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## **Mega-Cities in theoretical perspective**

**by Peter Taylor**  
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Session 9, Workshop 9.1: „Rural-Urban Migrations in Mega Cities and ‚Mega-Slums“  
Our Common Future, Essen, November 5th, 2010

Our Common Future, Hannover/Essen, 2-6 November 2010 ([www.ourcommonfuture.de](http://www.ourcommonfuture.de))



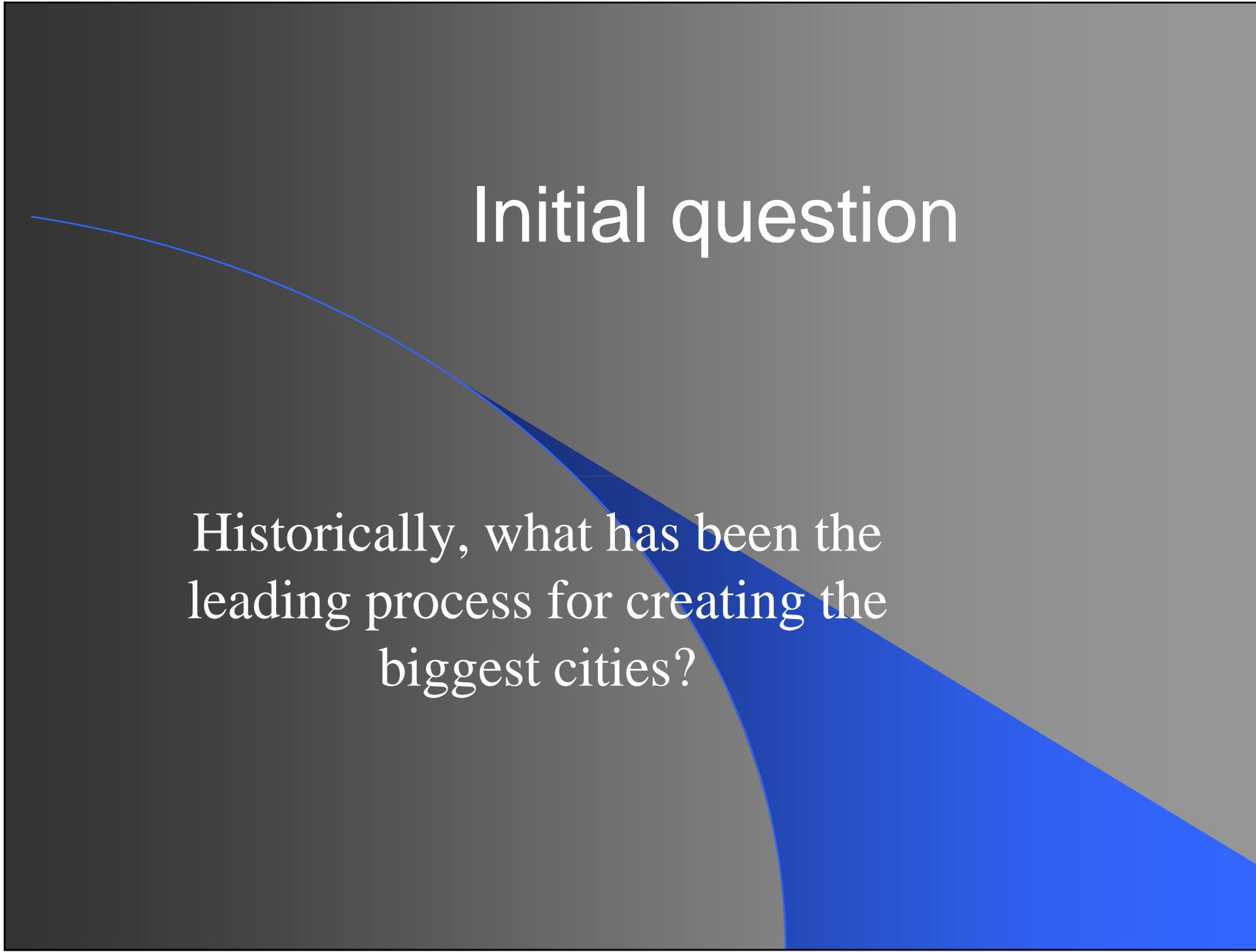
# Mega-cities in theoretical perspective

