BY ZACH PATTON

NO ONE KNOWS FOR CERTAIN what the future holds. But some people have a pretty good idea. To get a sense of what the coming decade might mean for state and local governments, we asked more than two dozen futurists — including thought leaders, public officials, academics and tech experts — for their predictions on the trends that will have the greatest impact on the public sector over the next 10 years.

Their responses, condensed and edited here, provide a glimpse into what may happen in the years ahead.
Countryside: The Digital Age & Rural Communities
Transforming Your Future
author of Epiphany Z: 8 Radical Visions for
Futurist speaker and founder of DaVinci Institute; Thomas Frey
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director of Denver’s Peak Academy; author of National change management expert; former Brian Elms
TEDx Talk, “Pioneering the Future of Work,” can be found online. #elaabate
Consultant and expert on global forecasting, founder and president of the Future Cities Council. Oualid Ali
Chief privacy officer for the city of Seattle. Oversees citywide Privacy Program, which she developed in 2015. Ginger Armbruster

Bob Bennett
Founder of B2 Civic Solutions, former chief innovation officer for Kansas City, Mo. @BobBennett_b2
Maria Bothwell
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Vint Cerf
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Nancy Donovan
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William Eggers
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Gabe Klein
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Chief innovation officer for the city of San José, Calif., innovation officer and major with the U.S. Army.
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Maria Thompson
Chief risk officer for the state of North Carolina; former cybersecurity chief for the U.S. Marine Corps. @NCRiskOfficer
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Founder of Constellation Research, co-host of DisrupTV, a weekly enterprise tech and leadership webcast. @rwang0
Amy Webb
Founder of Future Today Institute; professor of strategic foresight at NYU Stern School of Business; author of The Signals Are Talking. @amywebb
THE PANDEMIC...

We’re only beginning to understand what the long-term impacts of the pandemic will be on public life. But it’s clear the coronavirus will reshape our world in myriad ways both large and small.

Think of it as a slow-motion earthquake, said Elatia Abate. “We are currently in the midst of health and economic challenges from the first strike of the virus,” she said. “The secondary and tertiary impacts of health and the economy will come rolling in like aftershocks — mental health issues like anxiety, depression, suicide and addiction, and economic challenges like massive waves of evictions, credit defaults, continued job losses and a tighter labor market.”

Of course, the most immediate impact of the virus has been on public health. And on that topic, said Bertalan Meskó, there’s reason to be optimistic. “Health care will finally get the attention it has always deserved,” he predicted. “Remote care will be the new norm, and the health of medical professionals will receive priority.”

Governments that implement lessons learned from the pandemic will be more resilient in the face of future crises, said Emmanuel Fombu. “Cities and states that are open, transparent, collaborative and adopt comprehensive responses will be better positioned to manage pandemics than those that are not,” Fombu said. “While it’s still too early to declare a success, the early response of Singapore and Taiwan stand out. Both applied the lessons learned from past pandemics and had the investigative capacities, health systems and, most importantly, the leadership in place to quickly take decisive action.” Anticipating a high demand for masks in late January, Fombu said, the government of Taiwan started rationing existing mask supplies. “Taiwanese citizens can now go to designated drug stores to buy a designated amount of masks on a weekly basis. This policy and strategy will hopefully be duplicated by other cities and states going forward."

Local governments will also have to invest in manufacturing, Fombu said. “Taiwan leveraged the strength of its manufacturing sector and invested approximately $6.8 million to create 60 new mask production lines in a short time, which increased their daily mask production capacity from 1.8 million masks to 8 million masks. They were able to flatten the pandemic curve through early detection, thus keeping their health systems from becoming rapidly overwhelmed. I foresee many cities and states putting such contingency plans in place.”

Beyond the public health implications, it’s evident the pandemic has already accelerated many governments’ progress toward digital service delivery. “COVID-19 showed that very few services require in-person delivery. The pandemic is forcing governments to shift an array of in-person services online,” said William Eggers. “More and more government services, from licensing to human services, will be delivered digitally with embedded intelligence in the coming years."

Before long, predicted Kristin Judge, “government services will be almost 100 percent virtual. I don’t see us going to a county building for services or even having elected officials in the buildings much.”

That digital acceleration will be seen across the public spectrum, said Art Gazzetti. “For example, the movement of transit agencies toward cashless payments was driven by new technologies facilitating payment via cellphones and open payment systems,” he said. “Such policies were speeding the boarding process and transit operations even before the pandemic, reducing the need for costly systems and procedures required for the handling of cash and, most important, improving the customer experience. Health issues in the pandemic have further discouraged the exchange of cash.”

