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FLORIDA IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: How Eurocentrism Obscures Global Urban Challenges—and What We Can Do About It

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Abstract
According to Richard Florida, the world is in the grip of a 'New Urban Crisis'. In his most recent book Florida recounts a visit to Medellín that provoked an epiphany in which he realized that the New Urban Crisis is global in scope. Unfortunately, Florida's discovery of the global South is informed by a deeply Eurocentric understanding of urbanization. This leads him to conclude that Southern cities should 'unleash' creativity, and he proposes that the United States should develop a global urban policy that would export a version of American urbanism. In this essay we deconstruct Florida's notion of the New Urban Crisis and show that its Eurocentric assumptions obscure the very real environmental, economic and political challenges facing cities in the global South and their residents.

A new urban crisis is upon us, or so we're told by self-styled urban policy guru Richard Florida in his recent book The New Urban Crisis: How our Cities are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do about It (2017a). According to Florida this crisis is global in scope, and one of the policy prescriptions he offers is to export American urbanism. In this intervention we strenuously object to his analysis and prescriptions. Although Florida and other pop urbanists are well-worn targets among urban scholars, it is imperative that the transfer and circulation of his policy prescriptions do not go unchallenged. After a brief introduction of Florida's conceptualization of the New Urban Crisis, we demonstrate that the application of his chai-latte-infused urban epistemology obscures the multiple and interrelated environmental, economic and political challenges facing cities in the global South and their residents. We conclude by considering Florida's assertion that the New Urban Crisis should be addressed by exporting American urbanism globally.

In many ways Florida's latest book is a sequel to his The Rise of the Creative Class, and while it is not a mea culpa he does temper some of his earlier enthusiasm for the enfant terrible of this millennium's social structure. Indeed, the creative class is all grown up, and while a number of its members have become astronomically rich and lead well-established global brands that have evolved from nascent start-ups in less than two decades, many others are part of the precarious creative underclass whose members toil in the gig economy and, perhaps worst of all for creatives, languish in obscurity. Florida (2017a: 120) recognizes that cities with dense populations of young, successful creatives exhibit 'the harshest levels of economic inequality and economic segregation'. The inequality generated by the clustering of creatives in cities like San Francisco is so severe that Florida christens the 'New Urban Crisis' a proper noun. The general argument of the book is that this crisis can be addressed by some basic regulatory interventions that will allow cities to harness the economic potential of the creative class while mitigating its negative impacts.

The notion that the New Urban Crisis is in any way new will raise eyebrows within the urban studies community which has steadfastly critiqued the insights and policy prescriptions offered by the 'cult of creativity' (Marcuse, 2003; Peck, 2005; Markusen, 2006; Scott, 2006; Slater, 2006; Rousseau, 2009). Indeed, to critical urban scholars it was self-explanatory that less-/low-/un-skilled service-sector workers and uncreative long-term city residents would be priced out of San Francisco. Florida does acknowledge that he has been accused of fostering gentrification (2017a: 57), and he seeks to set the record straight; in fact, Florida begins Chapter Four by reassuring readers that his 'objective in this chapter is to focus on the facts'. He then proceeds to introduce a definition of gentrification that is bereft of its underlying causal mechanisms, and he simply provides a list of some of its most common characteristics. Thus, rather than a complex process of urban transformation driven by the production and exploitation of rent gaps, gentrification, according to Florida, 'describes a process in which a neighborhood gains wealth and sees its

population become more affluent, whiter, and younger' (ibid.: 59). Florida would obviously benefit from a close reading of some of his critics. Nevertheless, our objective in this intervention is not to heap further scorn on Florida's books (for an astute critique see Danny Dorling's 2017 review in The Guardian). Rather, we take issue with the universal claims embedded within Florida's conceptualization of the New Urban Crisis, his discovery of the urban worlds of the global South and his concomitant clumsy attempt to rebrand himself as a global phenomenon.

