

Hans Westlund discusses his new edited volume, *The Post-Urban World: Emergent Transformation of Cities and Regions in the Innovative Global Economy*



*Interview by Joan Fitzgerald, Editor-in-Chief, Regions and Cities Book Series
Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.*

Hans Westlund is Professor in Urban and Regional Studies and Head of Department of Urban Planning and Environment at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, and Professor in Entrepreneurship at Jönköping International Business School, Jönköping, Sweden. He is also affiliated to the Institute for Developmental and Strategic Analysis (IRSA) in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Together with Tigran Haas, Hans Westlund has edited *In The Post-Urban World: Emergent Transformation of Cities and Regions in the Innovative Global Economy* published in Routledge-RSA Regions and Cities.

Joan Fitzgerald (JF): How did the idea for this book emerge?

Hans Westlund (HW): Tigran [Haas] and I have been colleagues at KTH Royal Institute of Technology for almost a decade, examining the transformations of regions. His lens has been urban architecture and sociology and mine more regional and rural focused. We realized that we had complementary theoretical lenses and a range of experiences that are seldom brought together in our highly specialized disciplines that would be valuable to academics and practitioners.

JF: Your edited volume is titled, *In the Post-Urban World*. What do you mean by “post-urban?”

HW: We see the dissolution of two traditional dichotomies: urban-rural and urban-suburban. There is an ongoing re-urbanization from smaller urban areas to larger cities and a densification of polycentric city regions, which increase their dependency on each other. Transportation has enlarged the boundaries of city-regions and formerly rural areas are being integrated into urban labor markets. Outside the city-regions there are vast peripheral areas of declining rural areas and smaller urban settlements that slowly fade away. So, instead of the old dichotomies, we get a new dichotomy of city-regions on the one hand and vast, declining peripheries on the other.

JF: How does policy affect the economies of rural regions?

HW: In Europe, rural policy is mostly agricultural policy and there are strong vested interests in keeping these subsidies. However, agricultural productivity continues to increase and a smaller and smaller fraction of the rural population deals with agriculture. If rural areas should develop, they need jobs in other sectors. Good things are happening with access to broadband, but that is just infrastructure. Something more must happen. We need a totally new rural policy that supports the development of new rural industries and products, for which there is an urban demand.

JF: Who should read your book?

HW: Everyone interested in human society’s future development should read the book.