BOOK REVIEW:

SURVIVAL OF THE CITY: LIVING AND THRIVING IN AN AGE OF ISOLATION, BY EDWARD GLAESER & DAVID CUTLER (PENGUIN PRESS, 2021)

ARWI KRIZ, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

The world has changed since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. Global and local governments, including those in the United States, have struggled to navigate the crisis created by the pandemic. World economic output collectively dropped by 5% in the second quarter of 2020 (United Nations, 2020). Immediately after the pandemic hit, U.S. economic output (i.e., gross domestic product [GDP]) dropped by 9.1% (Brookings Institution, 2020). During the lockdown period, non-farm employment fell by 21 million; women, non-white, and low-income workers suffered these losses disproportionately. As these statistics indicate, the economic impact of the pandemic was sudden and relatively large.

The pandemic is currently in its third year and is still ongoing. New scientific knowledge, the development and deployment of vaccinations, broader testing availability, and newly developed treatments have allowed countries to reopen and economies to begin to recover. However, some of the immediate impacts of the pandemic may result in long-term social and economic changes. Supply-chain disruption and labor-supply shortages triggered inflation in 2021–2022, which has increased income inequity. Although both high- and low-income workers saw increased income, this increase has been offset by the higher prices of necessary goods such as food and housing. This inflation hits low-income families relatively harder (Orchard, 2022). Housing prices have been increasing dramatically, and office space remains empty. Also, the number of entrepreneurs is increasing, and remote work is in greater demand among professional workers. The Samuel Neaman Institute (2020) predicts that, with supply-chain disruption, a global recession is likely — and social problems can be expected.

Survival of the City offers a retrospective and prospective account of pandemics and policy recommendations to strengthen civil society, especially in the United States. The book is thought-provoking and encourages readers to look at old problems (that have not necessarily occurred because of the pandemic) in a new way. Examples include the failure of the World Health Organization (WHO) to curb the pandemic, social inequity, the high cost of U.S. health care, and U.S. urban gentrification. The authors recommend three solutions to these problems:

1. Establishing a new international organization to curb potential pandemics;
2. Reforming U.S. health care, police, and school services; and,
3. Lifting land-use regulations.

The book's central theme is that cities are, by nature, vulnerable to pandemics because they are the center of many people, which makes sense and unhygienic environments are unavoidable. The central thesis is that only a strong, healthy, and effective society will survive future pandemics and disasters. Cities require "effective and proactive governments to share strengths that serve everyone" (p. 132). The book consists of 10 chapters over 468 pages. I was eager to read the book because I expected that the authors would provide reasonable predictions about socio-economic changes caused by the pandemic and then develop policy recommendations for dealing with those changes. However, over half of the book is about historical cases of urban epidemics and pandemics (dating back to 541 CE) and historical cases of U.S. urban problems, including public safety, education, housing, and economic development. Despite the tension between my expectations and its content, the book remains valuable because it injects innovative ideas to prevent future pandemics and alleviate urban discontent.

In the first three chapters, the authors document the history of global pandemics ranging from the Plague of Justinian in 541 CE to cholera in 19th century New York City. Interestingly, the Spanish flu (probably the closest chronologically and medically to the current pandemic) is mentioned in only one paragraph on page 86. The history of early pandemics might be helpful because those events provide multiple cases for analysis to find common themes of how pandemics occur and what government efforts have worked in the past. I do, however, wish the authors had been more concise in their coverage of public health history. Examples of pandemic cases include the Black Death pandemics in medieval

Europe between the 13th and 15th centuries, the yellow fever epidemics in the post-colonial United States, and the cholera epidemics during 1817–1923.

The authors use the above historical examples to highlight their central thesis that weak and ineffective governments tend to fail in fighting pandemics. Failure happens because such governments have incoherent policies and planning strategies. The mistakes commonly made by weak and ineffective governments include (a) being unaware of the news regarding what parts of the world are experiencing epidemics; (b) failing to ban travel to and from world epidemic regions promptly; and, (c) having either ineffective quarantine and isolation policies or being too weak in enforcing those policies. The authors also observe that all pandemics that have occurred in humans originate in animals. The virus or bacteria were transferred from animals to humans and spread rapidly in crowded and non-sanitary areas, such as the world's cities.

The authors then introduce a couple of basic policy recommendations. First, governments should regulate animal–human separation and encourage stringent sanitization practices in areas such as wet markets or crowded cruise ships. This regulation would reduce the chances of the development of new infectious diseases. Second, governments should provide and maintain adequate, accessible, and effective public health infrastructure systems. These include sewerage and clean water systems that enhance sanitization and foster public health.

