012:48). On the level of urban economic policy, we find the increasing acceptance of the notion that "cities must become trendy, happening places in order to compete in the twenty-first-century economy" (Malanga 2004).

1.2. Global city isomorphism: cities of lifestyle and consumption

The popularity of Richard Florida's (2002) creative city proposals is an excellent case in point. In his bestselling book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida argues that in a post-industrial world where economic value increasingly stems from

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[2] This statement needs some qualification, since it is partly a result of a productionist bias in sociology and the social sciences more generally, which tends to see the history of modernity as being bound up with the rationalization of industrial capitalist production which reached its pinnacle in Henry Ford's assembly line, while ignoring the concomitant development of marketing, advertising and the mass selling of consumer goods (Petrovic and Hamilton 2011).

work "whose function is to create meaningful new forms" (Florida 2002:68), cities need to attract members of the creative class to remain economically viable and competitive. The core of the creative class, Florida argues, is composed of scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educators, artists, musicians and entertainers, and a broader group of roles that includes "*creative* professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields" (Florida 2002:8, italics in original). Since creative people flock to creative spaces, the argument continues, the logical solution for city governments and coalitions seeking to reinvigorate declining cities and revive urban economies thus lies in making them into edgy and authentic cities (Florida 2002:215-234). Cities which successfully manage to present themselves as centres of creativity will be able to attract members of the creative class to live and work in those cities, thus contributing to the economic growth of those urban centres. In other words, cool cities with all sorts of amenities and lifestyle considerations are talent magnets. While the efficacy of Florida's recommendations has come under scrutiny and critique, what is undeniable is that Florida's recommendations have been considered, adopted and implemented to varying degrees in cities as diverse as Singapore, Toronto, and Auckland (Peck 2005:742). It is tempting to over-attribute the consumerization of city visions in policy and planning discourse to the widespread acceptance of Richard Florida's ideas by urban planners and policy makers (see Peck 2005). Yet, another way is to see Florida's ideas as simply an exemplary case of a more generalized vision of urban regeneration based on leisure, lifestyle and cultural consumption. In other words, "Florida has come along to codify and capture a movement already in progress" (Jacobs 2005).

Indeed, while Florida's urban policy recommendations are aimed at stimulating localized "authentic neighbourhood" reforms and changes, they also exemplify a deeper concern with lifestyle and cultural consumption within global

urban policy thinking. The focus on cultural consumption has been scaled up globally, with city and national governments embarking on projects of cultural imagineering (Yeoh 2005). This includes the construction of spectacular flagship projects designed by world famous architects, waterfront re-development, place promotion and place marketing, investing heavily in the arts, and organizing mega-events, for the purpose of projecting images of global city-ness (Yeoh 2005). Furthermore, such policy measures are not limited to developed countries, or so-called "postindustrial" cities. One indicator of the institutionalization of such policy notions at the level of world society is in the fact that the World Bank has in place lending programmes to cities in developing countries to restore historic cores for the aim of boosting economic growth (World Bank 2011).

In summary, one could argue that this lifestyle vision of the city is one major principle in current urban policy considerations:

> […] the contemporary city is currently defined by a *belief* in consumption, and the current practices and future intentions of urban imagineers, local authorities and private-sector producers (financial speculators, architects, urban planners and other council officials) disseminate a clear message that it is consumption that is set to shape the future of our cities. *Consumption has become so ingrained in both political and institutional visions, planning and policy regimes and our everyday lives that consumption is not simply about goods and services but is central to our vision of the city, the very idea of the city.* (Jayne 2006:3, my italics)

On a deeper level then, the notion that (post)modern cities are cities of consumption makes sense, if this is taken to mean that semantics of modern cities is couched not simply in terms of urban liveability, but also, one that is "firmly linked into the global circuits of culture, taste and aesthetic sensibilities" (Short 2012:49). While the spatial actualization of these visions are not evenly distributed across all cities, the vision of

modern cities as exciting, cool and sophisticated places for consumption and lifestyle possibilities sets expectations for what globally modern cities ought to look like.

While some of these trends I have briefly described can be seen as extensions of long term modernization processes, there are also substantial qualitative differences. The absolute growth of cities in spatial and population terms has been staggering, and with the emergence of mega-cities, many of them in Asia, the result is an unprecedented inclusion of huge numbers of people into modernity over a relatively compressed scale of time. The formation of global cities as centres of formal organizations and informal interactions also represent a new way in which world society is organized and spatially inscribed. Finally, while intellectuals, emperors and kings had various visions of ideal cities and sought to realize them through city projects, the proliferation of increasingly transnational organizations represent radically new scales of organizing that were not achievable in previous epochs. Yet, paradoxically, despite the increasing complexity behind the shaping of cities one might expect from the proliferation of organized actors, there also appears to be an integrative, common point of reference between diverse organizational actors.

What does this all mean? Do all of these changes point to something new and different, and how can scholars make sense of this? Why is the meaning of being a globally modern city so tied up with lifestyle and consumption? These are broad and tentative questions which this work is chiefly concerned with. Obviously, the changes I have described have received a lot of scholarly attention and are more or less treated as unproblematic facts in urban studies. As such, this thesis' contribution is not to provide new empirical data, but rather, to provide a new, theoretically informed interpretation of these observations. Given the voluminous amount of scholarship on urban studies – most of them based on empirical case studies of city neighbourhoods,

or the different strategies that different actors have taken to regenerate cities and so on – one might expect theoretical integration to be a difficult task. After all, urban studies deal with actual cities, which, as unique places, resist generalizations and theoretical abstractions. This tendency can be traced back to the urban ethnographic tradition of the Chicago school, where Robert Park was quoted to have urged his students to "go get the seat of [their] pants dirty in real research" (cited in Brewer 2000:13). These case studies, many of them published in the journal *Urban Studies,* have done much to promote our understanding of urban transformations in individual cities around the world, particularly beyond the west, confirming that we are in an age of global urban change. Against such a presumed uniqueness of cities, it is sociologically fascinating how the processes, visions and strategies of urban regeneration, development, branding, and so on, are quite similar in different regions of the world. This observed similarity, or isomorphism, is what drives this thesis' attempt at re-interpreting the Third Urban Revolution as a revolution in city making.

1.3. Theorizing global city isomorphism and urban change

The concepts of city making and city makers are concepts respectively referring to social action and organized actors that affect and shape cities. More commonly, in existing usage, city making is often used to describe policy strategies that are adopted by governments interested in making their cities global (for example, see Goldman 2011, Segbers 2007). Thus, "global city making" is often discussed in terms of politics and inequality (for example, Lipman 2002). The implication is that the governments and politicians make cities through planning, coordination and governance, although there can be political resistance from activists and other marginalized actors. Others have also referred to the "remaking of inner cities" by the middle class, who physically remake cities through their consumption and

lifestyle (Hamnett 2003, Ley 1996). Landry (2006) refers to city making as an art, and although he claims that city making *should not* simply be left to architects, engineers, planners, surveyors, and so on, it is clear that his proposals of creating more organic cities are still aimed at those who are thought to matter – politicians and planners.

In my usage, however, city making is a much broader category, referring to the ways in which actors – sometimes individual, but mostly organizational – observe and reflect on the meaning of cities. It involves the articulation of city visions and the institutionalization of those visions. Although architecture and urban planning constitute part of it, beyond these direct ways whereby the city is imagined, planned, designed and then actualized, city making involves broader institutional activities, such as research on cities, policy reports about best practices, and so on. Thinking in terms of city making and city makers is an attempt to frame the study of urban change by problematizing issues of agency, actorhood, and the question of who makes cities.

In this sense, city makers have existed as long as cities have been around; there is nothing particularly new about projects that sought to re-imagine cities and re-order city life around them. City projects can be traced all the way back to the Greek *polis*, where philosophers debated what a good and just city might be like. More recently, since Paris –arguably the first modern city – transformed itself from a smelly, polluted collection of slums into the city of wide boulevards and fancy shopping arcades and set itself as the standard for other cities to emulate, intellectuals, architects and planners have sought to imagine what cities could be. Intellectuals have historically been fascinated by the city life that surrounded them, and often celebrated urban modernity, even if they were less approving of the more negative aspects of it. Even Marx and Engels, who were appalled at the conditions of the urban slums of England – which had developed as a result of dispossessed

peasants moving to the cities as proletarians – wrote in *The Communist Manifesto* that the excitement of city life was much preferable to the "idiocy of rural life" (Marx and Engels 2010:392).

Yet, given the scale and speed of urban transformation in the last thirty to forty years or so, there is evidence to suspect that there has been a qualitative change in city making over the same period. Indeed, this is constantly hinted at in the urban studies literature. As I briefly review in Chapter Two, questions of urban change – I examine the gentrification and global city literatures – have by and large been tied to the problem of agency, i.e. who is gentrifying cities, or who is driving global city formation, and so on. The scholarly literature has continually been revised to expand city making and city makers – from middle class individuals to real estate developers, municipal governments and entire states. Scholars are also paying increasing attention to the role of urban policy transfer, global networks and formal organizing. Even so, city making has mostly been approached from either side of the production/economy and consumption/culture dichotomy. Generally speaking, in the latter, urban change is primarily driven by capitalists seeking to commodify the city, or otherwise by neoliberal alliances between state and capital, and the consumers of the city are often the very agents of transnational capital. For that reason, political and financial elites feature prominently in this account. In this understanding, corporations and states are the main city makers. On the other hand, a consumption/culture explanation relies on the postindustrial thesis, with its focus on the emergence of a new class of professionals who subscribe to a liberal ideology and indulgence for urban lifestyles and consumerism. Yet, as I will go into further detail in the next chapter, both of these arguments are rooted in a more generalized economistic and productionist imagery of social change – which I refer to as the

political economy perspective – itself embedded in the broader narrative of the history of modernity (Jepperson and Meyer 2007).

I depart from accounts of city making that focus solely on capitalists and global elites, arguing that city makers are not simply capitalist individuals, firms, states, or neoliberal capital-state alliances, and they need not necessarily operate with economic or political motives only. Their visions cannot be reduced to neoliberal visions of global capitalism. Instead, I propose focusing on the rise of the global middle class as a key frame of reference and vehicle for understanding contemporary city making[3]. In Chapter Three, I elaborate in more specific terms what I mean by the global middle class. In my usage, the global middle class has two roles: first, it acts as an institutionalized demand for certain types of cities; second, a proportion of the global middle class act as experts, studying, observing, classifying, ranking, and proposing generalized urban solutions. In particular, I focus on the lifestyle and consumer role played by the global middle class as a constituted actor, before focusing on their role as profession experts in Chapter Four. I show that the rise of urban experts have greatly contributed to the rationalization of city making, where city visions are articulated in accordance with scientized scripts and universalized principles. I conclude the chapter by showing contemporary city making as a field that is highly rationalized, organized, and globalized. Finally, in Chapter 5, I summarize the central points of my argument, before discussing some implications of my account for city making and urban theory.

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[3] Critical reviewers have pointed out that the extreme focus on the global middle class marginalizes the city making capacity of other groups, such as the global working class and floating migrant workers in many global cities. I am not denying that there many people in global cities who would fall into what the examiner refers to as a global working class – but these people do not become a reference point for city making. This is unless of course their demands are articulated by NGOs and middle class activists – and even then, what is theoretically important in such cases is that cities are being re-made around liberal notions of freedom – a very typically global middle class value.

CHAPTER 2

GENTRIFICATION, GLOBAL CITIES AND CITY MAKING

In this chapter, I provide a review of classic studies of the following phenomena – gentrification, the formation of global cities, the shift towards urban entrepreneurialism and cultural regeneration strategies, in urban policy, and in general, the consumerization of cities. I show that these phenomena are not disparate, and scholarly trends indicate an increasing awareness of city making. Finally, I conclude by discussing some limitations of existing approaches for studying urban change, and propose alternative I refer to as an institutional perspective on city making and urban change.

2.1 From gentrification to global city formation: The emergence of political economy perspectives on city making

Gentrification, as a concept, has lent itself well to generalization beyond the narrow context in which it was originally created. While this very ubiquity of the term in various discourses points towards the similarity of processes in cities around the world, it has also generated some conceptual obscurity. To understand this, it is helpful to return to the origin of the concept. The term "gentrification" was coined in 1964 by the English sociologist, Ruth Glass, to describe the displacement of working class residential areas by middle class residents and the concomitant transformation of the area in various districts of London:

> One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes – upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages – two rooms up and two down – have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period – which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation – a have

> been upgraded once again … Once this process of "gentrification" starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed. (Glass 1987[1964]:138).

Glass's portrayal has become widely accepted as offering the definitive description of "classic gentrification", where "disinvested inner-city neighbourhoods are upgraded by pioneer gentrifiers and the indigenous residents are replaced" (Lees et al. 2010:10). In actual fact, this has to be understood within the context of a trend of suburbanization that took place in the Anglophone world beginning in London in the late nineteenth century, and in the US by the first decades of the twentieth century. What is important is that throughout the Anglophone world, suburbanization became the dominant trend, as populations in the US, UK, Canada and Australia "suburbanized in the post-war decades as compared with southern European and Latin cultures more generally" – and may I add, Asian cities – "where the middle classes clung to the urban core for longer (Butler, 1995:190) [4]. Urban development took two paths of development in the Western world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – in the Anglo-American model, the trend was towards decentralization. On the other hand, in the rest of Europe, the tendency was towards greater centralization (Hall and Twedwr-Jones 2011:27-54). Suburbanization was also greatly fueled in the twentieth century in America by the increasingly affordable automobiles and the government sponsored construction of highways to accommodate the automobile. This gradually reshaped the American urban landscape, leading to urban sprawl (Glaeser 2011:165-197, Gutfreund 2004).

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[4] While the difference in urban development can be attributed to the divergent urban planning traditions that emerged, decentralizing models espoused by individuals like Howard Ebezner in the Anglo-American tradition (see Hall and Twedwr-Jones 2011:28-31) were probably reinforced by anti-urban discourses that were largely Anglophone. In the UK, this was represented by the artists of the Romantic Movement, who articulated a preference for rural living by extolling the beauty and virtues of the countryside. In the US, there is no better representative of the anti-urban movement than Henry David Thoreau, who wrote his book *Walden* based on the experience of living alone in the woods for two years.

Without these earlier trends of decentralization in the Anglo-American context, it is unlikely that Glass and subsequent authors would have chosen to focus on the uplifting of inner city residential areas.

Hence, it is not thus surprising that one of the main and earliest theories of gentrification – famously known as the "rent gap thesis", draws on this historical fact. Smith (1979) argued that as a result of suburbanization in the US, old buildings in many existing inner cities had fallen into disuse, leading to a rent gap between the existing use value of the land and the potential, or, in his own words, a "disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized" (Smith 1979:545). Once the rent gap was big enough for real estate developers to make a profit by exploiting the difference between the exchange value and the potential use value of the real estate, Smith argued, gentrification would ensue. Thus, in this explanation, gentrification was result of the "movement of capital" back into the city. While the explanation made sense in the context of the experience of suburbanization of American cities, and even in cities in the UK the mechanism was more problematic when applied to other cities. Thus, gentrification, if defined as a moving in of middle class residents into inner city areas, never actually played out as strongly in other cities (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones 2011:27-54). Since these cities never experienced decentralization and disinvestment like American or British cities did, the rent gap thesis was clearly not the only explanation for gentrification.

In contrast to the supply and production argument implied by the rent-gap, which emphasized the role of capital, the demand and consumption argument emphasized the role of people and their choices. Its chief proponent, Ley (1980), argued for a role in considering the values and preferences of the gentrifying affluent and liberal middle class in providing the demand for gentrified neighbourhoods. Ley's argument depended on a more general thesis about postindustrial cities and

economic restructuring. Nonetheless, although Smith himself pointed out that Ley's "hypothesis about post-industrial cities [was] broad enough to account for the process internationally" (Smith 1979:540), he rejected the explanation on the grounds that a cultural explanation rooted in terms of individual consumer preference was a contradiction in terms[5].

Despite the theoretical squabbles regarding the mechanisms behind gentrification, researchers never lost the focus on questions of actorhood, i.e. "Who are the gentrifiers, why, and how are they driving the process?". Once the concept had become seen in terms of social action and social actors, rather simply than in physical terms of renovation and uplifting – in other words, in terms of city making – researchers began noticing similar patterns of urban regeneration. These examples were not necessarily in disused urban cores; it was not necessarily about middle class residents moving into inner city areas; it did not have to involve the rehabilitation of old buildings; it was not confined to London, or other English cities, and certainly not limited to western cities. At one end of the extreme was the argument for "rural gentrification" (Clark 2005). Notwithstanding the definitional squabbles, what later scholarship shared was the increasing awareness of "gentrification" simply as the spatial manifestation of social transformation, or in other words, seeing gentrification as spatially inscribed social action:

> If we look back at the attempted definitions of gentrification, it should be clear that we are concerned with a process much broader than merely residential rehabilitation … [A]s the process has continued, it has become increasingly apparent that residential rehabilitation is only one facet … of a more profound economic, social, and spatial restructuring. In reality, residential gentrification is integrally linked to the redevelopment of urban waterfronts for recreational and other functions, the decline of remaining

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[5] Smith (1979) was able to critique Ley's (1980) argument because the latter had appeared in an earlier conference publication.