Florida begins Chapter Nine by describing an epiphanic trip to Medellín where he attended the Seventh World Urban Forum. The visit had a profound effect on Florida and he spent the following month 'thinking and writing nearly non-stop about the issues that had been discussed there' (ibid.: 167). This intense period of non-stop thinking and writing culminated in a eureka moment, and Florida exclaims: 'The crisis of global cities and global urbanization, I was starting to see, was a huge dimension of the New Urban Crisis, substantially bigger than the serious urban and suburban challenges in the United States' (ibid.: 168). Florida's realization that urban worlds exist beyond North America and Europe highlights the continued challenges faced by scholars seeking to shift the epistemological foundations of urban studies (Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2009; Schindler, 2017). Florida side-steps a rich and well-established literature that grapples with the challenges of urban theory in the global South, the imperative to develop 'post-colonial' or 'Southern' inflected theoretical responses, and approaches for researching the second wave of urbanization. Instead, Florida is confounded by the lack of reliable data on cities in the South, and he uses a number of proxies that ostensibly illustrate the global nature of the New Urban Crisis, such as the length of time it takes people with average incomes in various cities to purchase an iPhone and satellite images of the world at night.

The paucity of data regarding cities in the global South is a complex issue that has received significant scholarly attention (for economic data in general see Jerven, 2013; for city data see Randall and Coast, 2015; Borel-Saladin and Parnell, 2017), but more important than Florida's apparent lack of awareness of this scholarship is his reverence for rankings. Florida reinforces the flawed logic of city rankings critiqued by urban theorists such as Jennifer Robinson (2006: 1), who cautions against the 'serious effects consequent upon labelling cities, placing them in hierarchies or dividing them up according to levels of development'. While the drawbacks of such ranking schemes are well known, Florida never makes clear how a New Urban Crisis ranking scheme of global proportions should be used. Thus, one immediately asks: what use is there for a New Urban Crisis framework that facilitates a comparison between, say, Dakar and Austin? The answer, of course, is that there isn't one, so there is an obvious follow-up question: why is developing such a ranking scheme important to Florida? His CityLab website features a host of ruminations on urbanization in the global South, and in a recent article in The Atlantic Florida (2017b) reviews research on economic development in cities in the global South and then concludes that 'there is no

one-size-fits-all pattern for urban and economic development'. We can only assume that Florida is purposefully attempting to rebrand himself as a global urban policy guru with insights that can be transferred from North America to, well, anywhere.

Florida's foray into the global South is troubling because of his sheer lack of understanding of the second wave of urbanization or humility in setting out on such a journey. This is evident in his treatment of informal settlements. Slums are understood as 'self-reinforcing poverty trap[s]' that are 'teeming' (2017a: 172), rather than popular neighbourhoods (Hansen and Verkaaik, 2009; McFarlane and Silver, 2017) that can offer a vital foundation for speculation, support and associational life for the many (Simone, 2014). This is not to celebrate everyday life on the margins, rather Florida's approach fails to capture the richness of city life and acknowledge that such neighbourhoods can be spaces of hope as well as despair. The reader learns that 'poverty occurs in the absence of institutions that unleash the creative energy of people and neighborhoods', so the key to addressing the New Urban Crisis is to help societies 'further their own development by unleashing the energy and talent of the people who are clustering in their cities' (Florida 2017a: 177–8). Indeed, Florida's engagement with the diverse geographies of global urbanism remains superficial. Mentions of a handful of cities including Addis Ababa, Bangalore, Beijing, Mexico City and Rio receive fewer entries in the index than the crucible of the creative class, Soho, New York. Florida is silent on pressing environmental, economic and political challenges facing cities in the global South, and it is to those that we now turn.

Environment

Sustained environmental crises are unfolding in cities, displacing and disrupting the lives of millions across the global South. The most devastating of these environmental crises is what Christian Parenti (2011) terms the 'catastrophic convergence' of climate change. The rapidly urbanizing spaces of Africa and Asia face precarious futures from sea-level rise, rising temperatures, and extreme weather events (IPCC, 2013). For city planners and residents alike the already lived experience of climate change presents a greater concern than an absence of a creative class. Florida's failure to address the environment within the conceptualization of the New Urban Crisis and his expansion of its explanatory logics to the global South demonstrates his limited understanding of environmental issues.