More than anything, said Dan Tangherlini, the pandemic has exposed the interconnectedness of how crises impact our lives. The three biggest trends of the coming years, according to Tangherlini?

“Complexity, complexity and complexity. The ‘black swan’ event of the pandemic demonstrates the cascading connectivity of programs and systems that will provide opportunities and threats to those who plan, develop, operate, and finance state and city programs and infrastructure. To successfully manage risk and enhance resiliency, managers will need to find opportunities for collaboration.”

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“The coronavirus,” says Thomas Frey, “will prove to be the most expensive crisis in human history, even more expensive than WWII. Businesses were simply never designed to be shut down and restored months later; 30 to 40 percent of inner-city retail stores will fail and never reopen. We’re witnessing the biggest job transition in history.”

As the pandemic influences where people choose to work and live, governments will be significantly impacted. “We’ll see a mass exodus from high cost-of-living cities as more companies go to remote work,” said Lawrence Grodeska. “It will be a reversal of the urbanization trend of the past few decades. Pre-pandemic predictions of how many...”
That large-scale relocation will have a massive effect on governments, said Amy Webb. For example, she said, “even if a fraction of the tech workers living in Silicon Valley leave, that will render apartments and houses empty. Declining property taxes means less city revenue, and that will have reverberating impacts across social services, schools and infrastructure.” Meanwhile, as those and other “tech migrants” settle elsewhere, they could overburden governments in their new homes. “If development happens fast and without a comprehensive growth strategy or plan, city services would be overwhelmed,” said Webb.

“Difficulties in financing the many services provided by state and local governments will be exacerbated by the decline in key sources of revenue, including state aid for cities, as well as property, income and sales taxes,” agreed Nancy Donovan. But she also noted that some places will be hit harder than others. “The current flight of urban residents to less-densely populated areas could result in a decline in revenue from personal income taxes. Persistent concern over frequenting indoor establishments could affect the amount of sales taxes collected, another important source of revenue, especially in areas dependent on tourism. In contrast, governments where property taxes provide a continuing and stable source of revenue may be less seriously affected.”

Not all economic effects of the pandemic will necessarily be negative, if states and cities are willing to take appropriate action, said Maria Bothwell. “The pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of a global, concentrated supply chain. If this spurs repatriation of manufacturing in the U.S., it could create a resurgence in exurban and rural communities and also stimulate the re-growth of a middle class supporting that manufacturing.”
It’s no surprise that nearly every person we talked to predicted that artificial intelligence will be the biggest trend impacting state and local government. (Climate change was a close second.) Almost every single one of our futurists said that AI — along with machine learning and big data — will have the greatest effect on public life in the coming decade.

“Conversational AI and digital identity will be a game changer in how citizens interact with governments,” said Pat Howard. “From building permits to financial assistance and health care, citizens will interact with AI-based virtual agents to get their queries answered. Over the next 10 years, as AI technology evolves, chatbots will become smarter, leaving government workers to solve complex tasks that require human interaction or creativity.”

Data goes hand-in-hand with AI, and governments will have to accelerate their use of data to drive decision-making, said Amy Webb. “Local governments still use too little data to make decisions, automate workflows, and analyze opportunities and risks. For example, Baltimore continues to miscalculate water bills — at one point, employees were simply driving around and making guesses based on how big they thought a house was and the past water consumption rates.” Local governments should be investing in smart systems, she said. “City departments make a lot of assumptions about citizens. Data would tell a more accurate story and would also empower local governments to modernize work streams, find efficiencies and provide better services.”

But AI remains largely misunderstood by the public sector, according to most of our futurists.

“Artificial intelligence is partially overblown and partially not hyped enough, which are symptoms of a true lack of understanding of what artificial intelligence can and can’t do,” said Maria Bothwell. “We’ll likely look back in 10 years and roll our eyes over how poorly we understood AI both in terms of the benefits it could provide and the risks it poses.”

Oaulid Ali put it even more starkly: “Right now we don’t know if AI will make our future world a utopia or dystopia.”

The public sector must prepare for all sorts of impacts of smarter AI, said Lawrence Grodeska. “Governments must confront artificial intelligence to get ahead of the potentially disastrous effects of deepfakes on public discourse and science-based policy, as well as the opportunities for supporting more meaningful civic engagement and effective service delivery.”