> inner-city manufacturing facilities, the rise of hotel and convention complexes and central-city office developments, as well as the emergence of modern "trendy" retail and restaurant districts … Gentrification is a visible spatial component of this social transformation. A highly dynamic process, it is not amenable to overly restrictive definitions. (Smith and Williams 1986: 3)

Scholars reconciled the production and consumption theses of gentrification by presenting them as two sides of city making. It became increasingly recognized by the 1980s that gentrification was not simply "the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use, [but also] a movement, that began in the 1960s, of private-market investment capital into downtown districts of major urban centers, [resulting in the] architectural restoration of deteriorating housing and the clustering of new cultural amenities in the urban core" (Zukin 1987:129). In particular, Zukin combined the production and consumption theses by focusing on the Yuppie (young urban professional) figure, not only as indicator of change, but also the very vehicle of change, as it was associated with hedonistic consumption and an enthusiasm for urban living. According to Zukin, the Yuppie lifestyle came into being during the 1980s

> as financial institutions expanded on their existing urban base, they took advantage of proximity to the city's cultural amentities to satisfy the needs to professional, high-income-wage earners, both male and female, for amusement. (Zukin 1998:830)

Furthermore,

> Their [yuppies] salaries and bonuses, moreover, enabled them to pay high prices for consumer goods and consumption spaces – for urban apartments, restaurants and entertainment. (Zukin 1998:830)

Zukin, like Ley, saw gentrification as an expression of qualitatively new patterns in urban consumption beyond issues of residence, and argued that "many new urban consumption spaces relate to *new patterns of leisure, travel and culture* (Zukin

1998:825, my italics). She hinted at the institutionalized nature of such preferences, without really developing this line of thought further. For instance, she suggests that "the near-universality of latte bars suggests that many consumption practices related to urban middle-class lifestyles have become widespread" (Zukin 1998:832). Fuelled by the media media coverage and pop culture phenomena of the Yuppie figure during the later part of the 1980s, gentrification studies underwent a productive period of scholarship, and gentrification itself even became celebrated as the solution for urban problems (Slater 2006). The emphasis on lifestyle, however, in no way suggested that structural factors were unimportant. On the contrary, although the production and consumption arguments had been reconciled to a certain extent, theoretical integration had been achieved on the basis of seeing them as expressing two sides of a similar, underlying economic transformation. By the end of the 1980s, it had become more or less accepted that gentrification had become increasingly "entwined with wider processes of urban and economic restructuring" (Smith 2002:440). Gentrification was reconceptualized as

> the social and spatial manifestation of the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial urban economy based on financial, business and creative services, with associated changes in the nature and location of work, in occupational class structure, earnings and incomes, lifestyles and the structure of the housing market, (Hamnett 2003:2402)

and that

> the basis of an effective explanation has to rest on the demand side as much or more than the supply side of the equation. But, in making this case, an argument is not being made for a naïve version of consumer sovereignty, but for recognition of the *importance of changes in the economic base and class structure of cities in the transition from industrialism to post-industrialism.* (Hamnet 2003:2403, my italics)

Thus, this sort of perspective emphasized the economic restructuring from an industrial to postindustrial base and the occupational transformations associated with such change, and as such, did not venture too far from the basic economic argument that undergirds most explanations about cities. Since cities are primarily shaped by economic forces, and since consumers and consumption now drive economic growth, by proxy, consumption increasingly becomes a major force in shaping postindustrial cities:

> The contemporary city is the product of the post-industrial consumer economy created through a fundamental shift between production and consumption – where the balance of power between the producer and consumer that pervades daily life has changed in favour of the latter. (Jayne 2006:3)

Phrased differently, gentrification became reconceptualized as the spatial inscription of economic restructuring:

> Gentrification was initially understood as the rehabilitation of decaying and low-income housing by middle-class outsiders in central cities. In the late 1970s a broader conceptualization of the process began to emerge, and by the early 1980s new scholarship had developed a far broader meaning of gentrification, linking it with processes of spatial, economic and social structuring. Gentrification emerged as a visible spatial component of this transformation. It was evident in the redevelopment of waterfronts, the rise of hotel and convention complexes in central cities, large-scale luxury office and residential developments, and fashionable, high priced shopping districts. (Sassen 1991:255)

Gentrification literature's emphasis on economic structuring led it to develop an affinity with the global/world city research trajectories, especially in the 1980s. Although there had been some awareness of a global urban system as early Peter Hall's (1966) notion of world cities, it was not until Friedmann and Wolff's (1982) classic piece, "World City Formation", which firmly revived the tradition. Drawing upon world system theory, Friedmann and Wolff attempted to account for hitherto disparate urban phenomena, by describing a process of a "spatial articulation of the

emerging world system of production and markets through a global network of cities" (Friedmann and Wolff 1982:309). In other words, world cities are understood as spatial manifestations of global economic processes. Specifically, world cities are the physical sites from which transnational corporations control and organize global production and markets, by serving "as banking and financial centres, administrative headquarters, centres of ideological control, and so forth" (Friedmann and Wolff 1982:312). Consequently, world cities experience fundamental economic restructuring in the form of growth of a large cluster of professionals who provide services ranging from management and banking to research and higher education (Friedmann and Wolff 1982:320). These are members of the gentrifying class that have been given much focus and attention by the consumption theorists of gentrification. Concomitantly, a cluster of service workers develops in response to the primary professional class, largely to serve their needs, and also a third and perhaps largely indistinguishable class of workers engaged in tourism also emerge (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982:320). Included in the secondary cluster are occupations related to hotel services, restaurants, luxury shopping, entertainment, and so on.

Saskia Sassen's (1991, 2001) global city thesis sought to understand why certain cities emerge as centres in the global economy, despite the development of new technologies that facilitate decentralization of capitalist control and coordination of production and of markets. Her focus on New York, London and Tokyo underscores her emphasis on all these cities as financial centres and homes to major stock exchanges. What makes global cities "global", according to Sassen, is that they are "sites of production… for the production of specialized services needed by complex organizations for running a spatially dispersed network of factories, offices, and service outlets; and the production of financial innovations and the making of markets, both central to the internationalization and expansion of the

financial industry" (Sassen 2001:5). Sassen claims that concentration occurs as firms increasingly rely on other firms located close by for factors of production, such as legal, technical and other specialist services which they are unable to provide themselves. Another reason is that "concentration arises out of the needs and expectations of the people likely to be employed in these new high-skill jobs, who tend to be attracted to the amenities and lifestyles that large urban centers can offer and are likely to live in central areas rather than in suburbs" (Sassen 2001:12). The economic base of production and capital accumulation are understood as the real forces driving cities, which are in turn, manifestations of the more fundamental and important economic forces of production. Consequently,

> the mode of world system integration (form and strength of integration; spatial dominance) will affect in determinate ways the economic, social, spatial and political structure of world cities and the urbanizing processes to which they are subject. (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982:313)

In this way, urban studies began to see gentrification as an expression of global economic restructuring. Gentrification was a byproduct and consequence of the rise of professional and managerial classes that were necessary to the workings of this new economic structure. By explaining gentrification as the spatial manifestation of shifts in the economic structure – a global capitalist economic system, this approach was able to provide plausible theoretical integration and explain why gentrification was occurring in multiple cities across the world. It thus produced a viable – if rudimentary – political economy theoretical model of city making[6].

[6] I do not see the capital/culture (supply/demand) debate within gentrification studies as posing two diametrically opposed models. Instead, both of them can be theoretically integrated within a political economy model of social change, which ultimately assumes the motor of social change as stemming from the economic realm. Thus, when I refer to political economy perspectives on city making, I am using it in an expanded and broader sense.

2.2 The sophistication of political economy perspectives

This rudimentary political economy approach towards understanding city making did not go unproblematized for long. What had originally been understood as a unidirectional relationship between capital and culture had become more obfuscated by the end of the 1980s. More specifically, rather than cities attracting investment because they had devalorized cores, or experiencing gentrification because of the entrance of the middle class, new patterns of urban development emerged where 1) cities had to appear cool to attract investment *in the first place*; 2) cities had to be gentrified and look cool to attract the middle class *in the first place*. I illustrate what I mean with two examples.

With reference to the first point that cities had to appear cool to attract investment in the first place, the critical Marxist geographer, David Harvey (1989) gives us what is probably the most influential view of this perspective. According to Harvey, in the realm of urban policy, there was a general consensual shift from a managerial form of urban planning to an entrepreneurial form of urban governance during the 1970s and 1980s. For Harvey, this is the result of the liberalization of capital and the intensification of inter-urban competition, where cities are increasingly forced to compete to attract capital:

> The urban region can also seek to improve its competitive position with respect to the spatial division of consumption. There is more to this than trying to bring money into an urban region through tourism and retirement attractions… Investments to attract the consumer dollar have paradoxically grown a-pace as a response to generalised recession. They increasingly focus on the quality of life. Gentrification, cultural innovation, and physical upgrading of the urban environment (including the turn to postmodernist styles of architecture and urban design), consumer attractions (sports stadia, convention and shopping centres, marinas, exotic eating places) and entertainment (the organization of urban spectacles on a temporary or permanent basis), have all become much more prominent facets of strategies

> for urban regeneration. *Above all, the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in*. (Harvey 1989:9, my italics)

Harvey notes that there has been a change in the way cities are governed, arguing that there has been a shift from urban planning and a centralized provision of services, usually by states and municipal governments, towards what he calls an entrepreneurial mode of urban governance where an increasingly decentralized coalition of public and corporate actors are focused on making the city more competitive and attractive to capital investment. It is entrepreneurial because of the heightened element of risk taking, speculation and experimentation with city making. Furthermore – and this is crucial – Harvey emphasizes that the building of attractions and promoting consumption *is not simply about attracting investment capital in the form of built spaces in the city*. In other words, this goes beyond a simple "commoditization of culture" argument. Rather, what Harvey has in mind is that in order to attract investment at all, cities have to *appear* like great places to live, play and consume. Cities increasingly became represented as brands. Terms such as city marketing and city branding became fashionable discourses and in fact became "established practices within urban management" (Kavartzi 2007:695, see also Greenberg 2000:230).

This observation still finds resonance more than two decades later, and today, promoting leisure, consumption, and entertainment has become one of the main ways for cities to project images of being world-class and global:

> No longer just epicentres of capital transactions, cities are 'going global' on the basis of integrating economic and cultural activity as an urban regeneration strategy. Place-wars among cities to attract investors have intensified around the production and consumption of culture and the arts, often taking the form of the construction of mega-projects and hallmark

> events, the development of a cultural industries sector and an upsurge of urban image-making and branding activities (Yeoh 2005:945).

Today, common is the claim that cities have to turn to "cultural strategies" to reinvigorate their urban economies. This statement is easily verified by an expansion of discussion on what is now referred to as cultural planning, urban regeneration, urban renewal – in short – an "urban renaissance", centered around the promotion of middle class consumption (Evans 2003, 2001). This is further exemplified by Richard Florida's notion of the creative class and the creative cities. This also connects to my point that cities now had to be gentrified to attract the creative class. Thus, it is significant that the empirical and conceptual basis of Florida's work cannot easily be separated from its policy recommendations (Peck 2005). What is interesting is that Florida himself re-uses an argument reminiscent of Ley's (1980) original argument that middle class professionals – he calls them the creative class – are choosing to live in edgy cities that promise excitement and lifestyle opportunities, hinting that the creative class are in some sort of position to make demands on the cities, and influence city making. While Florida has been widely criticized for promoting a "fast urban policy" (Peck 2005) and thus positively affirming class and contemporary capitalist development on dubious grounds (see also Krätke 2010, Scott 2006 for other critiques of Florida), it is undeniable that the creative city discourse has circulated rapidly and globally within policy circles:

> Notwithstanding the issue of the intrinsic value of Florida's insights, a perhaps more pertinent question concerns why they have struck such a chord amongst urban elites. (Peck 2005:342).

The rapid adoption of cultural and consumption strategies in urban development in cities around the world has gained the attention of urban scholars and sparked off another renaissance in gentrification studies. In contemporary gentrification research, scholars increasingly use the concept of gentrification to refer

the general reshaping of city visions oriented towards lifestyle and consumption on the part of states, municipal governments, corporations, policymakers, developers, architects, and so on. Neil Smith (2002), drawing on the experience of gentrification in the US, calls this the third phase of gentrification, of "gentrification generalized" to the level of global urban strategy. Table 2.1 summarizes the transformation in gentrification.

Table 2.21: Three waves of gentrification

Wave of gentrification	1950s-1960s	1970s-1980s	1990s-current
Spatial Inscription	Mainly residential	Consumer amenities	Integrated landscape complexes of lifestyle
Scale	Inner city areas of London and East Coast US cities	Advanced capitalist cities / global cities	Global process, laterally and vertically, new built gentrification, super-gentrification, rural gentrification
Institutional mechanisms	Sporadic gentrification in devalorized inner-city neighbourhoods	Gentrification intertwined with economic and social restructuring, "anchoring" phase	Gentrification generalized to level of urban policy, and also becoming global process, "gentrification generalized"
Main Actors	Middle class individuals, "gentry"	Professionals (Yuppies), developers	States, governments, corporations, developers, architects, activisits, media

(Adapted from Smith 2002)

Beyond simply referring to changes in the spatial manifestation of gentrification, this table also demonstrates the gradual increment in the scale of gentrification, the associated institutional processes surrounding it, and the changing role of the gentrifiers in each stage. In each stage, gentrification becomes more complex and its manifestations become more abstract and generalized. More importantly, gentrification becomes more formally organized. The literature on gentrification, as Shaw (2008:1704) summarizes, has identified various roles – represented in a stage model – who have acted as gentrifiers, including bohemians,

home renovators, "new middle class", corporate investors and developers, banks and governments. Despite the problem of applying linear stage-models to the study of gentrification in very diverse contexts, what seems to be consistent is the observation that by the 1990s, gentrification had become a policy directive where the gentrifiers were governments working in partnership with corporations. Smith (2002:439) states that there was a shift from Ruth Glass's depiction of gentrifiers as middle class immigrants to neighbourhoods in the 1960s, to the current phase where the gentrifying role has been taken up by organizations – governments, corporations, or partnerships between the two.

Despite the general consensus that scholars have achieved in the field of gentrification studies, some scholars disagree with how best to understand gentrification. Clark (2005), for instance, argues that scholars have confused and conflated the concept with the phenomenon. According to him, Ruth Glass coined the concept, but did not discover the phenomenon, since there were historical antecedents which involved "change[s] in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users" (Clark 2005:258). Conversely, in the same line of argument, Clark states that gentrification has not gone global; rather, the *concept* has gone global, "diffusing as the geographic foci of gentrification research has expanded" (Clark 2005:260). However, such an interpretation is theoretically problematic. First, it is focused on the outcome – suggesting it is gentrification as long as a group with higher socio-economic status replaces a group with lower socio-economic status. This is a rather formal and ahistorical definition, which glosses over observable differences in the scale of formal organization that suggest that there is something dramatically different about classical gentrification and "gentrification as global urban strategy" (Smith 2002). Also, to also say that the concept has gone global, but not the process itself, is also to

ignore much of the expanding research on urban policy transfer, and notions of making global cities through "cultural imagineering" (Yeoh 2005). I suggest that most of this confusion over terminology can be avoided by focusing instead on the notion of city making, which is less loaded than gentrification, and is broad enough to accommodate empirical variation. At the centre of these debate are issues to do with what a city *means*, and an increasing concern with questions of *who defines city visions* and *makes* cities, how they do so, and with what consequences.

2.3 Political economy models and some of their blind spots

We have accumulated substantial empirical descriptions of the complex processes that surround city making – mostly from a political economy angle – are now at an excellent juncture in the scholarship for some theoretical synthesis and the proposition of new directions in research. For one, there is general acceptance and recognition of the rising importance of the preferences of the middle class in driving urban change. Yet, while the institutionalized nature of such preferences are hinted at, but never fully explored nor developed into a viable theory of city making:

> The question as to why some activities continue to cohere in what were industrially based city spaces is one of the most crucial puzzles of the contemporary city. The entertainment machine provides a key piece of the puzzle… Contemporary consumption practice extends to the consumption of space. *The lifestyle concerns of social participants are increasingly important in defining the overall rationale for, and in turn driving, other urban social processes* (Clark et al 2002:499, italics mine).

Explanations that take into account consumer demand tend to be somewhat atomistic and simplistic, assuming that middle class gentrifiers make cities simply through their demand for certain kinds of urban environments. This might have been plausible in the first phase of gentrification (see Table 2.1 on page 31), but this mechanism becomes a bit stretched in the second phase, and implausible in the third phase when gentrification became a feature of the urban policy process.

