



KATOWICE-GLIWICE-TICHY: WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED

FAST FACTS		Similar To
Metropolitan Area Population	3,500,000	
Urban Area Population*	2,450,000	Naples, Harbin, Birmingham, Curitiba,
Urban Land Area: Square Miles	280	Albany, Nice, Adelaide, Shanghai
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers	725	
Population per Square Mile	8,800	Amsterdam, Mannheim, Durban
Population per Square Kilometer	3,400	
*Continuously built up area http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf		

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Genuine Conurbation

There are few genuine conurbations in the world. A conurbation is an urban area (agglomeration) that has been formed by the merging together of more than one urban area. The normal pattern is for a large urban area to simply expand outward, engulfing small municipalities and suburbs. But a conurbation occurs when large urban areas combine. Perhaps the largest conurbation is Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto,¹ while other famous ones are Dallas-Fort Worth and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Most conurbations constitute two or at most three former urban areas. But there are two notable exceptions. The first is Essen-Dusseldorf, which is variously known as Essen, the Rhine-Ruhr and the Rhine-Ruhr-Wupper. The other is in neighboring Poland, what we will refer to as Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy, a name chosen to convey the geographic expanse of continuous urbanization.

Essen-Dusseldorf, also a name we use to clearly delineate the inclusion of both the north and south parts of the urban area, is composed of a number of municipalities with from 250,000 to 600,000 population. In Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy, the municipalities are smaller, with six ranging from 150,000 to 350,000.

¹ Tokyo-Yokohama is really not a conurbation. Yokohama was engulfed by the suburban expansion of Tokyo and became large as a suburb of Tokyo, not as a separate urban area.

Like Essen-Dusseldorf, Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy has a northern and a southern section. Most people live in the north, from Gliwice eastward to Jaworzno. The southern section, most of it divided by forest and hills from the northern section includes Tichy and Mikolow.

Finally, the Polish and German conurbations have other factors in common. Both are the largest urban areas in their countries, a fact that is not generally well known. Further, Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy, like Essen-Dusseldorf, has much enclosed open space. Geographer Richard Forstall advises that this is due to the unsuitability of these areas for building, principally because of instability from the previous coal mining activity.

Tangled History

The Upper Silesian urban area, which is called Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy here, is among the least well known large agglomerations in the world. Yet, there is much of interest here. It starts with history. As is described below, Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy is one of two prototypical conurbations in the world. However, unlike its near twin, Essen-Dusseldorf, the history of Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy is especially complex, with sections of the urban area having switched between nations a number of times. The largest of the many municipalities is Katowice (pronounced KA TO VEE SEH), which has generally remained in Poland. But eastern municipalities, such as Katowice and Sosnowiec (pronounced SOS NO VEES), to the northeast, and the second largest municipality in the area, was a part of the Russian Empire before World War I.

The more important division, however, involved Germany. Virtually all of the urban area to the west of Chorzow, including the major cities of Bytom, Zabrze (pronounced ZAB ZHEE) and Gliwice (pronounced GLI VEE SEH) were in Germany between World War I and World War II. Indeed the “provocation” for Hitler’s invasion of Poland had been a phony Polish raid on a radio station in Gliwice the day before.

After World War II, Poland lost much of its eastern sector to the Soviet Union, now the Ukraine. Poland also gained considerable land to the west from Germany. Since that time, the Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy urban area has been unified.

Industrial Heartland

Again, like Essen-Dusseldorf, Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy is an industrial revolution urban area, having been important in heavy industries, such as steel and coal. Today these industries are in decline and Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy appears to be less affluent than Warsaw or even Krakow. Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy has at least three major motor vehicle assembly plants, Fiat, Open and Izuzu.

Emerging Affluence

It would be a mistake, however, to characterize Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy as in poverty. Here, as in Krakow and Warsaw are the signs of emerging affluence. There are major shopping centers throughout the area. The largest appears to be the Silesian City Centre, located just north of Katowice Centre. All of the large retailers that have located in Warsaw appear to have located in Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy as well. There are also many new detached houses in the suburbs.

Transport

Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy appears to have an integrated public transport system, principally relying on trams. However, as in virtually all large urban areas, the mobility that can be provided by public transport systems is woefully inferior to the automobile, and so traffic congestion is getting worse. The recently completed A-4 Motorway (Autoroute) provides a quick link along the southern part of the northern sector. Following the French model, this toll road is free within the urban area. This facility, and others, can be expected to improve the efficiency of labor markets by providing residents with more jobs opportunities throughout the urban area. There are also high capacity north-south roads, especially Route 86 and Route 1, through Katowice and Sosnowiec. However, there is a clear need for additional high-capacity roadways, especially north-south routes to the west of Katowice and a northerly road, parts of which are already in place in Routes 88 and 94.

Waiting to be Discovered

Even so, Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy has a particular charm that is yet to be discovered. There are few places in the world with the extent of 19th century houses, commercial buildings, warehouses and factories. In addition, they are not all concentrated in a small area. For example, the core areas of Gliwice, Zabrze, Bytom, Chorzow and Katowice itself all have areas that, if they were in US or English urban areas, would be undergoing renovation into condominiums and development into tourist sites. There is also an attractive wooden church in Gliwice, reminiscent of the Norwegian stave churches. It appears that the former German sector has a far smaller concentration of the post-World War II Stalinist high rise apartment blocks than Katowice and Sosnowiec.

Local and national officials would appear to have some potential to market Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy as a tourist destination. Many of the buildings are far from the best state of repair, but could be renovated to restore their former attractiveness (of course, they really were not attractive then, because places like Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy, Essen-Dusseldorf and Liverpool were not nice places to live in their prime).