Urban political ecology (UPE) has long shown the interrelated nature of urbanization and environmental crises (Cronon, 1992; Swyngedouw, 2004). From the storm drains of Bangalore (Ranganathan, 2015) to Nairobi's plastic bags (Njeru, 2006) and urban agriculture in Botswana (Hovorka, 2006), the socio-natural dimensions of urbanization in the global South remain visible and visceral. And UPE offers a crucial space in which research from the global South provides the foundation to articulate the multiple contours of power that produce urban environments. These include viewpoints that highlight the importance of considering everyday environmentalisms (Loftus, 2012), feminist (Truelove, 2011), post-colonial (Lawhon et al., 2014) and embodied (Doshi, 2017) processes and experiences of the

urban environment. Deeply rooted assumptions regarding the inability of cities in the South to address environmental crises have recently been disrupted by events in the global North, where neoliberal governance regimes have reworked notions of public goods and environmental commons. The injustices of water infrastructure in cities such as Flint (Pulido, 2016; Ranganathan, 2016) now have more in common with the South than they do with Florida's favoured creative class cities (Schindler, 2014). This socio-material, capital-centric understanding of the urbanization process (Swyngedouw, 2004) demands a much broader conception of cities than Florida is able to muster both in the North and South. It leaves us concerned about the failure to address the dynamic relations between environment and urban futures and how sustained environmental crises are already pushing cities towards long-term states of emergency. The recent droughts and water shortages in Maputo and Cape Town are but two harbingers of widespread, urban environmental turbulence and show the need to acknowledge and address environment within notions of urban crisis. Planning for future environmental contingencies and turbulence requires an outlook that is grounded in the history of human-environment relations that have animated and shaped urban processes. Indeed, Florida's ahistorical understanding of cities has been subject to scholarly critique. For example, Ashley Dawson has argued (2017: 136) that contemporary 'citerati' such as Florida have 'failed to address, in any significant way, the most crucial characteristic of extreme cities' like New York that appear at the top of ranking schemes. Most importantly, he says, 'their role in the transatlantic slave trade, in a hierarchical imperial world order' is completely omitted. Indeed, Florida has nothing to say about environmental histories and urbanization. UPE would connect climate change to the ways in which cities are spatial manifestations of successive world-ecological regimes (Moore, 2015; Schindler and Kanai, 2018; Silver, 2018) and the multiple ways that the urban and environment have been historically co-produced (e.g. Cronon, 1992). Florida's hierarchical city-centric worldview, on the other hand, fails to acknowledge the extended capitalist urbanization that has driven anthropogenic transformation and the ways in which vulnerability, inequality and violence, most notably through climate change, are likely to converge across the South. Dawson (2017: 136) is right to call this 'astonishing historical ignorance' and there is nothing in The New Urban Crisis that would counter such a claim or acknowledge the shared environmental crises of the coastal disaster zones of Africa and Asia and the metropolitan centres of the creative class. In sum, Florida's silence on climate change, environmental crises and the crisis-scapes of urban environments from Flint to Maputo exposes the limits of his universal claims.

Florida is not only insensitive to the climate change(d) futures of cities in the global South, but he has scant advice for cities in general that are struggling to reduce their vulnerability in the face of uncertainty. In an interview with Miami's New Tropic Florida does argue for the construction of more generic 'infrastructure', but also speculates: 'I don't think Miami's going to go away, I'm not a doom sayer. Miami's going to figure out a way to survive. Cities are resilient places. I know I'm not going anywhere' (Nebhrajani, 2016). This is at odds with

climate science, which does not predict a benevolent future. Instead, there is consensus that Miami faces existential danger and may cease to exist as a livable city (Hauer et al., 2016). Thus, while Florida might hang around, Miami will likely sink under projected sea-level rise in the coming decades (ibid.). Miami is unable to re-invent the rules of the game by simply embracing Florida's techno-optimism, and it shares more in common with those low-ranking, technologically 'underdeveloped' Southern cities than Florida will allow. As Hauer and colleagues' article in the journal Nature makes clear, climate change will submerge cities like Miami and 'could lead to US population movements of a magnitude similar to the twentieth century Great Migration of southern African-Americans' (ibid.: 691). The basis of Florida's urban rankings would collapse under such circumstances. The irony is that since the environment is not an indicator that interests Florida, Miami could be submerged ten to twelve feet below sea level yet that wouldn't necessarily affect its position in a New Urban Crisis ranking scheme.

