

Winner-take-all Urbanism: Geographic Divisions in the Modern Era

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Brown Journal of World Affairs: To begin, can you describe what you consider to be the New Urban Crisis? How did you get involved with urbanization?

Richard Florida: Almost a decade ago, I was starting to be taken by the downsides of the urban revitalization. In early 2003, I published an essay in the *Washington Monthly* in which I simply looked at the so-called winners of the creative economy, the places that have large concentrations of the “creative class.” I compared them to measures of inequality—wage inequality, the separation between high and low wage earners—and those two lists overlapped, pretty much completely.

The places that were winning in the creative economy were also the most unequal. This was way before Thomas Piketty, before all the concern over the Occupy Movement and the rise of “the 1 percent.” Maybe five or six years after that, I began to see that something very different than just an urban comeback was happening in certain cities. New York City was experiencing hypergentrification in some of its downtown neighborhoods in Manhattan. In San Francisco,

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not only was the same thing happening, but high-tech companies that had never been based in urban environments were moving back in. Similar effects could be seen in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Seattle. That's when I decided that I wanted to look at the upsides and downsides of "re-urbanization." So that's when I really turned my attention to digging into this in detail.

Quite simply, the New Urban Crisis is very different than the previous crisis.

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the abandonment of our once-great urban cities, like my own home city of Newark, New Jersey, as industry and jobs, followed by the middle class, were increasingly drawn to the suburbs. At the time, most of

these cities were industrial centers. The factory my father worked in was in the Ironbound section of Newark. New York City, Boston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco—they were all centers of industry, and much of that industry left. The New Urban Crisis is really more multifaceted, multi-dimensional, and all-encompassing. In my new book, I say it has five dimensions.¹

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The first dimension is the growing divide between the winner cities: places like New York, San Francisco, London, Paris, Singapore, Shanghai, and the rest. I call this "winner-take-all urbanism." The world isn't flat like Thomas Friedman implied; it's spiky. These economic spikes are growing taller and taller and are growing away from the rest of the world. In fact, I think this dimension of the New Urban Crisis is what propelled the populist backlash. In the book, I talk about the rise of Rob Ford in my own city of Toronto, then Brexit in England, then Trump.

The second dimension is the crisis of success in these winner cities as they begin to price out creativity and innovation, and more importantly, as they begin to price out the working and service classes which together make up more than two-thirds of the workforce. That's the big thing—there's a whole section in the book about how it's too premature to call this the death of creativity in expensive cities, but these superstar cities have begun to price out the middle class, the working class, and the service class.

The third dimension is the evisceration of the middle class and of the great middle-class neighborhoods that were the backbone of U.S. society: 203 out of 229 metropolitan areas in the U.S. have seen their middle classes decline, and the middle-class neighborhoods that used to host two-thirds of American families back in the 1970s now are home to a little over 40 percent. Our society

has kind of split into small areas of concentrated wealth and much larger areas of concentrated disadvantage that span urban centers and suburbs alike. I call this “the patchwork metropolis.”

The fourth dimension is the growing, metastasizing crisis of the suburbs. As our cities have come back, parts of our suburbs have declined, and poverty, dislocation—all of those things we used to see as urban problems—were passed on to the suburbs.

The fifth dimension is even bigger still: the crisis of global urbanization. Urbanization used to go hand-in-hand with economic growth in the West—the United States, United Kingdom, and the advanced countries of Europe—Japan, and even China. That is no longer the case. There

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are plenty of places around the world that are urbanizing without seeing any growth. Even worse than that, there are 860 million people around the world packed into urban slums, and their situation isn't getting better.

Taken together, these five dimensions comprise the New Urban Crisis, which is not just an urban crisis—it is the central crisis of capitalism today.

Journal: Among those researching the transformations within this New Urban Crisis, what separates the urban optimists from the urban pessimists, and where would you place yourself along that matrix?

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Florida: I was always an urban optimist. Coming from Newark, watching my city be decimated, and then living in Pittsburgh, a city that was thoroughly deindustrialized, I was quite keen to see the comeback of cities and urban areas. Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institute, Ed Glaeser from Harvard University, and I all fell into the urban optimist camp. We believed in the idea that urbanism and the creative class would rise and there would be a “metro revolution” and a “triumph of the cities.” We believed that urbanization is a force for good and that it would help mitigate many of society's problems.