Much of the hand-wringing over AI has been about its impact on the workforce, with the potential to automate and eliminate entire job categories. “A major theme of recent years is the disintermediation of human labor by AI and other technologies,” said Erica Orange. “But much of the conversation has been centered on private-sector disintermediation, resulting in the bottom-line cost efficiencies of automating work previously done by humans. It may be time to fundamentally shift our thinking away from the private sector, and toward labor disintermediation in the public sector — something far less discussed.”

That involves numerous possible benefits, she said, improving outcomes in everything from education, health care and urban management to border control and disaster response. But governments will also have to confront impacts on the workforce. “We must account for jobs lost in the transition. How will those people be reabsorbed into the economy?”

Not everyone is that worried about AI’s impact on jobs. The notion of massive unemployment due to automation is overblown, said Jordan Sun. “Human beings are incredible survivors, and until our civilization shifts away from work being tied to our individual identity, we will adapt to new employment opportunities and thrive along with the automation and AI trends,” he said.
OLDER AND OLDER
One of the biggest challenges will be the continually aging population. This will change the service mix, the requirements that cities need, and of course the shifting tax bases as retirees leave and migrate from tax-burdened cities to lower taxes and warmer climates. Governments will have to figure out how to deliver cost-effective services – and what services to cut. **RAY WANG**

**Government will shrink** and we will have a set of not-for-profits that will augment traditional city services. These not-for-profits will be leaner, more agile and able to adapt to emerging issues residents care about that traditional government organizations are either unaware of or too slow to resolve. **JORDAN SUN**

We have asked police to do too much of what they are not trained to provide. We will shift noncriminal, nonviolent issues to people with skills for helping others transition to self-sustaining progress. We’ll have social workers instead of police showing up to handle homelessness, school discipline, housing security and other issues. Meanwhile, on the criminal justice side, we’ll see a transformation of courts, jails, probation and parole. This has already started in some places. There must be a better way to process intake and release of individuals faster and safer. In fact, the entire booking process and moving of individuals needs to be automated. This isn’t just better from a moral standpoint, it will save governments money. We send sheriffs to people’s homes to arrest them when a parking ticket goes unpaid. That costs a county more than $1,500 to execute, and if the individual doesn’t post a bond they will stay in jail at least overnight. That’s another $250 per person. A parking ticket can quickly turn into $5,000 of lost revenue for a county and a criminal record for an unassuming individual. There are just so many processes and services around criminal justice that are ripe for massive disruption. Ninety-nine percent of criminal justice work is done on paper. It’s embarrassing. **BRIAN ELMS**

One of the major emerging trends is a rising public urgency surrounding climate change — one that is spreading quickly and globally. We refer to this as “enviralism.” More socially conscious people, particularly millennials and Gen Zers, are joining grassroots movements and rallying around environmental and political causes. At the local level, enviralism could ultimately have a direct impact on urban design and housing. Ultimately, real meaningful political action around climate change is still lacking — from politicians and voters alike. While climate change has been cast as the issue of our times, it still lags the economy, health care, tax reform and immigration in getting attention from political leaders. Governments and policymakers will be increasingly charged with responding to and addressing public enviralism, particularly when this issue has the power to swing future elections and reshape purchasing decisions. **ERICA ORANGE**
STAYING SMART ON CYBER

We have made such great strides in getting state and local governments to prioritize cybersecurity over the past 10 years. My concern as revenues fall is that security budgets will be cut. Ransomware and the threats from nation-states are increasing to a crippling level. If we don’t increase international and U.S. internal collaboration to make cybercrime less lucrative, our states and cities will be decimated by the costs. The digital threats will continue to grow, so we can’t let our guard down. KRISTIN JUDGE

My main concern is keeping data privacy as an important focus as we face serious budget impacts and staff decreases. The rapid changes required by the pandemic — including increasing volumes of data collection and working securely within a virtual environment — will become business as usual as residents become accustomed to the accessibility and flexibility these changes are bringing now. I am very hopeful that we will see action on federal privacy protection legislation in the next few years. It is not for lack of effort. Individual states, including Washington, have made attempts at following in California’s footsteps with the Consumer Privacy Act of 2018. As these have struggled to find support, we continue to need legislation that establishes common data privacy protections. As a nation, we are leaders in technology, and we should also have a leadership position in data privacy protection. GINGER ARMBRUSTER

BIG TECH GOES FARMING

Some of the world’s biggest tech companies — Amazon, Microsoft, Walmart — are getting into agriculture, and that impacts lots of communities around the U.S. Microsoft launched a multi-year plan to modernize agriculture with data analytics, and is piloting a program already on two U.S. farms in which Microsoft has invested. Walmart is opening its own meatpacking plants and dairy processing facilities in an effort to drive down costs. Meanwhile, Amazon’s Jeff Bezos has invested in vertical farming. AMY WEBB
Right now, we can plot three different plausible futures for where we’ll be in 2030, depending on the choices we make today.

