

**Global Cities in an Era of Change**  
**Harvard University**  
**September 4-6, 2002**

**Concluding Panel:**  
**Observations on Presentations at the Conference**

**Panelists: Alex Krieger, Harvard Design School; Anthony Downs**

**The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC; Jeremy Newsome, The Grosvenor Office, London, England**  
**Daniel Rose, Rose Associates, New York**

Mr. Rose:

Many thought-proving comments have been made in these three days, and I believe that they can be summarized by five images:

The first image, a message to the entrepreneurs present, is of the Marquis De Lafayette in the early days of the French Revolution, having a drink in a Parisian café. When someone dashed in, shouting, “Where is that mob going?” Lafayette replied, “I don’t know; but I must get there first because I am their leader.”

FOLLOWING FROM THE FRONT, Lafayette’s goal, is

what successful entrepreneurs do. The entrepreneur must understand and anticipate and fill the needs of his demanding and sophisticated clientele; if he does so effectively, he will be handsomely rewarded.

The second image is for local government planners who wish to attract and retain global city activities, with the jobs, tax revenues, purchasing power, etc., they bring. They must remember the picture of the 82-year-old multi-millionaire, questioning his 22-year-old chorus girl bride, ‘Honey, if I lost my money, would you still love me?’ The 22-year-old replied, “Of course I would still love you. I WOULD MISS YOU, BUT I WOULD STILL LOVE YOU!”

Capital flows to where it is rewarded, global city types to where they are encouraged. When they do not feel nurtured, they will move elsewhere.

The third image is for those anti-city social scientists who opine on real estate but who are out of touch with the real world.

That image is of a large MOUND OF HORSE MANURE. One hundred years ago, it was widely believed by those who thought about such matters that great cities could not function without horses, that horses deposit manure, and that the key factor limiting the size of great cities would be their ability to dispose of horse manure.

More recently, some of the world's most important social scientists met in 1968 in a group called The Club of Rome; they predicted the precise year in which the world would run out of each major non-renewable resource. Today, our tungsten, molybdenum, etc., are still here but the Club of Rome is not. A similar group predicted with some certainty that the Indian city of Calcutta, with an expected population of between fifty to sixty million people before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, would be the first human settlement to collapse and stop functioning. Calcutta fortunately was not listening, and it is still in business.

Finally, consider the social scientist who reasoned that

because roses are prettier, roses would make a better soup than cabbages. That kind of thinking posits that, for ostensibly rational reasons, the world's great cities will fade.

Yes, the role of cities will change with time; yes, bigger is not necessarily better. But count on it, London and Paris will exist as long as social scientists on government grants seek the world's best theater or the world's best dinners.

A fourth image, relating to public education in our large cities, is of the awe-inspiring event held in Stockholm each year as the KING OF SWEDEN PRESENTS NOBEL PRIZES. Picture those events between World War I and II, when many Nobel Prizes were won by graduates of New York City's free public university, City College. That over-crowded, under-resourced free college educated the children of poverty-stricken, often non-English speaking foreign immigrants. Members of one class in particular, the Class of 1937, received three Nobel Prizes, a feat never equaled by Oxford or Cambridge, by Harvard or Yale.

Fifty years later, City College was granting degrees to students who even the college deans described as “functionally illiterate.”

What had changed? Only the social and educational policies.

In those days, the public school served two important functions: to inculcate the values of a civilized society and to teach children to write with precision and to read with understanding. And they can again.

A decade ago, conventional wisdom held that the crime problem in large cities was insoluble. Today, thanks to Rudolph Giuliani and others, we know that it can be solved. Perhaps a decade from now, when our social and educational policies may revert to what they were, we may again produce literate and numerate students from the inner city (and Nobel laureates!).

When that happens, the middle class families that have been fleeing our failing public schools may again choose to live in our cities.

The fifth image I suggest that all city lovers keep in mind is that of ARISTOTLE AND HIS FRIENDS AT A PARTY.

Last night our speaker had forebodings about the future of cities, citing the impact of modern electronic communication, the frightening impact of terrorism, the failure of inner-city education, and so forth. He ended his depressing talk by flashing on the screen a citation from Herodotus, the fifth century BC historian who said, “Human prosperity does not long abide in the same place.”

I treasure Herodotus for his imagination and his curiosity, but I prefer Aristotle for his wisdom and his accuracy. It was Aristotle who said, “Men first come to the city for safety; they stay on to earn a living; and they remain to pursue the good life.”

Some, like our dinner speaker, may choose to retreat to a mountain top with their computers; others may choose to retire among “the walking dead” in places like, say, Naples, Florida. But there will always be some of us who will remain attached to the

dynamism, the vibrancy, the excitement and the stimulus of great cities.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx himself praised the bourgeoisie for creating cities that saved the world from (his words!) “the idiocy of rural life,” in which even a computer can be of limited help.

Let us hope that those attending this conference on Global Cities share Aristotle’s view; and that we all work toward the common goal of making global cities wonderful international centers where civilized people can pursue the good life.

Daniel Rose talks can be found on: [www.danielrose.org](http://www.danielrose.org)