Of course, I tempered that a bit in *The Rise of the Creative Class*.² I said the creative class has to grow up, apply itself to making a better more equitable city and society, and work to overcome our divides, but in general I thought this was a path for good. Still, I don't think I was prepared for just how fast the comeback of the city would be and the challenges it would bring.

On the flip side are the people I would call the urban pessimists. In that camp, I would put the great geographer David Harvey, the West Coast essayist and book writer Mike Davis, and many others. I've read all of them of course.

I was a neo-Marxist in my younger days; I know that perspective, and I respect it. For the urban pessimists, urbanism is a highway to hell or a road paved with good intentions that ends up not so great. It is a force for gentrification, widening divides, gated cities, exclusionary policies, and isolation. It is a force for taking poor people's neighborhoods away, for expropriating their property, for contaminating natural parts of the world. So it's really part of the rapacious nature of capitalism to put capital first and people last.

In the book I say that both of these groups have a point. I had a line in the book that goes something like this: Does urbanization lead to economic growth? Does urbanization lead to innovation? Does urbanization lead to greater inequality, greater segmentation, greater urban slums? The answer to all of those questions is "yes." Urbanization does many of the good things that the urban optimists say it does, but it also does many of the bad things that urban pessimists accurately point out.

So we need a more balanced approach. My worry, though, is that in these times of populist backlash—especially since so much of the Trumpist message is completely anti-urban—we risk throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. If the problem is urbanism, then the solution is also urbanism. Marx said this about capitalism: capitalism was the most dynamic force that human history ever created and generated these contradictions that would lead to its own demise, so we had to figure out a way to create a new mode of production that was better. Similarly, urbanism leads to its own contradictions, but it's not like we can backtrack on urbanism. We're going to become a more urban society, so we have to deal with the contradictions, challenges, and difficulties urbanism puts before us.

In the book, I talk about how we can at least begin to think about making an urbanism that benefits many more people. We have to get beyond the kind of winner-take-all urbanism we have now, and I think the rise of this populist backlash is making it pretty clear that the advantages being conferred on the so-called urban elite of knowledge workers, professionals, and Hillary Clinton voters are helping propel this discontent and anger from left-behind working-class people in less dense suburban and rural areas.

What the New Urban Crisis really illuminates is that we have this overlay between class and geography. It's not just a class divide in our society—it's that socioeconomic class is overlaid by location. Our different classes live in different worlds, and that is provoking this divide and this backlash. So my optimism has clearly been tempered. But to say that somehow we're going to wait for "the revolution" is an insufficient answer for me. Where I think the urban pessimists

go wrong is saying that somehow we will have a revolution that will create some kind of socialist urban utopia, but that is nowhere to be found.

I said this in an interview with the leftist magazine *Jacobin*—I’ve become much more of an incremental reformer, someone like the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century German social democrat Karl Kautsky, who said that instead of trying to wait for the revolution, we can try to reform already existing capitalism or already existing social democracy.³ But that’s

looking like a tough go now in the age of Trump, so I think the better course of action is to try. There is room for lots of progressive action to create a

more beneficent, tempered, and egalitarian urbanism for all—a more inclusive kind of urbanism at the local level. That is certainly where I will put my effort, where I can use my own tempered optimism to work with mayors and officials at the local level to try to move the needle on urbanism, to make it less exclusionary and more inclusive.

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Journal: You use the term “patchwork metropolis” to describe the patchwork-like concentrations of wealth and inequality in metropolitan areas, not just cities alone. How do suburbs fit into the patchwork metropolis?

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Florida: Historically, if you go back to the Chicago School of sociology, they identified the zones that make up the industrial city of the twentieth century—the central business district, the industrial areas, the warehouse zones, and then the areas of working class and lower-income housing, and then radiating out further the middle- and upper-class residential areas in the suburbs. And of course suburbanization and white flight took off during the ‘50s and ‘60s and ‘70s, with an increasingly hollowed-out city surrounded by the affluent suburbs.

