

The Diversity of Megacities. A sociological perspective



Norbert Gestring

Jacobs University
Bremen, 22.11.2011

- 1) Megacities and other types of cities
- 2) Sociological perspectives on cities
- 3) Do megacities make a difference?

What is a City?

- Statistical Definitions
 - Municipalities with a population of 2.000 and more inhabitants (London conference on statistics [1887]);
 - Big/large cities more than 100.000 inhabitants;
 - Megacities: city-regions (agglomerations) with more than 10 million inhabitants (United Nations)

Typologies of Cities

- The medieval *European City* in contrast to the Oriental City (Weber) or – today – the European City in contrast to the American City (Wacquant).
- Shrinking cities – growing cities (Häussermann/Siebel)
- Industrial city – postmodern city
- Global City (World City)
 - Economic definition based on the specific functions of a city in a globalising world (Friedman; Sassen)
 - Features: concentration of headquarters of transnational companies and concentration of finance industries

Typologies of Cities

- Global Cities / World Cities
(Globalization and World City Research Network)

Alpha Cities

London, New York, Tokyo, Paris, Chicago, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Milan, Singapore

Beta Cities

San Francisco, Sydney, Toronto, Zurich, Brussels, Madrid, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Moscow, Seoul

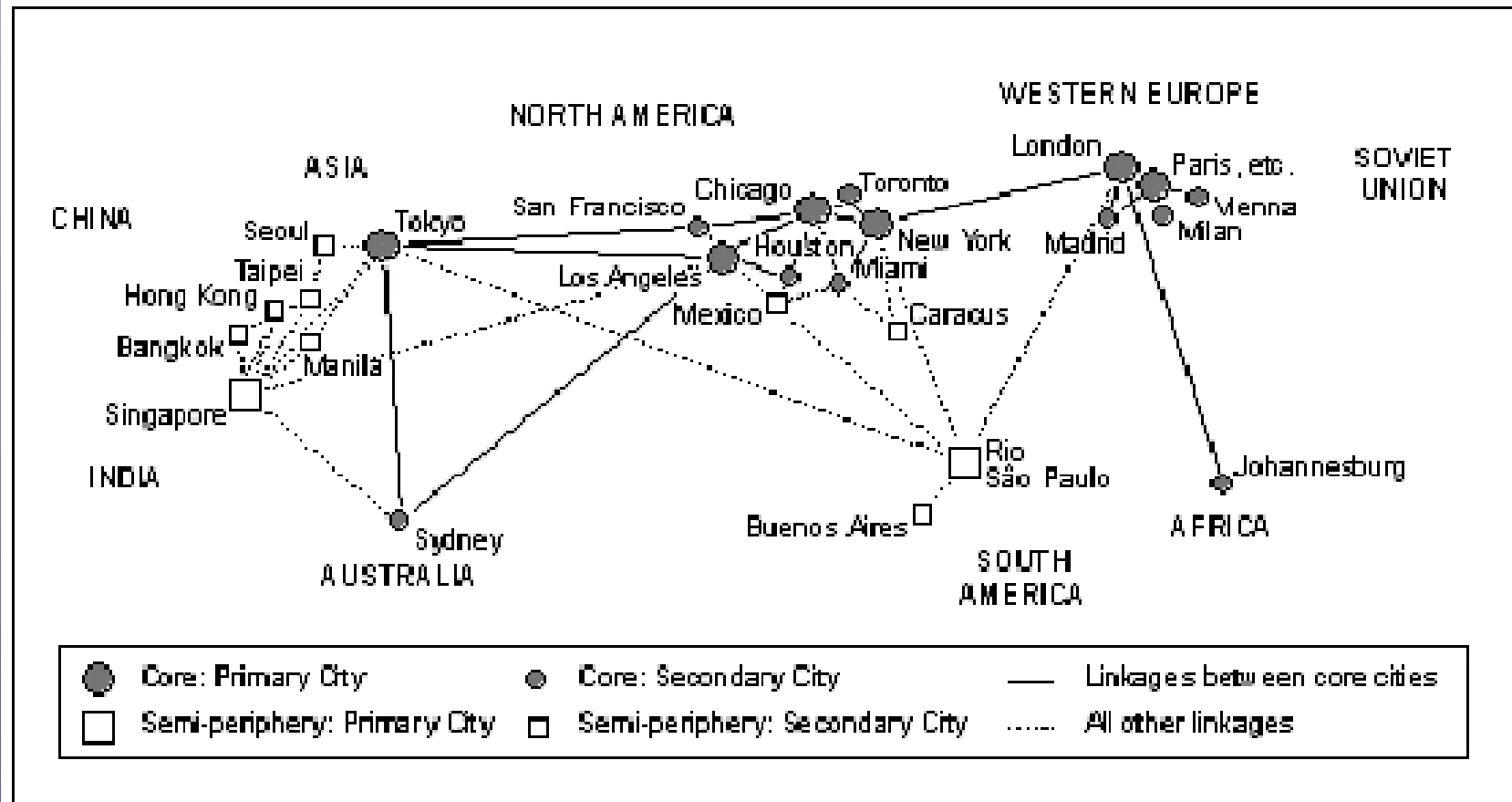
Gamma Cities

Amsterdam, Boston, Caracas, Dallas, Düsseldorf, Geneva, Houston, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Melbourne, Osaka, Prague, Santiago, Taipei, Washington DC, Bangkok, Beijing, Montreal, Rome, Stockholm, Warsaw, Atlanta, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Miami, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Munich, Shanghai

