

Archaeology and Anthropology

October 01-02, 2018
London, UK

Glob J Res Rev 2018, Volume 5
DOI: 10.21767/2393-8854-C1-003

LONG WAVES OF URBANIZATION, 1800-2015

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This paper is about long waves of urban growth and urbanization in Sweden during the past two hundred years. Since an urban breakthrough around 1840 Swedish urbanization has evolved in cycles with a length of forty years. A combination of demographic and economic factors is supposed to have generated this pattern. Each long period has for example a specific set up of dynamic industries which can be supported by favourable urban demographic conditions. The expansive branches cause rapid growth for some cities while others stagnate. A theory of uneven urban development has been used to explain variations in population growth between cities and regions as well as over time. The first four cycles (1840-1870/80; 1870/80-1920/30, 1920/30-c.1970) form together a long wave of industrial

urbanization. They have been followed by post-industrial urbanization (c.1970-c.2010) characterized by metropolisation and urban shrinkage, and a second post-industrial cycle may recently have started. The analysis is based on official datasets for towns, boroughs and all other urban localities from the Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics. These figures have been carefully revised to give reliable and comparable data. The short term effects of changes in administrative urban areas have thus been neutralized. Foundation of new towns and boroughs, and the introduction of new urban localities into the official statistics have been balanced in the same way. The revised figures have given a more solid base for the analysis.

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