Economy

The globalized economy in the twenty-first century presents cities in the global South with a series of challenges including (1) an emergent geography of deindustrialization and (2) the automation of low-skilled employment. Manufacturing remains a key driver of economic growth, but truly creative strategic responses—such as basic income grants—are required to ensure that it underpins broad-based prosperity. Furthermore, given the urgency of the environmental crisis, industrialization can no longer externalize its tremendous ecological costs. Florida fails to grasp these very real challenges, while the creative class is peripheral to the challenge of fostering equitable and ecologically sensitive economic futures. Mainstream development theory has historically posited that broad-based prosperity was achievable through the approximation of Fordist manufacturing. Peasants could be relocated from villages to cities where the productivity of their labour power would be augmented through its combination with capital (Lewis, 1954). The modernization narrative posits that a country's overall productivity increases as its peasantry is progressively transformed into a proletariat, and once surplus labour is absorbed to a degree that wages increase, capital will be invested in labour-saving technology (Haraguchi et al., 2017). Debates have surrounded the methods of fostering industrialization but the virtues of societal transformation were largely taken for granted. For example, in contrast to policy makers in international financial institutions, dependency theorists argued that domestic industries in countries peripheral to the global economy required protection from their more productive and capitalized rivals in advanced industrialized countries (Frank, 1967; Amin, 1990). While participants of the alter-globalization movement and some post-structural scholars articulated alternatives to mainstream development (Bello, 2002; Escobar 2017), recent research confirms that manufacturing remains a driver of sustained economic growth (Haraguchi et al., 2017). Furthermore, cities with agglomerations of industry tend to exhibit less inequality than those whose growth is fuelled by resource extraction (Gollin et al., 2016). Thus, contrary to what Florida would have us believe,

unleashing pent-up creativity in cities of the global South is a distraction, while industrial growth, attendant to concerns of people and planet, is more likely to result in economic transformation and reduced inequality.

Developing countries that seek to foster industrialization face an increasingly daunting set of challenges. While attracting/retaining foreign direct investment and 'moving up' global value chains into more value-added activities has never been straightforward (Coe et al., 2004; Phelps et al., 2009; Horner, 2014), Dani Rodrik (2016) has shown that many developing countries are experiencing rapid deindustrialization. Common wisdom in urban studies, media, politics and public discourse continues to associate deindustrialization with urban decline in the industrial heartlands of OECD countries. This is commonly understood as a lasting legacy of what Folker Fröbel et al. (1980) termed the 'new international division of labor', in which manufacturing was offshored from the OECD beginning in the 1970s. While many OECD countries indeed experienced significant industrial decline due to offshoring, particularly from 1990–2010, Richard Baldwin (2016: 2) shows that offshored industry has concentrated in a small number of developing countries. Indeed, he notes that 'only six developing nations … saw their share of world manufacturing rise by more than three-tenths of one percentage point since 1990'. Meanwhile, other developing countries have experienced deindustrialization on an unprecedented scale, surpassing levels witnessed in the American Rust Belt, northern England, Alsace and the Ruhrgebiet (Rodrik 2016).