Source: www.gwac.loboro.uk

1) Megacities and other Types of Cities

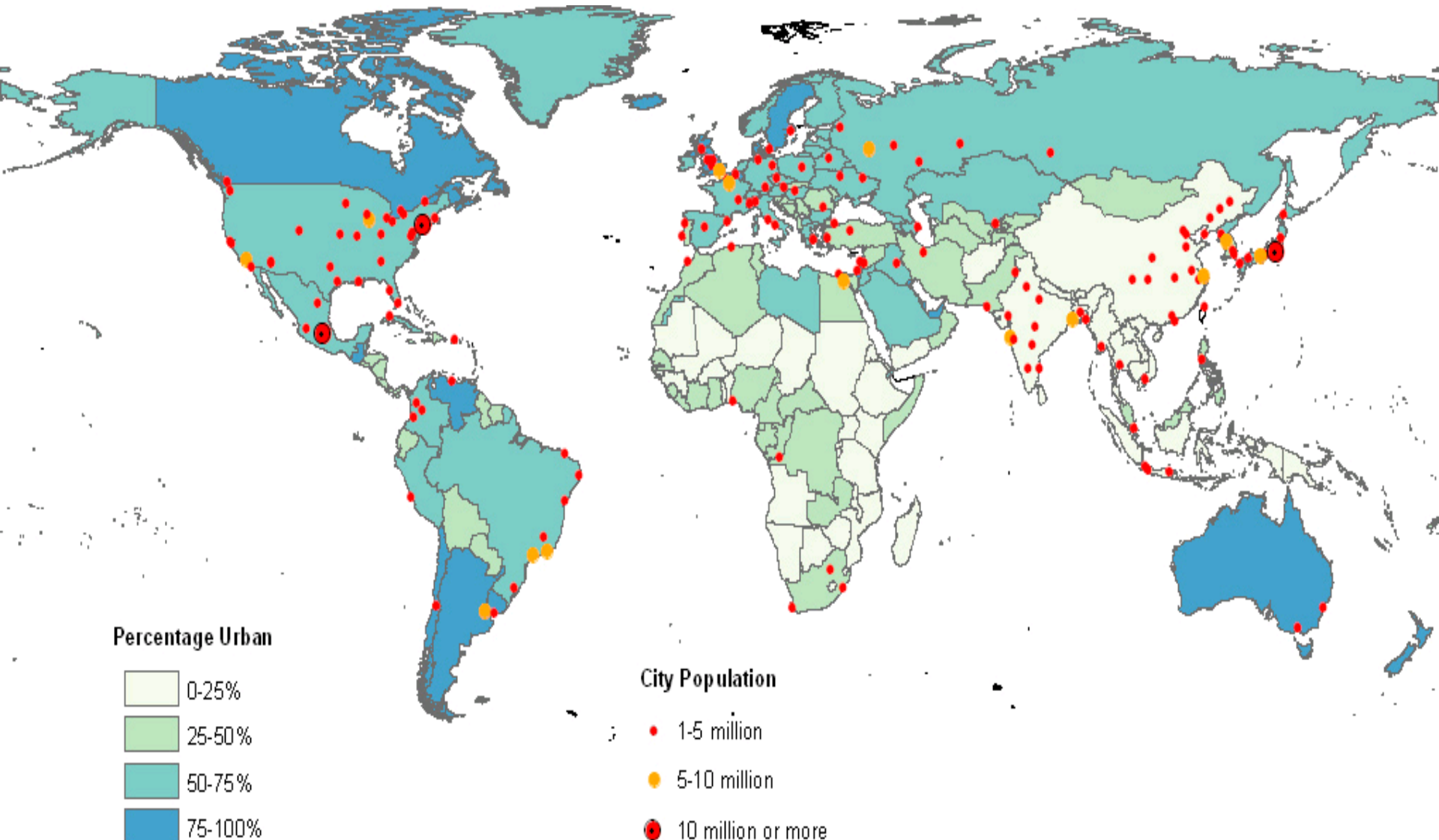
The hierarchy of the world cities (Friedman 1986)



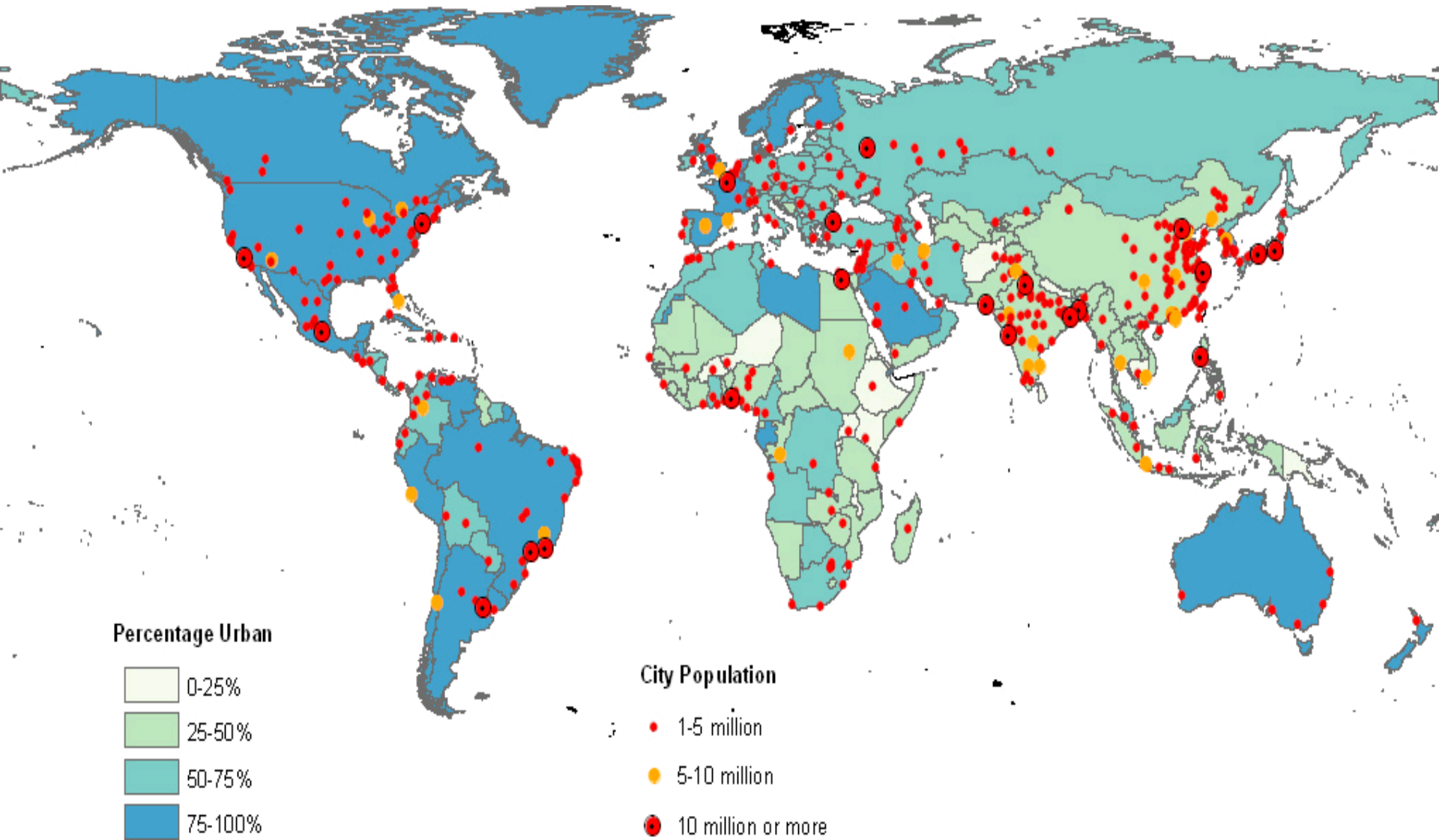
- Global Cities / World Cities
 - Disputed consequences:
 - a) destinations of migrants,
 - b) polarisation of the income distribution (Sassen; Hamnett),
 - c) increasing residential segregation