Then, a few years ago, Alan Ehrenhalt wrote a book called *The Great Inversion*, which says all of that’s been inverted: now the rich people live in the city, and the poor people live in the suburbs. But my look at the data suggests that the richest people still live in the suburbs, really rich people live in some parts of the city, and really poor people live in parts of both.

So I did this mapping exercise where we took about a dozen large cities and metro areas in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom and simply mapped their educational attainment, income levels, and class (creative

class, service class, or the blue-collar working class). What emerged was this patchwork pattern: some cities had the creative class and the affluent in their center, many others had the affluent and creative class in the suburbs, some were split completely in half, and others had islands of creative class activity. Together, this formed the “patchwork metropolis.” I suggest that there are four or five factors shaping it. One thing—and it really is the decision of the dominant or advantaged class—is that the educated and affluent came back and began to recolonize central locations, particularly in big, dense metropolitan areas like New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. Second, the affluent also began to colonize the areas around transit hubs, subway systems, and rail lines where they have easier commutes. Third, they cluster around research universities, colleges, university towns, college towns, laboratories—any kind of knowledge-based institutions or healthcare institutions. Fourth, they also colonize areas around all the great amenities—waterfronts, mountainsides, and parklands. The result is they colonize the most economically functional, most connected, and most desirable locations, and the less advantaged get the places left over.

In this way, our suburbs are becoming as divided as our urban centers. The richest places in America, the places with some of the highest home values, remain the suburbs of New York City, the Hamptons, parts of Connecticut, western L.A. suburbs like Beverly Hills, the suburbs outside of San Francisco, and the Silicon Valley, where rich techies and venture capitalists live. These are some of the richest places on the face of the earth. But then, of course, other suburbs are also home to great swaths of poverty, dislocation, and increased crime, because many of the people who used to live in cities can no longer afford them, and they’re getting pushed into the suburbs. So the same divides and crises that affect urban areas have been pushed out to the suburbs.

Journal: You’ve identified a hollowing out of the middle class both in cities and suburbs. Where has the middle class gone and why?

Florida: Well this is built from the superb work of a colleague of mine at the University of Toronto, J. David Hulchanski, who did a very powerful study a decade ago called *The Three Cities Within Toronto*. The “first city” is the old Toronto of middle-class neighborhoods, which had been eradicated. The “second city” is the one made of affluent residents, located in and around the downtown core and near universities. The “third city” is the new city of poverty and dislocation, located out past the transit lines and impacted areas of downtown in what

we think of as older suburban areas—areas that gave rise to the dysfunctional mayor Rob Ford.

Many scholars and commentators have talked about rising inequality, and that's a big issue in the United States of course, but not nearly enough have focused on the decline of the middle class (though there's a great new book, *The Vanishing Middle Class* by MIT historian Peter Temin, which does just that). I think that's much more of a factor in the rise of Trump than just income inequality. Trumpism is motivated by both the real and perceived decline of some kind of middle class.

What we are seeing disappear is not just the middle class, but middle-class neighborhoods. It's worth separating those two things. The middle class was this big group of people in the United States who were part of the American Dream—my parents were certainly on that conveyor belt, moving out of working-class Newark to the working-class suburb of North Arlington,

where I grew up. Those neighborhoods, which were the conveyor belt into the middle class

and to upward mobility, have been eradicated. So it's not just the middle class, but also the neighborhoods that were its platforms and escalators that have been eradicated.

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As middle-class neighborhoods have disappeared, Americans increasingly live in either neighborhoods that are upper-middle-class or beyond affluent, or in neighborhoods of disadvantage and decay. The spikiness of our society is *between* places—like how New York, San Francisco, and London have grown away from the rest of their countries—and *within* places, where successful neighborhoods of New York are a world apart from the city's less advantaged neighborhoods. As middle-class neighborhoods have disappeared, we have divided into small areas of concentrated affluence surrounded by much larger spans of concentrated disadvantage.