Political economy perspectives have sought to address this problem with the concept of inter-urban competition. Yet, although Harvey's (1989) discussion of neoliberal urban regimes – makes the point that cities need to present themselves as cities as cool, exciting and liveable cities to attract investment in a competitive world, what is less clear is the question of why this idea – that such cities would attract investment in the first place – has such salience and legitimacy, and has come to be taken-for-granted and naturalized. Indeed, such isomorphism among global cities within such a short span of a few decades seems to be based less on any sort of real economic calculation, but more on the basis of a normative and cognitive template of how global cities ought to look:

> [A] gentrification "*blue-print*" is being mass-produced, mass-marketed, and mass-consumed around the world. As the urban-rural dichotomy has broken down… as a significant part of the world has become increasingly urbanized and desirous of an urban(e) lifestyle, the result seems to be that even some Third World cities and First World suburban and rural areas are experiencing gentrification. (Davidson and Lees 2005:1167, my italics)

Not only are cities worldwide experiencing uplifting, they are also experiencing it in very expected and convergent ways, almost according to a generalized blue-print. Such outcomes point to the creation and diffusion of shared and universalized cultural models of urban development. Indeed, it is hard to see how consumption strategies in urban development would have been so quickly adopted all over the way simply on the basis of rational economic calculation by state and corporate actors. Peck (2005), for example, dismisses Florida's proposals as "snake oil", insinuating that there is perhaps little or no efficacy behind Florida's recommendations of promoting creativity to stimulate urban growth. While Peck sees this as a problem, *I see this precisely as evidence for the deep institutionalization of global city visions*. In other words, globally modern cities are being defined in reference

to the concerns of individual consumption and lifestyle, but this is not a simple case of individual middle class individuals demanding certain kinds of urban environments. How can this conundrum be theoretically resolved?

First of all, even without taking any meta-theoretical positions, given the ubiquity of the consumerist vision of cities in policy and popular discourse, we might expect the notion of consumption, leisure and lifestyle, to also play a huge part in answering these questions. Yet, since production takes central place in political economy explanations of urban change – which also happens to dominate urban theory – consumption is treated as a residual category that is implied by, or logically following from transformations in economic production and work. For example, the world city perspective argues that secondary (including restaurants, luxury shopping, entertainment, etc.) and tertiary industry centred on international tourism arise to *service the needs* of transnational elites (Friedmann and Wolff 1982). Furthermore, as I noted earlier, scholars advocating consumption driven explanations of gentrification resort to defending the perspective on the basis that it is rooted in the transformation of class structure in the context of a shift from industrialism to post-industrialism (Hamnett 2003). Even Richard Florida (2002)'s emphasis on the promoting of spaces for consumption, leisure and lifestyle in modern cities, belie his more traditional concerns with economic production and work productivity – authentic spaces, for instance, are places that supply inspiration (resource of production) to creative workers.

In summary, it is probably safe to say that the study of urban change in the last thirty years or so have been mostly approached from a political economy perspective. Here, research is usually focused around explaining change as a function of transformations in the economy, defined in terms of a more fundamental reality of work and production. For instance, numerous commentators have focused on the

transformation from an industrial society focused on making things to a postindustrial society that produces services, ideas and symbols. Others yet note the shift from a Fordist model of mass production to a post-Fordist model of flexible accumulation. If consumption plays a more central explanatory role in theoretical accounts, it is usually explained with reference to the rise of the professional middle classes, the growth of which is again explained with reference to economic restructuring and the growth of the financial and advanced producer services[7]. In the case of city making case, we find similar imagery of discussions of an endless list of words being appended to "economy" – I have in mind concepts ranging from postindustrial economy (Ley 1980), to symbolic economy (Zukin 1998), cultural economy (Scott 1997). Some authors simply call this the new economy (Hutton 2004, Scott 2006). With the exception of qualitative, ethnographic case studies, most do not focus much on lifeworld consumption, either treating it as naturally following from economic new modes of (economic) production (postindustrial economy leads to professionals with higher disposable salary to engage in consumption), treating consumption itself as a means of production (creative production), or including it as a kind of production (in the sense of economic accounting of service and entertainment industries). There is some pioneering research into the role of global

[7] Much of contemporary urban studies has theoretical roots in the "new urban sociology", which arose as a result of influence from the New Left, neo-Maxist political economy approaches in the wake of failure of approaches such as urban ecology to sufficiently address urban phenomena of the late 1960s and 1970s. The strength of political economy lies in its overarching framework, and its ability to provide a global perspective. Political economy explains gentrification, global city formation and cultural strategies within the framework of economic and technological transformation. This economic change – depending on the author – varies from the shift from an industrial to postindustrial economy, the shift from Fordism to post-Fordist flexible production, de-regulation of labour and capital markets, to the rise of finance and associated producer services. Some accounts utilize a centre-periphery model, notably in the global cities literature, which itself has roots in the Wallerstein's world-system theory. On a smaller scale, this centre periphery model is also applied to understanding gentrification. Thus, focus is on change from producing machines to producing services, knowledge, symbols, and so on (Gottdiener and Hutchinson 2011:1-22, 75-98).

policy networks and urban policy transfer[8], but what is less certain is if there is any theoretical connection between this and the consumerization of city visions.

2.4 An institutionalist perspective on city making

Thus, the political economy models of city making I explored in the previous section mainly focus on the objective, economic conditions of city building and takes for granted that actors are "real" actors, mainly states or corporations engaging in rational calculation and economic action. For example, real estate developers seek out profitable investments; states and municipal governments seek to reinvigorate urban economies. Even when there is a consideration of consumer demand, the economic implication is clear: middle class individuals are seen as calculating consumers.

Thus, while political economy perspectives have been instrumental in directing our attention to organizational actors and the larger global economic context, it does run into several limitations. One, it has little to say about the broader institutional processes of city making which I am interested in. First of all, political economy has little to say about the role of norms and cultural scripts in city making. It treats city makers as rational actors, and in doing so, artificially bracket the role of norms, scripts, and cultural knowledge which inform their social action. As I alluded to in the first chapter, a more holistic an understanding of city making needs to go

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[8] There are numerous strands of emerging innovative poststructuralist research – notably from within geography but also more general urban studies – which are moving away from purely political economic modes of explanation. These studies are increasingly turned towards notions of "mobile urbanism," "urban assemblages," "urban policy mobilities," "urban policy tourism," "travelling cities," "learning cities," and so on (McCann 2011, McCann and Ward 2011a, González 2011, McFarlane 2011). Drawing on the notion of networks, relationality, mobility, travel, process and flux – these concepts and research see cities as institutional process rather than stable spatial entities. All of them highlight the role of knowledge, mobile agents of knowledge, and the networks within which such knowledge travel, as important factors in contributing to urban change, rather than simply seeing urban change as the result of the dynamics of economic production and work.

beyond seeing it purely shaped by the coercive economic and political power of corporations and states. These may be very powerful organizational actors, but even then, they do not act purely in instrumental-rational ways, and certainly not in an institutional vacuum. For example, Harvey's discussion of entrepreneurialism in urban strategy alluded to urban coalitions who have very diverse interests:

> the real power to reorganise urban life so often lies elsewhere or at least within a broader coalition of forces within which urban government and administration have only a facilitative and coordinating role to play. The power to organise space derives from a whole complex of forces mobilised by diverse social agents (Harvey, 1989:6).

Given diverse city makers with diverse interests, as well as cities with very different histories and geographies, one pertinent question is why is it the case that global city visions centred around consumption and lifestyle have spread so quickly over the world? Even if we do assume – as Harvey does – that it is ultimately economic and class-driven, there is still space for broader institutional considerations. Let me illustrate what I mean through a hypothetical example. Neoliberal alliances may result in the construction of a new entertainment and consumption complex, but there is always a target population the investment is aimed at. In business circles, the target population is often referred to as a unitary "market". This market "wants" certain experiences, and "demands" certain kinds of goods, services, and experiences. Since this "market" indirectly affects how real estate developers evaluate investment options, or how municipal governments or states adopt certain policies to attract such investment, "the market" is in a broad sense, "acting" on cities *through organizations* as a reference point for city making. As such, my focus is very different from traditional approaches to city making. Instead of focusing on direct economic and political power, where the city makers are powerful corporations and states, I am interested in more mimetic and normative forms of power that produces the sense-making

frameworks within which city makers operate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). What sorts of considerations and what points of references do these organizations have? What kind of cognitive scripts do city makers – including political and economic actors – rely on?

What do I mean by institutions? I am not simply referring to organizations such as states or corporations – although these are examples of institutions. Institutions, broadly speaking, are social rules, "comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life" (Scott 2008:48). While institutionalist thinking may not be familiar in urban studies, it has a long tradition in sociological discourse. For instance, Emile Durkheim famously defined sociology as the "science of institutions", where the aspiration was to build a general theory of how institutions emerge and function (Durkheim 2004[1895]). This thesis draws on sociological neo-institutionalism (hereafter, simply "institutionalism") of the Stanford school and the related world society theory, which synthesize Durkheimian and Weberian perspectives on institutional analysis (Drori and Krücken 2010, Meyer 2010, Jepperson 2002, Meyer et al. 1987). One central task of analysis is to understand how institutionalization takes place (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Institutionalization can be described as sets of process by which certain "social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rulelike status in social thought and action" (Meyer and Rowan 1977:341).

I argue that the global middle class is one of the major vehicles and reference points for contemporary city making, and that the contemporary urban condition needs to be understood in light of the emergence of this class. Of course, I am in no way suggesting that cities are only shaped by the global middle class. Obviously, cities are shaped by different forces, but of all these, the global middle class can be said to

be relatively new, and thus, under-theorized. The first step towards such an understanding involves understanding the rise of the global middle class in its consumer/lifestyle and expert roles, which has two implications. First, there is the emergence of experts who fill organizational roles necessary for dramatically enhanced capacities for formal organizing and rationalized modes of city making according to universalized models of urban development. Second, there is the reflexive understanding of the consumer and lifestyle role played by the global middle class, mediated by organizations such as marketing companies and media organizations, which are themselves occupationally staffed by experts and other cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu 1984). In this sense, although there has been a proliferation of organizations with diverse interests, the global middle class remains an important and major reference point, and thus provides some coherence to the logic of city making. City makers are led by diverse goals and interests, only some of which might be economic. In the process of city making they increasingly orient themselves toward the institution of the global middle class.

To summarize the discussion so far, the goal of this thesis is to connect contemporary debates within the interdisciplinary field of urban studies – hitherto largely dominated by political economy – to a rich intellectual tradition of sociological institutionalist thought. In addition, this thesis also hopes to point the way towards an institutionalist perspective on urban studies. While these are modest aims, this work will have succeeded if it is able to encourage further research about how institutions beyond the economy affect city making, what sorts of visions city makers carry, how these visions are communicated and institutionalized, and how these visions are inscribed onto the urban landscape.

CHAPTER 3

THE GLOBAL MIDDLE CLASS AS REFERENCE POINT IN CITY MAKING

In the second chapter, I introduced the notion of a global middle class, which I claimed was crucial to understanding why global city visions today are increasingly organized around consumption, lifestyle and leisure. Specifically, I argue that the global middle class is a major reference point for city making, in at least two roles; the lifestyle/consumer role and the professional expert role. I briefly discuss the significance of the middle class, showing the long tradition of these two roles of the middle class in sociological usage. Next, drawing on secondary data, I show that there are hints pointing to a markedly accelerated global spread of institutional processes that generate middle class identity within the last two to three decades. In this chapter, I aim to elaborate what I mean by the global middle class, what is so "global" about this middle class, and how it differs significantly from previous middle classes. Even though the notion of the global middle class is not theoretically precise and rigorous, the term has distinct meanings established in sociological usage, two of which I would like to review and draw upon for my argument.

3.1 The significance of the middle class

The concept of the middle class in the social sciences is an old one and has roots in classical sociology. Although it is one of the most central sociological concepts, there is no consensus on its meaning and the concept is often operationalized in various ways in empirical research. Furthermore, the concept is relatively entrenched in public discourse, and thus has absorbed many meanings that affect the use of the term in academic discourse. As a rough indicator, a search on

Google with the terms "middle class" yielded about 361 million results, and the term "society" only returned 280 million results[9]. To make matters worse, within sociology, the concept of the middle class seems to be a constantly shifting one. The definition of middle class is continually subject to re-interpretation, with each generation of social scientists proclaiming a revolutionary "new" middle class. Featherstone (2007:43) reminds us that a lot of effort in sociology has been concerned with explaining the role of the "new" middle class, with varying labels attributed to them. As a case in point, Archer and Blau (1993), in a review of historical studies of the middle class in America, argue that the middle class in America, even when operationalized occupationally, has undergone quite a bit of evolution. They point out that the composition of the middle class has changed according to historical era:

> Studies of the early to mid-nineteenth century describe the importance of artisans in this period in which manual and nonmanual differences in work and social status were sorting themselves out. In the early industrial period, attention centers on small capitalists. For the latter decades of the nineteenth century, with the emphasis on industrialization and large firms, it is white-collar employees who are defined as comprising the middle class (Archer and Blau, 1993:20-21).

To be sure, this is expected, since the birth of the concept of the middle class represents an intellectual effort to cope with and make sense of the outcomes of major upheavals in social structure that sociologists today routinely refer to simply as modernity:

> However, the term [middle class] was, from the beginning, also associated with a value judgment: the middle class as intermediary social stratum of secondary importance situated between the main classes: the rich and powerful and the poor and powerless. In this interpretation, the term highlighted the element of socio-cultural changes that evolved as a core feature of the transition from feudal societal structures with their large

[9] As of 30 September 2011.

> number of social classes, towards the modern - industrialized and capitalist - societies, including increasingly sharp polarizations between the working class poor and the wealthy company owners (Lange and Meiers, 2009:6).

As the above quote demonstrates, one of the most common interpretation of the middle class is simply to think of it as an "intermediate strata in advanced *industrial* societies" (Burris 1986:317, my italics), which is theoretically problematic for two reasons. First, this a more specific case of a generalized economism that is embedded in the broader development story of modernity, which tends to tell the development of modern society from the perspective of transformations in technological and productive forces (Jepperson and Meyer 2007). Furthermore, to describe the middle class as "intermediary social stratum" or "intermediate strata" does not tell us much about the content nor significance of the middle class.

There are a few ways of defining the classes – and by extension, the middle class – class, either in technical or relational terms (vis-à-vis other classes). Empirically oriented sociologists who are more interested in measuring the extent of the middle class usually operationalize class in terms of amorphous groupings of income categories, and sometimes variables like educational achievement, type of housing, and so on, are added to provide a more nuanced picture. Nonetheless, the focus is usually on income, since income is a good proxy for consumption, lifestyle, and values, which is what researchers are interested in measuring, at least when they speak of the middle class. And thus, when *The Economist* (2009) writes about the burgeoning middle class in Asia, what the magazine is clearly interested in is the transformation in consumption habits, lifestyles and values of people as more individuals become middle class. As a further illustration, some scholars describe the

new middle class with the label of "new rich" (Lange and Meier 2009:4-5)[10]. While the term is partly pejorative – connoting that the newly rich lack cultural knowledge suitable for their newly acquired wealth, what is obviously the focus for commentators is the middle class' penchant for consumption (Lange and Meier 2009:4-5). For the most part, income groupings can be arbitrary and not based on specific consumption thresholds. As such, much of this work, while useful and relevant for policy researchers interested in measuring inequality, is not theoretically interesting for understanding the deeper significance of the middle class. There are of course exceptions, but these are only interesting insofar as there are theoretical justifications made for specifying certain income thresholds. I discuss some of these approaches later on.

Marxist scholars, on the other hand, are less interested in formalistic definitions of class, defining class within the relations of production. In traditional Marxist theory, the working class and the capitalists (bourgeois) practically define each other. Ironically, this actually creates a problem for Marxist scholars. Conventional Marxian class analysis treats the middle class as a residual category because it is unable to deal with them satisfactorily within its schema of the relations of production, as strictly speaking, the middle class cannot achieve class consciousness, as its members do not share objective, economic bases for class solidarity, and in fact, are external to the bourgeoisie-proletariat relations of production envisaged by Marx (Burris 1986:322). Thus, although Marx is aware of a middle class, he sees it as largely a residual class which he predicts will vanish with increasing class polarization. To some extent, this was empirically true, since Marx's

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[10] The term is also used to refer to the super-rich, but is also sometimes used in a more general way to describe the mass expansion of wealth and consumption.

notion of the middle class was largely restricted to what he called the petty bourgeois, small capitalists and independent artisans.

