Richard Florida, Professor at the University of Toronto and NYU. Senior Editor, The Atlantic

In 2002, the American economist and sociologist Richard Florida published the book "The Rise of the Creative Class", which became a bestseller. Florida made a close connection between the future development of cities and the development of the "creative class": Cities will flourish if they are able to attract these rising stars of the 21st century and persuade them to be long-term residents. The definition of the "creative class" (a group of qualified staff whose activities involve creative work in the broadest sense of the term) is not restricted to artistic professions, but also includes consultants, researchers, IT specialists, producers of culture and freelance professionals. According to Florida, it includes people who are not only the driving force for the economic success of cities, but are also particularly attracted to an urban lifestyle. It is therefore necessary to create appropriate living and working conditions in cities to support and gain the loyalty of the "creative class". Florida summed up the most important conditions for holding on to the "creative class" with the "three Ts": technology ("How much high-tech does the city have?") , talent ("How many creative innovators live in the city?") and tolerance ("How tolerant and open to new ideas is a city?").
"creative clusters": Urban areas where infrastructures
and opportunities are concentrated, which are par-
ticularly conducive to creative work and in addition
ensure a positive image. When you visit cities today,
do you see a difference in quality to ten years ago? Is
urban life understood differently and seen more pos-
Itively today?

RICHARD FLORIDA
Crime rates were falling and property values were al-
ready rising ten years ago in creative cities like Boston,
New York, Washington, DC, and San Francisco, and
the most desirable suburbs, the Birmingham, Michi-
gam, Maplewood, New Jersey’s, Bethesda, Maryland’s
and Brookline, Massachusetts’s of the world, were
getting denser, more walkable, and more filled with
mixed uses. The tide had already shifted, even if home
builders and city planners didn’t recognize it yet. The
crazy-high real estate values in Brooklyn and San
Francisco today show that the process has continued
pace; walk through any urban downtown – even in
struggling Rustbelt cities like Cleveland and Detroit
and you’ll see young creatives at work and play. The
developers didn’t create this phenomenon –
they followed it. What’s hard to remember is that thirty years ago,
when I was just starting out as an
academic, America’s cities were
largely given up for dead. For
all their continuing troubles, the
change has been astounding.

RICHARD FLORIDA
The concept of the "creative class" and the three Ts is not an
American phenomenon. The Global Creative Index (GCI),
which reflects the three key factors of technology, talent
and tolerance to secure long-term economic prosperity, examines
worldwide which countries are in the lead. As well as the three
Ts, key figures for economic and social progress – including
conventional data on economic performance and competi-
tiveness, but also indicators regarding income discrepancies,
wealth and happiness – are systematically taken into ac-
count. Here, Sweden is in first place, the USA comes second,
followed by Finland, Denmark and Australia.

In recent years, Asia has clearly been gaining ground. In ad-
dition to Hong Kong in nineteenth place, cities such as Shang-
hai and Beijing in Greater China have been able to improve
their position dramatically through large-scale measures to
enhance the creative economy.

Cities in Germany too (in 15th place) are competing more and
more for the best creative brains. Here the assumption is that
Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, Cologne and Stuttgart will be in ev-
ery increasing competition with one another.

Source: The Martin Prosperity Institute "Creativity and Pro-
sperty: The 2010 Global Creativity Index", 2011 and "Under-
standing the Creative Economy in China", 2011.

RICHARD FLORIDA
In your book you write that a "people climate" is
much more important for cities than a "business cli-
mate". What exactly do you mean by that?

RICHARD FLORIDA
People today make a conscious choice of where they
want to live. Today’s important criteria are not only
the job, but also the city where that job is based.
What is the ideal city like, in your opinion? What are
important factors that attract creative people?

RICHARD FLORIDA
The short recipe is density (but not too much), mo-
biity (walkability, bike trails, transit), diversity, in-
clusivity (a place where everyone earns a living wage
and there are career ladders for all; low crime; green
spaces and sustainable practices; and family friendli-
ness (good schools, affordable housing).

RICHARD FLORIDA
It’s something of a paradox. As
globalized as we may be, wealth
and power are more concentra-
ed and clustered than ever before.
Yes, communications are instan-
taneous and journeys that used
to take months now take hours,
but the world is anything but flat;
it is spiky. This clustering is a fundamental fact of life.
Over the course of the next century, the world’s ur-
bam populations are projected to increase by as many
as 5 billion people. Our biggest and richest cities will
grow even bigger and richer.