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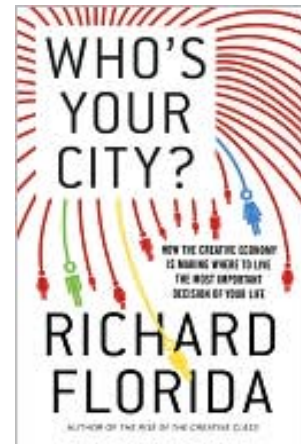
The Power of Place

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

Richard Florida has long championed the rise of the “cultural creatives” as a major force in the nation and its economy. In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida argued that the regions and cities most likely to prosper in the coming economy were those that could attract and retain people who would produce the ideas for the future.

Now, in *Who's Your City?*, Florida takes a closer look at the importance of place. The jacket for the book declares that where you live is “the most important decision of your life.” Well, book jackets are made for exaggeration, but Florida’s argument is important nonetheless.

Florida describes the world as “spiky.” He provides visual evidence for his theory by the use of graphs that identify concentrations of “cultural creatives” by means of relative spikes off of the global image. Thus, regions such as the North East corridor and Silicon Valley show up as huge spikes on the map. The point is very clear — these creative individuals are unevenly distributed around the world, and even around the United States.



Furthermore, Florida shows how that these “cultural creatives” cluster themselves together and now choose where to live in terms of the culture they prefer and the amenities they demand. Some communities will be winners, but most will be losers.

Beyond all this, cultural creativity is clustered now in giant mega-regions such as greater Paris and the technology-rich cities of the Pacific Rim, as well as in huge regions of density within the United States.

One of the key insights of the book is that many people now choose wherethey want to live as a *first* decision — even before career and other choices.

Florida’s work is not without its critics, but the basic argument he presents is difficult to refute. For the intelligent Christian reader, the book raises several issues. The clustering of creative populations seems to correlate with areas evangelical churches have found difficult to reach. The creatives are clustered in more secular regions of the nation. All this should be underline one major aspect of our Great Commission challenge in America and around the world.

An excerpt:

As the most mobile people in human history, we are fortunate to have an incredibly diverse menu of places—in our own countries and around the world—from which to choose. That’s important because each of us has different needs and preferences. Luckily, places differ as much as we do. Some have thriving job markets, others excel at the basics, like education and safety. Some are better for singles, others for families. Some are more about work, some play. Some lean conservative, others liberal. They all cater to different types, and each has its own personality, its own soul.