First, there’s the visionary future, in which we use this crisis to reimagine, try new stuff and take a proactive approach to what’s coming. In this scenario, we see a lot of re-shoring of manufacturing and science jobs, a new Office of the Future at the federal and state levels whose job it is to anticipate and plan for disruptions, and a revamped education system that requires two years of post-high school for all American students. We get a program akin to the Works Progress Administration that puts people to work and rebuilds our failing roads, bridges, airports and other infrastructure. And we see state universities return to their mission of serving the public by using best practices from a hybrid learning environment of online and on-campus classes.

The expectable future has deeper partisanship, more corporate money in state and local races, fewer local newspapers to act as ethical watchdogs, greater corruption, less trust in government and lower government bond ratings. Local and state budget deficits further impact our most marginalized, and we see more community mergers and regional governments. Climate change re-enters the lexicon as a top threat to local and state government, and leaders work collaboratively outside of government structures to share best practices, socialize costs, and try to mitigate or deal with climate change. The theme here is that bad stuff keeps coming for a decade and we somehow find a way to deal with it, although it’s not holistic.

Then there’s the challenging future. The theme here is “slipping backwards.” America continues to be pitied by other countries as our brokenness in public health, public education and the tragedy of the commons causes us to slip even more noticeably behind. We try to use the same old tricks to combat this, but without innovation and a shared agenda, it’s just a giant game of whack-a-mole. REBECCA RYAN

THE GIG ECONOMY GETS GIGGIER

Prior to the pandemic, the trend toward freelance work was growing year over year — 23 percent to 34 percent and moving into the 40s. The pandemic has accelerated this trend. It’s possible that over 50 percent of the U.S. workforce will never return to a traditional job. This doesn’t mean people won’t be working. However, what we define as work and employment relationships, how they are taxed, and what entrepreneurship’s role is in our society will change. Much of this is related to the Internet of Things and ubiquitous connectivity. Once everything is smart — and even more importantly, is on blockchain — there is no more need for bureaucracy, middlemen or human beings to perform large portions of what the government does for society administratively. ELATIA ABATE

We need to rethink City Hall. The whole method of meetings and permits needs to be rethought because it’s not making great places for people to live, work and play. It’s wasteful; it’s slow; and it’s too insular. City halls are like museums – in fact, many city halls and state capitols might make excellent museums. CINDY FREWEN

Our voting system is incredibly ripe for disruption. If governments moved their records to a blockchain, we could dramatically improve the voting process by ensuring that every vote is counted while simultaneously cutting down on voter fraud. It could also make voting much easier, removing the need for people to manually queue up at a polling station. If we can shop online, why shouldn’t we be able to vote online, too? Especially if we’re able to use blockchain to make digital voting fairer and more tamper-proof than the existing system. It’s socially distanced, too! EMANUEL FOMBU

WATCHFUL EYES

Most state government entities have not established an Insider Threat program. Employee monitoring will be a risk mitigation step to manage the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of systems and data. MARIA THOMPSON
A Q&A with Vint Cerf

You helped create the Internet. How do you see it evolving over the next 10 years?

The biggest trends right now are disinformation and bad actors — people who want to harm others and interfere with other countries’ infrastructure and elections. All these problems that are caused by a global and open Internet are going to shape the Internet over the next decade, as countries try to respond. Some will be responding because they want to protect their citizens, and some will be responding because they want to protect their regimes.

So we’ll see more things like we’ve seen with China creating firewalls and blocking and filtering various systems. It’s a pity. I think the value of the free flow of information has been enormously demonstrated. But as countries try to respond to these bad behaviors, the result will be a fragmentation and disruption of Internet global connectivity.

What other technologies will have the biggest impact?

5G will probably be the most significant — but not because it’s faster and all the hype around that. What is actually important, and alarming, is that the interface to the 5G system is going to leach control away from the Internet Layer Protocol, which has been the egalitarian component of the Internet, and it is going to introduce a bunch of mechanisms that

AN ONLINE TRAFFIC JAM

The single biggest challenge that state and local governments will face over the next decade will be meeting the unprecedented volumes of web traffic based on citizen demand for digital government. This will require a renewed focus on emerging technologies for government use. As an IT nerd at heart, this is an exciting time to be leading the way in the technology space. ERVAN ROGERS

Citizens will have a much more high-touch engagement with government. Every interaction we have is going to be saved and logged and fully transparent. I’ll have an ongoing stream of conversations that I can tap into with elected and appointed officials in my jurisdiction — at the street level, neighborhood level, borough level or citywide. I’ll have access to the entire virtual history of these interactions.