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# Initial question



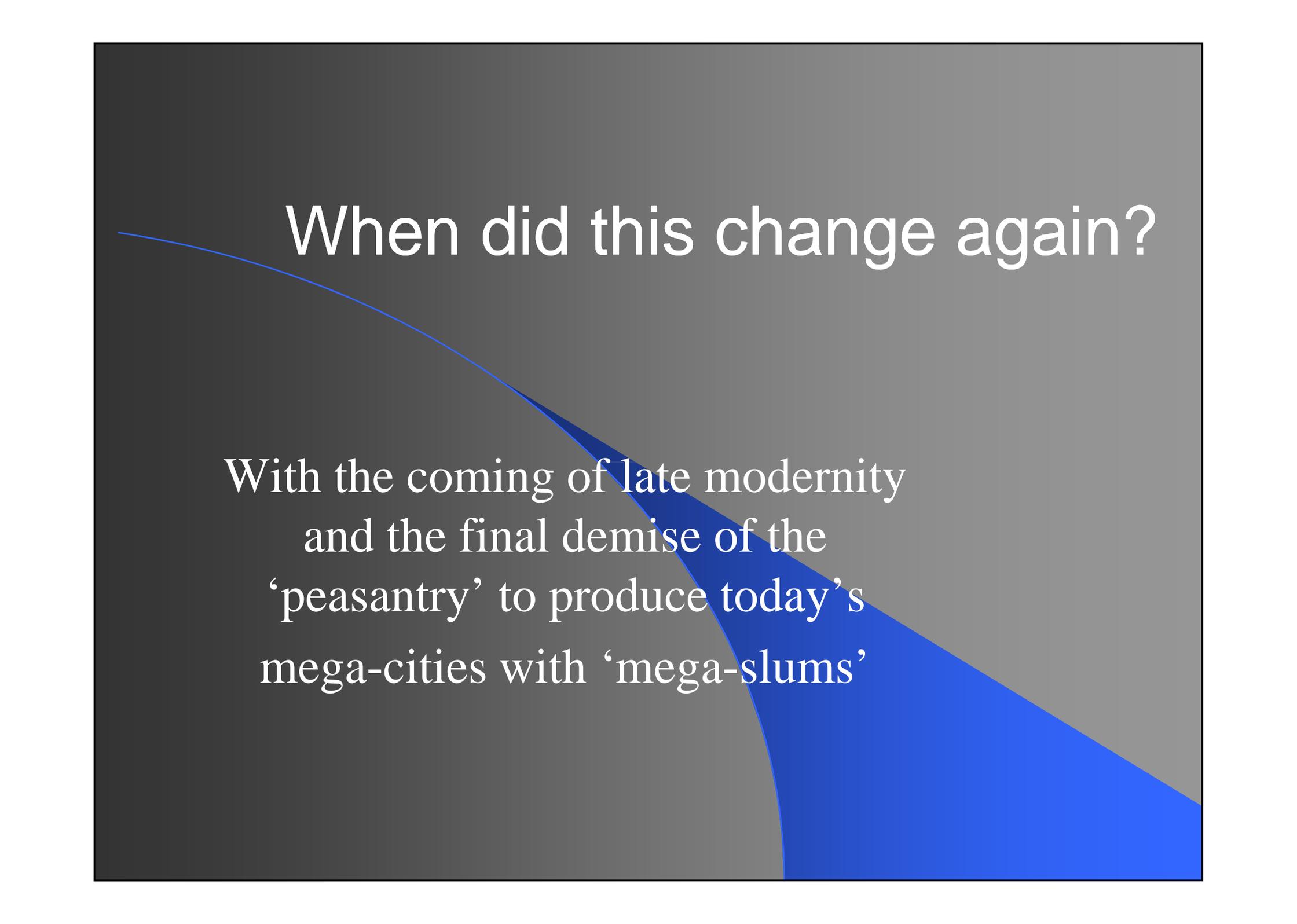
Historically, what has been the leading process for creating the biggest cities?

