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Top 20 Leaders in Urbanization

[by Claer Barrett](#)

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1) Richard Florida, Academic, Author, Urban Theorist

Urban migration is the drumbeat behind the global cities movement. And urbanization leaders are rising to prominence across the spheres of real estate, technology, and sustainability.

By the year 2050, it is projected that 70 percent of the global population will live in cities, consuming the lion's share of the world's natural resources. As populations rise and the pressure for limited resources increases, smart thinking is needed -- in the form of smart cities, which harness technology to fight the challenges of urbanism, whilst maximising its creative and economic potential.

In the following pages, you'll find the Top 20 individuals around the globe who are at the forefront of this movement. (Feel we've missed the mark or left anyone off of our list? Be sure to tell us on the message boards below.)

Known as the "high priest" of urbanism, Florida is undisputedly the thought leader of the future cities movement.



(Source: Nick Cunard)

The globe-trotting academic's theories have progressed from cult phenomenon to mainstream. *The Rise of the Creative Class*, his key text, has been updated and republished to mark its tenth anniversary, and examples of Florida's vision from the past decade abound. To succeed, he argues, cities need to invest in public transport and develop "walkable" communities, in which like-minded creative professionals can rub shoulders with each other.

His updated tome captures the transformative powers of creativity, noting the soaraway success of Tech City in Shoreditch, a hitherto grubby part of East London; Twitter's decision to site its European HQ in trendy Berlin; and, in a reversal of the process, the simultaneous decline of suburban office parks and ageing shopping malls, isolated by their dependence on the motorcar.

The undisputed link to property values means that Florida's theories have gained great traction in the real estate world. Appointed global research professor at New York University in July, he is part of its Schack Institute of Real Estate, a fellow of the Urban Land Institute, and he has worked as an adviser for property groups including Starwood hotel group.

For more, read the Future Cities [Conversation With Richard Florida](#).

- [1\) Richard Florida, Academic, Author, Urban Theorist](#)
- [2\) Steve Lewis, Founder & CEO, Living PlanIT](#)
- [3\) Jacques Rogge, President, International Olympic Committee](#)
- [4\) Angela Ahrendts, CEO, Burberry](#)
- [5\) Song Young-gil, Mayor of Incheon, S. Korea](#)
- [6\) Mathieu Lefevre, Executive Director, New Cities Foundation](#)
- [7\) Dr. Ya-Qin Zhang, Chairman, Microsoft Asia Pacific Research &](#)

Development Group

- 8) Huang Qifan, Mayor of Chongqing, China
- 9) Rick Robinson, Executive Architect, Smarter Cities Programme, IBM
- 10) Paul Romer, US Economist, Entrepreneur, Activist
- 11) Daniel Libeskind, Founder, Studio Daniel Libeskind
- 12) Lord Norman Foster, Founder & Chairman, Foster + Partners
- 13) Rem Koolhaas, Founder, OMA
- 14) David Adjaye, Founder, Adjaye Associates
- 15) Joel Garreau, Author & Founder, The Garreau Group
- 16) Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, Chairperson, Qatar Foundation for Education, Science & Community Development
- 17) Kenneth Er, CEO, Gardens by the Bay
- 18) Attila Kiss, Founder, Szimpla Budapest
- 19) Klaus Wowereit, Governing Mayor of Berlin
- 20) The 7 Billionth Person