

Saskia Sassen

1. Saskia Sassen is a leading sociologist renowned for her work on globalisation, urbanisation, migration, and the evolving concept of state sovereignty. Her research illustrates how globalisation influences cities, economies, politics, and social inequalities. She is especially well-known for introducing the idea of the Global City, a concept that has significantly impacted urban studies and international political economy.
2. Saskia Sassen, born on January 5, 1949, holds Dutch-American nationality and is a renowned sociologist, economist, and urban theorist. Her main fields include globalisation, urban migration, and international political economy. She is famous for her theory of the global city. Her major works include "The Global City " (1991), " Territory, Authority, Rights " (2006), " Expulsions " (2014), and " Cities in a World Economy " (1994).
3. Sassen's work developed in the late 20th century amid the rapid acceleration of globalisation following the Cold War. During this period, international finance became more integrated, digital communication linked economies, and large cities emerged as command centres of the global economy. She sought to answer key questions: Why do some cities become globally influential? Has globalisation undermined nation-states? Why has inequality risen despite economic growth? And what is the impact on migrants and marginalised groups in a globalised world?
4. Sassen argues that globalisation has not eradicated geography; rather, it involves concentration in particular cities that serve as command centres for the global economy. These cities manage international finance, business services, technology, communication, innovation, and decision-making, making globalisation heavily reliant on urban hubs.

5. Her most influential idea is the concept of the "Global City." A Global City goes beyond simply being a large metropolitan area; it wields a disproportionate influence over the global economy. These cities often serve as financial centres, host the headquarters of multinational corporations, and act as key legal, banking, and innovation hubs. They are also centres of advanced producer services.
6. A global city typically features significant financial power with major stock exchanges, international banking, and investment firms, as seen in New York, London, and Tokyo. It also hosts the corporate headquarters of large multinational companies, including global banks, insurance firms, technology companies, and consulting agencies. Additionally, these cities excel in "Advanced Producer Services," such as finance, accounting, advertising, legal consultancy, management consulting, and IT, which support global corporations. They are characterised by "International Connectivity," possessing airports, ports, internet infrastructure, financial networks, and communication hubs. The cities also attract "highly skilled labour," including engineers, scientists, lawyers, economists, researchers, and executives. Lastly, they exert "cultural influence" through fashion, education, media, arts, and entertainment.
7. According to Sassen, the leading global cities are New York City, London, and Tokyo. Later scholars broadened this list to add Singapore, Hong Kong, Paris, Shanghai, and Dubai.
8. Sassen argued that globalisation creates a paradox: although technology enables work anywhere, high-level decision-making remains concentrated in certain cities. Thus, economic decentralisation occurs, yet organisational centralisation persists, with production happening worldwide while strategic control stays localised.
9. Earlier theories emphasised nation-states. Sassen notes that today, cities often surpass national borders in importance, with many global financial transactions skipping traditional state control. Cities directly interact with global corporations, investors, international organisations, and digital platforms.
10. Regarding "Globalisation and the State," Sassen challenges the notion that globalisation merely destroys the state. Instead, she argues that states undergo transformations. Governments actively implement financial regulations, trade agreements, investment laws, and corporate structures. Therefore, globalisation is driven by states, not replaced by them.

11. The term “Denationalisation,” a key concept by Sassen, refers to certain governments shifting their focus from solely national interests to global markets. Examples include financial regulation, investment policy, international arbitration, and free trade agreements. Although states remain powerful, their priorities are increasingly aligned with global economic integration.
12. Migration is a key aspect of Sassen’s work, and she contends it is deeply connected to globalisation. She highlights factors such as international labour demand, economic inequality, colonial history, foreign investment, global production networks, and conflicts. Consequently, migration is viewed as a structural result of global capitalism rather than just a personal decision.
13. The feminisation of migration, as highlighted by Sassen, includes the growing involvement of women in international migration. Women migrate as domestic workers, nurses, care workers, factory workers, and professionals. She also notes that globalisation has further transformed gendered labour markets.
14. In the informal market, “the informal economy” can cause global cities to produce both wealth and informality. While corporate headquarters are established, there are also street vendors, domestic workers, gig workers, informal settlements, and undocumented labour, illustrating how the formal and informal economies coexist.
15. Global cities form two distinct groups: the winners- CEOs, investors, financial professionals, and technology experts- and the losers, which include low-wage workers, migrants, domestic workers, informal labourers, and homeless populations. This division leads to pronounced urban inequality.
16. In *Expulsions Theory*, presented in his 2014 work *In Expulsions*, Sassen contended that modern capitalism is progressively excluding people from economic and social systems. The various forms of expulsion include forced displacement, land grabbing, environmental degradation, debt crises, mass unemployment, and refugee movements. Expulsion is more severe than ordinary inequality because it forces individuals outside stable social and economic participation.
17. In *'Territory, Authority, Rights'* (2006), Sassen examined how globalisation has altered three fundamental concepts. *'Territory'* is no longer solely governed by national borders, as digital and economic networks reshape spatial organisation. *'Authority'* is now more shared among states, international organisations,

corporations, courts, and financial institutions. 'Rights' increasingly transcend national boundaries through international human rights standards, rules, and global governance.