When I was young, my dad was a factory worker. He had a seventh-grade education, and we moved to this working middle-class neighborhood that had good schools. I got a scholarship to the local university, Rutgers University, and off I went into middle-class society. Nowadays, a kid like me, first of all, would not grow up in a middle-class neighborhood anymore. He would grow up in a less advantaged neighborhood where the schools wouldn't be as good and there would be less opportunity to get ahead. It'd be very difficult to get into Rutgers College, never mind a better school than that—the competition

would be among kids all across the country, if not all across the world. Look at universities like the University of Michigan or the University of Toronto, where I teach. There are so many kids from all over the world who go to school there. Even if a kid made it into that school from a neighborhood like mine, that young person would have to go out and find a job. But where are the jobs? They're in New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Boston—they're in these very expensive superstar cities and tech hubs.

How does that young person get a toehold in those communities? Well, as my students told me one day in class: "That's easy, Professor, the 'Bank of

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Mom and Dad.'" But if you don't have access to the "Bank of Mom and Dad," how do you even get the money to get the starter job in New York City? You can't. You're stuck in a place that isn't as advan-

tageous. Today, the possibility of getting a toehold in these places requires so much money and accumulation of capital that it's not only what schools your parents can put you in; it's also how your parents' wealth and economic equity can leverage your own location and the path to a career and better life. In this way, class and location reinforce each other over generations in ways that were never the case before.

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Wherever I give a talk, parents always come up and ask, "How do I get my child to move back to Pittsburgh, Omaha, or Cleveland when they want to go to San Francisco or New York?" But what I hear from parents in expensive cities like New York or San Francisco, Boston, or Washington D.C. is, "How can I help my kids afford a house where they grew up?" It's very interesting to see how the New Urban Crisis tracks parents' mentality about where their kids are going to live.

Journal: Do you consider the New Urban Crisis to be a primarily U.S. phenomenon, or is it applicable to urban centers around the world?

Florida: I think the New Urban Crisis is a global phenomenon writ large, and I would even say that it is the central contradiction of capitalism. The central contradiction of capitalism in Marx's time was the contradiction of industrial capitalism that was playing out on the factory floor, where workers worked but did not own the means of production. The capitalists enriched themselves, and workers got poorer. That contradiction, Marx believed, would ultimately result

in an untenable situation where workers would rise up in those industrial factories and overthrow the capitalists. For Marx, the entire outcome of capitalist innovation, productivity, technological dynamism, capitalist breakdown, and the organizing of alternative socialist or communist movements played out on the factory floors at the point of production.

But knowledge capitalism is much more place-based today. The platforms of the old capitalism were these giant, vertically integrated, industrial corporations. The platforms of this new capitalism are cities themselves, which bring together people, talent, economic assets, research universities, whatever mix of things creates innovation. At the same time, with the New Urban Crisis and this imbalance between the winners and losers of urbanism, we are seeing increasing class conflict over place. The losers are Trump voters who are angrier and angrier at the success of the blue urban centers.

This is playing out all across the advanced world. Look at the great cities across Europe, such as London, Paris, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Oslo. Look at Asia's great cities, such as Tokyo, Seoul, and Shanghai. If you look at the data, even though it's not perfectly comparable, many of these places are more expensive than New York City. In Canada, Toronto and Vancouver are among the 10 most expensive cities in the world. Winner-take-all urbanism is a global phenomenon, and these divides between the urban "haves" and the urban "have-nots" are becoming worse and worse. There are around 860 million people—more than the combined populations of the United States and the EU—living in uninhabitable conditions in global slums. So yes, I do think the New Urban Crisis is a global crisis.

We cannot understand the relevant politics, such as Trumpism and populism, if we don't understand the fundamental workings of the New Urban Crisis, in which the clustering of talent, people, and economic advantage is so powerful that it concentrates economic advantage in a few spiky centers and leads to much larger swaths of disadvantage. People still don't really want to talk about how to deal with these geographic and locational divides.

The populist—or Trumpist—solution is to tear down the spikes. When you really look at what Trump is trying to do, it's clear he's trying to screw the techies in San Francisco, clamp down on immigration, and make sure that foreign talent doesn't come to the United States. His plan is to erect walls so that all the old factories can produce again. That's a losing strategy; it can't work. What we have to do is figure out a way to let the technology and innovative centers thrive—but have their success raise all boats. We have to find a way that can spread the benefits. We also need a set of answers on how to deal with places

that are falling behind.