At the end of Chapter 3, the authors propose three steps to prevent future pandemics. First, pandemics occur due to international trade and travel and thus require global cooperation to limit the chance that local epidemics will become global pandemics. The world must have an effective international cooperative organization (in which multiple countries are participants as stakeholders) to set and enforce international rules to prevent pandemics. Member countries must inform each other and report to the organization when and where local epidemics occur. The sanitization systems of each member country must meet universal standards, and the separation between humans and animals must be effective.

Second, the international organization must enforce the rules. For example, the countries that fail to report epidemics in their areas should be sanctioned. The organization should also have missions to help low-income countries adopt universal hygienic practices to prevent disease outbreaks. These practices include eliminating wet markets or "last-mile problems" to complete the

network of effective public health infrastructure systems. Economic incentives from rich countries — such as grants in aid — should be used to encourage low-income countries to commit to the international organization's goals.

Finally, the international organization must monitor any violations by the member countries. The authors believe that, due to politics, the WHO fails to do these tasks. It delayed in acknowledging that SARS-COV2 was spreading and failed to prohibit travel to and from Wuhan, China, promptly after the disease was identified at the end of 2019. According to the authors, fighting illness and pandemics must be a technical rather than a political issue; scientists need to be prompt in evaluating the severity of newly discovered diseases, calculate the likelihood of their spread, and convey this knowledge to the public immediately — the WHO instead played down the outbreak. The same was true in the case of Ebola in the spring of 2014, when the WHO failed to take public action for six months for fear of creating an economic shock for the West African region. West African countries feared losing trade revenue if they were seen as the center of an outbreak. According to the authors, WHO sees itself as a technical and political agent where major world health issues are discussed and debated (p. 56). Because of this reason, the authors propose that the model of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should be used due to its success in preserving world peace.

NATO has successfully preserved peace because it is a technically-oriented alliance of great powers. Its purpose is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means. Its shared mission is translated into strategic concepts: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security. The NATO Secretary General is often a politician, but technocratic military leaders are highly placed in the organization. NATO works by consensus. All decisions, even ones made by committees, are unanimous. The NATO charter declares that an attack on one is an attack on all. Thus, there is no ambiguity in potential aggressors about how NATO would view any military strike. After World War II, the West formulated the NATO structure to defend Europe from Soviet aggression, which worked well for 40 years. According to the authors, an organization using more technocratic-centered structures, such as NATO, should be created (the authors refer to this organization as NATO for Health). They can then monitor outbreaks and manage a global trade-off where developed countries provide aid to developing countries for health-related infrastructure. In turn, the poorer countries agree

to rules involving water and sewer infrastructure maintenance and to separate humans from sources of new pandemics.

These ideas seem wise because the recommendations are based on the microeconomic theory that people tend to use their marginally private net benefits (or loss) in choosing the level of their consumption or production while being oblivious to social net benefits (or loss). In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, negative externalities occurred because some governments invested less in public health facilities, failed to regulate animal–human separation, or failed to report the local epidemics to the WHO. They likely operated on private rather than social benefits and marginal costs. To force nations to see social costs, multinational organizations should employ incentives, including grants, fees, penalties, and sanctions.

The book's second part, Chapters 4–9, deals with urban social and economic problems in the United States. These problems create weak spots in a society fighting a pandemic or other disaster. Chapter 4 discusses the histories, causes, and consequences of U.S. cities' obesity and drug use (i.e., opioids, cocaine, and heroin). The authors remind us that obese and drug-addicted populations were particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. The chapter then cites statistics regarding health problems and educational levels. It concludes that education is key to helping people take proper care of their health (such as using preventative care, maintaining a healthy weight, and staying away from drugs).

In Chapter 5, the authors offer the view that U.S. health care is too expensive compared to the health care systems of other developed countries (e.g., Canada and England), where quality care is provided at a lower cost. The authors attribute the relevant expense to three reasons: (a) U.S. systems focus on providing private individual medical care instead of public health; (b) the United States is reactive in spending budgetary resources treating acute illnesses rather than proactive in providing preventative care; and, (c) people in the United States are tolerant of health disparities. Basic living standards such as having good health infrastructure (i.e., effective, accessible, and affordable sewerage and water systems), a healthy (and educated) population, and adequate yet reasonable social safety net systems are potent sources of immunity in the fight against future public health crises. The question becomes: how do we acquire and maintain these living standards?