18. Sassen discusses how digital technology links global markets, facilitates rapid financial flows, opens new economic opportunities, and transforms labour markets and political activism. However, digital infrastructure still relies on physical urban centres like data hubs and financial districts.
19. According to Sassen, globalisation creates polarised cities, with one side featuring luxury housing, corporate headquarters, and financial districts, while the other side includes slums, informal settlements, and low-income neighbourhoods. Consequently, urban development often exacerbates inequality.
20. The main books include -
 - The Global City
 - Cities in a World Economy
 - Guests and Aliens
 - Territory, Authority, Rights
 - Explusions
21. Sassen's work has greatly influenced fields such as globalisation studies, international political economy, urban governance, migration governance, migration studies, comparative politics, public policy, development studies, human geography, and sociology.
22. Critics highlight several issues, including an economic bias, as she tends to prioritise finance over culture or local politics. There is also a perception of 'Western bias' because early analyses mainly focus on New York, London, and Tokyo, possibly overlooking different development paths in the Global South. Additionally, the shifting urban hierarchy is recognised, with cities like Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Dubai emerging rapidly and prompting updates to the original global city models. Lastly, technological progress is acknowledged; some argue that remote work and digital communication could lessen, though not completely eliminate, the need for geographic concentration.
23. Sassen's framework clarifies why cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, and Hyderabad have emerged as hubs for global finance, IT and software services, business process outsourcing, startup ecosystems, international migration, and

advanced producer services. Simultaneously, these cities contend with increasing housing prices, informal employment, and spatial inequality — issues that strongly align with Sassen's unique analytical perspective.

24. Comparison with other thinkers includes -

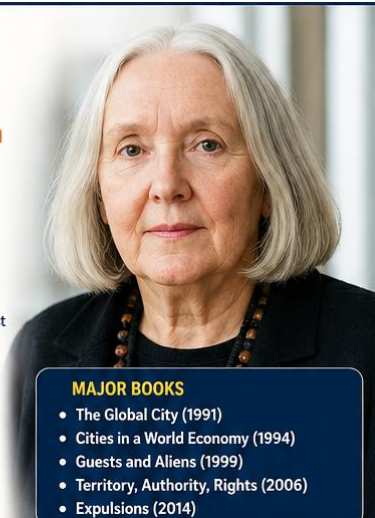
- Manuel Castells discusses the Network Society, emphasising information networks, while Sassen highlights key strategic urban centres. David Harvey's theory centres on 'Capitalism and Urbanisation,' focusing on capital accumulation and class dynamics, whereas Sassen highlights global command functions. Anthony Giddens examines modernity and globalisation, exploring broad social transformations, whereas Sassen concentrates specifically on cities with global networks.
- Sakia Sassen showed that in the age of globalisation, power is now organised through globally connected cities that manage finance, migration, and governance, while also creating new forms of inequality and exclusion.



SASKIA SASSEN

Sociologist | Urban Theorist | Scholar of Globalization

“ In the global city, we see both the concentration of power and the production of deep inequality.”
– Saskia Sassen



Born: January 5, 1949

Nationality: Dutch–American

Profession: Sociologist

Known For: Theory of the Global City

Affiliation: Columbia University, New York

WHO IS SASKIA SASSEN?

Saskia Sassen is one of the world's most influential sociologists. Her work explains how globalization reshapes cities, economies, states, migration and inequalities. She shows that globalization is not placeless—it is organized through strategic cities that command the world economy.

MAJOR BOOKS

- The Global City (1991)
- Cities in a World Economy (1994)
- Guests and Aliens (1999)
- Territory, Authority, Rights (2006)
- Expulsions (2014)

THEORY OF THE GLOBAL CITY

A Global City is a command and control center for the global economy. These cities concentrate advanced producer services, finance, corporate headquarters, information, innovation and specialized labor.

EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL CITIES

 **NEW YORK**
 **LONDON**
 **TOKYO**
 **SINGAPORE**
 **SHANGHAI**

KEY FEATURES OF GLOBAL CITIES

- Financial Power:** Stock exchanges, banks, investment firms.
- Corporate Headquarters:** Decision-making centers of multinational companies.
- Advanced Producer Services:** Finance, legal, accounting, consulting, IT, advertising.
- Global Connectivity:** Airports, ports, internet infrastructure, communication hubs.
- Highly Skilled Labour:** Attracts professionals, managers, experts from around the world.
- Cultural Influence:** Shapes media, education, arts, fashion and lifestyles.

CENTRAL IDEAS

- Cities Matter More Than States**
Globalization is organized through cities that connect directly with global markets, corporations and institutions.
- Denationalization**
State functions increasingly oriented toward global markets rather than exclusively national interests.
- Migration**
Migration is a structural outcome of globalization, inequality, labor demand and historical forces.
- Expulsions**
Modern capitalism excludes people through displacement, land grabbing, debt, unemployment, environmental degradation and violence.

GLOBAL INEQUALITY

WINNERS

- CEOs, Executives
- Investors
- Financial Professionals
- Tech Experts
- Global Managers

LOSERS

- Low-wage Workers
- Migrants
- Informal Workers
- Homeless Populations
- Marginalized Communities

“ The global city produces immense wealth, but also deepens inequality and exclusion.” ”

TERRITORY, AUTHORITY, RIGHTS (2006)

- Territory:** No longer confined to national borders; shaped by global flows and networks.
- Authority:** Shared among states, corporations, international organizations, courts and financial institutions.
- Rights:** Increasingly operate across borders through international norms and global governance.

RELEVANCE TODAY

Her ideas help us understand issues like:

- ✓ Rise of megacities
- ✓ Global finance and digital economy
- ✓ Migration and refugee crises
- ✓ Urban inequality and informal economy
- ✓ Transformation of the modern state
- ✓ Smart cities and global governance

CONTRIBUTIONS

- ★ Redefined how we understand globalization by focusing on cities.
- ★ Connected urbanization, migration, economy and state transformation.
- ★ Highlighted the dark side of globalization—inequality, exclusion and expulsions.
- ★ Influenced Sociology, Political Science, Geography, Urban Studies and International Relations.

★ ONE-LINE CONCLUSION

Saskia Sassen showed that in the age of globalization, power is concentrated in globally connected cities that drive the world economy while producing new forms of inequality and exclusion.

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