- Megacities
 - Demographic definition based on the numbers of inhabitants (originally 5, than 8 and now 10 million)

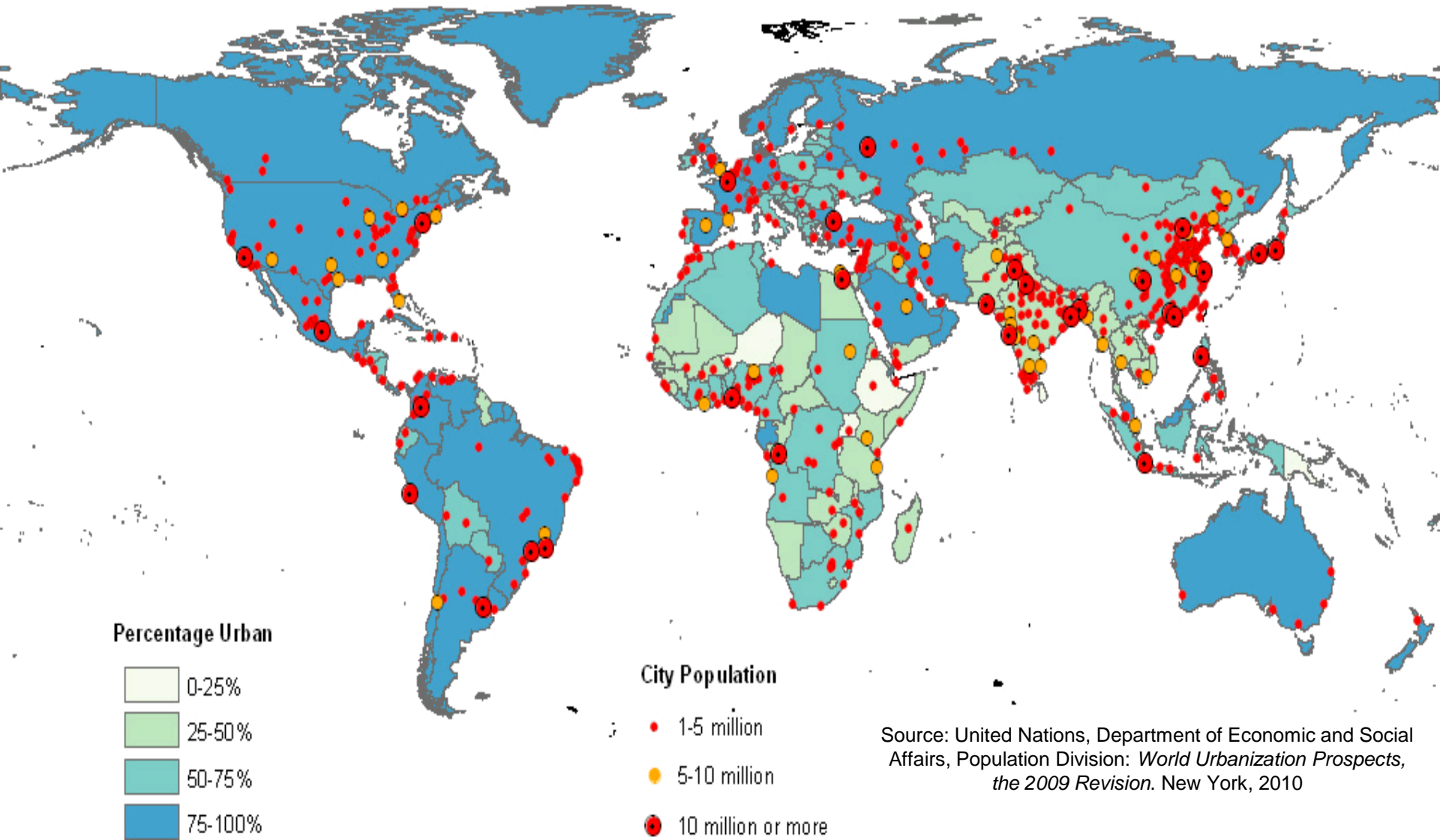
Urban Agglomerations, 1975



Urban Agglomerations, 2009

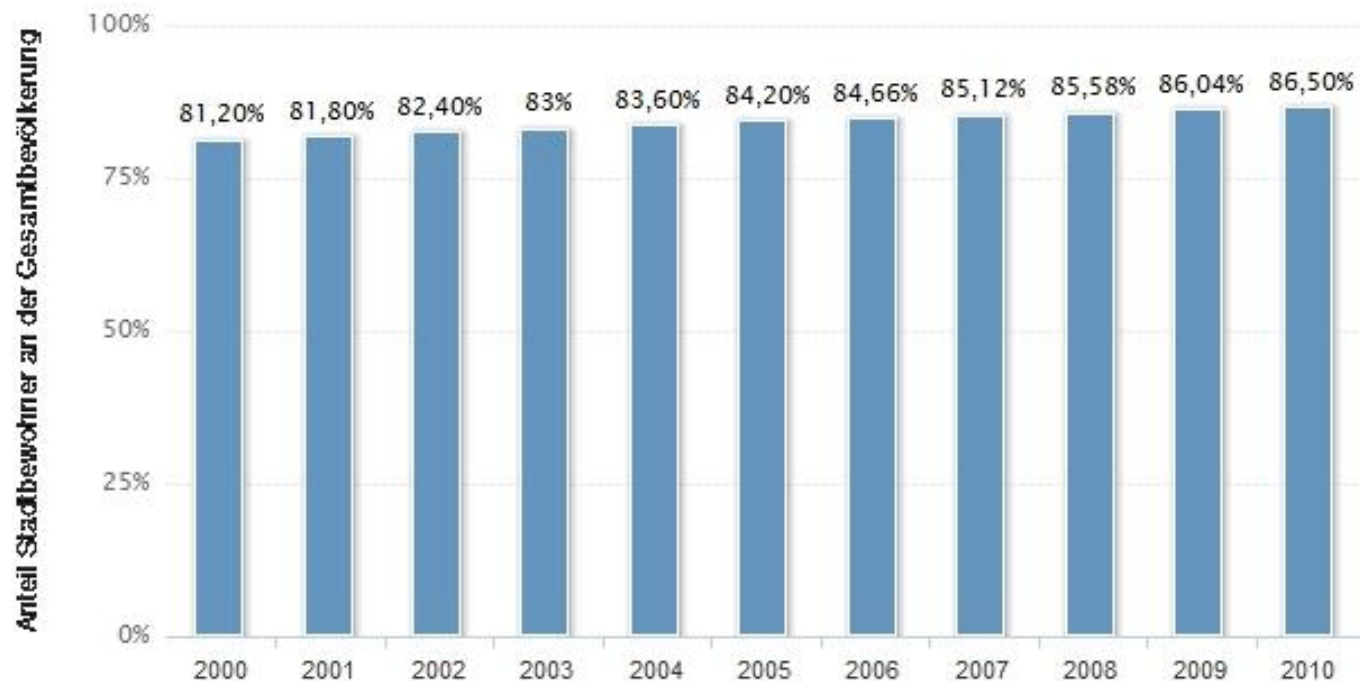


Urban Agglomerations, 2025



1) Megacities and other Types of Cities

Brasilien: Grad der Urbanisierung von 2000 bis 2010



