Richard Florida is the anti-Thomas Friedman. Florida takes issue with the New York Times columnist’s popular notion that “the world is flat”—that under globalization, a great leveling has erased the economic advantages of any place in particular. Florida says this is an oversimplification. While some out-of-the-way areas may be finally experiencing economic development, he says, globalization has also meant a tendency for “higher-level economic activities such as innovation, design, finance, and media” to cluster in an ever smaller number of locations. We need to understand “that the world is flat and slippery at the same time,” he insists.

In a new book, Who’s Your City? How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life, Florida makes the case for why place matters and explains how to determine which cities will “encourage people to do more than they otherwise would, such as engage in more creative activities, invent new things, or start new companies.” Such thinking will be familiar to readers of Florida’s pieces in The Atlantic or his earlier books, including The Rise of the Creative Class. But while his previous works were traditional urban-studies texts, the new book is a useful guide for those contemplating a change of venue. Only occasionally does it falter, as when the author dwells too much on others’ research rather than his own.

More people are on the move than ever: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 40 million Americans relocate every year, and the average citizen moves once every seven years. The well-being of such people, says Florida, is as dependent on a choice of destination as it is on a choice of a spouse or profession. It’s true, he concedes, that new technologies allow more people to work remotely. But folks still congregate in certain areas “because of the powerful productivity advantages, economies of scale, and knowledge spillovers such density brings,” he says. In this “slippery” world, the tallest points are innovation hubs. These include the areas around Seoul and San Francisco, which generate the most patents; “mega-regions” such as the “Bos-Wash” corridor, including Boston, New York, and Washington, which generates $2.2 trillion in output; and the region from Osaka to Nagasaki, which generates $1.4 trillion.

Some of the most interesting material in Who’s Your City? describes fresh psychological research. A “Place and Happiness Survey” of over 27,000 people that Florida conducted with the Gallup Organization found that location is almost as important to people as job satisfaction. And working with various psychologists who surveyed more than 600,000 people across the U.S., Florida determined that those with such basic personality types as agreeableness or “neuroticism” tend to group together. For instance, while most regions contain people with a variety of personality types, the most “conscientious” and “agreeable” people are in the Sunbelt. A fascinating array of maps and charts illuminates these studies and others.

Some of Florida’s assertions are a matter of common observation, but many readers will still find them useful. If you’re single, it matters that New York has 211,000 more women than men. Best places for families with children? Try Washington, D.C., which has a favorable student-to-teacher ratio.

The volume’s lighthearted tone—illustrated by the title’s play on the expression “who’s your daddy”—doesn’t always work. Pop music references along with a potted history of coinages such as “slasherville” (for an area with a large number of young families) will amuse some readers and annoy others. Ultimately, reading Who’s Your City? feels like a cross between relationship counseling and a personality exam meant to determine the best career path. It asks as many questions as it answers.