# Answer

Political power – the largest cities  
have traditionally been the capital  
cities of great empires

# When did this change?

With the coming of the modern world-system when economic processes created great cities to challenge imperial capitals



# When did this change again?

With the coming of late modernity  
and the final demise of the  
'peasantry' to produce today's  
mega-cities with 'mega-slums'

# Three urban growth processes

1. Political-led process
2. Economic-led process
3. Demographic-led process

*As processes they occur simultaneously but their dominance changes historically*

# Three migration tendencies

1. Political-led -> push-pull factor balance
2. Economic-led -> pull factor dominant
3. Demographic-led -> push factor dominant

*Focusing on 2. & 3., I argue that we need a combination of Jacobs' city-economy model and Wallerstein's world-system analysis to understand the turnaround*

# From Jacobs

She provides a generic understanding of cities and how they mould the world to meet their needs ('city-ness')

This is a world of city-regions, economic clusters, networks and supply regions

Key concept: explosive city growth

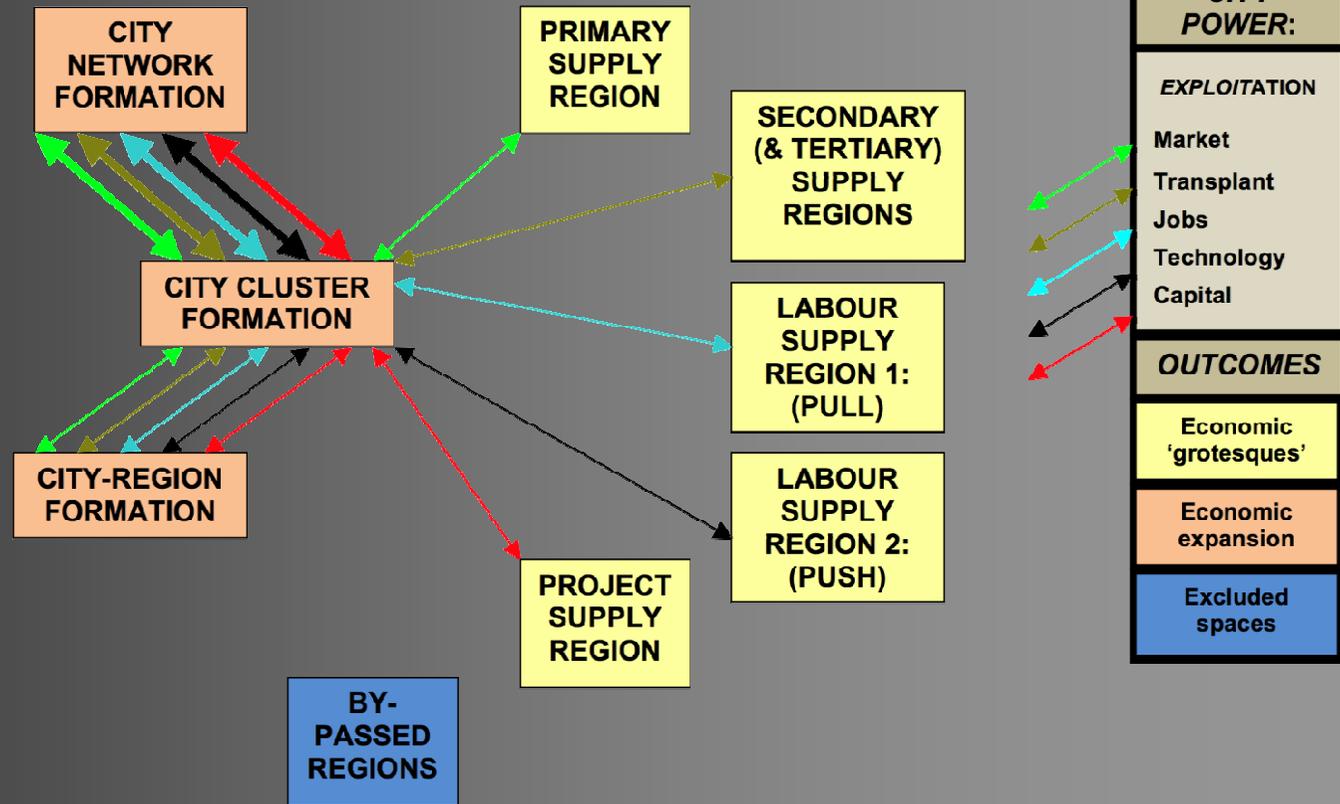
# From Wallerstein

He provides the specificity of the modern experience as a dynamic modern world-system

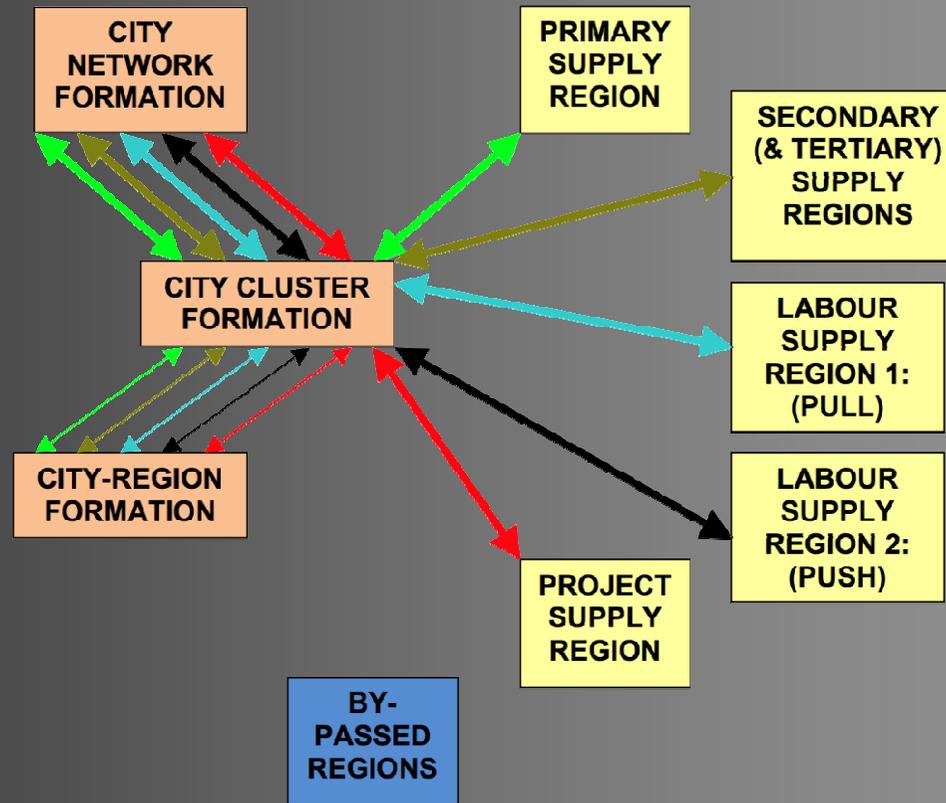
This is a world of economic cycles and uneven economic development (core--making and periphery-making)