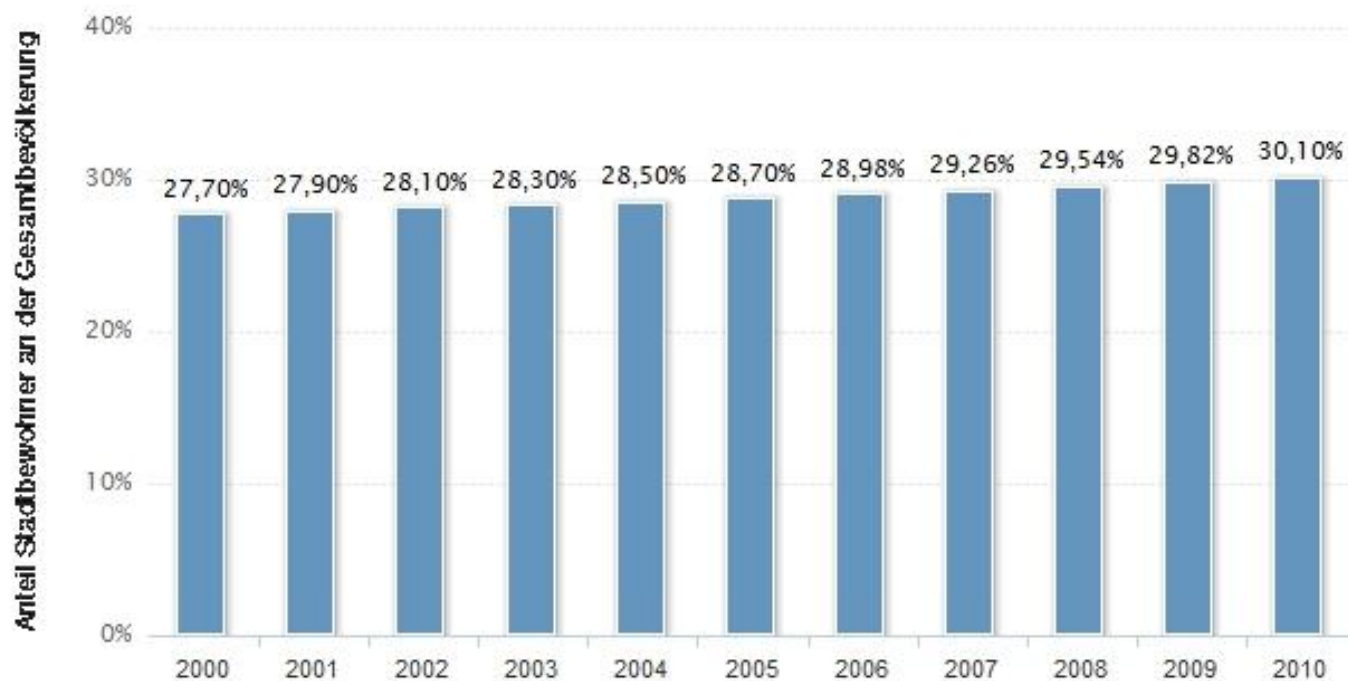
i Brasilien; World Bank

Quelle: World Bank

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1) Megacities and other Types of Cities

Indien: Grad der Urbanisierung von 2000 bis 2010



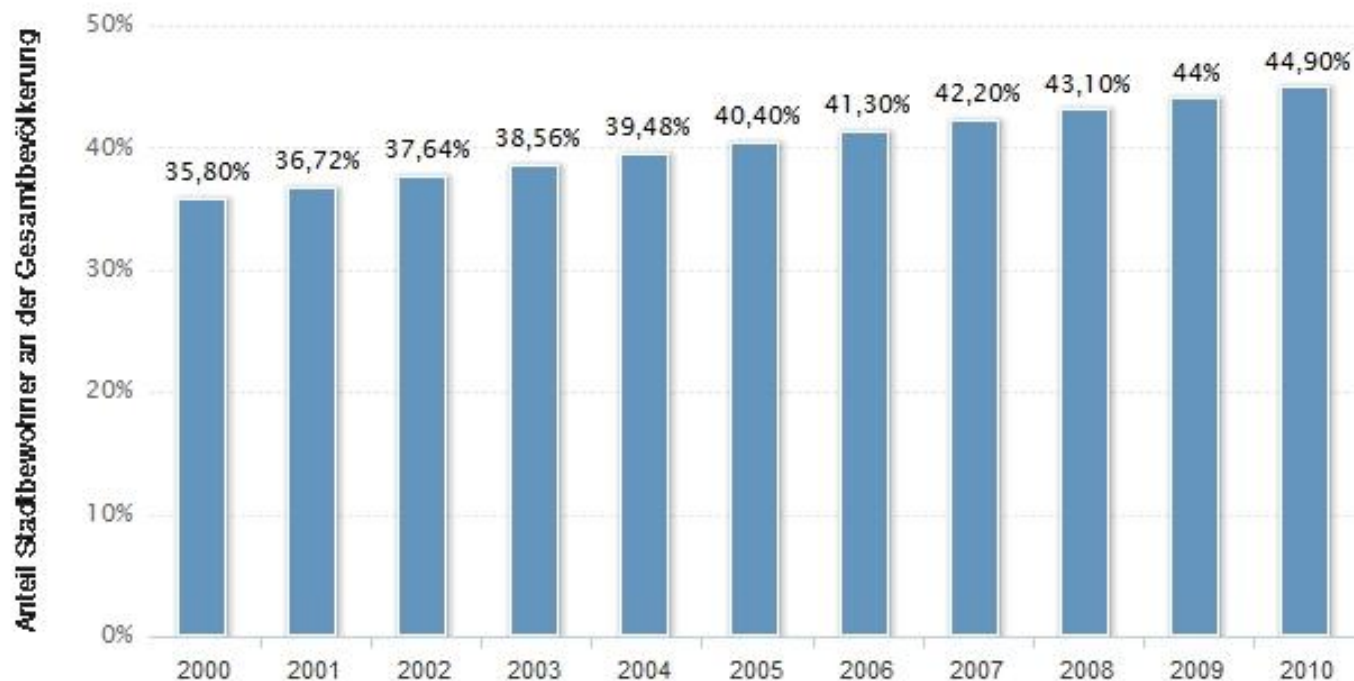
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1) Megacities and other Types of Cities

