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Mega-Cities in theoretical perspective

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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

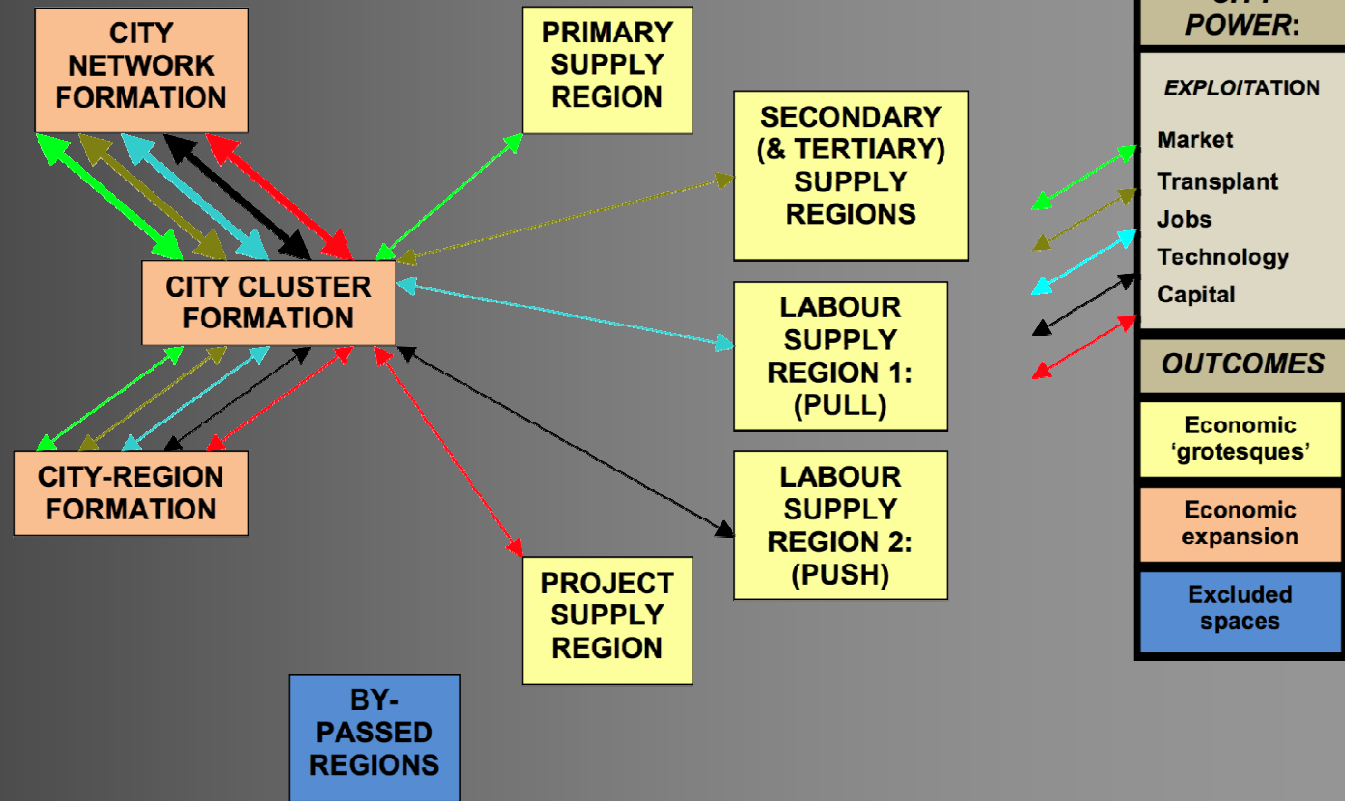
From Wallerstein

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

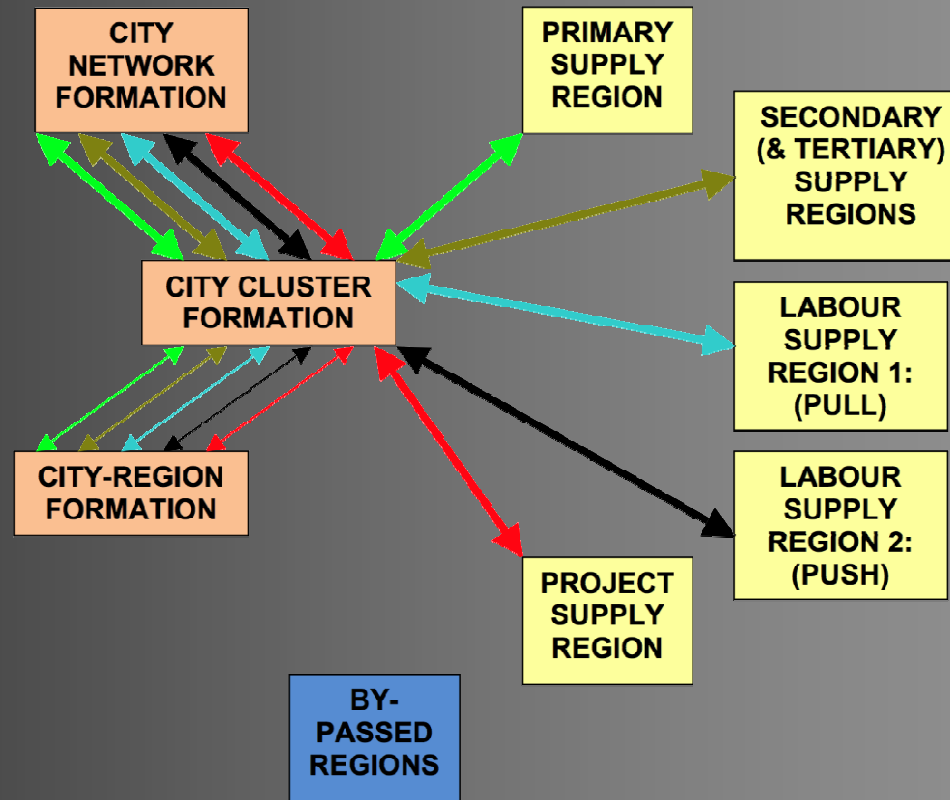
This is a world of economic cycles and uneven economic development (core--making and periphery-making)

