

The global economy has been able to spread unfettered, thanks to technology. Or so today's (and yesterday's) theorists like to declare. As for most Americans, they have stopped pondering the implications of place as they rush around the globe in pursuit of a job offer, academic degree, or significant other.

According to Richard Florida, everyone needs to take a good look around. In **Who's Your City?: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life (Basic Books)**, Florida, a best-selling author and a professor of business and creativity at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, argues that while globalization has vastly expanded job markets in developing regions for readily outsourced functions like manufacturing, it has also caused opportunities for high-level innovators to cluster in a number of specific, often specialized locations. That has produced what he terms a "spiky world," illustrated in the book by a map of America, scattered with nodes of creativity, that resembles nothing so much as an uneven city skyline. Place remains crucial in any truly competitive arena, from finance to fashion.

In an age of agonizing over who's got what, Florida advises all of us to start worrying about where. Where is the ideal place for someone of your idiosyncrasies and needs? Where will you find the most opportunities? Where do you live now, and what has your hometown done for you lately?

In that vein, he identifies the best cities for recent college graduates, families, professionals, empty nesters, and retirees. There's also the "Singles Map," which pinpoints the highest concentrations of the unattached, helpfully denoted by gender.

Perhaps the most entertaining chapter addresses America's distribution of what psychologists call the "big five personality traits": conscientiousness, agreeableness, extroversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience. While the data are not shocking -- neurotics live in New York, "open" types hug the coasts, and all the agreeable people are down South -- they serve as a reminder that such conventional wisdom is more than comedy fodder; it's the stuff of day-to-day interactions and deserves consideration before your next move.