There is also the popular notion of a middle class as comprising of "white-collar" workers. This emerged in the German academic environment in the 1890s as a solution to traditional Marxism's failure to deal with the expansion of offices and bureaucracies, which later became a core theme of Weber's pioneering studies on bureaucracy. For example, the German sociologist Emil Lederer observed the emergence of the white-collar salaried employee in the early twentieth century as a "new" middle class – to be distinguished from the petty bourgeois that Marx had observed (cited in Bell 1973:69). The founder of German academic socialism, Gustav Schmoller, even went so far as to argue that the "new middle class" of his time – referring to salaried employees including civil servants, technical employees, supervisors, and so on – would, rather than the proletariat, "embody the general interests of society" (cited in Burris 1986:326), thus in effect, turning Marx's view of class and social change on its head. Today, the debates surrounding the new middle classes continue, demonstrating the continued significance and relevance of the new middle classes a century later (Featherstone 2007:).

My task here is to reinterpret the middle class from an institutionalist perspective, and in so doing, expand our understanding of the significance of the middle class. Specifically, I adopt the meaning of the new middle class in its lifestyle/consumption and expert/"white-collar" roles. The first refers to the idea of a generalized middle class *lifestyle*, typically associated with being cultured and educated, having a decent standard of living, having access to certain goods and services, having certain leisure preferences, and perhaps most importantly, being

connected to liberal values of individualism, free will and choice[11]. This sort of identity emerges in modernity, as it is not an ascribed, but rather, achieved identity. While the formation of the middle class consumer role is typically attributed to education and the passing on of cultural knowledge that distinguished status groups from one another, a major part of the development of the middle class cannot be divorced from that of the history of consumption.

As many scholars have noticed, middle class consumers provide the institutionalized demand for a generalized, global urban modernity. However, in my analysis, consumers are not treated as unitary, atomistic individuals. Rather, my key argument is that the global middle class should be seen as a kind of "constructed actor." The global middle class "acts" indirectly as institutionalized demand, as they are often indirectly observed by experts and operationalized through notions like "the market", or some notion of general "social trends", which in turn influence and affect city makers, such as policy makers or corporations. The values and lifestyle practices of the global middle class are observable through popular media discourse, which not only carries evidence of its institutionalization, but also acts as a vehicle for the diffusion of values associated with the global middle class. My second usage of the middle class refers to its *professional, expert and technical* roles. The emergence of the professions is a key part of the historical process Weber referred to as rationalization, which is the impersonalization of authority, knowledge, and the ordering of different spheres of social life according to increasingly formal, abstract and universal principles. Empirical data suggests both a quantitative expansion of

[11] I am aware that the notion of the *new middle class* has been a key concept in political sociology, which emphasizes the middle class' elective affinity with democratic values, expressed in the statement that "[f]ew topics in political sociology have received as much attention as the nature and politics of the new middle class" Burris (1986:317). While this political meaning of the new middle class forms one part of the semantic history of the concept, I will not be concerned with this aspect in my discussion.

professionals, as well as increasing institutionalization of their legitimacy and authority. While professionalization creates professions, professionals also become the key carriers of rationalization, as they develop, formalize and submit greater parts of society to general and universal principles. I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

These two meanings of the new middle class should be retained, but the concept itself should be updated. For that reason, I propose the concept of a global middle class. This difference is not simply terminological – in fact, I argue that the global middle class is qualitatively different from previous middle classes. The rest of this thesis will discuss how the global middle class affects city making through these lifestyle and expert roles. Obviously, it is beyond the scope of this work to offer a general theory of the global middle class. What this chapter aims to achieve is to set up the context for an exploration of the relationship between the global middle class and modern cities. In the next section, I explore the global middle class as an empirical category, before elaborating on its analytically separate lifestyle and expert roles in Chapter 3.3 and Chapter 4.1.

3.2 Key aspects of the global middle class

The global middle class is global for a few reasons. Spatially, members of the group are no longer limited to residents and citizens of Western, developed countries. Furthermore, this group is highly mobile, whether as tourists, students, professionals, and so on. As mobile consumers, they contribute to an institutionalized demand for increasingly similar types of urban environments. The lifestyle preferences and values of this group are institutionalized at the level of world society, rather than at the level of national societies. These post-national aspects of the global middle class thus problematize the unity of nationally bound conceptions of middle classes. It is highly

illustrative that in the American context, the model of the American suburban middle class has become one type of middle class lifestyle alongside a more global version of the middle class lifestyle with a preference for city centre living. This has been empirically confirmed in studies focusing on the renaissance of cities in the American context. American cities began to experience a renaissance in the 1980s, as suburbanization began to slow and reverse. Glaeser and Gottlieb's (2006) discussion of the phenomenon of reverse commuting, coupled with evidence on real estate prices, urban real wages, and survey data indicate that "people began actively to choose to live in cities in the 1980s and 1990s rather than just work there" (Glaeser and Gottlieb 2006:1284). People were paying rent premiums to live in densely populated cities while commuting to work in the suburbs (Glaeser and Gottlieb 2006:1283-1284).

While the notion of the transnational capitalist class – made up of owners of global corporations, global politicians and bureaucrats, globalizing professionals and consumerist elites (Sklair 2000, Robinson and Harris 2000) – may seem close in meaning to the concept employed here, there are key differences. First, the concept of the transnational capitalist class emphasizes the latter's role in facilitating capitalist globalization. The global middle class, however, is much more heterogenous, and its members work in diverse organizations, from business enterprises to government agencies, and non-profits. For that reason, I do not see the global middle class as homogenously supporting and promoting "capitalist" interests. Furthermore, although the transnational capitalist class approach also emphasizes the similarity of the lifestyles and consumption habits of its members, I adopt a less "elitist" and more inclusive version of this perspective. Specifically, while the latter approach notes the emergence of "exclusive clubs and restaurants, ultra-expensive resorts in all continents, private as opposed to mass forms of travel and entertainment," (Sklair

2000:71), I emphasize the democratization of access to higher education, institutional resources for lifestyle design and consumption, and even of tourism as key processes generating global middle class identity. Thus, the notion of the global middle class points to the congruence of a few aspects; purchasing power, education, mobility, liberal values, and so on. Finally, the transnational capitalist class is only used in a realist sense, of being a "real" actor, whereas my usage of the global middle class has a reflexive meaning as a constituted and indirect actor.

In this regard, while the most common way of measuring the extent of the global middle class is to use measures of purchasing power, this is at best a crude indicator that sets some initial parameters for specifying the extent of the global middle class, which is itself only be a proxy for its institutional power. Many efforts have been made to standardize measurements of the middle class, but these can be divided broadly into absolute and relative measures. Since I am interested in a truly global middle class, it makes sense to focus on absolute measures of consumption levels. Thus, if the global middle class is defined as households with daily expenditures falling in between between US$10 to US$100 per person, adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP), then there are 1.8 billion people who currently fall into the GMC, which translates to about 28% of the world population (Kharas 2010). Income indicators provide a fairly similar picture. According to Goldman Sachs' economic research, whose analysis uses an income range falling in between $6000 and $30,000 per capita per year in PPP terms, there were a relatively stable number of people – about 1 billion – who fell into this category during mid-1970s to 1990. However, this figure has exploded to 1.8 billion, with China accounting for about half of this massive growth (Wilson and Dragusanu 2008). These ranges are not arbitrary. Rather, there is evidence to show that expenditure for "consumer durables as well as for services like insurance" increase disproportionately relative to the increase in

income from around US$6000 per capita, before tapering after reaching US$25,000 (Nomura cited in Kharas 2010:11)[12]. Furthermore, these trends have been projected to continue. Current projections indicate the global middle class to nearly triple to 4.9 billion people by 2030, with 85% of this growth centred on Asia alone (Kharas 2010:27). Of course, my notion of the truly *global* middle class is much narrower. Even so, these initial observations will no doubt fuel a continued intense observation of the global middle class by banks, insurance companies, academic organizations, consulting companies, marketing and advertising companies, and so on.

Numbers alone do not provide the entire picture, since the *meaning* of the global increase in income and expenditure is not captured by economic data. This focus on purchasing power indicators must not be mistaken for an economistic definition of the global middle class. Rather, from an institutionalist perspective, quantifying the extent of monetarization is important because in contemporary society, money, far from "being a narrowly economic commodity, is… used to support the widest array of identity and activities and choices of modern persons" (Jepperson and Meyer 2007:294). In other words, the middle class can be conceptualized as "the consumer class" (Kharas 2010:10). Increasing purchasing power opens up the realm of consumption to members entering the global middle class, allowing them to aspire towards a better life, and as I wrote earlier, sets possibilities for global middle class identity. Thus, what distinguishes the middle class from other groups is that

> the middle class pursues what is conventionally known as better "quality of life" – better health care for the family and more expensive education for the

[12] In the actual article, it is written in the language of economics: "there is a kink in consumer demand curves around USD6000 per capita. Above this level, the income elasticity for items like consumer durables as well as for services like insurance rises well above one. This remains the case until income levels surpass USD250005. At that point, the income elasticity drops again." (Kharas 2010:11)

> children […] , as well as more and better housing, more expensive eatables and more entertainment, tobacco, and alcohol. Despite the middle class's reputation for thrift, some "frivolous" consumption is as middle class as a commitment to education or health care (Banerjee and Dufluo 2008:10).

Furthermore, while I see the global middle class is a constructed actor, this perspective does not mean that tracking the actual number of people who fall into the category is completely unimportant. Obviously, the larger the number, the more normative and cognitive power the global middle class has on organizational city makers. Beyond crude indicators of purchasing power and expenditure which can only provide necessary but insufficient conditions for the emergence of a global middle class, patterns showing broad similarity in the realms of education, work, lifestyles and values across different parts of the world give a more complete picture of the content of the global middle class. Studies of values and attitudes provide evidence of the similar aspirations of the global middle class. Specifically, the global middle class identity is characterized by its strong association with a liberal ideology of individualism. For example, the World Values Survey time-series data has been useful in showing a general global shift towards more liberal attitudes (Welzel 2007). In a similar vein, the Pew Global Attitudes (2009) survey confirms that middle classes in developing countries "consider religion less central to their lives, hold more liberal social values, and express more concern about the environment" compared to on the other (Pew Global Attitudes 2009:1). Again, this cannot simply be seen simply as a function of increasing economic security, since evidence suggests that economic security is not the main factor in driving "liberty aspirations" – liberal orientations towards civil and political freedom (Welzel 2007:195-197). But perhaps the proliferation of such studies is the most telling of the increasing importance of individualism itself, since "the availability of these data is itself evidence of the

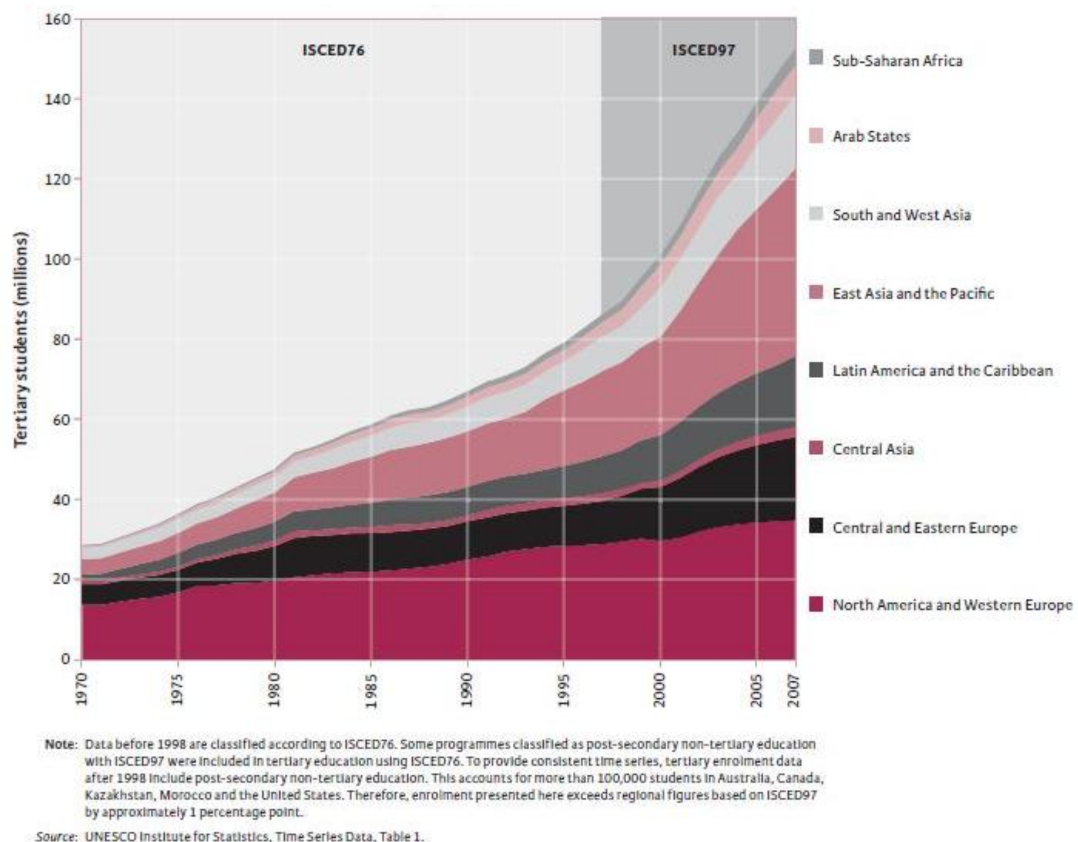
institutionalization of the same trend that the studies formalize and quantify" (Drori and Krücken 2010:5).

This individualism is based on the diffusion of a notion of the agentic individual, endowed with a sense of greatly expanded powers and capacity for action (Frank and Meyer 2002, Jepperson 2002:248-250). Of course, this does not mean that the individual becomes completely agentic and institutions become less important. In fact, the opposite is the case. Meyer (1986) argues that modern society is characterized by a standardized life course, replete with institutional resources from which individuals can construct and project their identity. Much of this standardization of life course is most apparent in, and perhaps even definitive of the global middle class identity. Choosing where to live, what to do for a career (in fact the notion of a career itself) – who to marry, or not to marry at all, what sorts of clothes to wear, what kinds of dietary and health regimes to adopt, and leisure activities to take up, are all important questions that are bound up with the identity of the global middle class.

Unlike the concept of the transnational capitalist class, the global middle class includes the ranks of students in universities and colleges, the number of which has been growing rapidly in the last few decades (see Figure 3.1). This is significant because the socialization process into the global middle class identity begins from university, as students are exposed to ideologies of globalism and cosmopolitanism. There is evidence to suggest that education is a stronger predictor than economic or financial circumstances, of how much importance an individual will place on liberty aspirations (Welzel 2007:197-198). Needless to say, these values are reinforced by institutionalized practices of study abroad and student exchange programmes, underpinned by highly rationalized and elaborate models of the modern, cosmopolitan and educated individual, pushing higher education towards becoming

"a designed activity to introduce [to students] an international and multicultural outlook" (Varghese 2008:10). The underlying expectation is that in a global world, the modern, educated individual should be comfortable living in areas outside of their comfort zone. While it is difficult to gauge the precise effect of student exchange programmes and internationalization of higher education on values, on a superficial level at least, figures show a dramatic increase in university enrollment from the 1970s, and even more recently, another major spurt from 2000 onwards. Furthermore, most of this expansion has been in Asia (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.21: Global tertiary education enrolment

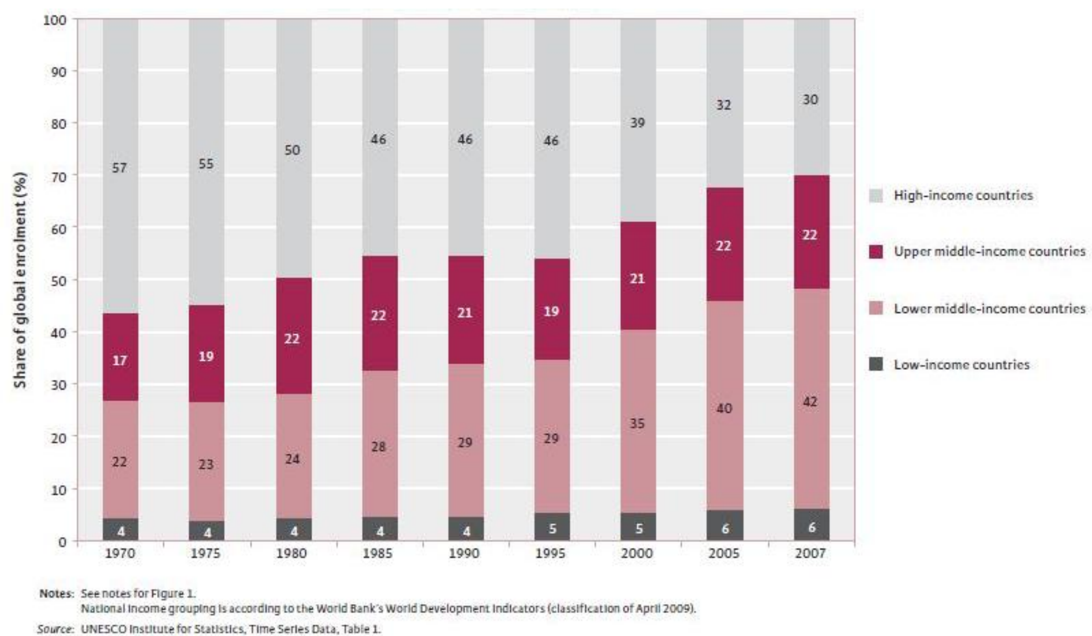


(Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2009:10)

Even after controlling for national income (Figure 3.2), it is clear that there is now greater representation by what might be considered lower income countries. The rich countries, proportionally, represent less of global tertiary education participation. It is

in this sense that I speak of an emerging global middle class that is no longer concentrated in the very rich countries. This is a major qualitative change that has gone unnoticed by researchers focusing on urban change. It would not be far-fetched to assume that universities are contributing to a convergence in lifestyle norms, in producing a global middle class with similar aspirations and expectations. There is some evidence that university students can also be gentrifiers, and at least one scholar has written about the phenomenon of "studentification" (Smith 2005). This is not unexpected, since the socialization into the global middle class identity begins primarily at this stage in the life course.