Key concept: ceaseless capital accumulation

PROCESSES OF CITY-NESS



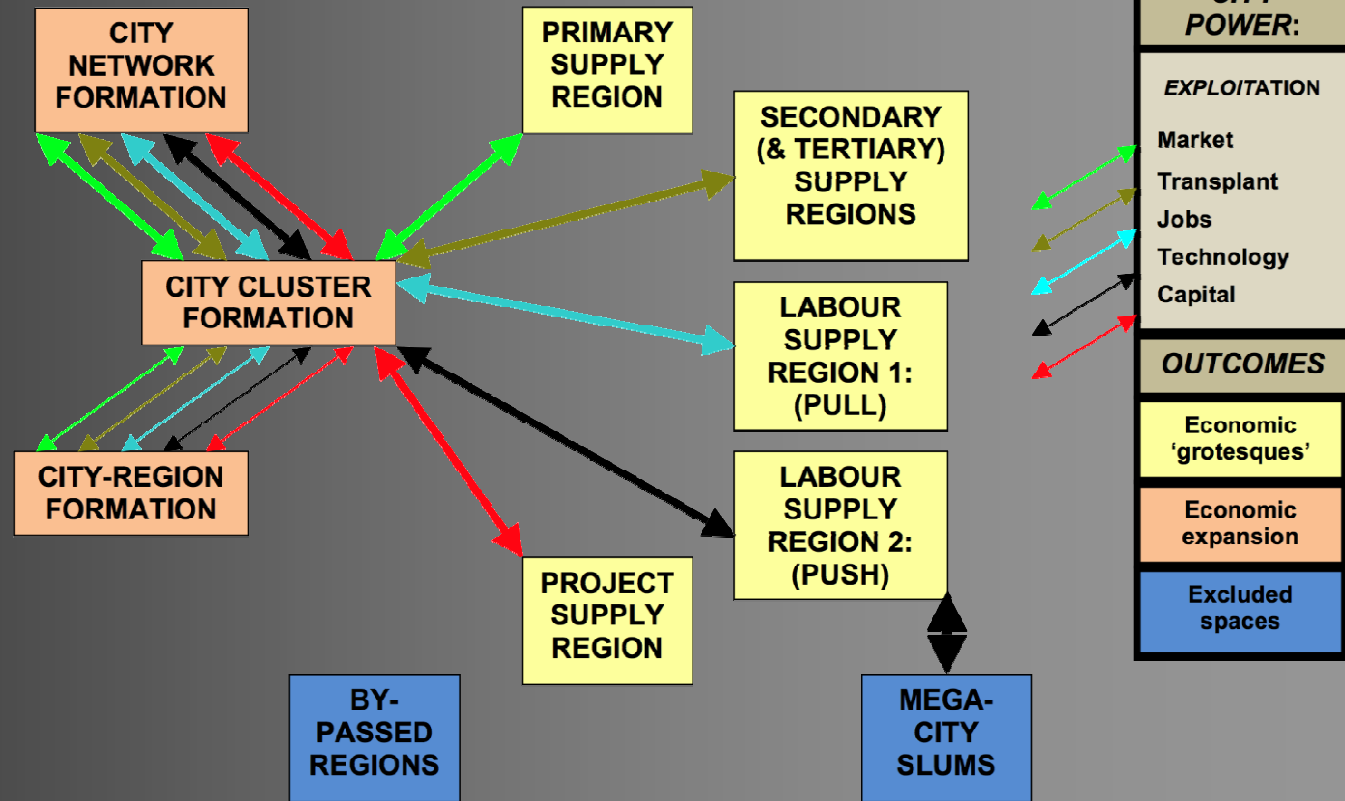
PROCESSES OF CITY-NESS



KEY
CITY POWER:
<i>EXPLOITATION</i>
Market
Transplant
Jobs
Technology
Capital
OUTCOMES
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)