

Urban Regions

*By Henrik Valeur and Fredrik Fritzson, 2005 **

According to the UN, 3/4 of the population of the industrialized world live in cities, but these are not necessarily cities in the traditional sense. People may choose to live in rural settings, while still having direct access to most urban facilities.

The urban region includes not only the city and its suburbs, but also the provincial towns, the rural districts and the nature reserves. In fact, it has no clear external borders. Instead it has plenty of internal ones.

While global migrations, networking and exchange make us globally more interdependent, locally it makes us more autonomous. Increased mobility and new means of communication are connecting people around the globe, thus liberating them from neighbors whom they otherwise have nothing in common with.

Though it is possible to experience most of the world within a given urban region, an increasing number of people tend to live with like-minded people without interfacing with others. The most radical example of this trend is the gated community, promising its residents security in a world which is perceived as being increasingly hostile. Ironically, however, it also reinforces this very hostility.

The gated community, the gang territory and the so-called cop-city are modern day versions of the ghetto, not just inhabited by the outcasts, but by people who feel they share a common social or cultural identity differentiating or setting them apart from others. Thus it is no longer the ghetto that is segregated from the city, but the city that is being segregated into ghettos.

The urban region encompasses many different cultures, co-existing without necessarily interconnecting. Thus it is not like the melting pot of the industrial metropolis, but more like a salad bowl in which various ingredients are tossed together without losing their particular flavor.

*Abstract

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