

# COMPLEXITY IN THE URBAN AGE

Robert Beauregard  
Professor Emeritus  
Columbia University

# Complexity according to Kwa (2002):

Romantic – despite diversity and disruptions, complexity is integrated into one whole (holism);  
poses epistemological problems

Baroque -- incessant flow of sensuous materiality;  
poses ontological problems

# Terminological networks:

complexity – instability (dynamism) – non-coherence

simplicity – equilibrium - coherence

# Urban Age Thesis

baroque complexity:

knowledge spill-overs, innovation

diversity

density

tolerance

absence of regulations

# Urban Age Thesis

romantic complexity:

uninterrupted economic growth

convergence to middle-class

'public' lifestyle (discretionary consumption)

progress

In Urban Age Thesis, baroque complexity  
resolves into  
romantic complexity.

# Policy implications

centers the Urban Age Thesis in knowledge-based  
policymaking and governance

suggests the need to protect baroque complexity

# Theoretical implications

rejection of contradictory nature of cities

suppression of the city's socio-materiality



Thank You

