

Rurality/Urbanity

Nobody asked but ...

It is a voluntaryist's decision to live in town or in the country, even on-the-grid or off-the-grid. I, for instance, live at the edge of the grid. But these things are in constant flux. From the 19th century until the mid-20th century, in America, there was a vast migration of people from the farm to the city. Then, in the 1950s, a new direction arose, spanning into the millennium, where people fled the center city, creating suburbs, which in turn became satellite urban areas. And gradually, these urban agglomerations became the center city again, in character. As an example, Chicago became Chicagoland.

All of this activity is underlain by an individual-by-individual seeking of simplicity, escaping from complexity.

The two poles, rural or urban, have existed since early civilization, with each having a pull. People each choose the complexity of the marketplace that he or she will tolerate. A person will gravitate toward a level of simplicity/complexity that gives her the optimum lack of unease. People orient themselves through market choices. The city attracts through multiplicity of choices of goods and services, whereas the countryside beckons with the choice of task focus.

Today, in America, it is obvious that goods and services exert a far greater pull on a far larger number of people, therefore we are an urban nation. But we are past the point where the city pulls at its maximum. Technology is spreading the market choices with less and less regard to geographic location of the buyers and sellers. Concentrated nodes of transportation and communication are becoming less needed.

— Kilgore Forelle