More budgetary resources (than those currently allocated) at all levels of government (i.e., national, state, and local) are likely necessary to achieve those

standards. For example, every new government program teaching people to stop harmful behaviors requires new public resources. The question becomes, who will fund these additional programs, and how do we find the additional resources to execute the programs? Closing the health gap between the rich and poor may require fundamental structural reform, such as universal health care. Special interest groups such as health insurance groups, food and beverage companies, and cigarette and alcohol producers lobby for their profits. Getting most people to agree to allocate public resources to enhance public health may take work. However, such disagreement is the beauty of a full-fledged democratic system. On this point, I agree with the authors that education is crucial to help citizens make informed decisions.

Besides politics, culture and values also determine public choices. Examples include the notion that since our liberty is valued, we do not want people to tell us what to do (e.g., consuming soda). When this occurs, strong and effective governments need to chime in to convince people to do the right thing. Multiple economic instruments such as corrective taxes, penalties, and market tools such as tradable pollution permits help reduce negative externalities. I agree entirely with the authors that strong, effective, and efficient governments are key. Also, benevolence and integrity in preserving public interests (as opposed to private interests) are additional virtues for government practitioners.

Chapters 6–9 discuss urban problems that have resulted from the recent pandemics, ranging from job losses and business relocation to dissatisfaction with policing and schooling services. As mentioned earlier, I think some of these are byproducts of the pandemic (e.g., structural changes in the labor market). However, some had already occurred before the pandemic (e.g., urban gentrification and dissatisfaction with policing and school services). Nevertheless, I appreciate the discussion because better public services yield stronger and healthier communities.

In Chapter 6, the authors point out that the U.S. economy at present is in the third wave of the Industrial Revolution. In this wave, service, retail, and hospitality are the major industrial sectors in terms of employment. This pattern contrasts with the first and second waves, where the agricultural and manufacturing sectors were the major industries. Unfortunately, the service sectors require face-to-face activities. For three reasons, workers in these sectors were the most vulnerable to the pandemic. First, they work on the front line, requiring close contact with many people. Second, as mentioned above, they were most likely to lose their jobs during the lockdown. Third, most workers in these sectors

receive relatively lower pay and are minorities. The authors argue that these factors will remain the same for several decades. For professional workers in the finance, trade, insurance, education, and health care sectors, the authors disagree with futurist Alvin Toffler's prediction that technologies such as Zoom will reduce face-to-face working conditions. They admit, however, that it is hard to predict whether the COVID-19 pandemic will result in a centrifugal or centripetal society (p. 220).

Citing Silicon Valley, where a professional and highly educated workforce works in shared office spaces, the authors argue that workers in basic industries will still be required to perform face-to-face jobs after the pandemic. This work pattern will persist because difficult and complex tasks require face-to-face collaboration where innovative ideas flow freely through formal avenues such as documents and reports and informal paths such as chatting over the office cubical spaces. The authors agree with Richard Florida's concept of the creative economy, in which cities must accommodate changes in the post-pandemic period by promoting rich cultural and entertainment activities in addition to providing essential urban services to attract a highly tolerant, talented, and technologically knowledgeable workforce. To sustain entrepreneurship in the post-pandemic period, city governments should be effective and efficient in accommodating businesses. These accommodations could include streamlining business application processes, using business tax incentives and job tax credits, and deregulating land use policies to create more housing space for young urban workers. It also entails enhancing urban housing supply to make housing more affordable.

I agree with these ideas, but I wonder if professional workers would be willing to return to face-to-face office buildings because they have strong negotiating power, especially when a labor-supply shortage exists. Barrero, Bloom, and Davis (2021) report that, on average, Americans, especially those who are highly educated and working in professional sectors, prefer remote work for at least two to three days per week and would be willing to quit if such working conditions are not available. Barrero, Bloom, and Davis suggest that one-fourth of employment will be done remotely after the pandemic. If this happens, non-professional workers like those in the service sectors will continue to work face-to-face. In contrast, creative-class workers perform their work remotely, enjoying the leisure and hospitality services their non-creative counterparts provide in distinct regions of the country or the world. This labor reshuffling poses significant challenges and opportunities for cities around the country

and the world. City governments must be proactive in drawing the creative workforce to reside (and work remotely) in their jurisdictions, but what leads those targeted groups to reside in a town? How can the social and economic inequity gaps between those who "must" work face-to-face and those who "can" work remotely be reduced? How can empty office spaces be used creatively and productively? Are property taxes obsolete? Should local income taxes replace property taxes? Should the city target new businesses, new homeowners, or both? The relevance of these questions will depend on the long-term impact of the pandemic and whether the change in society will be centrifugal or centripetal. Unfortunately, the authors do not discuss the above questions.