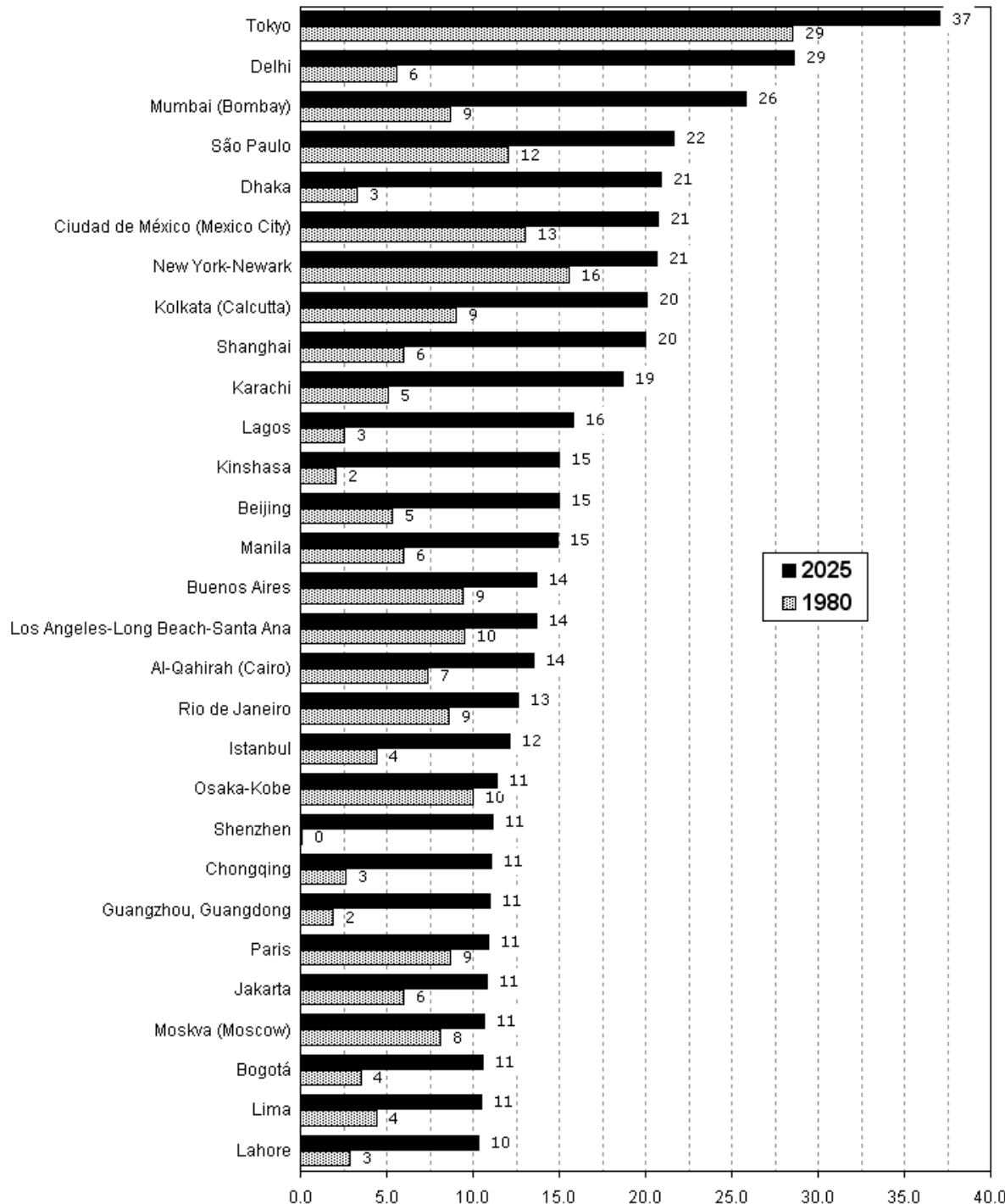
China: Grad der Urbanisierung von 2000 bis 2010



i China; World Bank

Quelle: World Bank

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Population of the 29 urban agglomerations that are expected to become megacities in 2025

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2009 Revision*. New York, 2010

2) Sociological perspectives on cities

"Sociology is the study of human social life, groups and societies. (...) The scope of sociology is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of passing encounters between individuals in the street up to the investigation of world-wide social processes". (Giddens)

- Micro-level: "individuals in the street"
- Macro-level: "world-wide social processes"
- Meso-level: cities and neighbourhoods;
= a level between the small institutions and the large national and international organisations

Classical approaches of (urban) sociology

- Opposition of cities and countryside
 - Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society

Community: groupings based on feelings of togetherness and on mutual bonds, e.g. families and villages in pre-modern rural areas

Society: instrumental relationships according individual aims in an urban surrounding of a capitalist country

- Highly visible are the *judgements* that are associated with the *good* relations that are based on the community and the *bad* ones in urban societies – one example for the conservative criticism of big cities (anti urbanism)

Classical approaches

- Max Weber's definition of the European city in the Middle Ages:

“To develop into a city-commune, a settlement had to be of the non-agricultural-commercial type, at least to a relative extent, and to be equipped with the following features: 1. a fortification; 2. a market; 3. its own court of law and, at least in part, autonomous law; 4. an associational structure (*Verbandscharakter*) and, connected therewith, and 5. at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, which includes administration by authorities in whose appointment the burghers could in some form participate“ (Weber 1922).
- The city is defined in opposition to the countryside (and the European city in contrast to the Oriental city)

Classical approaches

- Georg Simmel investigated the behaviour of city dwellers in the public sphere

In his essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (Simmel 1903) he characterised the urban dweller with attributes like “intellectuality” and “indifference” – consequence of the “money economy” and the conditions in modern cities

“The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli.” (Simmel 1903)

- The mind of the city dweller is contrasted with the mind of villagers.

Urban and rural areas

- From urban-rural opposition (in the classical approaches) to an urban-rural continuum
- Industrialisation and urbanisation result in a harmonisation of living conditions: “Urbanisation of the society” = even villagers adopted the urban way of life

Subjects of urban sociology

- Social structures and inequality
 - Ways of life and life-styles
 - Conditions of living of social groups
 - Integration of migrants
 - Participation of different groups in political topics
 - etc.
- All these are subjects of sociology – but with an urban perspective
- The role of cities for the developments of societies,
 - the concrete conditions of living in different types of cities and neighbourhoods

3) Do megacities make a difference?