Figure 3.22: Global distribution of tertiary education, 1970-2007



(Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2009:12)

One very important factor that makes this emerging global middle class very different from all other middle classes that preceded it is the relative *global mobility* afforded to its members. Part of this increase in mobility is in part, traceable to the deregulation of air travel which began in 1978 in the US and spread to the rest of the developed countries by the 1980s. Since then, the general trend has being towards

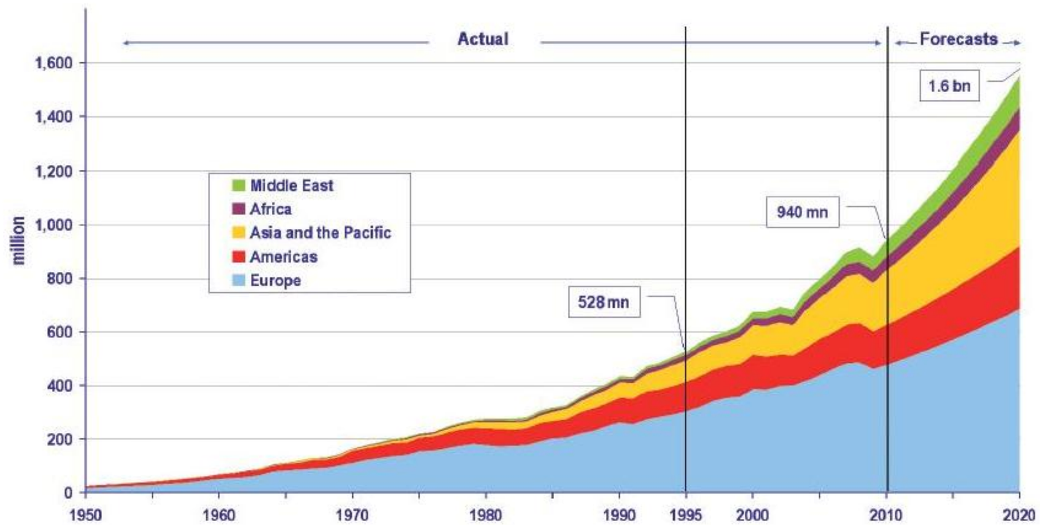
greater liberalization of air travel, as evidenced by the formation of single aviation markets, such as the one in Europe, which was formed in 1993 (IATA 2006:7). Much of the recent growth in air travel can be attributed to the Asia-Pacific region. In 2010, Asia-Pacific accounted for 647 million passengers, exceeding the 638 million passengers who travelled within North America (IATA 2010). These trends are likely to continue with the emergence of low-cost carriers, which have made it very affordable to travel, accelerating a trend towards mass travel:

> When low-cost carriers (LCCs) burst on to the scene in the late 1990s, it was certainly the start of a trend. But perhaps it was less a rise in their fortunes at the expense of network carriers, than a move towards the ideal of low costs for all carriers (IATA 2010).

This expansion of air travel has contributed to the increase of global tourism[13], which is itself a good indicator of the converging practices of the global middle class consumers. The figures indicate a massive increase in tourism figures from the year 1970, a process which accelerated from the 1980s. Again, the aggregate data confirms the growth of travel by populations originating from Asia Pacific (see Figure 3.3). In addition, the rise of the global middle class has undermined the stereotypical image of the Western tourist, slowly giving way to an increasing number of tourists who come from non-Western countries. Many of these come from the East Asian countries that have become affluent (Japan, China, South Korea), and increasingly also from other places like the Middle East, India and Thailand (Cohen 2008:331).

[13] Of course, "tourist" here refers to "temporary visitor staying at least twenty-four hours in the country visited and the purpose of whose journey can be classified under one of the following headings: (a) leisure (recreation, holiday, health study, religion and sport); (b) business (family mission, meeting)" (cited in Leiper 1979:393).

Figure 3.23: International tourist arrival by region (in million), 1970-2020



(Source: World Tourism Organization, 2011:11)

While it may be tempting to attribute these growing numbers of travellers to the expansion of transnational corporations and the increasing mobility of transnational elites or expatriates who run corporations, this is simply not the case. Part of this increased mobility can be traced to the globalization of professions which are not typically associated with corporations – researchers, professors, journalists, healthcare professionals, and, as I discussed early – of students. Furthermore, the globalization of corporate labour markets increasingly mean that people who work overseas need not be on an expatriate pay packet (Smith and Favell 2006).

Moreover, not only is the new global middle class a mobile one, it is one engaged in tourism and travel for the sake of pleasure, leisure and entertainment. In 2010, travel for leisure, recreation and holidays accounted for 480 million, or 51% of international tourist arrivals, compared to a 15% figure reported for business and professional purposes (World Tourism Organization 2011:3). Given current trends, as more people around the non-Western world enter into the global middle class, the institutionalized expectation is for demand for travel and tourism to increase:

> As prosperity spreads in populous countries of the non-Western world, travel demand soars. Tens of millions of Chinese will travel abroad in the next decade. They will be soon followed by tens of millions of tourists from India, Brazil and other rapidly developing countries, even as tourism from the West continues to grow. Current projections of future tourism indicate progressive growth in the coming decades (Cohen 2008:333).

This general expansion of mobility, largely of the global middle class has had an impact on how researchers see the world. Previously, scholars interested in physical mobility usually studied migration; today, this is increasingly being challenged by the emergence of a sociology of mobilities (rather than of migration). One of the main proponents of this approach, John Urry, argues that contemporary sociology should pay more attention to studying diverse mobilities – which suggests movement – rather than be fixated with the concept of society, which, by implication, is static (Urry 2000). There is also a deeper connection behind the rise of the global middle class and the expansion of mobility and travel, a topic I explore further later in this chapter.

3.3 Lifestyle and consumption as institutionalized semantics

Although none of the indicators I have provided demarcate clearly the extent of the global middle class, on the whole, they do indicate a rapid expansion of key elements associated with global middle class identity. As I have already argued, the global middle class is defined through similarity of lifestyle and consumption, rather than by specific income categories or production relations. The global middle class identity is highly bound up with that of being an individual with the agency to choose particular modes of life. I must again emphasize that this is not a plea for considering consumer agency, intentions and motives from the "bottom up", which is the approach taken by ethnographic studies of individuals who identify as global middle class (for instance, Rofe 2003). Rather, the global middle class identity is itself a

highly institutionalized role. Campbell (1994) makes the point that consumer motives are often "justificatory accounts" of their actions (Campbell 1994:39-44). In other words, consumerism is a language which provides the vocabulary for individuals to *justify* and account for their consumer desires. Thus, individuals identify with the global middle class consumer identity by learning "vocabularies of motive, along with rules and norms of action for various situations, through the common processes of socialization" (Campbell 1994:40). The implication is that "motives should thus be studied as correlates of occupation or social class" (Campbell 1994:40), and that the "true location of motives was to be found in institutions rather than individuals" (Parsons cited in Campbell 1994:40). In short, an institutionalist approach turns the question of "why do gentrifiers gentrify?," into a question of "what kind of vocabulary do gentrifiers draw on to account for their gentrification, and how were these semantics of consumption institutionalized?"

Scholars have traced the origin of consumerism to the late seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries when there began "a flourishing of discourses which tried to provide legitimate grounds for the ways of consuming and the goods which were such an important part of the emerging bourgeois way of life" (Sassetelli 2007:35). These discourses continued to evolved in parallel with the evolution of markets and of product worlds during the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, and have achieved truly global proportions only from the 1980s onwards. From the beginning, the evolution of the semantics surrounding consumption involved multiple actors and discourses. While these included political and economic actors, they also incorporated scientific discourses – particularly of economics and psychology – and marketing and advertising practices that were themselves based on scientific principles, all of which constructed and naturalized the role of the consumer (Sassatelli 2007:32-52). Thus, as Miller and Rose (1997) argue, "without 'lifestyle'

being understood as something linking up a particularly complex of subjective tastes and allegiances with a particular product, battles over the best way of linking the desires of individuals to the productive machine would take very different forms" (p.7).

As I noted in chapter two, the emergence of the current phase of urbanization based on cultural consumption is tied to the emergence of a new middle class, which began in the 1950s-1960s, established itself in the 1970s-1980s, and became a global phenomenon by the 1990s and 2000s. If this view is accurate, we should expect to see a dramatic transformation in the middle class that parallels this historical periodization. If we refer back to the income and expenditure indicators, the dramatic increase of the global middle class from 1 billion to 1.8 billion from 1990 does seem to provide some initial support (refer to page 49-50). Beyond the factors I examined in the previous section (mobility, higher education, etc.), a major part of the emergence of a global has been the increased exposure to popular (global) media, partly propelled by expansion of distribution channels (print and broadcast), and later on, by the communications revolution in the form of the Internet. Media representations of certain lifestyles are a key indicator and vehicle of the institutionalization of urban middle class consumption practices. The institutionalization of a consumption-driven urban lifestyle can be thus observed in the birth and development of the modern city magazine, which started in the US in the 1960s. These are

> "onsumer magazines that fuse the identity and consumption habits of their readers with the branded 'lifestyle' of a given metropolitan region… [the magazine industry] identified the new educated middle-class niche growing in metropolitan regions across the country, as well as a breed of visionary writers and entrepreneurial publishers who could represent this class and attract advertisers and investors seeking to tap its market potential. (Greenberg 2000:231-232)

In the 1980s, the term "lifestyle", which, as Featherstone reminds us, connotes "individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness" (Featherstone, 1987:55) became further popularized through media discourse. In the popular media, descriptions and accounts of the yuppie (young urban professional) figure became a focus of debate. While the term "yuppie" is pejorative, it is illuminating insofar as points to an intense reflection of the nature, practices and tendencies of the expanding global middle class. As evidence of this, the expansion of the global middle class went hand-in-hand with the growing interest in consumer culture and its origins, studies of which burgeoned in the 1980s (for example, McKendrick et al. 1982, Appadurai 1986, Campbell 1987, Miller 1987, McCracken 1988,).

3.4 The global middle class as a reflexive construct

The intensification of research and data collection on consumption, lifestyle and indicators of the global middle class since the 1980s indicates the growing awareness of the significance of the global middle class. Underlying this is a generalized *expectation* that these different aspects (consumption, mobility, education, liberal values, etc.) are crucial points of reference for understanding social change. In other words, the global middle class identity is as much an entity and object of theorization and elaboration (Meyer et al. 1987:25-27) as it is a group of individuals sharing similar lifestyles.

While members of the global middle class can act on their immediate urban environments as organized communities, what is theoretically more interesting is that the global middle class can also influence city making *indirectly* as a constituted actor. In the realm of marketing, consultancies often speak of trying to "identify the market", or to "capture social trends". Although notions of "the market" and "social

trends" are institutional entities, these can "act" on the social world. The understanding of "social trends", for instance, – mediated by advertising companies, brand consultancies and so on – influences what kind of goods are produced. Similarly, the global middle class can affect city making and city makers when it is observed in reports which attribute primacy to their role in social change. Through this mechanism, the global middle class becomes a major reference point for city making, affecting cities even if the global middle class does not itself organize itself into a movement. To highlight another example consumer trends briefing reports, such as the one extracted below, reflect on the significance of the global middle class consumers:

> The hundreds of millions (and growing!) of experienced and sophisticated urbanites*, from San Francisco to Shanghai to São Paulo, who are ever more demanding and more open-minded, but also more proud, more connected, more spontaneous and more try-out-prone, eagerly snapping up a whole host of new urban goods, services, experiences, campaigns and conversations…
>
> Back to CITYSUMERS. Consumption-wise, the fast pace and ever changing nature of urban life guarantees CITYSUMERS an endless number of new and fleeting social connections, experiences and (commercial) temptations. All of which means that CITYSUMERS are addicted to the here-and-now, experiences, choice and freedom, flexibility and rawness, unrestricted opportunity, and yes, the hunt for the Next Big Thing if not the Next Big Story. In fact, urban culture is the culture these days*. (Trendwatching.com 2011).

Trendwatching.com calls the global middle class "citysumers" to emphasize the penchant of the members of the global middle class for indulging in urban experience. While this sort of description of consumers who adore urban lifestyles and crave experiences is somewhat clichéd and definitely not new in sociology, what is interesting it that it has spread to MBA and business circles, especially since the publication of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) *The Experience Economy*. The increasing

importance of experience in consumption and the individualization of consumption are keenly felt in many other spheres. For example, mass tourism of the 1970s has increasingly given way to customized and individualized travel, as attested by the development of alternative and hyphenated forms of tourism, many of which focus on active, immersive experience rather simply on passive sightseeing. Coupled with this phenomenon is the expansion of institutional resources which make individualized travel possible. These include travel guide books, and the proliferation of websites that allow you to customize travel itineraries and make hotel reservations without the need for a travel agency. Backpacking, which started out as a rejection of mass tourism, has become a mainstream activity (Cohen 2008). The ultimate form of individualized travel is epitomized by websites such as Couchsurfing.com and the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) movement, which promise authentic experiences to live like natives do.

This increased mobility afforded by the global middle class has contributed to a re-ordering of place in the modern world via the language of travel and tourism (Franklin 2004). Only with the emergence of a language of "going places", places – and in this work, specifically, cities – does it make sense for cities to have to be made "visitable" (Dicks 2003). This has contributed to a relative blurring of boundaries between tourists and residents, or the "end of tourism *per se*" (Urry 1995:150). While Urry's statement is questionable on empirical grounds, it is an important insight, because if post-tourism is to become an accurate depiction of contemporary practices, it will likely apply more to the practices of the global middle class – as being tourists and residents simultaneously.

What I have described only reflects the tip of the iceberg. There are entire media, marketing and advertising industries dedicated to researching and finding out about the practices, preferences, values and desires of global middle class consumers

– or in the words of Trendwatching.com – "citysumers". Again, this is not so much the creation and imposition of false needs, but "a delicate process of identification of the 'real needs' of consumers" (Miller and Rose 1997:6). The significance of the global middle class is reinforced by intense reflection by global consultancy firms, think tanks, research organizations, and media publications, such as *The Economist* (Parker 2009) *and Financial Times* (O'Neill 2011). For example, The McKinsey Global Institute – the research arm of the global consultancy firm – just produced a report on the emerging "consuming class," which is estimated to grow by another 1 billion people by the year 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute 2012). Wheary's (2009) article in the *World Policy Journal* is aptly titled "The Global Middle Class is Here: Now What?," indicating the intense reflection and speculation on what the global middle class will bring. Banerjee and Duflo (2008) echo the same idea when they write, "[w]e expect a lot from the middle classes" (p.3). In short, the global middle class becomes a major normative and cognitive frame of reference for organizational city makers. Much attention is spent on finding out the real needs of its members, the results of which can either be used to inform corporations looking to sell goods, services and experiences, or otherwise be used to recommend appropriate policy measures. In this sense, the global middle class "acts" as a form of institutionalized, and constructed demand.

The global middle class is not just observed via statistics and figures. On a more descriptive, lifeworld level, the activities associated with the global middle class identity is also observed in the writings of other social scientists, and importantly, in works like Richard Florida's, which feeds directly into policy circles. While his proposals, methodology and concepts have become the objects of intense critique by social scientists, he does capture quite succinctly the institutionalized notion of the creative professional who experiences a blurring of boundaries between work and

play. The life motto of the individual of the creative class, as Florida tells us – based on his interviews – has to do with the *active accumulation of experiences*:

> On many fronts, the Creative Class lifestyle comes down to a passionate quest for experience. The ideal, as a number of my subjects succinctly put it, is to "live the life" – a creative life packed full of intense, high-quality, multidimensional experiences… (Florida 2002:166-167).