And we’ll be able to rate every interaction we have with government. Just like we can rate our local bar on our phones, I want to hold my phone up next to a bus and rate my experience with that particular bus driver. Or that particular police officer. Or that particular public health nurse.

Every interaction with anybody who’s on the government payroll — police, fire, social services, schools, public health, transit.

We’ve come to expect and assume this from the private sector, and soon we will expect and assume it with our government.

This will empower citizens to know that, if you need something from Public Works, you want to deal with this specific woman who’s in that particular office on Monday through Thursday, because she’s the highest rated. It could affect the way that employee is evaluated by her supervisor, how that supervisor is evaluated or even how that agency is budgeted.

GORDON FELLER

YOUR OWN DIGITAL ID

A unique digital identity for citizens could enable dramatic leaps in service quality and drive financial and social inclusion by providing citizens access to seamless services in health care, education and other government benefit programs. Citizens will have to share their information only once. A single digital identifier-based system can then kick in and elevate the experience of citizens by anticipating their needs and personalizing public services. Already, countries like Estonia and Austria are proactively serving their citizens without waiting for them to apply for services.

PAT HOWARD
not only will potentially invade privacy but will also tend to cut the Internet up into little narrow slices with different functionalities. That interface is very troublesome from my point of view.

5G isn’t the only way we’re fragmenting the network. What about the Internet of Things?

I’m very nervous about the IoT space. I used to joke that the thing I worry about most is a headline that says, you know, “100,000 Refrigerators Attack Bank of America.” I used to think that was funny, but it isn’t funny anymore because that’s exactly what’s happening (with webcams and other IoT devices).

Many of these devices are fairly inexpensive — we’re talking tens of dollars — so there isn’t a huge investment by the makers in securing the software. There are bugs all over the place. I’m very worried about access control and safety and security. I am convinced we will experience a number of bad things as a result of IoT devices that have bugs in them.

There’s a huge amount of work to be done. Who will feel responsibility for that? Will it be the cities and the states and the federal government? Will it be the companies? I think legislation and regulation will be needed to hold organizations accountable for the products and services they build and offer. We don’t yet see enough accountability.

Do you see any lessons learned so far from the pandemic?

The coronavirus has basically forced us into online interaction, and I think that’s not going to go away even after the pandemic goes away.

With government, there will be an increased attempt to deliver digital access to services. But that’s going to be very dependent on high-quality identification. Two-factor or other strong identification is going to be essential, and that implies there’s going to have to be some common standardization involving strong authentication techniques. States and cities are going to have to mandate certain requirements for the tools and software that people use to interact with the government.
Not everyone is convinced that driverless tech will be commonplace by 2030. “Autonomous vehicles will not be nearly as ubiquitous as industry experts predict,” said Lawrence Grodeska. “Resolving the moral dilemma of protecting either pedestrians or passengers will prove to be far too difficult for most people to feel safe with this technology on the road.”

Bob Bennett agrees. “We’ll see some limited autonomous vehicles 10 years from now, but not a majority. The hype around AV is still overblown. To work, it will require a network of vehicle-to-everything sensors and a supporting digital infrastructure that cities just can’t afford — that’s even more true now because of COVID.”

Driverless tech will be the most disruptive innovation in history, according to futurist Thomas Frey. A single autonomous car will replace 30 traditional cars, he predicts, and by 2030 fewer than four million autonomous vehicles (AVs) will have replaced 50 percent of all traffic in the U.S. “Car ownership,” Frey said, “will soon become a very expensive hobby.”

The shift to AVs will have positive effects — less congestion, less noise, less pollution — as well as negative consequences. Without speeding tickets and parking violations, cities will lose more than half their current revenue streams, Frey said. New York City alone stands to lose more than $2 billion a year in traffic fines. Airports will lose 41 percent of their revenues as parking fees disappear, and the health-care industry could lose more than $500 billion annually thanks to fewer crashes.

“Driverless technology will not only be applied to cars, but also tractors, trucks, ships, lawn mowers, forklifts, water taxis, snowplows, submarines, drones, trains and even airplanes,” Frey said. “It will soon touch the lives of every person on planet Earth.”