In Chapter 8, the authors suggest that the real issue of urban gentrification is not about race but rather the limited space for people living in towns. The authors assert that there is plenty of land for everyone. However, land-use restrictions make it difficult for the young, minorities, and service sector employees — whose jobs are primarily in the cities — to live urban lives. With the land-use restrictions and worries about urban sprawl, the winners are wealthy, older, and suburban homeowners. California Proposition 13 is an example of how regulation can create winners and losers between the homeowners who have occupied a house for a long time and younger, newer residents. To the authors, the problem is between insiders and outsiders instead of race or ethnicity. The solution to housing problems is to lift land-use regulations, allowing people to pursue their housing opportunities in the cities. To the authors, one can create more space if there is not enough in the cities. When I read this, I was reminded that removing regulations is a classic economist approach to resource allocation problems.

Problems appear with urban population density because cities are the center of economic, social, and entrepreneurial opportunities. These problems include inadequate sanitization systems, pollution, and poor public health in general. Once again, the authors suggest that problems related to property rights occur in large cities simply because people see only their private benefits and costs instead of social benefits and costs. As any public economic and policy textbook would suggest, we need strong and competent local governments to carefully apply economic and financial instruments such as taxes, subsidies, and creative market approaches to curb behaviors that create negative spillover effects.

Chapter 9 discusses urban discontent, including dissatisfaction with police and school services. For the police service, the authors use the case of the sex offender Gene Raymond Kane from 1988 and homicide statistics in the

1980s and 1990s to point out that, at one point, citizens demanded that police be tough on crime and provided a larger budget for police services. In 1994, citizens preferred life sentences and a three-strike provision, as manifested in the enactment of the Violence Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. Later in 2015, President Bill Clinton apologized to the public, stating that the bill had worsened the problems. The authors point out that because of the law and police efforts, the U.S. homicide rates dropped significantly in the following decades. (The 1994 ban on assault rifles (which expired in 2004) may have had something to do with this as well). In the 2000s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation budget was cut. Times change, and so do public views. Since the 2000s, citizens have tended to feel that the police have gone too far in providing public safety services, as we can see in the cases of police abuse of power. The authors also use statistics to remind us that, in the 1980s and 1990s — when homicide and crime rates were relatively high — African American households were more likely to be victims than any other races.

The authors argue that defunding the police service will not solve the problem because this is, once again, a matter of "insiders' and outsiders' problems." This analysis makes sense. Cutting public safety could trigger high crime rates, such as U.S. cities experienced in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead, the authors suggest that city governments use performance measurement through citizen satisfaction survey tools to hold police accountable for their law enforcement operations. I agree that police (and all other public servants) need to be held accountable, especially those with discretionary power (such as the police), to interpret laws and determine how to enforce the law against offenders. While I agree with the authors that well-designed and carefully thought-out surveys can start to get at public sector performance (see, e.g., Caiden 1998), I offer a couple of caveats.

First, Greg Van Ryzin (2004) has empirically shown that the results of citizen satisfaction surveys do not reflect the actual performance of urban public servants and service quality in New York City. According to Van Ryzin, citizen satisfaction was influenced by two factors: their expectations of the city's services and the true performance of the city employees. The *Expectancy Disconfirmation with Performance* model predicts that high performance will lead to more positive disconfirmation, and lofty expectations will produce more negative disconfirmation (p. 436). Simply put, the satisfaction survey will be biased, and the results will tend to be based on prior citizen experiences shaped by their expectations. Second, any survey is subject to content validity problems,

depending on how the questionnaires are worded (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Last, police service is a public good: once provided, we cannot exclude those who do not pay to obtain the benefit of a safe community, and for this reason, no private police service is available. When this occurs, evaluating or valuing the results of public performance satisfaction surveys is difficult since there are no private sector service provider counterparts to compare with as a milestone to determine how good is considered very good or bad is considered very bad.

