

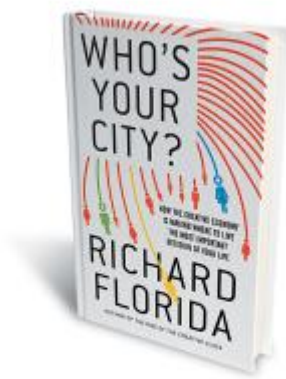


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Book review

Who's Your City?

By **Richard Florida**. Basic Books, \$26.



Sociologist Florida achieved recognition with his 2002 *The Rise of the Creative Class*, which introduced his theory that the “creative capital” generated by artists, bohemians and gays was crucial to the regeneration of American cities. Since then, Florida has not been shy about repeating his basic (some might say simplistic) concept, even establishing it as a branded “for-profit think tank” offering all manner of executive services (see creativeclass.com).

Who's Your City extends the theory in the direction of self-help: Florida seeks to aid all manner of iconoclasts in identifying the place where they can flourish, in terms of career, family and the more nebulous pursuit of creativity. He begins by contradicting Thomas Friedman, asserting that the world has become more “spiky” than flat. “Mega Regions” (like the New York-Boston-Washington corridor) and “superstar cities” like San Francisco—with large technological and creative economies—now exert unstoppable cultural and economic influence. Since numerous talented, educated people feel they must live in such locales, Florida argues, place assumes enormous importance, despite trendier notions of globalization.

Working with a number of collaborators, Florida musters an impressive array of evidence, tracking the experiences of a variety of demographics (twentysomethings, stroller couples, empty nesters) to tabulate which areas of the country benefit members of these groups. He concludes by offering a ten-step process. To his credit, Florida acknowledges the deleterious effects on cities of the living patterns he tracks, including gentrification and the disruption of older urban communities. Even so, one senses his work mainly applies to a self-selecting slice of the ambitious and affluent.

— *Mike Newirth*