That will have a major impact on jobs, said Elatia Abate. “The trend toward autonomous vehicles was what got me interested in the future of work to begin with,” she said. “If truck driving is the most popular job in 26 states in the U.S., what happens to all these jobs? And what happens to all the ancillary industries built up around truck driving? As the trend toward commercial and consumer use of this technology continues to grow, we will need to figure out what to do with this workforce population and all of the others that will be impacted.”

Just as Washington is going through a governance crisis, in the sense that Congress is not very popular, I think it is only a matter of time for local governments to be impacted by this as well. Local governments need to make sure they improve civic engagement and become more responsive. Being more digitally inclusive and leveraging digital platforms will be key to ensure local governments are more responsive and trusted.

ROBERTO GALLARDO
FURTHER INTO THE FUTURE
Books, podcasts, TED Talks and more recommended reading from our futurists

The Longevity Economy
BY JOSEPH F. COUGHLIN

The Industries of the Future
BY ALEC ROSS

BY ANDREW GUTHRIE FERGUSON

The Age of Living Machines: How Biology Will Build the Next Technology Revolution
BY SUSAN HOCKFIELD

Prediction Machines: The Simple Economics of Artificial Intelligence
BY AJAY AGRAWAL, JOSHUA GANS AND AVI GOLDFARB

The Death of Expertise
BY TOM NICHOLS

The Future is Faster Than You Think
BY PETER DIAMANDIS AND STEVEN KOTLER

Humankind: A Hopeful History
BY RUTGER BREGMAN

21 Lessons for the 21st Century
BY YUVAL NOAH HARARI

Team Human podcast with Douglass Rushkoff

Follow @Futurism on Instagram

Follow r/Futurology on Reddit

Exponent podcast with Ben Thompson and James Allworth

WTF?: What’s the Future and Why It’s Up to Us
BY TIM O’REILLY

The Wall Street Journal’s Future of Everything podcast

Future Thinkers podcast with Mike Gilliland and Euvie Ivanova

The Inevitable: Understanding the Twelve Technological Forces that Will Shape Our Future
BY KEVIN KELLY

The Death of Expertise
BY TOM NICHOLS

“Shari Davis’ TED Talk “What if you could help decide how the government spends public funds in your community?”

“The Perils of Short-Termism,” by Richard Fisher on BBC.com

“The Unraveling of America: How COVID-19 Signals the End of the American Era,” by Wade Davis in Rolling Stone
A DAY IN THE LIFE

We asked our futurists to imagine a typical day in 2030.

I will rarely leave my neighborhood. Flights are mostly a thing of the past due to fossil fuel caps, unless I am willing to spend a lot of money for a vacation once a year. Driving is significantly taxed as well — at least for any vehicles that aren’t completely CO2 neutral — so I ride my solar-electric-trike when I run errands locally.

Between the existing solar on my house and the new solar and wind co-op coming to my neighborhood, these power all of my needs and technologies. Cloud-based services cost three times what they used to, because they’re powered by solar farms. But with the money I save not having to pay office rent, it’s a fair tradeoff.

I work every day from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., which is enough to support all my basic needs. I spend the rest of the day hanging out with my family and writing.  GABE KLEIN

Personalized information feeds on weather and environment, news, my financial portfolio, public safety and work events pop up on my flexible display wall in my house. Using eye gestures and brainwave controls, I can drill in on what I need to know. Most of my work is done in augmented reality conference calls, where it feels like all of us are in a room together. When people do need to go into the office, they commute in autonomous cars, allowing them to sleep on the way in from exurbs 100 miles away.  RAY WANG

I start my morning with my holographic automated online office assistant, to assess my daily work calendar. I then initiate automated meeting participation with my meeting tool avatar. Using artificial intelligence and replication of my voice and personality, Virtual Me attends (and documents) noncritical meetings, along with any I just do not want to attend. I do real work until noon, when I review notes from the morning meetings to ensure I’m up to speed with the action items assigned to Virtual Me.  GINGER ARMBRUSTER
I have to exercise when I use a vehicle to make it accelerate, and go for a run to generate electricity for my mobile wear. I harvest food off the wall of my apartment. My neighborhood is completely self-sufficient in water, food and energy, and we trade with other clusters for various goods and services. CINDY FREWEN

TANYA WAKES UP AT 5:30 A.M. ON AUGUST 19, 2030. Her home system is immediately notified, via the implantable health device in her arm, that she’s a little low in calcium and iron. While she gets ready in the bathroom, the smart mirror on her bathroom wall updates her on her daily health status, which is also tracked by her doctor. Downstairs, she eats breakfast while scanning her feed of AI-generated news stories. As Tanya thinks about all that’s changing in the world, suddenly her implantable notifies her home system about her increased heart rate. A list of meditation techniques is automatically displayed on her smart screens. Tanya takes some deep breaths and faces the day.