For the police matter, city leaders should use human resource management approaches such as training, professional development, and strategic personnel recruitment. Police are street-level bureaucrats who interpret policies and laws in their day-to-day operations. They need to use this discretionary power to determine how they will execute laws on the go (Lipsky, 2010). Training and professional development could gradually change the mindset of these public safety servants. The training and development programs could teach young police officers to apply their discretionary power properly, based not only on the law and policy as they interpret it but also on the will of the body politic. For personnel recruitment, the police workforce must represent and mirror the races and ethnicities of the citizen body. Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity laws have been used successfully in Illinois to attract and retain specific minority groups (Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2020). Suppose there are no targeted minority police applicants. In that case, cities should use recruiting companies and pay higher salaries to recruit and retain them.

Chapter 9 discusses urban discontent with school services along the same lines as the discussion of the police and identifies the main problem as the failure to hold teachers accountable. The authors mention previous national policies, including *No Child Left Behind* or *Race to the Top*, as "somewhat" unsuccessful models because pay for performance in the public sector is good in theory but bad in practice. In the case of education, the teachers are the ones who teach and evaluate the students who attend their classes. Grade inflation, the lowering of standards, dumbing down of content, and teaching to increase performance on standardized tests are all practices in education. The authors imply that school reform will have more work to do. They suggest that reformers should foster an attitude of trial and error because no one knows what works unless they keep trying. Education reform has to do with motivation and attitudes. Education is not a public good, but it provides positive spillover benefits to society, which is why governments are significant providers. Parents must view education as

a development instrument rather than a straightforward transactional deal between teachers and students who provide and receive the service. To begin with, parents, school administrators, and citizens need to understand that students are different in cognitive capacity; it is always impossible to expect that a good grade is a single and accurate indicator of better teaching and learning accomplishment.

Chapter 10 summarizes the recommendations from the previous chapters. In short, based on the NATO model, an international organization should be established to set the rules and monitor member countries to ensure they comply with the rules to prevent local epidemics that will result in global pandemics. National governments should be strong, effective, and fully committed to enhancing public health. The U.S. health care system must be reformed to reduce costs and improve health disparities; it should focus (and allocate budgetary resources) on preventative care and public health rather than on individual chronic and acute care. Local governments should strive to provide effective services that will make communities stronger, including school and police service reform, creating more space and encouraging more urban housing, lifting land-use regulations and zoning, attracting new businesses and a creative workforce, providing and maintaining public health infrastructure systems (such as sewerage and water systems), and restructuring vocational training based on the community college model. All of these are good in theory, but they require greater budgetary resources and more time to develop. If we do not start today, when will we see the results?

Arwi S. Kriz is an Associate Professor in Public Administration at the University of Illinois Springfield. Her research interests include public budgeting and finance, fiscal policies and economic growth, public infrastructure management, and government efficiency analyses. Her research appears in top economics and public policy journals including Journal of Public Policy Analysis and Management (JPAM) and Economic Development Quarterly (EDQ).

REFERENCES

Barrero, J.M., Bloom, N.A., & Davis, S.J. (2021). *Why Working from Home Will Stick*. Working Paper No. 3965. Stanford Graduate School of Business. Retrieved from https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/working-papers/why-working-home-will-stick dated July 11, 2022.

Brookings Institution (2020). *Ten Facts about Covid-19 and the US Economy*. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/research/ten-facts-about-covid-19-and-the-u-s-economy/ dated May 21, 2022.

Caidan, N. (1998). Public service professionalism for performance measurement and evaluation. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, Summer Issue, 35–52.

Creswell, J. and Creswell, D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th Edition. Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, California

Illinois Department of Employment Security. (2020). *Women and Minorities in the Illinois Labor Force: Progress Report*. Retrieved from https://ides.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/ides/ides_forms_and_publications/women-and-minorities-2020.pdf dated May 10, 2022.

Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy, Dilemmas of Individual in Public Service*, 30th Anniversary Expanded Edition. New York City, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Orchard, J. (2022). *Inflation Inequity: Poorest Americans are Hit Hardest by Soaring Prices on Necessities*. The Conversation. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/inflation-inequality-poorest-americans-are-hit-hardest-by-soaring-prices-on-necessities-174853 dated June 26, 2022.

Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research (2020). *The Global Economic Impact of COVID-19: A Summary of Research*. Retrieved from https://www.neaman.org.il/EN/Files/Global%20Economic%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19_20200322163553.399.pdf dated April 29, 2022

United Nations. (2020). *World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2020*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-as-of-mid-2020/ dated April 29, 2022

Van Ryzin, G. (2004). Expectations, Performance, and Citizen Satisfaction with Urban Services. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 23*, 3 (Summer, 2004), 433-448.

Printed 2023/2: 1,200