

# Urban Regions

*Henrik Valeur and Fredrik Fritzon, 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.

## **Regional Urbanization**

Congress participants from around the world are invited to discuss problems and possibilities concerning a set of challenges related to the processes of regional urbanization. The discussions will be held in small workshops, where different experiences, potentials and viewpoints can be tested and exchanged.

**Consumption** Despite a growing awareness of the limitations of the world's natural resources, demands for urban growth persist. How can we meet the increases in the consumption of resources without exhausting them?

**Democratization** Citizens are seeking greater influence on the decisions regarding urban development. How can we make the most of this engagement in a positive way?

**Dynamization** Cities are forming evermore interrelated, complex systems, while competing more and more fiercely with each other. How are we to cope with these new dynamic environments?

**Hybridization** Urbanity, agriculture and nature are mixed in new and intricate combinations. How are we to handle these hybrid environments?

**Privatization** Cell phones, webcams and private bodyguards are blurring the borders between private and public space. How are we to deal with these new spatial relations?

While these challenges were formulated in discussions regarding the Oresund region, we consider them to have global significance. They may, however, be perceived and confronted in different ways in different regions. We would therefore like to call for participants from various regions throughout the world to broaden our understanding of these challenges. In order to qualify the debate in our own region – and hopefully in others as well, we will document the workshop results.

## The Los Angeles Region

A mixed media map with icons pinpointing ethnic enclaves, gated communities, barrios, gang-territories, cop-cities, military bases, theme parks, slum areas, multicultural zones, lifestyle communities, celebrity cities, sects and subcultures in the Los Angeles region.

Zooming in on a particular icon, a related short text, a video clip, a photo or a sound pops up. Together the many pop-ups create a MTV-like tale of a globally emerging new society, characterized by disorder and dissimilarity.

While hundreds of homeless people live in cardboard homes on the sidewalks of Skid Row, others pay hundreds of dollars for a new shirt from one of the exclusive fashion shops along Rodeo Drive. With its composition of 3rd world slum areas and the most extravagant luxury of the western world, Jewish business districts and Muslim mosques, black ghettos and Hispanic barrios, hippie cultures and fanatical sects, LA is not only one of the world's most heterogeneous regions, it is as such one of the most radical democratic experiments yet to be seen.

Disneyland is being promoted as "The Happiest Place on Earth". The theme park's three hotels ensure that visitors can participate in the fairytale 24 hours a day.

The Bloods are one of the most infamous street gangs in North America. The gang was founded in Southern California, in defense against the Crips. Bloods members wear red bandanas and cross out the letter "C" in words as disrespect for the Crips.

This article consists of 3 abstracts, for respectively a poster, a seminar and a video, that were presented at the XXIIInd World Architecture Congress in Istanbul, 2005.

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