Later, in her home office, she puts on her new brain control interface, which allows her to interact with her computer via her brain waves. Her work is freelance and entirely remote. Although she and her teammates are located all over the world, they feel like they are in the same conference room due to advanced 4D virtual reality workspace capabilities. Tanya works primarily for startups, and she is one of the 200 million freelancers via Global. MARIA BOTHWELL, WHO CREATES NARRATIVES LIKE THIS AS PART OF HER SCENARIO PLANNING WORK

For lunch, I grab a liquid shot of protein, carbs, fiber, vitamins and caffeine. It’s a small shot but it makes my brain feel full. JORDAN SUN

TOP HEADLINES / NOV. 1, 2030

Cascadia Secession Plan Could Get Vote Early Next Year
CINDY FREWEN AND 3,456 OTHERS SHARED THIS

Opinion: Why El Paso’s 3D-Printed Neighborhood Will Be Such a Game-Changer
THOMAS FREY AND 92,345 OTHERS SHARED THIS

Miami Mayor Pledges ‘No More Roads’ Without Full Funding for New Overwater Transit System
CINDY FREWEN COMMENTED ON THIS

‘My Kid’s Robot Could Paint That’: Is A.I. Art Worth the Hype?
EMMANUEL FOMBU AND 1,378 OTHERS LIKE THIS

FDA to Launch Investigation After Report Links Implantables to Cancer Risk
KRISTIN JUDGE COMMENTED ON THIS

Boston’s Twin Superstorms Could Top $50B in Damages
154,935 PEOPLE SHARED THIS

Opinion: Let Space Tourism Companies Pay Cost Overruns for Moon Base
RAY WANG, OUALID ALI AND 3,864 OTHERS SHARED THIS

One-Third of Private Universities Closed in the Past Decade. Are We Too Late to Fix the College Crisis?
MARIA BOTHWELL COMMENTED ON THIS

‘Not a Drop Left’: Las Vegas Issues Last Batch of New Water Permits to Developers
CINDY FREWEN AND 856 OTHERS SHARED THIS

Real Truth Party Goes to Washington: First worldwide political party may gain two seats in Congress in next week’s election
MARIA BOTHWELL AND 45,785 OTHERS SHARED THIS

With Drone/Human Aerial Collisions up 150% in Seattle Skies, City Eyes New Regs
GINGER ARMBRUSTER COMMENTED ON THIS
Moving education to remote/online/virtual, while difficult and with arguable results, will nonetheless have people questioning the geographic model of K-12 public education. If schools are online-enabled with effective teaching methods, then why would delivery of the classes be limited to only those within a certain geographic area? If students can have access to subjects not offered at their school or schools with better performance records, why shouldn’t they have that access? The pandemic and remote schooling — with all of its flaws — has shown that the connection between education and location can be broken once teaching goes virtual. That one simple idea could cause a revolution in education. **Maria Bothwell**

One way for cities and towns to address resource constraints will be to co-create solutions within their regions, with other like-cities nationally, with the private sector and in some cases, with the federal government. Bespoke solutions are going to be a thing of the past, because if it is good enough for Washington D.C., chances are it is good enough for Arlington, Va., and vice-versa. **Gabe Klein**

The urban/rural socioeconomic divide is going to be a huge challenge for cities and states. **Many rural areas lack the connectivity to participate in — let alone shape and benefit from — an increasingly digital society.** The political power for rural areas is dwindling, and the lack of understanding regarding the interconnectedness of rural and urban areas must be addressed to help reduce wealth disparity issues in the future and create a more inclusive economy that goes well beyond geographic boundaries. **Connie Reimers-Hild**

**Synthetic biology will start to shape the future of waste management, the pharmaceutical industry and health care.** Synthetic biology involves creating an organism that doesn’t already exist in nature, and someday it will help repair defective genes, rid the planet of toxins, destroy cancer cells and help mass-produce proteins for our consumption. Imagine a future in which you no longer take medication — instead, your cells are simply reprogrammed to fight off whatever ails you. Or imagine biting into a thick, juicy Tomahawk steak, grilled to perfection — one that’s vegan-friendly, because it is made from plant-based proteins. Forward-thinking cities and states could decide to build new research hubs for this work, especially if they are already hubs for complementary industries. **Amy Webb**

