

READER

PROBLEMÁTICAS DO MUNDO CONTEMPORÂNEO

ano I
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Unidade Curricular**da Pós-graduação CURADORIA, CULTURA URBANA E PRÁTICAS ESPACIAIS**

Nada existe isolado. A compreensão do mundo atual depende de um conjunto de relações complexas e mutáveis com a política, sociologia, filosofia, economia e tecnologia, dentro de culturas e contextos. A unidade curricular PROBLEMÁTICAS DO MUNDO CONTEMPORÂNEO fornece o equipamento intelectual, competências de investigação e ferramentas analíticas para entender, articular e desafiar o papel de problemáticas como produto de sistemas mais amplos, ligados a questões sociais e planetárias, bem como à nossa dependência de mecanismos de troca. Estes fatores influenciam a produção, experiência e compreensão do mundo. Através de uma série de leituras, a unidade apoia os estudantes numa exploração temática da história e teoria, de formas e forças contextuais das quais uma série de problemáticas contemporâneas emergem como produto de uma cultura específica.

Assim, esta unidade oferece a oportunidade de (re)pensar manobras de orquestração global, através do questionar o modo como, durante este século, se foram desenvolvendo e problematizando problemas do Mundo Urbano e Industrializado.

Docente:

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PART I

globalização, polarização, comunicação e identidade

The Global City: Introducing a Concept

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EACH PHASE IN THE LONG history of the world economy raises specific questions about the particular conditions that make it possible. One of the key properties of the current phase is the ascendance of information technologies and the associated increase in the mobility and liquidity of capital. There have long been cross-border economic processes—flows of capital, labor, goods, raw materials, tourists. But to a large extent these took place within the inter-state system, where the key articulators were national states. The international economic system was ensconced largely in this inter-state system. This has changed rather dramatically over the last decade as a result of privatization, deregulation, the opening up of national economies to foreign firms, and the growing participation of national economic actors in global markets.

It is in this context that we see a re-scaling of what are the strategic territories that articulate the new system. With the partial unbundling or at least weakening of the national as a spatial unit due to privatization and deregulation and the associated strengthening of globalization come conditions for the ascendance of other spatial units or scales. Among these are the sub-national, notably cities and regions; cross-border regions encompassing two or more sub-national entities; and supra-national entities, i.e. global digitalized markets and free trade blocs. The dynamics and processes that get territorialized at these diverse scales can in principle be regional, national or global.

I locate the emergence of global cities in this context and against this range of instantiations of strategic scales and spatial units.¹ In the case of global cities, the dynamics and processes that get territorialized are global.

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ELEMENTS IN A NEW CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURE

The globalization of economic activity entails a new type of organizational structure. To capture this theoretically and empirically requires, correspondingly, a new type of conceptual architecture.³ Constructs such as the global city and the global-city region are, in my reading, important elements in this new conceptual architecture. The activity of naming these elements is part of the conceptual work. There are other closely linked terms which could conceivably have been used: world cities,⁴ “supervilles,”² informational city.⁵ Thus, choosing how to name a configuration has its own substantive rationality.

When I first chose to use global city,⁶ I did so knowingly—it was an attempt to name a difference: the specificity of the global as it gets structured in the contemporary period. I did not chose the obvious alternative, world city, because it had precisely the opposite attribute: it referred to a type of city which we have seen over the centuries,⁷ in earlier periods in Asia⁸ and in European colonial centers.⁹ In this regard, it can be said that most of today’s major global cities are also world cities, but that there may well be some global cities today that are not world cities in the full, rich sense of that term. This is partly an empirical question; further, as the global economy expands and incorporates additional cities into the various networks, it is quite possible that the answer to that particular question will vary. Thus, the fact that Miami has developed global city functions beginning in the late 1980s does not make it a world city in that older sense of the term.¹⁰

THE GLOBAL CITY MODEL: ORGANIZING HYPOTHESES

There are seven hypotheses through which I organized the data and the theorization of the global city model. I will discuss each of these briefly as a way of producing a more precise representation.

First, the geographic dispersal of economic activities that marks globalization, along with the simultaneous integration of such geographically dispersed activities, is a key factor feeding the growth and importance of central corporate functions. The more dispersed a firm’s operations across different countries, the more complex and strategic its central functions—that is, the work of managing, coordinating, servicing, financing a firm’s network of operations.

Second, these central functions become so complex that increasingly the headquarters of large global firms outsource them: they buy a share of their central functions from highly specialized service firms—accounting, legal, public relations, programming, telecommunications, and other such services. While even ten years ago the