Florida's notion of creativity points to a sort of double meaning of his creative class. On the one hand, the creative class use "creativity" – whatever it may be, in producing whatever it is they produce, be they ideas, music, patent, new innovations, and so on. On another level of meaning, they are creative because they are institutional entrepreneurs. Specifically, Florida makes the point that such an "active, experiential lifestyle is spreading and becoming more prevalent in society as the structures and institutions of the Creative Economy spread. Despite, or perhaps precisely because of his uncritical view of this sort of lifestyle, Florida's view is in fact quite mainstream and points to a highly institutionalized notion of the active, consuming individual of modernity. Indeed, many other commentators have discussed similar issues. For instance, Featherstone (2007), citing Bourdieu's (1984) discussion of the new petite bourgeoisie – cultural intermediaries who create and provide symbolic goods and services – states that the "petty bourgeoisie" are fascinated with the cultivation of lifestyle and "consciously invent an art of living" (Featherstone 2007:59). The emphasis is on the active role, and the learning attitude – an intellectual attitude – these individuals adopt towards life. And Featherstone has the same conclusion as Florida, stating that the "new cultural intermediaries… help in transmitting both intellectual cultural goods and the intellectual lifestyle to a wider audience" (Featherstone 2007:59). In fact, Florida himself would qualify as a cultural intermediary, since his proposals directly affect urban policy making.

To conclude, while the observation that more and more cities around the world are embarking on consumption strategies to revitalize themselves is accurate, the interpretation of them as risky, entrepreneurial and speculative has to be qualified. To be sure, some of them involve heavy capital investment in infrastructure and are indeed speculative and risky from an investment standpoint. However, these activities make sense in light of the expectations that have been placed on the global middle class. Cities may be betting, but they are in fact taking an informed gamble on the global middle class. By this reasoning, then, the global middle class consumer lifestyle role in city making is also dependent on the observation and reflection on their significance by media and marketing organizations; through popular and expert discourses produced by marketing experts, consultants, academics, and similar expert roles. Without these organizations staffed by all these observing experts, it is difficult to imagine how the global middle class consumer lifestyle identity could have so much impact on city making. But beyond simply observing the global middle class and actually constituting institutionalized demand through their activities, professional experts also contribute more directly to city making. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERTS, CITY VISIONS, AND RATIONALIZATION

In the last chapter, I elaborated on the concept of the global middle class, which I claimed was the key to understanding why global city visions today are increasingly organized around consumption, lifestyle and leisure. I claimed that the global middle class plays a dual role – acting as institutionalized demand for certain types of urban lifestyles, but also as experts and professionals. In this chapter, I focus this second aspect of the global middle class[14]. I discuss consequences of the rationalization of city making as a field of formal, globally organized, and increasingly professionalized social action. Rationalization refers to the structuring of social life "within *standardized, impersonal rules* that constitute social *organization* as a *means to collective purpose*" (Meyer et al. 1987:24, my italics).

The concept of rationalization helps us understand three institutional processes which affect city making today. First, as implied by the second meaning of the global middle class, there is the rise of experts, specifically, scientists, consultants, urban planners, architects, policy makers, marketers, and similarly empowered, authoritative roles. This legitimacy lets them observe cities and the global middle class, articulate city visions and institutionalize them as global standards within a scientized global environment. Second, coupled with increasing professionalization is increased formal organizing of city making, evidenced by the burgeoning of

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[14] There is a distinction between the global middle class lifestyle/consumer and professional roles – however, in a practical sense, the actual people who fall into this category overlap. Social roles are differentiated, in a theoretical sense, but people are always whole. There is a very close coupling between the two. For example, professionals are highly educated and enjoy consumption, and see their careers in terms of how they contribute to personal development. Furthermore, professionals are the ones who have stable incomes, which is required for consumption.

organizations, networks, initiatives in sharing urban best practices. Third, most of this formal organizing is increasingly regional, transnational and global in nature.

4.1 The global middle class as professional experts

The lay understanding of the middle class as being "white-collared" does not really say much about the significance of their role in modern society. I argue that the (global) middle class, if used in the sense of "white collar", points to their role as professional experts. This requires that we go beyond seeing them simply as non-physical labour intensive occupations. At the same time, the Marxist interpretation of the professions in terms of managers who coordinate production but do not own capital itself is also severely limiting (for example, Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich 1979), as it does not take into account many other contemporary roles that are increasingly organized as professions today. Indeed, today, even the managerial role has been transformed into an increasingly expert role, indicated by the global expansion of business schools and proliferation of Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes, standardization of management knowledge and the codification of such knowledge into fields such as management science (Moon and Wotipka 2006, Mendel 2006, Meyer 2002). What defines professions from other roles in society is their equipment with specialized knowledge, which is standardized and codified through disciplines and fields, and passed down in the form of certification and qualifications (Weber cited in Ritzer 1975:425). Furthermore, professionalization often develops with increasing bureaucratization. Weber himself noted the tight coupling between the two when he wrote that "the bureaucratization of all domination very strongly furthers the development of 'rational-matter-of-factness' and the personality type of the professional expert (cited in Ritzer 1975:632).

Together, these two processes constitute different aspects of the historical process of rationalization (Ritzer 1975:632).

While the implications of the rise of the professions and formal organizations have been discussed by many authors since Weber, one of the best attempts to forecast the impact of professionalization on society remains Daniel Bell (1973)'s *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society.* For Bell, what he saw an emerging class of professionals and technical workers – which included teachers, healthcare workers, scientists and engineers, and government employees – were rapidly becoming a central occupational category. It is unfortunate that Bell wrote about the coming of post-*industrial* society, for this economistic emphasis has perhaps overshadowed a Weberian insight implied by Bell's argument. Bell notes the growing importance of theoretical knowledge with the expansion of the professional and technical class. Bell is also highly aware of the growth of non-economic, specialized organizations (he calls them non-profit). Bell thus arrives at a Weberian conclusion, that the rise of the professional and technical class – as purveyors of theoretical knowledge – is interlocked with the expansion of formal organizations in society. While organizations are not new, what makes the current era markedly different from previous of organizational expansion, is the rapid proliferation of specialized organizations beyond the military, the state, or corporations. In fact, the proliferation of formal organizations and penetration of formal organizing into all areas of social life is one key defining characteristic of the contemporary age (Meyer et al. 2006). What is so important about formal organizations and the professional experts that are typically employed at these organizations are "the universalized models they carry" (Drori 2008:449). In other words, formal organizations and the professions are the carriers of rationalization processes, spreading formal organizing into different

realms of society. I will illustrate this with examples when I discuss city making proper.

Richard Florida's (2002) notion of the creative class, although couched in the language of creativity, does actually recognize of the expansion of professionalization in contemporary global society, and can be read as an extension of Bell's work. After all, the creative class comprises of scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educators, artists, musicians and entertainers, and a broader group of roles that includes "*creative professionals* in business and finance, law, health care and related fields" (Florida 2002:8, italics in original). Although his identification of the creative class seems vague and lacks occupational similarity – and perhaps even arbitrary– I suggest that is because professionalization is endemic in modern society. Meyer argues, for instance, that professional occupations, whose "authority commonly rests on their disinterested agency for general or universal principles, are the most rapidly growing ones in every society in the world" (Meyer 2010:7).

On a more general level, the rise of professional experts and specialized organizations, as I will argue, is driving the process of globalization, and the formation of global cities as centres of these specialized organizations. Even more important to my discussion, the proliferation of professional experts and rationalized organizations contributes to the rationalization of city making, which organizes into a highly rationalized global field of social action. The continued expansion of experts and professionals has a radical impact on city making, including the reconstitution of practices directly associated with urban inscription – such as architecture and urban planning – into increasingly formalized, organized and globalized fields.

In the next section, I show the emergence of a global field of city making, which is itself underpinned by rationalized organizations and professions which focus on cities as their object of observation and solution proposition. There is greater

reflection about cities, the specification of urban problems and the proposal of solutions by experts. Policy solutions and best practices are routinely shared through conferences, policy tours, reports and articles. Thus, concomitant with the increasing formal organization of city making is the universalization of models of urban development and regeneration, through what I call the scientization of city making. These practices create an institutional world of cities in a global hierarchy of cities, where cities can be ranked according to standardized criteria. The result is the rapid reordering of city making into a highly rationalized, organized and globalized field.

4.2 The scientization of city making

Scientization, as a general concept, refers to the general expansion of science in society, in a variety of ways. This includes the quantitative expansion of scientific organizations, as well as of the number of scientists trained and hired to fill research positions. From a longer term perspective, universities and scientific organizations and associations have expanded rapidly since the Second World War (Drori and Meyer 2006). Webometrics, an ongoing online project that maps and ranks world universities based on research output and web presence, has indexed over 20,000 universities worldwide (Webometrics 2012). Some indicators go further, pointing to the massive growth in science in the last twenty to thirty years or so. If we focus of scientific researchers (excluding social scientists), the number of scientists increased from 5.8 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2007, a 25% increase within a span of five years (UNESCO 2010:8).

Beyond the quantitative expansion of science, scientization also refers to the penetration of science in more aspects of social life, and is one of the core vehicles of rationalization. It provides an image of the world as orderly and understandable through standardized techniques (Drori and Meyer 2006). "Expansion in the volume

and scope of science activities has meant a change in the logic of operations in many parts of society. Scientization becomes a general cultural form" (Drori and Meyer 2006:53):

> Science assumes universality of patterns and thus derives law-like rules of regularity. In addition, scientific work is articulate and produces explicit scripts, formulae, models, and principles. The scientized scripts gain authority, derived from the faith in the scientific method, and thus can be applied and tested by others. One can see how this works, best, when it is applied without much actual data or analysis. *We celebrate scientized scripts even when those are not more than awkward formulas of unquantifiable and untested data* (Drori and Meyer 2006:57, my italics).

In this manner, science, or rather, *scientized scripts* becomes a generalized tool for understanding and making authoritative claims about society and then prescribing how positive change may be effected. As one indication of this, the number of think tanks – research organizations which bridge the gap between academic research and policy research, as well as the gap between civil society and state institutions in terms of policy making – has massively increased globally since 1980: Between 1971 and 1980, an average number of 60 new think tanks were set up every year. In the following period, from 1981 to 1990, the rate of think tank expansion increased by 50% to around 90 new think tanks per year. In the decade between 1991 to 2000, nearly 1200 think tanks were created (McGann 2007:5). By 2011, there were an estimated 6,545 think tanks operating in 182 countries. (McGann 2012:5)

Science has also penetrated market and business oriented circles. For example, management consultancies have also seen a huge expansion and spread around the world, since their initial establishment in America in the early 1900s. According to one estimate, in 2007, the global management consultancy market was valued at $210 billion (Gross and Poor 2008). There are two competing arguments surrounding the origin of management consultancy in America. The first argues that

the rise of management consultancy in the United States was born out of a fusion between engineering, law, and accounting, and the consultative practices of merchant bankers at the beginning of the twentieth century, the other contends that the growth of management consultancy can be traced to the growth of ideas about scientific management and Taylorism (cited in Gross and Poor 2008). Whatever the case may be, it is undeniable that consultancy today is highly scientized. Consultants and consultancies regularly produce strategy reports that often use proprietary methodologies, modeling strategies and even embark on their own data collection. They not only advise corporations, but also governments and non-profit organizations (Gross and Poor 2008).

While there is no reliable data on exactly how many such organizations in the world specifically focus on urban issues, the broader trends of the expansion of science gives us some rough indication of the parameters for understanding the scientization of city making. One indicator of rationalization in the field of city making is the growth of research organizations that take the city as an object of study, if not at least a point of reference. These organizations may run the spectrum to purely "academic" ones, to those involved in policy advice or more commercially oriented ones, including universities, think tanks, consultancies, and so on. What they have in common is that they produce scientized understandings of cities.

One concrete example of this is the standardization and universalization of city ranking indices, many of which look at how "liveable" a city is, although in recent years, more sophisticated one – such as those attempting to measure the globality of each city – have also proliferated. These lists are, like most institutions, not new, but they did reach a highly elaborate form by the 1980s. Rogerson (1999) argues – at least in the US context – that it was the publication of the bestselling *Places Rated Almanac* that represented "the first serious attempt to popularize a

statistical ranking of metropolitan areas and to do so on the basis o what has been termed 'quality of life' factors (Rogerson 1999:969-970). Since then, there has been a tremendous growth of similar ranking efforts, and they have only grown more elaborate and sophisticated. Attempts to rank cities on a global scale in terms of their liveability were initially popularized by magazines and editorials oriented towards globally-minded businessmen. As an example, global city rankings comparing the liveability of cities from around the world were originally developed by management consultancy firms for the purpose of advising their clients on how to compensate expatriates on overseas posting without compromising their quality of life. This is the case with Mercer's Quality of Life Reports and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Liveability Index:

> "The purpose of the Quality-of-Life Reports is to provide you with an objective, consistent and comprehensive evaluation of the relative differences in quality of living between any two cities. The Quality-of-Life Reports aim to overcome as many of the potential weaknesses of "traditional hardship" ratings as possible." (Mercer 2002:1)
>
> The concept of liveability is simple: it assesses which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions. Assessing liveability has a broad range of uses. The survey originated as a means of testing whether Human Resource Departments needed to assign a hardship allowance as part of expatriate relocation packages (EIU 2011:1).

In addition, these reports are often written in an objective tone, relying on data and certain indicators, which may actually not be very complex. The Mercer Quality of Life report also emphasizes the methodological rigour underpinning the report, in a way a social scientific article might discuss how certain concepts were operationalized in a given study:

> Data for the reports was gathered using a questionnaire developed by Mercer Human Resource Consulting professionals around the world in close co-operation with some of our major multinational clients and experts in the field. Each city was evaluated in terms of the 39 questions, on a scale from 0 (lowest score) to 10 (highest score). A copy of the questionnaire is provided with each report.
>
> The first step in the service process was the data collection phase. Here, field researchers, along with consultants based in our network of offices worldwide, supplied the initial data, evaluations and comments for the reports. During a second phase, the data was reviewed and analyzed by regional centers. In the third and final phase of the process, the results of the data collection were compared and controlled by global analysts ensuring consistency among all of the cities surveyed (Mercer 2002:2)

Here, the notion of "scientized scripts" that Drori and Meyer (2006) describe is incredibly salient. Through the adoption of scientific tools and methods, not only are discourses made more authoritative, they gain "a dramatic standardizing power: relying on their assumptions of universal applicability, they are applied to very different contexts" (Drori and Meyer 2006:57). By measuring cities according to standardized and universalized criteria, city rankings become more abstract and highly diffusible to potentially all cities in the world, independent of national or cultural origin. For example, Mercer Quality of Living Reports' methodological approach is to "avoid the national and cultural differences and to compare factors, which are of basic concern for *all international employees"* (Mercer 2002: 1-2, my italics). If one examines the scale carefully, it is quite clear that consumer lifestyle practices associated with the global middle class are used as benchmarking criteria. Mercer's, for example, puts close to 10% weight on "recreation", a criteria that measures the variety of restaurants, theatrical and musical performances, cinemas, sport and leisure activities. Thus, a consumer lifestyle is specified in these

benchmarking criteria. The implication is that a liveable city is at least partly defined by how consumer-friendly it is.

Although these reports originated from the field of business and management consultancy, the global scale and extent of such reports made them suitable for being developed and broadened into a more general way of benchmarking cities. Today, Mercer's Quality of Living Report has gone beyond providing human resource solutions to companies, having re-branded itself as providing "international city benchmarking" (Mercer 2011). The Economist Intelligence Unit's Liveability Index has also taken the same strategy:

> The Quality-of-Living Reports cover approximately 200 major cities around the world. The flexibility of the reports ensures that each of these cities can be used as a base city and can be compared to any other city (Mercer 2002:2).

> While this function [assessing liveability of cities to compensate expatriates appropriately] is still a central potential use of the survey, it has also evolved as a broad means of benchmarking cities. This means that liveability is increasingly used by city councils, organisations or corporate entities looking to test their locations against others to see general areas where liveability can differ (EIU 2011:1).

City ranking reports are not only produced by human resource consultancy firms providing advice to companies – they are also generated by more "serious" research think tanks and policy bodies. Beyond what may appear to be "pop" business categories, one finds a parallel mention in more academic categories, such as categories like alpha, beta and gamma cities, pioneered by Beaverstock et al. (1999). This initial approach has since evolved into the Globalization and World Cities Research Network, self-described as "the leading academic think tank on cities in globalization." It has an ongoing project to comprehensively document and track global city status of individual cities around the world (GaWC 2012).

In actual fact, the boundary between what is strictly academic and what is more action-oriented research is not always very clear. In fact, in some cases, it is not even possible to make such distinctions. For example, the Global Cities Index produced by *Foreign Policy* in 2008 was a product of collaborative effort between consultancy firm A.T. Kearney and The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Besides the usual collection and analysis of broad indicators, what was interesting was that the index also "tapped the brainpower of such renowned cities experts as Saskia Sassen, Witold Rybczynski, Janet Abu-Lughod, and Peter Taylor" (Foreign Policy 2008:70). The following ranking of 20 global cities, extracted from a bigger list of 60 cities, shows how the cities are ranked according to five indicators of business activity (number of Fortune Global 500 firms headquartered there and volume of trade of goods), human capital (how well city attracts diverse groups of talent), information exchange (access to global news and information), cultural experience (diverse attractions for international residents and travellers), as well as political engagement (how a city influences global policymaking and dialogue) (Foreign Policy 2008:70; see table 4.1).