**There is a growing realization that life events such as childbirth and change in employment status trigger citizens’ need for related services.** However, the traditional government service delivery model is based around departments that provide disparate services to citizens. Governments are building common digital platforms and using data innovatively to ensure citizens don’t have to navigate an alphabet soup of agencies and regulators across local, state, and federal jurisdictions. In this approach, everything rule-based is digitized and automated, vastly reducing or eliminating the need for physical interactions. ‘No-stop shop’ is a government service delivery model that requires no forms, has an integrated back end, and is proactive or predictive. Data collection, storage and usage evolves to the point where it becomes possible to deliver services in a proactive or predictive way. For example, parents in Ireland, Denmark and Sweden receive child-care subsidies post-birth without even having to apply. **Pat Howard**
The challenges of 2020 worldwide have highlighted the impact and importance of local government. In the United States, local and state governments have led the way in dealing with a global pandemic in every sense, from the overwhelming public health challenges to the generation-long impacts of systemic racism. At the same time, however, these very challenges have highlighted the need to rethink and redesign and rebuild local government in a way that is consonant with the times in which we live.

Increasingly, we face challenges that require us to be flexible and resilient in the face of past failures in a changing world. We need local governments that can react quickly to changes and work in creative and human-oriented ways to improve the lives of our residents. We need innovation in our thinking about what local government actually is and what it does.

This innovation isn’t simply a question of using technology, though certainly technology will probably be part of the solution. This is a problem for how we choose to organize local government. Are we talking about traditional patriarchal hierarchical models that privilege the few at the top of the hierarchy? Or are we trying to build an approach to governing our cities that is born out of empathy and respect and care?

When I think of a future that I am excited about, one of the elements is a flexible model of local government that can handle ambiguity and that is designed to be creative and explicitly anti-racist. We need to think big. Bigger than we have ever thought about what it means to be Citizens of the World. We need to realize that bureaucracy is something that we build; it doesn’t just happen to us. We have chosen to build slow and cumbersome institutions that frequently make life worse, especially for those whose voices are heard the least.

Our system of government is our greatest invention. It’s time that we realize that and take responsibility for how it works — and for changing the way it works. **Nigel Jacob**

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**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

**The average person isn’t aware of how much data they’re shedding.** Collectively, our homes are starting to produce digital emissions, which includes all the data not actively used and processed by devices. Bits of information in that network include things like your body temperature as you watch TV, the ambient hums and creaks that your home makes at night, and the communication pings your devices make. Digital emissions aren’t harmful to the environment, but they’re an untapped resource to be mined and analyzed — with transparency and permissions, of course. **Amy Webb**

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**WE NEED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT CAN REACT QUICKLY TO CHANGES AND WORK IN CREATIVE AND HUMAN-ORIENTED WAYS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OUR RESIDENTS.**

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**Human augmentation.** One in four adults in the U.S. has some form of disability, along with one billion people around the world. Human augmentation — whether affecting brain activity, limb functions or something else — will be a game changer to achieve a new level of inclusion, economic productivity and quality of life. **Jordan Sun**

**Personal data and genomics are made a property right.** This means that citizens take back control of their privacy data and can choose not to share the data, donate the data to a charity like the American Cancer Society, or monetize their data and be paid for that data when it’s being utilized. **Ray Wang**

**Smart toilets will be on the market, designed to track human waste and hydration levels, to provide early warning signs of digestive problems or medical conditions.** **Emmanuel Fombu**

**Bikes and small velomobiles will outsell cars.** **Gabe Klein**

**Arts taxes.** Arts and culture programs are going to be decimated by the pandemic. Local cities and states are going to create taxes to support the arts and culture of a city. **Brian Elms**

**Successful longevity technologies will extend human life expectancy to 150 years.** **Oualid Ali**

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**WHAT’S YOUR WILDEST PREDICTION?**

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**Maybe Not By 2030, But...**

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**WE NEED INNOVATION IN OUR THINKING ABOUT WHAT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTUALLY IS AND WHAT IT DOES.**

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**Successful longevity technologies will extend human life expectancy to 150 years.** **Oualid Ali**

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When I think of a future that I am excited about, one of the elements is a flexible model of local government that can handle ambiguity and that is designed to be creative and explicitly anti-racist. We need to think big. Bigger than we have ever thought about what it means to be Citizens of the World. We need to realize that bureaucracy is something that we build; it doesn’t just happen to us. We have chosen to build slow and cumbersome institutions that frequently make life worse, especially for those whose voices are heard the least.

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