In my book, I talk about the difference between people- and place-based policies. Most economists in the past would have said, “We just want to do people-based policies that allow people to leave—to move to the most productive places, where they have the most opportunity.” Now, increasing numbers are saying, “Oh my God, the backlash is so strong. Even if it’s not the most economically efficient, we need to begin to think about place-based policies that can enable the places falling behind to at least stabilize themselves.” That’s very hard, because the logic of the economy favors spikiness, and it’s very hard to uplift places that are not part of this new urbanized knowledge economy.

What worries me so much is that, certainly at the national level, no one is talking about this. No one in a position of political influence on the left really seems to get the fact that we are this divided geographically. And we really need to overcome not just inequality, but also these geographic divides and the very different mentalities and ideologies they create.

Journal: A lot of the phenomena that you are describing appear to be most evident in wealthy, developed countries. How do you relate them to what’s happening in the urban centers of the Global South?

Florida: I think they’re worse off. It’s spikiness and winner-take-all urbanism on steroids. It’s terrifying and disturbing. A young student of mine from Shanghai once put it this way: “You know, Professor Florida, everything you say is very interesting, but when you’re talking about these divides, realize that even though I’m just a young person in my twenties, I live a better all-around middle-class life than you do. I don’t want or mean to insult you, but I have better prospects for life. We have a better standard of living than you do already, those of us who are in this class; however, the people who live in the outskirts of Shanghai live in uninhabitable conditions.”

In the United States and the developed world, we are starting to see something resembling the kinds of conditions that have always existed in the developing world: small groups of very advantaged people surrounded by masses of poverty. The United States, along with the rest of the world, is starting to look much more like an emerging economy. The divides between the Global North and the Global South are now being reproduced and reflected within individual nations and cities.

Obviously, the conditions of a less advantaged person in the United States are nowhere near equivalent to those of a poor person in Pakistan or Bangladesh,

but the divides are becoming worse and worse. They are fractal and occur at every level. The divides between the winner cities in the Global North and the declining or less advantaged cities in the Global North and South are growing. At the same time, the divides within individual cities in the Global North and South are also getting worse.

There are some urban areas in the Global South where it is possible for people to have lifestyles like those in the Global North, but these areas are much smaller, and divides within cities of the Global North are growing worse and worse. So we have more magnified economic division, segregation, and inequality: the economic and geographic divides across every level are worsening.

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Journal: What do you think are some of the most promising ways for the crisis to be resolved?

Florida: When I was writing the book, I was hopeful that a Clinton administration would come to office and develop a national urban policy and strategy for the United States. I called for a national Council of Cities in the White House, analogous to the National Economic Council or the National Security Council and staffed by mayors and others to think about ways to mitigate the New Urban Crisis. Then of course we had this rude awakening from which none of us are recovered: the election of Donald Trump. The United States has never had a figure less prepared, less competent, more dysfunctional, or more on the wrong side of history.

The United States has always avoided these kinds of populist leaders, which is why Trump and Trumpism are so troubling. During the Civil War, we elected Abraham Lincoln. During the Great Depression, we got Franklin Delano Roosevelt, not Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini. Now, for the first time—because of this backlash, because of these divides, because of this New Urban Crisis—the United States has elected a president who is clearly on the wrong side of history. That has deep implications not just for the United States, but for the entire world. If Donald Trump were the Prime Minister of Canada or Sweden, he wouldn't be so worrisome. He is very worrisome domestically. But Donald Trump as President of the United States is terrifying for the entire world.

But the problem goes far beyond and runs far deeper than Trump. The anachronism of the nation-state and the imperial presidency are the problem;

maybe it just took Trump for us to realize what a huge problem that is. The super-centralized nation-state is something that has outlived its usefulness. In the past, we needed a strong nation-state and presidency to eradicate slavery. We needed a strong nation-state to be able to give women and minorities the right to vote. We needed a strong nation-state to have the power to make sure that people had basic welfare during the New Deal and to solve the urban problems during the Great Society.