The Difference between Urban Areas and Museums

It is not unusual for residents of Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy or Warsaw say that there is little of tourist value in their urban areas. Everyone's favorite place in Poland is Krakow (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-krakow.pdf>). Krakow's core is more attractive for its medieval architecture, which was preserved in tact because the city was not destroyed in World War II. A small part of the Warsaw core has been rebuilt. Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-katowice.pdf>) is of considerable disinterest to tourists, as an industrial age (post medieval) urban area, more akin to Birmingham, Manchester or Essen-Dusseldorf (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-rrw.pdf>). However, it is an oversimplification to dismiss Warsaw or even Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy as inferior to Krakow. Outside the small historic cores, the urban areas look remarkably similar. The same is true throughout much of Europe. All of the large urban areas have grown far beyond the historic cores.

Thus, when Krakow is praised and Warsaw or Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy dismissed, the commentary focuses on history, not the present. This is, of course, what makes such areas interesting for tourists. The mistake occurs when tourists, or worse, urban planners return home wanting to remake their cities in a manner that not even Europeans have built for centuries. They see crowded tram cars (street cars) and presume that people have chosen them over automobiles. The truth is that, for the most part, people buy cars as soon as they can afford them.

It is the difference between urban areas and museums. The attractive European cores are outdoor museums that are unrepresentative of how people live on the continent. For decades, virtually all of the growth in European urban areas, as well as Japanese urban areas has been more similar in form to the suburbs of Melbourne or Los Angeles than to the core of Krakow or Barcelona. Anyone interested in seeing the Europe of today can see this reality by driving just a few miles away from the historic cores.

DRIVING IN POLAND

National Speed Limit: The national speed limit outside cities is 90 kilometers per hour (approximately 55 miles per hour).

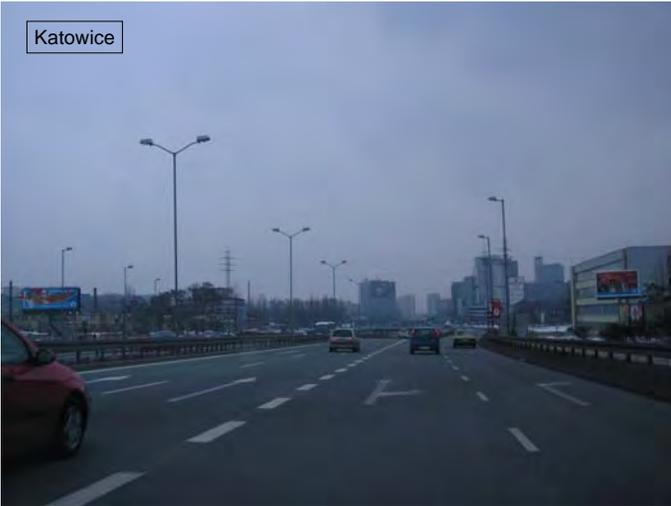
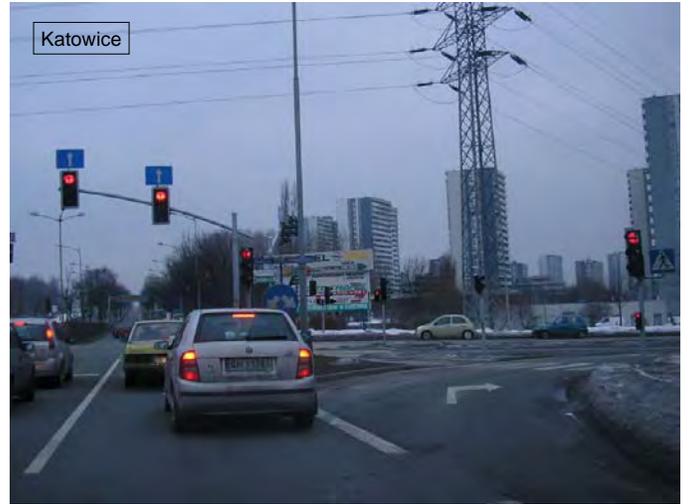
Motorways or Autoroutes: On motorways or autoroutes the speed limit is 130 kph (81 mph). Traffic moves at 140 to 150 kph and it is not unusual for cars to pass at 160 kph (100 mph). Generally, there are no speed signs except where the speed limit is below 130 kph.

Divided Highways: On four lane divided highways (dual carriageways) Traffic tends to flow at 110 to 120 kph, or 20 to 30 kph above the limit. On four-lane divided highways (not motorways or autoroutes), there are frequent 70 kph zones at crossroads and pedestrian crossings. The police monitor these closely, often sitting to the side of the road, sometimes hidden. There appears to be little patrol on the 90 kph sections. Generally, there are no speed signs except where the speed limit is below 90 kph.

Two-Lane Intercity Roads are not recommended for travel due to heavy truck traffic. A motorway, autoroute or divided highway alternative will often be faster, even if it is longer.

General Comment on Speed Enforcement: Like many European countries, speed enforcement seems to be considerably more lax than in the United States, Canada or Australia. However, being caught at 40 kph or more above the speed limit is considered a serious offence. Further, patterns can change. For example, a strong speed enforcement program in France has slowed typical traffic on autoroutes from 150-160 to 140 (the speed limit is 130) over the past five years. The best advice on speed is to generally travel no faster than the fastest prevailing traffic, while complying with any speed limit below 90 kph.

<http://www.rentalcartours.net>
<http://www.demographia.com>
<http://www.publicpurpose.com>





Chorzow



Gliwice



Gliwice



Gliwice



Gliwice



Zabrze



Zabrze



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Zabrze



Suburbs-Tychy



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