Table 4.21: The 2008 Global Cities Index

Ranking	City	Dimension				
		Business Activity	Human Capital	Information Exchange	Cultural Exchange	Political Engagement
1	New York	1	1	4	3	2
2	London	4	2	3	1	5
3	Paris	3	11	1	2	4
4	Tokyo	2	6	7	7	6
5	Hong Kong	5	5	6	26	40
6	Los Angeles	15	4	11	5	17
7	Singapore	6	7	15	37	16
8	Chicago	12	3	24	20	20
9	Seoul	7	35	5	10	19
10	Toronto	26	10	18	4	24
11	Washington	35	17	10	14	1
12	Beijing	9	22	28	19	7
13	Brussels	19	34	2	32	3
14	Madrid	14	18	9	24	33
15	San Francisco	27	12	22	23	29
16	Sydney	17	8	27	36	43
17	Berlin	28	29	12	8	14
18	Vienna	13	31	29	11	9
19	Moscow	23	15	33	6	39
20	Shanghai	8	25	42	35	18

Source: Foreign Policy (2008:70; only top 20 cities shown)

What is interesting about these five criteria used to measure city globality is that they all imply that a global city is constituted partly through the circulation of the global middle class. Measuring business activity by counting the number of Fortune Global 500 firms headquartered in a city, for instance, indirectly means that the city is resident to a large number of professionals – who may or may not have been born there. The actual variables for how well a city attracts diverse groups of talent include the "size of a city's immigrant population, the number of international schools, and the percentage of residents with university degrees" (Foreign Policy 2008:70). The dimension of information exchange measures "the number of international news bureaus, the amount of international news in the leading local papers, and the number of broadband subscribers" (Foreign Policy 2008:70). As for the criteria of cultural experience, again, what the index measures is how diverse

entertainment options are for *international residents and travellers*. Finally, in the realm of political engagement, what matters is how many "embassies, consultates, major think tanks, international organizations, sister city relationships, and political conferences a city hosts" (Foreign Policy 2008:70). A naturalized tautology that indicates institutionalization quickly becomes apparent: the globality of cities is defined by the circulation of the global middle class; global middle class urban experts define what global cities are. The consideration of these aspects as representative of, or constitutive of global city status indicates that global cites are being theorized as sites where members of the global middle class circulate, either as professionals (who are global and mobile), or as travellers. Boschken (2003) tells us, using his own concept of the upper middle class, that there is an

> unusually high percentage of upper middle class (UMC) living in global cities relative to nonglobal ones. This may seem logical to some. After all, as instrumental actors in molding an integrated global economy, the UMC contains those institutional professionals at the forefront of international awareness and experience. As a group with the most geographic mobility, its members seek out professional opportunities in cities having the richest supply of postindustrial employment (i.e., jobs centered on global information analysis, financial control, and symbolic creativity). Having been college educated, they have acquired not only the requisite scientific professional knowledge for such employment but also heightened tastes for multiculturalism and world-renowned cosmopolitan entertainment venues found mainly in global cities. (Boschken 2008:809)

However, this does not mean that there is some sort of conspiracy going on, where the upper middle class use underhanded political means influence policy makers. Rather, as I emphasized repeatedly throughout this work, the mechanism is far more symbolic and diffuse; the rationalized organizational environment "indirectly prescribes what symbolic and functional features a city should have and the policy outcomes policy makers should emphasize" (Boschken 2003:809). As I

discussed at length in the previous chapter, the global middle class is a constituted actor which becomes a major reference point for city making.

Data on cities, of course, are not limited to simple rankings of cities that are published by consulting companies and business magazines. They are also collected in more complex forms by more technically oriented organizations and processed with sophisticated data processing technologies. Indeed, we have yet to document the long term impact of the development and application of computer technologies that are only beginning to transform the way data about cities and urban areas are collected. "Better technology has *turned cities into fountains of data* that confirm *known regularities and reveal striking new patterns*" (The Economist 2012, my italics). While talk of "the laws of the city" in the same article may strike some social scientists as being overly positivistic and mechanistic, what is undeniable is that the dramatic advancement in urban research data collection is slowly contributing to the global standardization of how cities are to be measured and understood. The collection of data and their compilation in statistical tables, reports and databases further allows the application of more scientific techniques to understanding and making cities, resulting in a self-perpetuating institutional feedback mechanism. The same organizations that produce such reports often make their data available through institutional subscription, and thus, available to other experts working in similar fields. For instance, the UN-Habitat, which collects data about cities, routinely makes such data freely accessible to the public. Another initiative, the Global City Indicators Facility – originally sponsored by the World Bank – also reflects the trend towards the standarization of indicators and methodologies for global city benchmarking (GCIF 2012).

In this way, in effect, city ranking, indicator, methodologies, and reports – whether they are created by academics or consultants – do not simply rank cities;

they actually create the representation of the world as being made up with competing cities. Global city status, by implication, is an objective characteristic that can be measured and quantified according to standardized indicators, all of which measure how global a city is. Phrased differently, the "narration" of a city as global – as similar and connected to others in terms of policy – is, then, materialized through the practices of consultants and other experts of truth" (McCann 2011:116). Thus, the scientization of city making is a specific case of the "great taxonomic powers" of science (Drori and Meyer 2006:65). By generating quantitative scales, rankings and categories of cities, experts and expert discourses actually generate an institutional world where cities can become the most global city, the most liveable city, or the city with the most culture, the city with the best access to healthcare – as long as city makers take the appropriate policy measures. In the institutionalist literature, this is referred to as theorization, which refers to "the self-conscious development and specification of abstract categories and the formulation of patterned relationships such as chains of cause and effect" (Strand and Meyer 1993). Once formulated in abstract and universalized terms, such categories gain the ability to be applied to many different contexts. These authoritative categories are *socially real entities* insofar as they provide very general categories how city makers understand cities, urban development, and urban regeneration.

In this sense, despite the discourse about urban competition, in fact, what characterizes contemporary urban development are the remarkably similar norms, models and institutional processes which undergird expert reflection about cities. Even if planners and governments' focus on liveability might stem from the desire to attract multinational firms to set up in their cities, the logic of this is not directly economic. It is also highly mediated by expert descriptions of a globalizing world, embedded in universalized and highly scientized understandings of cities. Not only

are city rankings an indicator of city globality or liveability; it is implied that governments and planners themselves ought to act on the results of such rankings (Giffinger et al. 2010). If this can be referred to as "power", it is certainly not power in the sense of economic or political power that most of extant literature makes it out to be. This power is not coercive, and is diffuse rather than hierarchical (Drori and Meyer 2005:67).

Seen in this light, Richard Florida becomes less of a unique case, but rather, as one case within a larger field of urban discourse that observes and theorizes cities, identifies "urban problems", and prescribes expert solutions, made possible within a scientized framework. What makes Florida quite exemplary is that he actually singles out the role of agentic consumption and builds it into his model and theory of urban regeneration. In fact, this notion has also been repeated in other rankings, such as the 2008 Global Cities Index I presented above (in the categories of human capital and cultural experience). Perhaps Florida's popularity lies in combining the newer and more contemporary individualist/consumption discourse to more old-fashioned productivity concerns that is so embedded in the discourse of development, by stating that consumption of by the creative class is not trivial because it enhances competitiveness. All of these rationalization processes, however, needs to be understood in relation to formal organizing and global organizational networks which help to spread and institutionalize best practices at the global scale.

4.3 From centralized urban planning to global urban governance

The significance of formal organizing and global networks in city making is highly salient in the examples I presented in the previous chapter. I showed that much of the theorization of urban models depended on global networks of academics, researchers, consultants, and similar experts. In this section, I want to shift the

discussion to that of city planning and the related fields of urban policy and architecture. City planning, as a practical field, affects the urban landscape in more direct ways than the activities I described in the previous section. Being more practical rather than theoretical activities, one might expect them to be more resistant to global organizing and be more sensitive to local conditions. For that reason, the significance of global organizing in city making is best exemplified through city planning and related practical fields. The key point here is to show how even urban planning itself has become a very specific form of city making, and is being superseded by urban governance, which is a more inclusive kind of city making, where the organizations are not simply state entities, and the experts involved go beyond those traditionally associated with urban planning and architecture, and include the professionals and experts who are not traditionally thought of as having any direct role in shaping cities.

Of course, city projects and city planning – rationalized activities which sought to implement certain city visions onto the physical landscape have been around for a long time. Many scholars agree that there are historical antecedents to contemporary urban planning. In the broadest interpretation, examples of attempts to plan and order cities come from ancient civilizations. In this sense, city planning has existed for as long as there have been cities. For the purpose of the current discussion I will not refer to examples of urban planning in ancient or classical civilizations, focusing on what can be referred to as modern urban planning[15]. Modern urban planning emerged in response to the Second Urban revolution, which

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[15] While I make a distinction between urban planning in the historical and classical civilizations and modern urban planning, I recognize that examples in the former were in fact very modernist in their spirit, because they went against tradition, and sought to imagine and improve upon urban life. In fact, classical Greek urban planning, for instance, was said to have inspired Le Corbusier, the father of modernist architecture and planning (Evans 2001:22). Nonetheless, there are still key differences, since the cities that the nineteenth century urban planners were dealing with were much more complex and populous than classical and medieval cities.

saw the explosion of urban populations with the advent of industrial technology (Hall et al. 2008:2). Contemporary urban planning, or more specifically – globalized urban governance – is a response to the Third Urban Revolution.

For the purpose of the current discussion, I present the following periodization in terms of transformations in modern urban planning: pre-nineteenth century precursor to urban planning, 1890-1940s: the professionalization of urban planning, 1940s-1970s: the nationalization of urban planning, and 1980-today: globalized urban governance and city making. These are certainly disputable dates, and are not meant to be historically precise. Rather, they indicate identifiable turning points in the development of modern urban planning. The first period can have said to have ended in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and depending on perspective, can either be considered as a logical culmination of tendencies towards rationalization of urban thought and urban projects, or as a precursor to the emergence of urban planning proper. Urban planning as a professional practice took shape in the 1890s-1920s, with the elaboration of general urban visions for resolving urban density and other problems associated with urbanization. The emergence of urban planning as a profession also coincided with the birth of the modernist movement in architecture, as well as the increasing consolidation of urban planning under the state. The post-war to 1970s period represented the zenith of the nationalization and state-led centralization of urban planning. However, this began to change in the 1980s, as state-led planning began to be dismantled, to be replaced by a far more diffuse global network of diverse organizations, problematizing the notion of urban planning itself.

Most planning historians agree that precursors to modern urban planning blossomed in the Baroque during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as regal and papal power reached their heights (Hall and Twedwer-Jones 2011:12). Where

there was obvious urban design and planning rather than spontaneous urban growth, the result was expressed mainly in the form of rectilinear streets. But there were also great architectural projects undertaken, such as the reconstruction of Rome, or the development of Bath into a spa town – which had up till then been a small medieval town (Hall and Twedwr-Jones 2011:12). Much of this consisted of local town rationalizations, usually in the form of monumental squares, were designed to express hierarchical power, either regal, aristocratic, or papal (Hall and Twedwr-Jones 2011:12). The Haussmannization of Paris represents the zenith of this logic; on the other hand, it also marked the turning point of the emergence of modern, large scale urban planning. Georges-Eugène Hausmann was appointed Prefect of the Seine by Emperor Napoelon in 1853. He was entrusted with considerable power, which he used to map and level the whole of Paris. During his office he destroyed more than half of old Paris, creating "new streets through existing urban structures" (Hall 1997b:71), and the wide boulevards and great parks Paris is famous for today. In this way, his work represented a logical culmination of a tendency towards monumentality that had been present since the Baroque.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, urban planning increasingly became constituted as a professional practice. Urban thinkers such as Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier emerged during this era, as they sought practical answers to the problem of urban density. Of course, this did not appear overnight; on the contrary, there had been, since the mid-nineteenth century, a "growing interested in urban improvement," (Hall 1997b:47), no doubt a reaction towards urbanization and the massive increase in the urban population, and with it, the threat of disease and congestion. Two traditions to urban planning – the Anglo-American, and the continental tradition to urban planning emerged. The Anglo-American tradition is best represented by Ebenezer Howard's thinking on the garden city, which advocated

decentralization (Hall and Twedwer-Jones 2011:28-31). In contrast, the continental tradition pursued centralization. Le Corbusier – ostensibly the best representative of the tradition – advocated increasing urban density through skyscrapers, at the same time creating wide urban space in between those buildings (Hall and Twedwer-Jones 2011:49-52).

Despite the stark differences in these two visions, they had many commonalities. The visions of the pioneering planners were expressed as physical blueprints, as ideals to be realized in practice. Often, they presented little or no alternatives, and in doing so were able to institutionally monopolize planning and establish urban planning as a profession, with its own distinctive knowledge (Hall and Twedwer-Jones 2011:53-54). Their writings inspired countless urban thinkers, urban planners, and architects, and continue to do so today. Since they were physical planners, many of their visions were intensely obsessed with physical form, and tended to see "the problems of society and of the economy in physical terms, with a physical or spatial solution in terms of particularly arrangement of bricks and mortar, steel and concrete on the ground" (Hall and Twedwer-Jones 2011:53).

These pioneering ideas set the way for urban planning's gradual expansion terms of theoretical elaboration, institutional monopoly, and control over physical space. The rationalizing tendencies in pioneering urban planning intensified with the development of national-states, which saw planning increasingly become subsumed under public agencies. Urban planning generalized from the planning of cities to the planning of entire city regions and whole urban systems. Twentieth century urban planning reached its zenith in postwar 1950s and 1960s, as nation-states were formed all over the world. While modernism as an architectural movement – with its emphasis on minimal ornamentation and production of homogenous forms – always had social equality as one of its principles, this tendency was fully expressed as

planning became increasingly subordinated to the state. This came in the form of a spatial Keynesianism in liberal, democratic states (Martin and Sunley cited in Brenner 2004:2). In the 1960s, many Western states set up

> relatively uniform, standardized administrative structures throughout their territories and mobilized redistributive spatial policies desgined to alleviate intra-national territorial inequalities by extending urban industrial growth into underdeveloped, peripheral regions. (Brenner 2004:2)

In socialist contexts, state-led planning was even more extreme, since central planning regimes of communist states reflected the priorities of the state (Evans 2001:32). Interesting, the increasing focus on function corresponded to a de-emphasis on physical form, which had been the focus for the pioneering planners. Planning increasingly became integrated with Keynesian policy concerns. The high point of twentieth century urban planning was the elaboration of a functionalist bent and the parallel development of functional zoning expressed in master plans. Thus, "city planning became increasingly more abstract, concerned with process and function, while its focus on physical form withered and died" (Boyer 1988:50). This trend reached a peak with the advent of computers and cybernetic modelling, when

> "city planners began to develop simulation models of urban development; most often related to transportation models based on location theories, which minimized the journey to work, or models of the real estate market used to predict which neighborhoods would likely decline and which would develop according to various public strategies, subsidies, and regulatory interventions" (Boyer 1988:50).

State-centralized urban planning began to be undermined in the 1970s-1980s, giving way to Harvey's (1989) notion of urban entrepreneurialism. Central planning became increasingly undermined. States began to concentrate investment into the "the most competitive city-regions within their territories (Brenner 2004:2). The result was the establishment of new agencies at multiple scales, local, national,

regional, and global. Indeed, in contrast to twentieth century state-centred urban planning, contemporary city planning is organized globally, according to universalized and abstract norms and models, which I presented in the previous section. Unlike traditional urban planning, contemporary city planning is not centralized – and hence the term urban governance rather than urban government (Harvey 1989) – and city visions are not necessarily implemented in a hierarchical manner. Furthermore, city making is not reducible to the professional fields of architecture and urban planning, although these disciplines continue to play an important role in informing city making.

As I have already alluded to in the previous section, much of the rationalization of city making parallels the expansion of organizations and the creation of global organizational links. Mercer's reports, for instance, are produced by researchers who are stationed in different cities all over the world. But beyond the examples of more indirect forms of city making I presented in the previous section that, recent studies have also stressed the the tendency for more obvious and direct city making – in particular, architecture and urban planning – to travel (Guggenheim & Söderström, 2010). While there are many ways for such models to diffuse – including direct imitating – such convergence is most obvious in spectacular architecture. This should not be surprising, since architects have always travelled. Today, a small number of "starchitects" are responsible for designing many iconic buildings in many cities around the world (McNeill 2009).