Deindustrialization in the global South is termed 'premature' by Dani Rodrik because unlike the pattern observed in the OECD, it is happening before productivity increases in the service sector and prior to wage increases which could boost domestic demand. Thus, in contrast to OECD countries whose deindustrialization was partly driven by the reallocation of capital to the service sector as its productivity increased, deindustrialization in the global South is a result of increased competition from producers in newly industrialized countries in East Asia (Shaffaedin, 2005; Page, 2009; Jenkins, 2015). According to UNCTAD (2015) South–South trade increased ~15% annually from 1990–2010, and 'the outstanding feature of South–South trade is the dominant role of developing Asia' which accounts for 80% of intra-South exports. Economists are only beginning to account for the impact of China's accession to the WTO and the rapid expansion of its manufacturing base and exports on OECD countries (see Autor et al., 2013; 2016). Preliminary evidence suggests that the so-called 'China shock' was not limited to OECD countries, and it may be even more pronounced in some developing countries, particularly those whose manufacturers were historically protected by import-substitution policies (see e.g. Bogliaccini, 2013; Jenkins, 2015).

Finally, it is clear that manufacturing in the twenty-first century will be unrecognizable from twentieth-century Fordism. Advances in robotics and artificial intelligence promise to

transform the way things are produced (Brynjolfsson and MacAfee, 2014), and this poses a new set of challenges for developing countries (Hallward-Driemeier and Nayyar, 2018). Until recently automation was associated with advanced sectors in high-wage countries, but there is a growing anticipation of the automation of labour-intensive sectors in low-wage countries in the near future (Norton, 2017). Exports of advanced automation technology from OECD countries to Asia have increased dramatically in recent years (Pooler, 2017), driven largely by China's 'government-backed, robot-driven industrial revolution the likes of which the world has never seen' (Bland, 2016). Low-wage countries that neighbour China have long anticipated attracting foreign investment as wages rise in China (see Haraguchi et al., 2017), but the revolution in automation technology threatens to derail this development strategy. Even light industrial sectors (e.g. textiles) and low-wage countries such as Bangladesh may not be immune to the revolution in automation technology (Stacey and Nicolaou, 2017).

Manufacturing remains a key component of national development strategies but cities in the global South that seek to attract/retain investment and 'move up' value chains face a host of new challenges from deindustrialization to automation. Meanwhile, the growth model that propelled China to middle-income status and is being pursued by many other developing countries externalizes environmental costs and is increasingly untenable in the face of impending environmental catastrophe. Thus, the foundations of an economy-yet-to-come must recognize and respond to the limits of carbon-fuelled growth (Klein, 2015). Finally, industrial decline in many OECD countries presaged a populist right-wing backlash (e.g. Trump, Brexit, AfD in Germany and the FN in France), and the loss of factory jobs in the global South raises immediate questions surrounding the urban political. To avoid social breakdown countries in the global South will have to continue to pioneer creative policies such as basic income grants (Ferguson, 2015). While a nascent creative class may indeed exist in some cities in the global South, it is peripheral to these pressing challenges.

Urban politics and governance

Florida notes that the New Urban Crisis is fuelled by a 'winner-take-all' mentality, and in Southern cities this is commonly manifested in the dispossession and removal of entire communities to make way for private developers. Extreme inequality and violent dispossession explain why cities incubate resistance to the current order. Indeed, from Taksim and Tahrir Squares to Malmö and Paris, contemporary urban politics is animated by rage (Dikeç, 2017). However, the regulatory reforms proposed by Florida betray a gross underestimation of how deeply this rage is felt. As we demonstrate below, urban governance in the global South is subject to an upward politics of scale, as governments seek to manage urban processes and reduce contingency. Judging from its track record, the creative class is most likely to be on the side of the police and contribute to maintaining the current order, rather than an emancipatory politics of change.

Urban policy is being centralized. Cities are typically seen as engines of growth, so national governments increasingly seek to manage urbanization and this trend reverses decades of decentralization and devolution, and is driven by the view that cities are engines of economic growth whose expansion must be managed. National governments began crafting urbanization strategies in the mid-2000s (Turok, 2014), and signatories of the New Urban Agenda have committed to the promulgation of national urban plans in accordance with the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning developed by UN Habitat. Contemporary urban politics in the global South must be understood in the context of this expansive role of national governments, the fiscal limitations imposed on unbounded and rapidly urbanizing metropolitan regions and the ensuing tensions among governance regimes established at various scales from local to global.