But today it has grown into this Frankenstein. The accumulation of power in the nation-state and the imperial presidency are so out of sync with the demands

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of the urbanized knowledge economy that we just have to call it quits. This is an institutional problem. We have to rebalance power horizontally and distribute it among the legislative

and judiciary branches. We also have a vertical separation in the United States between federal, state, and city levels of government—called our federalist system—which has tilted far too much toward a centralized nation-state.

We now have to go about the very hard work of empowering our states and cities. For one, cities and metro areas are the key actors of the global economy. Roughly 15 sanctuary cities in the United States provide around 45 percent of the nation's GDP. Around 85 percent of people in the developed world, and more than half of the entire world, live in metropolitan areas. The world's 40 leading megaregions alone—places like the Boston–New York–Washington Corridor, Greater London, and Greater Tokyo—produce two-thirds of global economic output and nine out of ten of the world's innovations, despite housing just 18 percent of the world's population.

We know that large cities in the United States are the opposition to Trump, and that's great. But the agenda is bigger than that. Empowering communities in our cities and suburbs is the only way to fix our terribly divided country. What fits Red America doesn't fit Blue America, and we can't continue essentially slaughtering one another every eight years. This is, in a sense, really electoral civil war, where half the country is in trauma depending on which side wins.

The only way around this I can see is to essentially reduce the stakes. In Canada, the prime minister doesn't have this power—the provinces do. We have to take away the power from the presidency, bit by bit, and return it to the states. But more importantly, we need to devolve much greater power to our economic engines, our cities, and our metro areas. This is happening in Europe and the United Kingdom, where they are developing new governance structures.

Of course the nation-state has to do some things, and the state provinces have to do others, but the focus should be on massively empowering metro areas, regional governments, local governments, and neighborhoods.

Here we have to respect the fact that different people want to live differently. I've been writing an op-ed with Joel Kotkin, my old sparring partner and critic. Sometimes people see us as opposites: he's pro-suburban and I'm pro-urban. But what we've realized is that urbanites and suburbanites, people who live in different kinds of places in different parts of the country, have to respect each other's choices. If I want to live in a blue state or city and I have different preferences than someone in a red state, it means respecting those preferences. People on the left say, "How can we do that, why should we give up?" Well, we're losing anyway. The red states have restricted women's reproductive rights, and they're restricting the rights of gay and lesbian people. Right now, I think the best we can do is to protect ourselves where we live and to create safe havens and mutual respect. If I want to live my life one way and you want to live your life another way, that's okay, and that's what we're going to have to do.

When it comes to cities and mayors, we don't see such hyperpartisanship or ideology. When I go to a city and I meet the mayor, and I say this with all honesty, I can't tell what party they're from. Mayors are pragmatic, they want to solve problems, they care about their people, they care about climate change, and they don't give a hoot about all of these social and cultural divide issues. It's time to organize and create a bipartisan coalition of mayors. There are both Republicans and Democrats who care about this, and we're going to have to take back our country. But the only way we're going to do that is at the local level.

The morning after election day, my wife said to me: "Imagine if Hillary Clinton, whom we worked so hard for and voted for, had won. If we're sitting here crying on election morning, imagine how the less advantaged people who were Trump supporters would be traumatized, and they're not economically advantaged." We cannot remain in this low-grade civil war.

Here's my solution to take back the country. A pair of mayors—a Democratic mayor and a Republican mayor—should run together on a joint bipartisan ticket. I'll name some names: John Hickenlooper, the governor of Colorado and former mayor of Denver; Martin O'Malley, the governor of Maryland and former mayor of Baltimore; Tim Kaine, who ran as Hillary Clinton's vice presidential nominee; Mick Cornett, the Republican mayor of Oklahoma City who now chairs the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

This bipartisan ticket of mayors could run on the following platform: "We're going to make America great again by empowering you and your communities,

by building the kind of cities you want to build, the kind of suburbs you want to live in. When we're elected, we're not going to tell you how to live or how to raise your kids. You're going to tell yourself. We're going to return power to you. We're going to give *you* the power to live the way you want to live. And we will only serve for four years. Our job will be to go to Washington and reduce the power of Congress and the federal government and give it back to you. We will appoint a council of communities that will be composed of a bipartisan group of your mayors and your local leaders to help reduce the scope of the federal government and empower your communities."