On one hand, modern architecture as a professionalized practice has historically been relatively global, even before the Second World War, with architectural movements often spreading over the world, carried by colonial practices and so on. The modernist movement pioneered by Le Corbusier, for instance, with its universalizing ambition of "one building for all nations and all climates" represented

a high point of architectural rationalization (Le Corbusier 1923, cited in Lang 1994:155). Building forms such as the skyscraper, are ostensibly recognized globally as the symbol of corporate capitalism, distinctively modern, and lacking any specific sort of ethno-cultural reference (Grubbauer 2010). What characterizes the contemporary practice of architecture is not that it has suddenly become globalized, but that travel has become a "routine aspect of contemporary architectural practice" (McNeill 2009:1).

Even so, it is only in recent decades that the portfolio and operations of major architectural firms have become global, especially with the "emergence of clients with transnational operations and a cosmopolitan sensibility" and (Knox 2007:72). The result is the emergence, since the 1990s, of major architectural firms which pursue a global strategy, with "office networks that are international in scope" (Knox 2007:74). Thus, beyond the institutionalization of generalized city visions, specific spatial forms – such as architectural spectacles themselves, are in fact imitated in many cities. With the development of communication technologies that make for rapid and effective dissemination of information, architectural drawings, plans, photographs, and other visual representation of buildings can be quickly transmitted, referenced, and reproduced in different cities around the world (Guggenheim and Söderström 2010:7). This partially accounts for the rapid diffusion of spectacular forms across different cities, such as redeveloped waterfronts and observation wheels – both of which often seem to go together. Furthermore, the engineering expertise that enables the construction of these structures is itself a product of a globalized and mobile expert culture. The opening of the London Eye in 2000 triggered the construction of other observation wheels in other cities, including what is currently the world's tallest wheel, the Singapore flyer (Yap, forthcoming).

Formal organizing and the establishment of organizational networks that enable city making are even more salient in the realm of policy. For instance, González (2011) shows that Bilbao and Barcelona have become models for urban policy makers, and this has been facilitated through short trips – she uses the term "urban policy tourism" – taken by policy makers to the model cities. The scale of this sort of practice is hinted at by the figures – a staggering number of "almost 5000 professionals visit these two cities every year to learn more about their regeneration" (González 2011:1413). What these two cases show is the point that model cities do not necessarily have to come from the Anglo-saxon "core". The importance of such networks cannot be understated, and perhaps the notion of "network" imprecisely captures the institutional meaning of formal organizing and in city making. What the notion of network tries to point at is the transnational character of such organizations. For instance, many of these organizations are regional and are funded by multiple governments of different countries or cities, or even banks. The result is a growing list of non-government, non-profit organizations *dedicated* to the discussion and solving of urban issues and urban development. A good example is the Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA), which is

> a regional initiative established in 2007 by the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Germany, with additional support of the governments of Sweden and Austria and the Shanghai People's Municipal Government. The Initiative provides assistance to medium-sized Asian cities to bridge the gap between their development plans and the implementation of their infrastructure investments. (CDIA 2011).

By conducting research on urban issues, recommending solutions and even providing the funding to correct urban problems, organizations like CDIA promote a certain model of urban modernity. Much like the programmes of development launched by transnational organizations in the name of an abstract and universal

notion of linear development in the wake of modernization theory, these initiatives are both a reflection of the institutionalization of city visions, and the very agent of institutionalization. Closer to my discussion and focus on notions of liveability and envision of cities of the future around the global middle class, however, is given in the example of the New Cities Foundation,

> a non-profit Swiss institution dedicated to improving the *quality of life and work in the 21st-century global city*, with a particular focus on new cities in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. NCF sees cities as humanity's most important source of innovation, creativity and wealth-creation. We believe that achieving the vision of building more sustainable and dynamic urban communities can only be done through innovative partnership. NCF serves a unique role in developing new models of collaboration between the public, private and academic sectors (New Cities Foundation 2012a).

The New Cities Foundation is another good example of the importance and salient of inter-organizational networks in city making, since it was founded by corporations such as General Electric, CISCO and Ericsson. While many member organizations are corporations, others include academic and other non-profit organizations (New Cities Foundation 2012b). In addition to the emergence of these formal city making organizations, there is a growing list of conferences, summits and other similar platforms where urban planners, policy makers, academics, consultants and other experts meet to share data and best practices from cities around the world. For example, the New Cities Foundation organized the inaugural New Cities summit in May 2012, held in Paris. The annual event is supposed to bring together

> 700 global thought leaders in technology, infrastructure, architecture, energy, transport, national and local government, the media, academia as well as the non-profit sector. Content-rich keynotes and plenaries form the basis for discussion about how we will *live, work and play in the cities of tomorrow.* (New Cities Foundation 2012c)

The World Cities Summit, the first of which was organized in 2008, is

> *the* global platform for government leaders and industry experts to address liveable and sustainable city challenges, share innovative urban projects and forge partnerships. Held in conjunction with the 5th Singapore International Water Week (SIWW) and the inaugural CleanEnviro Summit Singapore, the World Cities Summit 2012 will enable delegates to network with an even wider group of public and private sector players and discover synergies between urban planning, water and environmental solutions. (World Cities Summit 2012, my italics)

The proliferation of such events reflects the increasing institutionalization of city making as a routine practice. In these conferences and events, city visions are discussed, articulated and defined by experts. Furthermore, these networks of city making, once established, further the rationalization of city making by elaborating more norms, visions and models for urban development and planning. Many city visions are institutionalized in the programs of international organizations, such as the United Nations and its many derivative arms. For instance, the formation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) is a reflection of formal organizing to deal with massive urbanization. As a transnational policy organization, many of the policies, research programmes promulgated by the UN Habitat reflect the institutionalization of abstract norms at the global level. UN Habitat also has a journal, *Habitat International*, through which research about urban development is consolidated. As further evidence of how seriously UN Habitat takes its mission of urban development, it is instructive that UN Habitat has established awards to recognize best practices in urban planning and policy (Campbell 2009).

The consequence of all these processes is a world filled with formal organizations and the formal organizing of city making. These organizational actors are empowered with the authority to define general city visions and to set goals for cities. Many such organizations transcend locality. The result is a growing awareness that cities are not simply spaces where things occur; they are literally represented as

actors with the ability to transform their own development path and reinvent themselves.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION:

OBSERVING CITY MAKERS AND CITY VISIONS

5.1 Observing global cities as sites of circulation of the global middle class

I started off by claiming in Chapter One that contemporary city visions and urban models of regeneration and planning are increasingly organized around ideas about lifestyle, entertainment, and consumption. Reviewing the literature in Chapter Two, I found that most of the existing literature tended to operate from a political economy framework. These literature tried to identify the actors who were responsible for urban change, and there were a variety of answers – ranging from middle class individuals, real estate developers, capitalists, and even governments and states. Despite their very different ideological origins, and different production or consumption emphases, both accounts are fairly compatible, since they both stem from a predominantly economically driven understanding of society. These two accounts have been synthesized by many scholars into a political economic theory of city making, where the massive transformations in cities happened because "capital turned to the creation of specially designed environments [for the consumption] of the new professional classes" (Boyer 1988:55).

I suggested that an institutionalist approach to city making would help urban researchers generate a more sophisticated of these observed urban changes. More specifically, much of the urban transformations we observed can be attributed to the emergence of the global middle class as major reference point for city making. After a brief review of the significance of the middle class in social theory in Chapter Three, I emphasized its global character and specified two aspects that make the global

middle class central to the process of city making. The first of these, the lifestyle/consumer aspect, refers to an institutionalized demand for certain kinds of urban experiences as, for instance, specified and observed in lifestyle magazines, marketing discourses, and so on. This means that the existence of institutionalized demand is also partly dependent on the observers of the global middle class – cultural intermediaries and other professional experts.

The second aspect of the relationship between the global middle class and contemporary city making refers to the latter's constitution as a highly rationalized, formally organized, and global activity concerned with the observation of cities, and the elaboration of communication about the *meaning* of (globally modern) cities. Its main agents are diverse formal organizations and the global middle class professional experts – not just architects and urban planners, but also, policy makers, scientists, consultants, think tank researchers, journalists, and so on. Their legitimacy does not stem from imperial power – as was the case of Hausmann, who was entrusted by Napoleon Bonaparte essentially free reign to reshape Paris as he saw fit. Rather, their symbolic legitimacy is derived from a highly rationalized cultural environment, and although not necessarily "scientific" in the conventional sense of the term, is definitely scientized, highly professionalized, and organized around expert cultures. City visions today are increasingly articulated via expert knowledges, and then institutionalized through a global field of city making, legitimized through scientized scripts that hold universal relevance. Within the field of city making, cities are observed as abstract entities, and cities which approximate some sort of idealized city are used as actual models for other cities to aspire towards. While New York, Tokyo, or London have traditionally been viewed as the quintessential globally modern cities, this is no longer the case, with the emergence of other cities around the world which satisfy the abstract benchmarks that have been elaborated by these urban

experts. As such, model cities can be located in any part of the world, and city makers in different cities look to other cities for reference.

In Chapter Four, I made the claim the benchmarks used to rank cities are so universalized and abstract to begin with, that urban models need not even be actually existing cities. In that sense, global cities or liveable cities are more theoretical categories than existing empirical referents. I showed that most indicators in expert discourses imagine global cities as sites of circulation of the global middle class, and liveable cities are defined according to the lifestyle requirements of the global middle class. The criteria used to define the globality and liveability of cities is often based on the institutionalized demand represented by the lifestyle practices of the global middle class. I also emphasized that the main mechanism behind urban change is institutional "soft" power – which is normative and cognitive, rather than coercive. Urban transformation along consumerist lines is phenomenological and symbolic, rather than being the outcome of a conspiracy where elites simply impose their visions on cities through economic and political force.

I want to conclude the discussion here with an illustration that encapsulates and summarizes the discussion of the two roles of the global middle class in city making. *Monocle*, a magazine that carries the self-description of being "a global briefing covering international affairs, business, culture and design," has been ranking cities around the world since it was launched in 2007. It emphasizes that its rankings have "not been developed as a guide for ex-pats looking for their next plumy posting. Rather, it has been created to identify the cities that put its residents [sic] happiness and well-being first" (Monocle 2008a:18). Beyond city liveability rankings – which are only published once a year – the magazine reports on global trends in consumer goods, services, design, and so on. This makes it is clear that the magazine is oriented towards globally minded, active individuals – and who are not necessarily expatriates,

but active, fun, and spontaneous creative individuals who are likely to identify with the global middle class identity. Furthermore, the magazine also discusses urban projects and visions in different cities around the world, publishes interviews with city mayors and leaders, and showcase cities and communities that have "got it right". As a further illustration, thinkers such as Richard Florida have been invited to contribute articles on urbanism in its pages (for example, Monocle 2008b:59). The magazine is published from London, and has bureaus in New York, Zurich, Tokyo and Hong Kong. It is put together by journalists, photographers, artists, designers, and has 16 foreign correspondents based in cities around the world. In a rather direct sense, then, it is prepared by the global middle class experts, for the global middle class consumer in mind.

5.2 Institutionalism and the city making approach in urban studies

Throughout the present work, I constantly referred to the conceptual approach taken by the present work as institutionalism. To be more specific, it is a phenomenological, constructivist version of institutionalism that treats all social entities, including actors themselves and the attribution of agency, as socially constructed, and thus – in the broadest sense – institutional. In terms of city making, the emphasis was on the proliferation of diverse organizational actors, following multiple goals. What gives a measure of coherence to the overall activity of city making, I suggested, is the global middle class which serves both as the basis of professionalized and rationalized expert knowledges that legitimize city making, as well as the reference point for formulating city making goals and visions.

In contemporary discourse, there is a growing tendency to portray cities as actors (Taylor 2004:56), much like how nation-states, organizations, and individuals were constituted as actors in over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

(Meyer and Jepperson 2000, Meyer 2010). Cities are "competitors" trying to attract capital; they "participate" in initiatives and "learn" from each other; they can "fail", or "succeed" by "reinventing" themselves. It is quite significant that cities are increasingly portrayed as actors at the juncture that the locus of city making is shifting away from centralized state power to one that is increasingly diffuse, decentralized, and difficult to pin down – a "globalizing urban governmentality" (Robinson 2011). Cities, if they can be said to act, do not do so through solely through municipal governments. Rather, city action is the outcome of multiple organizational actors, it is the product of "urban assemblages" (McCann and Ward 2011). In this ironic sense, city making, as a global field, also supplies its own "organizational myths" (Meyer and Rowan 1977) to mask its own operation. The notion, therefore, that cities can actively portray themselves as exciting places of lifestyle in order to attract talented individuals who can then contribute to economic growth of that city, is also one major meta-narrative which mask the operations of city making in the contemporary age.

The institutionalist city making perspective observes and analyses this account as a product of historical social construction. Here, the institutionalist city making perspective shares an affinity with realist political economy approaches in that both see such narratives as problematic, rather than accepting them uncritically as real descriptions of society and urban change. However, the key difference is this: in the political economy approach, economic (and sometimes political) elites are promoting these myths in order to drive global capitalism; in contrast to that, in the institutionalist account, there is no economic base, and city making is rarely simply an outcome of pure economic or capitalist intentions:

> This institutionalist emphasis on rationalization turns the discourse of rationality on its head: it regards action and its formal justifications (in policy and other statements), which are often taken by realists to be prima facie

> evidence of deliberated and rationally calculated intention, as scripts of purposive and instrumentalized intention that carry symbolic, ritualized, and ceremonial importance. (Drori 2008:452)

What are some of the advantages of the institutionalist approach to city making? First of all, it problematizes the belief that cities are primarily shaped by economic processes and actors. This is not to say that capitalists and states are not important actors in the process, or that investment in built urban environments is not driven by economic considerations – they are. However, it is hard to see how economic processes and actors could possibly work except within the global field of city making co-constructed by diverse organizational actors and the experts who are involved in rationalization activities. Without media reporting on middle class gentrification, or the identification of a viable global middle class consumer market through market studies, it is unlikely that real estate developers would ever risk millions of dollars of capital in risky investments. Without consultants to prescribe creative city strategies to municipal governments, or the organizational networks formed between city makers, it is difficult to imagine how urban regeneration strategies would quickly become so similar all over the world.

The second benefit is to see the process of diffusion and adoption of the global middle class as a reference point for diverse, yet somewhat isomorphic organizations. Thus, even economic actors are embedded within a larger environment of city making, populated by diverse organizational and constituted actors, empowered by rationalized models of urban development and expectations of cities and their potential users. Despite the diversity of organizations, the process of diffusion and adoption of the global middle class as a common reference point serves to give a degree of coherence to city making. The third advantage of the institutionalist approach is that it is a reflexive framework capable of second order observation and self-observation. Put crudely, political economy perspectives focus

on the ways that corporations and states actively shape cities. The institutionalist perspective attempts to go beyond economic and political actors, and looks at how city making is constituted via the global middle class: global middle class experts observe the global middle class consumer lifestyle. While realist perspectives sees reification of cities as actors as a methodological problem, the institutionalist approach sees that as a verification of its own descriptions. Finally, the institutionalist approach recognizes that the possibility of its own observation is also contingent; that this thesis is itself an expert discourse on cities, made possible with the expansion of universities and the growth of the legitimacy of urban research.

In summary, I believe that this work's focus on the centrality of city visions revolving around consumption, leisure and lifestyle in city making demonstrates the viability of an intuitionalist approach to city making and urban studies more generally. There are quite a few directions for further research that such an approach suggests. For one, building a more general theory of city making would require identifying major city makers in other periods of history, and how city making changed according to institutional environments and historical contexts. Second, the definition of the global middle class, which in the current work was limited to lifestyle/consumer and the professional expert roles, can be further expanded. There are other roles of the middle class that have a long history in sociology, especially as champions of democracy and supporters of democratic movements. Could the members of the contemporary global middle class generate movements that directly affect cities on the political level? And if so, what organizational form would such movements adopt? Finally, while the notion of a professional expert role gives us a general purchase on the role of global middle class in city making, it might be also too general to guide more detailed empirical investigation of city making and city makers. Researchers undertaking studies of the latter sort would want to examine

and compare different types of city makers and their organizational capacities. How is the city making role of media organizations and journalists, for instance, different from the city making role of an urban economic commission filled with ranks of transport economists? These are surely interesting questions to consider.

Finally, I want to end with a note of caution regarding global city visions. City making is a complex and heterogeneous field that is populated by diverse actors with divergent interests, and thus the notion of global middle class does not imply that all cities in the world will inevitably converge toward the same form. Rather, the idea of the global city, based in global middle class lifestyle and consumption, has become a global reference point for all cities in the world. City makers can choose to disagree with this vision, but they cannot avoid it. It is in this sense that we can speak of the consumer and lifestyle global city as an institutional project of global modernity (Wittrock 2000). The next step for urban research would be to examine the relationship between this project and other emerging city visions that have gained attention in recent years, such as sustainable cities and smart cities (Cohen 2012).

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