For many countries in the global South, urban development was subordinated to national development strategies after independence. Cities typically captured the attention of national planners given the association of urbanization with industrialization, but the actual nuts and bolts of urban politics often escaped their attention. The everyday messiness of urban politics exceeded the narrow confines of national planning, and municipal governments were expected to cope with competing claims, resource scarcity and growing populations. Many cities established long-term master plans, but, in practice, everyday governance was often determined by a nebulous and unwritten set of unofficial but institutionalized rules against which claims could be advanced and conflicts adjudicated. Rather than a legal code with universal applicability, these parallel political systems were often a patchwork of place-specific arrangements that obtained with the consent of a range of stakeholders and determined how and by whom urban space and resources were used and distributed. Partha Chatterjee (2004; 2011) has conceptualized this vast constellation of political arrangements and exceptions as 'political society', and he argues that it affords vulnerable groups an avenue to advance claims on a moral basis. Sympathetic bureaucrats and elected officials who see merit in a particular claim advanced by a marginalized community 'use the sovereign power of the state to declare their cause an exception to the norm laid down by the law' (Chatterjee, 2011: 16). Chatterjee's analysis has provoked lively scholarly debate, and for the purpose of this essay it is important to note that scholars have shown that governments are indeed commonly complicit in informal arrangements for land use and resource distribution (see Roy, 2005; Björkman, 2015; Cornea et al., 2016).

A significant amount of urban space in the global South is governed according to extra-legal customs and institutions, yet there is a global trend toward the 'elimination of the very possibility of non-private forms of tenure' that threatens the 'rich lifeworlds sustained by diverse, non-privatized land regimes' (Ghertner, 2015: 553). Many governments are increasingly hesitant to entertain the moral appeal of claims made by vulnerable groups, as they prioritize the transformation of territory over the 'improvement' of populations (Schindler, 2015). Governments at multiple levels assert their authority to acquire land for

speculative purposes (Goldman, 2011), while elsewhere governments have empowered private-sector corporations to transform vast swaths of cities into private enclaves (see Murray, 2017; Shatkin, 2018). Finally, in many cities in the global South real estate is the only game in town, and a host of factors encourage foreign and domestic investors to channel capital into the 'secondary circuit' (Kutz, 2016; Goodfellow, 2017).

It remains to be seen if vulnerable communities will be able to continue demanding exceptions on moral grounds, or if the informal arrangements that have historically obtained at the micro-scale will be dismantled. This question has vexed scholars for a number of years, and while there are instances in which vulnerable communities in informal settlements have thwarted attempts by powerful actors to evict them (see Weinstein, 2014), the context has changed with the ongoing recentralization of urban policy. Indeed, national governments may seek to micro-manage urban processes and at the very least this could alter political opportunity structures and disrupt political alliances. In the most extreme cases we may witness renewed and more aggressive efforts to clear space for real estate developments that constitute 'urbicide' (see Coward, 2008; Graham, 2011), but elsewhere we are likely to see qualitatively more intensive and invasive forms of surveillance and discipline.

Where does the creative class fit into the story? To answer this question we look to .rümqi, the capital city of China's restive Xinjiang province. The Wall Street Journal (Chin and Bürge, 2017) describes .rümqi as 'a laboratory for high-tech social controls'. It reports that 'for every 100,000 people the police in Xinjiang want to monitor, they use the same amount of surveillance equipment that police in other parts of China would use to monitor millions' (ibid.). As a result, the authors claim that 'it is nearly impossible to move about the region without feeling the unrelenting gaze of the government. Citizens and visitors alike must run a daily gantlet of police checkpoints, surveillance cameras and machines scanning their ID cards, faces, eyeballs and sometimes entire bodies' (ibid.). Human Rights Watch (2017) concurs, and has asserted that thousands of ethnic Uyghurs are detained in re-education camps. If these claims are true, they raise a number of important questions. First, will the limits of this experiment in Orwellian governance be exposed, or will the totalizing and unprecedented use of surveillance technology absorb sociality and subdue dissent? It is already apparent that the tech giants spawned by the creative class are not at the forefront of emancipatory politics. It is not that the technology they develop is devoid of emancipatory potential, but the largest tech firms have been quick to acquiesce in the demands of authoritarian governments (see Chan, 2017). According to Amnesty International (2006: 23), tech firms Google, Yahoo and Microsoft have 'failed to uphold [their stated principles] in the face of business opportunities'. For example, a recent editorial in the New York Times pointed out that tech firms in Silicon Valley have cosied up to Saudi Arabia, so it is much more likely that they are complicit with the surveillance and silencing of journalists than the creation of anything that resembles a public sphere within