That's our only way out. If every election cycle we go through this low-grade civil war, this incredible trauma, we're not going to have a country left—we're going to pull each other apart. The only way forward is to recognize our divides and enable us to live peaceably within our divides, to respect one another, and to build up our communities the way we want to.

My goal with the book and beyond is to work to help make this happen, to work with local and federal officials to create a bipartisan agenda to redistribute power away from the federal government and to empower our cities, suburbs, and communities all across the country.

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Journal: How do you think the New Urban Crisis will affect international relations moving forward?

Florida: My touchstone on this was the great international political theorist, Benjamin Barber, who died recently. Ben wrote this prescient essay in 1992 called "Jihad Versus McWorld" that really predicted our circumstances today. In the essay, he argued that the world is increasingly divided between a small, elite group of globalists and a rising force of nationalists. The globalists say "tear down the walls," while the nationalists say "build them up." Ben came to see that the real globalizing force isn't the nation-state, it's cities and mayors (see his book *If Mayors Ruled the World*). I'm a member of an organization Ben created, the Global Parliament of Mayors. Perhaps this could grow into something like a "United Nations for Mayors" and become a mechanism for empowering mayors to not only rule their own jurisdictions, but also provide perspective and ultimately draft international policy. In fact, Ben told me right before he died that existing members of the Global Parliament of Mayors have already agreed to help fund America's sanctuary cities if Trump cuts off their federal money. What an achievement. The biggest single thing we have to do in international relations is empower mayors.

We have always tried to empower cities and develop urban leaders. We have all sorts of training mechanisms for people who do diplomatic foreign affairs. Mayors have little, if any, of that. There's nothing like a medical school, law school, or business school for mayors. One of the things we're creating at the University of Toronto that we'll be announcing in the next year is the world's first School for Cities, which is global in scope. The school will help to educate city-builders: urbanists, architects, urban designers, computer scientists, public health officials, mayors, and students, in addition to conducting research and teaching traditional undergraduate and graduate students.

The other thing I talk about in the book is that we have to move away from this ridiculous nation-building strategy, which is really nation-destroying strategy. In the developed world, we have to focus on city-building. The next generation of international development has to be urban development. How does development occur? As Jane Jacobs has said, it occurs by building great urban areas and making them work. We have to work with international institutions like the UN and the World Bank. Slowly but surely, they are starting to focus less on nation-building, infrastructure, and industrial clusters, and more on city-building.

That's the conversation we need to have, but there are real barriers to having this conversation nationally. I'll give you one example. I've been trying to write an op-ed on exactly this: that the way out of our crisis is to empower the local community, to build coalitions that are bipartisan, and use our federalism to find a constructive way out of our divide. No one is interested. Major newspapers aren't interested; magazines aren't interested. They're interested in the divide! So there are real structural impediments to even having this conversation.

When people like Ben Barber, Bruce Katz, or others talk about the Global Parliament of Mayors or empowering mayors, we're really small voices in a very large wilderness. Now is that better than it was a decade ago? Yes. But there is no budding movement in the national halls of power to empower the local. There are big structural impediments from the old mass production, centralized age of authority that stand in the way of this, and it's going to take a long time. And I fear that we don't have that time.

Someone recently asked me what I predict to be the big story of the next 10 years. I said I can't answer that question, but I can tell you what I didn't predict would be the big story of the last 10 years. If you asked me 10 years ago, I would have said, "It's 9/11; it's terrorism; it's the war in the Middle East." Those

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were very big stories then. But the biggest story that I take away from the last 10 years is the inexorable rise of the urban and power of cities—and of course, the backlash that it has produced. The big story that was there all along, that we weren't looking at, was the rise of cities across the board. I think the power of this urban dynamic, to spur both positive change and this backlash, is going to attract its share of attention eventually. I truly hope it's sooner rather than later. 

NOTES

1. Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).
2. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
3. Erin Schell, "The Creative Bubble," *Jacobin*, October 3, 2014.