- What are the specific problems and challenges of megacities?
- Does the size of cities matter?

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Megacities as centres of global change

geo-ecological change:	e.g. through natural hazards, air-, water- and soil pollution, sea-level rise, global warming, urban heat islands, bio-connection
geo-economic change:	e.g. through economic globalisation, industrial competition, activities of transnational companies, new labour division, transformation processes
geo-social change:	e.g. through (inter)national migration, empowerment of marginalised groups, urban ethnicity, new urban epidemics, global life styles
geo-cultural change:	e.g. through organisation of global places, globalised media, social movements, new cultural diversity, transnational social scapes
geo-political change:	e.g. through conflicts and power (im)balances, globally acting NGO networks, human rights movements, global regulation, security and stability

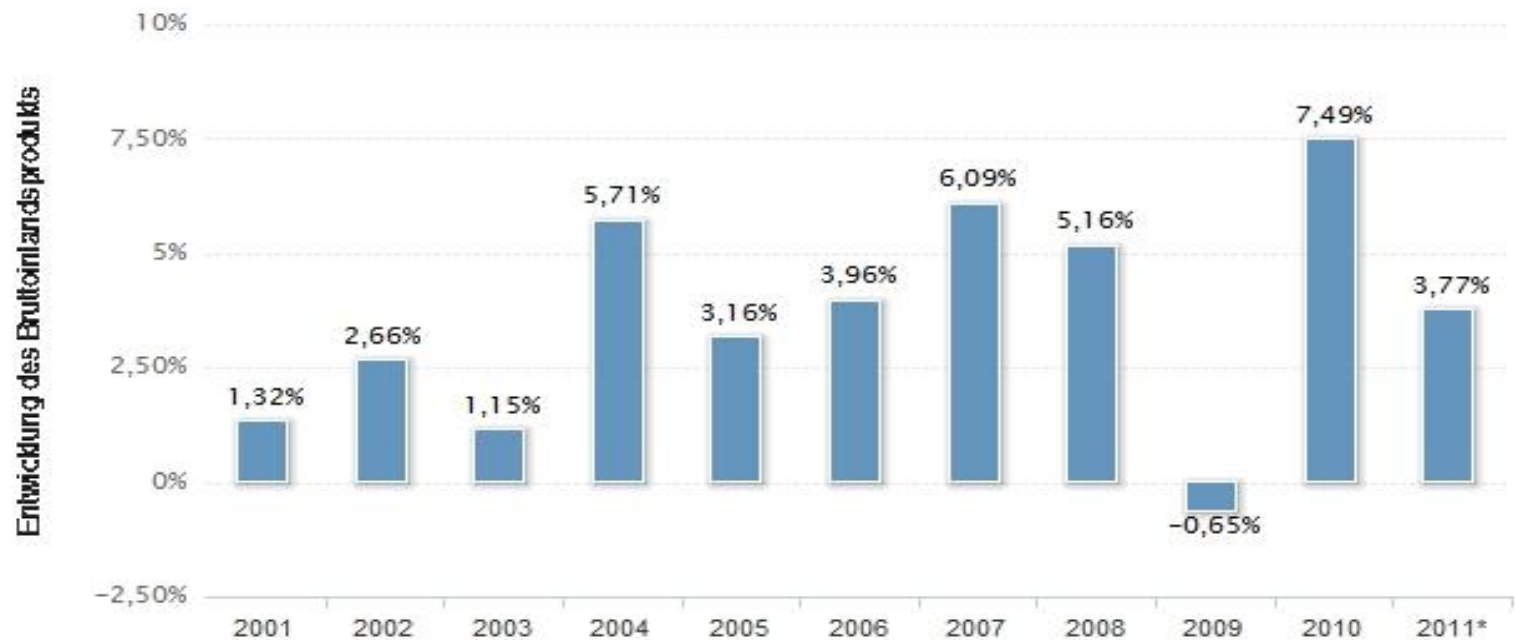
3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 1: There are great differences in the capacities of megacities to deal with these challenges

- Speed of population growth
- Political governance
- Degree of industrialisation
- Economic development
 - Rich countries, poor countries (less and least developed)
 - “Emerging nations” or NIC (newly industrialised countries)

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Brasilien: Jährliches Wachstum des realen Bruttoinlandsprodukts (BIP) von 2001 bis 2011



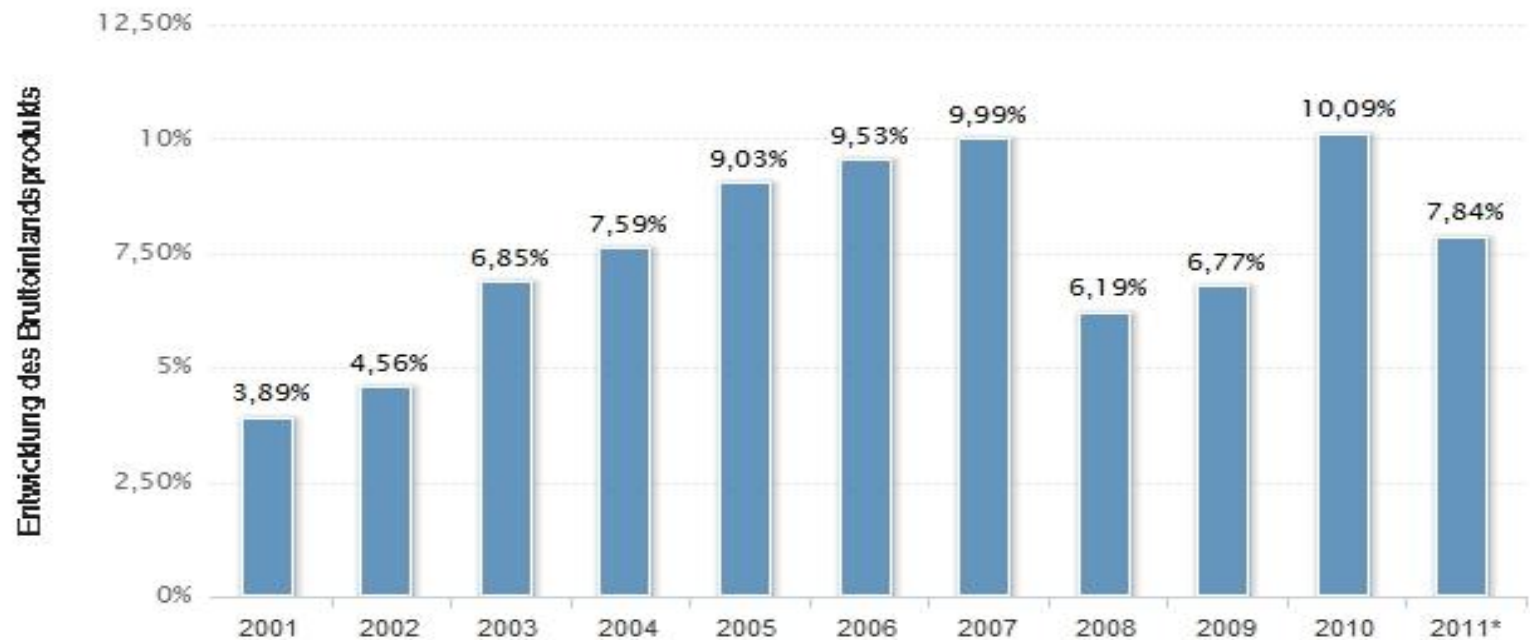
i Brasilien; International Monetary Fund

Quelle: IMF

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3) Do megacities make a difference?