Key concept: ceaseless capital accumulation

# PROCESSES OF CITY-NESS

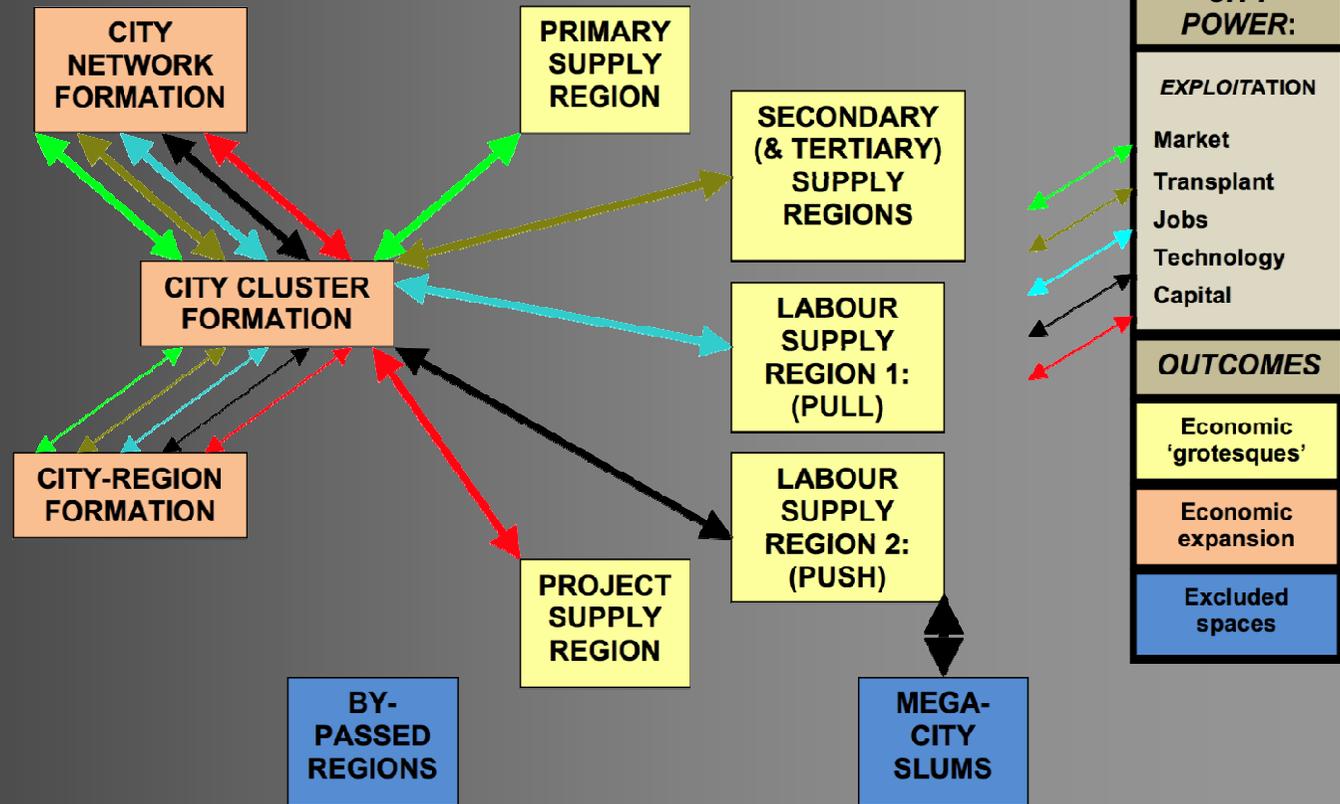


# PROCESSES OF CITY-NESS



KEY
<b>CITY POWER:</b>
<i>EXPLOITATION</i>
Market
Transplant
Jobs
Technology
Capital
<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Economic 'grotesques'
Economic expansion
Excluded spaces

# PROCESSES OF CITY-NESS



# Interpretation and thoughts

1. Two city processes enhancing creativity  
*(world city network formation and mega-city slum formation (economic growth and economic survival))*
2. Chinese labour imperialism *(the last great imperialism of the modern world-system)*
3. Resilient cities and dysfunctional states  
*(from Plan A on sustainability to Plan B on resilience)*