the Kingdom (Giridharadas, 2018). In conclusion, urban politics in the global South is at a crossroads as national governments seek to manage urban processes, and in many cases this inevitably means rolling back political society. There is simply no basis for Florida's assumption that creativity is 'pent up' or that 'unleashing' it will foster economic growth, let alone invigorate civic debate, strengthen the public sphere, or serve as an outlet for the rage that animates politics in many cities in the majority world.

Conclusion

Urban regions in the global South and their residents face uncertain, precarious futures marked by environmental, economic and political instability. The ecosystems upon which many cities in the global South depend for their reproduction are increasingly strained and vulnerable to climate change. Meanwhile, many cities have reached their absorptive capacity of waste, so air is unbreathable and water is undrinkable. It is inconceivable that the environment is not centre stage in any conceptualization of urban crisis. We have advocated here for a historicized understanding of the convergence of crises that accounts for the production of ecologies through intra- as well as inter-city relations. Cities that once boasted extensive industrial clusters are deindustrializing, and others are on the brink of dramatic transformation as a result of advances in automation technology. Despite its undeniable promise, the potential of new technologies to foster emancipatory politics remains unfulfilled. Instead, technological advances and leading creative firms are commonly implicated in authoritarian governance regimes. Thus, against all evidence to the contrary, Florida clings to the naïve belief that individuals in the majority world possess the superhuman capability to endlessly adapt and refine creative solutions that reduce their vulnerability to environmental shocks, economic hardship and political repression.

It comes as no surprise that Medellín's cable cars capture Florida's imagination and serve as the basis for his rumination on global urbanization (for a scholarly analysis of Medellín's model of 'social urbanisation' see MacLean, 2015). The cable cars are exemplary of the sorts of 'ingenious solutions' that Florida claims (2017a: 183) are worth replicating elsewhere, but this is followed by a passage in the conclusion which is undoubtedly the book's most pernicious sleight of hand. Rather than advocating South–South transfers of policy, planning norms and technology, Florida astonishingly argues that the New Urban Crisis should actually be solved by the United States. 'Historically, our urban policy has had a largely domestic focus', Florida laments, and he then proceeds to assert that 'it is time for it to take on a more global dimension' (ibid.: 210). He admits that this endeavour would not be entirely altruistic, because 'building stronger cities around the world with a larger middle class would open up new markets for American business' (ibid.). The payoff for America would not end there, because 'developing stronger and more resilient cities in chronically unstable parts of the world would help further key diplomatic, military, and humanitarian goals, such as fighting against terrorism' (ibid.:201). It is unclear how the US could spearhead such an ambitious agenda given its international isolation over its attempts to rewrite trade deals and inhibit the WTO from functioning, its recognition of Jerusalem as