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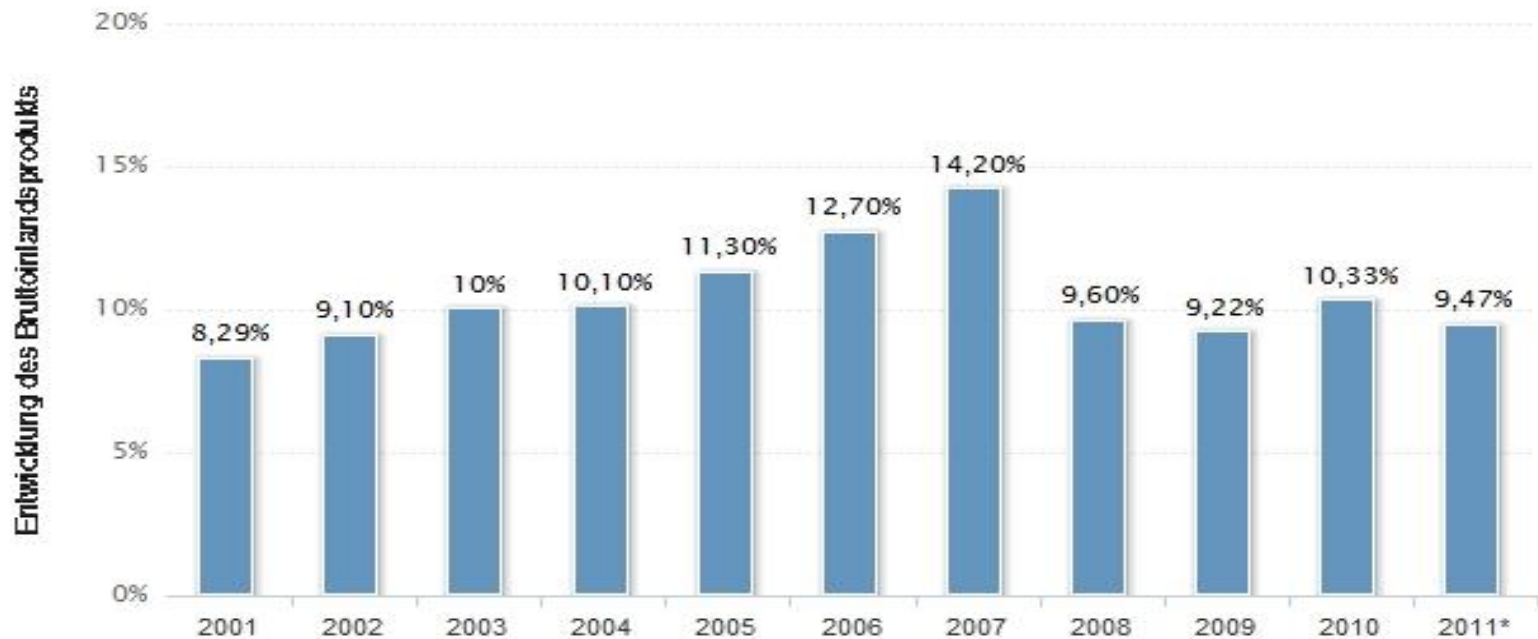
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3) Do megacities make a difference?

China: Jährliches Wachstum des realen Bruttoinlandsprodukts (BIP) von 2001 bis 2011