Israel's capital, its unilateral undermining of the Iran nuclear deal, and a host of other ill-conceived international relations blunders. Never mind all of this, Florida is not one to get bogged down in details. He simply asserts that 'the failed states that are the breeding grounds for global terrorism are among the least urbanized places in the world' (the substantiation for this claim is a blog post of his own from his CityLab website). Thus, forget the Peace Corps or US Agency for International Development, the New Urban Crisis is an opportunity for Homeland Security and the US Chamber of Commerce, and the US should 'consider underwriting and assisting in the development of refugee cities' (ibid.: 180). The construction of new cities in 'fragile and broken' nation states (ibid.: 210) comes close to the privatopias, or 'charter cities', advocated by neoliberal and neocolonial commentators such as Paul Romer and Bruce Gilley. These entrepôt enclaves are unencumbered by regulations imposed by the nation-state from which they have been carved (see Easterling, 2016; Murray, 2017). The champions of this sort of urbanism gleefully imagine a network of mini-Dubais—or in keeping with the title of this essay, mini-Miamis—dotting Africa's coastline. Indeed, Richard Florida is likely enthused by these urban fantasies (Watson, 2014) because these enclaves offer the prospect of designing habitats in which the creative class can thrive. Take a moment to do a thought experiment: imagine what aspects of American urbanism would be exported to these privatopian enclaves by the as yet uncreated Federal Bureau for Global Urban Development headed by New Urban Crisis Czar Richard Florida. We began this depressing exercise by considering what aspects urbanism from the US could be leveraged in a global war on the New Urban Crisis. We surely wouldn't advocate replicating Detroit's extreme socio-spatial segregation, the endless sprawl of Los Angeles, or Miami's unwillingness to recognize the risks posed by climate change. We concluded that America's urban infrastructure shouldn't be exported anywhere. In fact, we imagine residents of Flint, Michigan, who were poisoned by lead-contaminated water would question Florida's claim that Southern cities lack '[t]he kinds of basic infrastructure and division of labor we take for granted in the advanced world' (Florida, 2017a: 180). Houston's lack of formal city planning would be redundant in many cities in the global South. The militarization of America's municipal police forces poses a lethal hazard to its minorities while its incarceration rate is the highest in the OECD, so we quickly ruled out America's model of law and order. The non-transparent nature of the inter-city competition to host Amazon's second headquarters makes a mockery of electoral democracy (Creswell, 2018). Ultimately we just gave up without anything on the list.

In contrast to Florida's portrayal of cities as centres of creativity where enterprising individuals can pick themselves up by their bootstraps, evidence suggests American cities incubate poverty and vulnerability. The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Philip Alston (2017) recently visited the US to investigate 'whether the persistence of extreme poverty in America undermines the enjoyment of human rights by its citizens'. The report shows 'how thousands of poor people get minor infraction notices which seem to be intentionally designed to quickly explode into unpayable debt,

incarceration, and the replenishment of municipal coffers' (ibid.). Alston found the practice of employing punitive measures against the poor as a means of raising revenue for municipal governments was widespread:

In many cities and counties the criminal justice system is effectively a system for keeping the poor in poverty while generating revenue to fund not only the justice system but diverse other programs. The use of the legal system, not to promote justice, but to raise revenue, as documented so powerfully in the Department of Justice's report on Ferguson, is pervasive around the country.

The tone of this essay has been rather flippant in parts. This was the only way we could respond to Florida's simplistic notion of the New Urban Crisis, and we urge him to embrace the growing movements to decolonize urban studies and geographic knowledge (Roy, 2009; Jazeel, 2017), dispense with ranking schemes and instead get out more and walk around, listen to diverse voices, remain humble and open to new forms of learning and unlearning (Lawhon et al., 2016). However, we hope that our tone does not detract from the seriousness of the issues at hand. The fact that there is a readymade market for the claims made by Florida about the New Urban Crisis demonstrates that Euro- and America-centric notions of urbanity and planning remain hegemonic. While urban studies scholarship has become somewhat more geographically diverse in recent years (Kanai et al., 2018), many cities remain 'off the map' (Robinson, 2006) and voices from the South are marginalized (Nagendra et al., 2018). This illegibility leads to dangerous policy prescriptions like the idea that American urbanism should be replicated, or that the United States should build private enclaves all over the world. This is unfortunate because, as we have shown above, cities in the global South face a range of very real challenges that can also offer learning opportunities to cities in the US dealing with the urban crisis experienced by millions of the US poor. However, these challenges require a creativity that Florida fails to muster and his search for solutions in those bastions of the creative class is an unhelpful distraction.

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