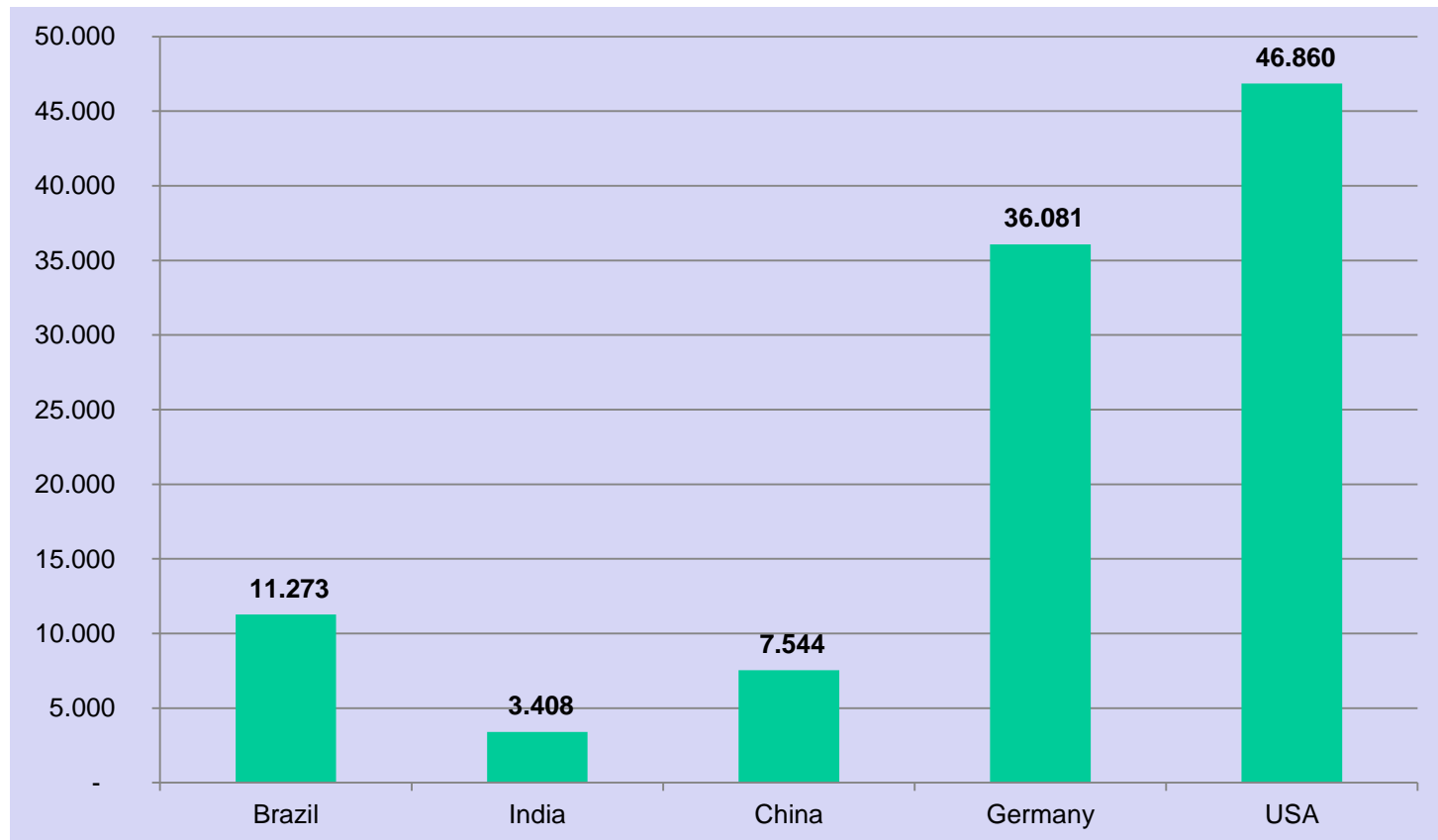
i China; International Monetary Fund

Quelle: IMF

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3) Do megacities make a difference?

GDP per head 2010 (in \$)



Source: IMF 2010

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 2: There are challenges that arise from the size of the megacities

- Air (and water) pollution



Beijing on a sunny day

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 2: There are challenges that arise from the size of the megacities

- Traffic (and other infrastructures [water supply, health services, education etc.])

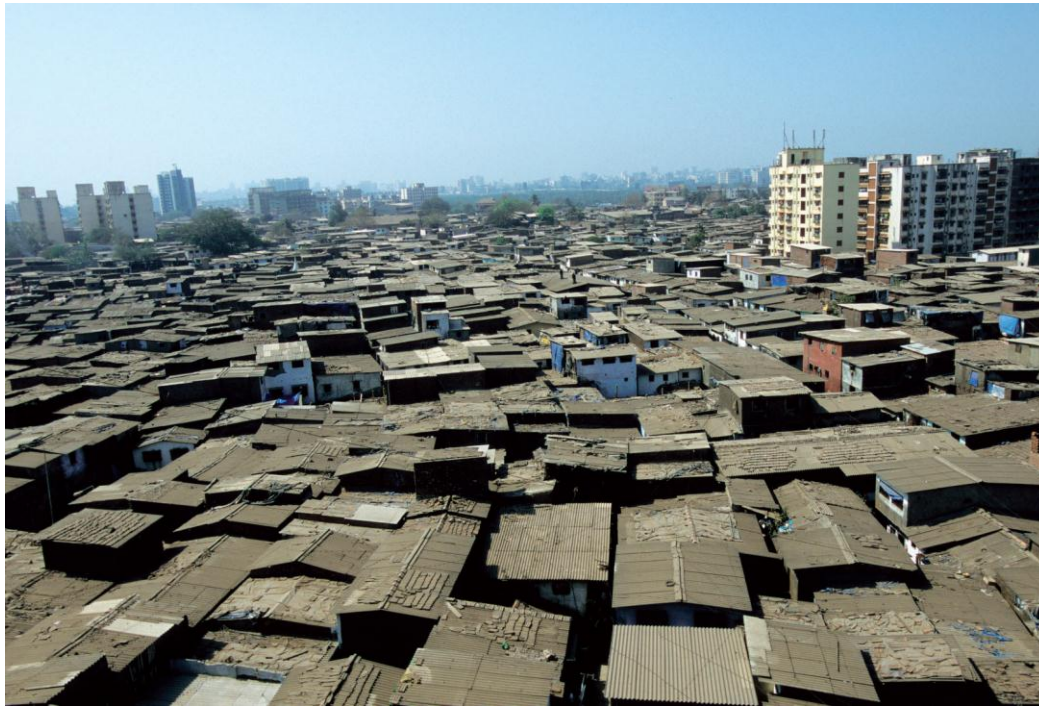


Commuters in Sao Paulo

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 2: There are challenges that arise from the size of the megacities

- Housing



Slum in Mumbai

3) Do megacities make a difference?

- Housing



Favelas in Rio de Janeiro

3) Do megacities make a difference?

- Housing



Construction site,
Wuxi (China)

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 2: There are challenges that arise from the size of the megacities

- Air (and water) pollution
 - Traffic (and other infrastructures [water supply, health services, education etc.])
 - Housing
 -
- All cities do face these challenges – in megacities they are more pronounced: a gradual not a categorical difference

Thesis 3: The demonisation of slums is an expression of a new anti-urbanism

- Slum: a run-down urban area of poor people with a shabby fabric of buildings and infrastructures
- “UN-HABITAT defines a **slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:**
 1. Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
 2. Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
 3. Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
 4. Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
 5. Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.” (cf. www.un-habitat.org)

3) Do megacities make a difference?

The Planet of Slums (Mike Davis 2004)

- ... describes on the basis of UN data the urban future as a recurrence of the disastrous living conditions in European cities of the 19. century (“back to Dickens”)
- ... describes the conditions in slums as horrible and unchangeable.
- “(...) *Planet of Slums* is overly descriptive and its apocalyptic rhetoric feeds into longstanding anti-urban fears about working people who live in cities.” (Angotti 2007)
- Davis neglects a) the potential of slums to change into liveable neighbourhoods and b) the capacities of slum dwellers to organise themselves

3) Do megacities make a difference?

- In some countries the term slum has a very bad image because of the politics of *slum clearance* (=demolition and displacement)

The term slum means that “somebody else defined my community in a way that allowed them to justify destruction of it” (Mel King, cited by Angotti 2004)

- Herbert Gans’ (1961) study of the Westend in Boston: It was declared as a slum but what Gans found were “urban villagers” with close helpful social networks in their neighbourhood.

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 4: Megacities are “arrival cities” (Doug Saunders 2011)

- The future of mankind is urban – a massive shift from rural life into cities is one of the most important developments of the 21. century.
- The anti-urbanism discourse ignores the integrative functions of megacities and the potentials of the dwellers of the newly constructed urban quarters.

3) Do megacities make a difference?

Thesis 4: Megacities are “arrival cities” (Doug Saunders 2011)

- “Arrival cities” are those areas where the migrants and new citizens start their new urban lives:

“These transitional spaces (...) are the places where the next great economic and cultural boom will be born, or where the next great explosion of violence will occur. The difference depends on our ability to notice, and our willingness to engage.” (Saunders 2011: 3)

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