



## Visions of Eurovegas and Richard Florida

Bassets Marc | 19/04/2012

When it comes to urban planning and geography, the future of cities and of the keys to economic prosperity, [Richard Florida](#) is a benchmark .

Professor at the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, Florida published in 2001 *The rise of the creative class* , an essay on "the emergence of a new social class." The [creative class](#) , according to Florida, "has influenced and will continue influence in profound changes in the way we work, our values and desires, and the functioning of our daily lives."

In 2008, the year that broke the last crisis, published *creative Cities: why where you live may be the most important decision of your life* . "A mantra of the era of globalization is that no matter where we live," he wrote. "It's an attractive idea, but it's wrong (...). In the current creative economy, the real source of economic growth comes from the concentration of talent and productive. "

In his latest essay, *The Great Reset* , claims that "times of crisis reveal what works and what does not." "These are times, he adds, in which systems and practices are outdated and dysfunctional collapse or are cornered. There are times when the seeds of innovation and ingenuity, creativity and entrepreneurship flourish, allowing recovery by a remodeling of the economy and society. "

In *The Great Reset* , Florida deals with the case of Las Vegas. "Las Vegas, he writes, has become the convention capital of the United States and the world, and hosts as the show megaconvenciones International Consumer Electronics (with 150,000 attendees), the exhibition World Cement (with some 85,000 attendees) Show and the National Association of Broadcasting (about 110,000 attendees). " He adds: "In the future, Las Vegas can be constructed on the basis of its emergence as a key node in global networks of business."

A few days ago, I spoke by phone with Richard Florida's plan to build a mini-Vegas in Spain, near Barcelona or Madrid. Here is a summary of the conversation.

I started asking if I could offer some advice to the government of Catalonia in negotiations with Las Vegas Sands Corp., the company that wants to build the project.

"They should abandon them and say no. Barcelona has done a remarkable job. On the one hand, being a model of a livable city. Not only is aesthetically beautiful. It is a city of people, pedestrians and bicycles now," he replied. "It has become a model of beautiful and creative center, with a growing presence of high technologies. I know that the economic crisis has beaten Spain very, very hard. I do not want to minimize it. But, literally, all the economic research that has been matched. Economic development experts may disagree about whether a place should be nicer, kinder people, more friendly to pedestrians, or whether to have more arts and culture, or businesses, incentives or low-tax, or invest in better schools. But one thing on which all economic development experts agree on is that casinos are absolute economic disaster for a city. They do not create the assumption that they are supposed to benefit. And the activity that generated appears to be offset by the problems they create: the need for more police, more crime. For a city like Barcelona, one of the most important cities of the world, now is becoming a city of innovation and economic progress, not just artistic and creative, would be a giant step backward. "

Florida explained that when he learned that Barcelona sought to host the project has been called Eurovegas, was surprised.

"I found shocking. Shocking! He said. And I'm not anti-play. No game, and if I do, play a small amount. And in fact I think that the casinos work very well in Las Vegas. Although it has economic problems and has the housing crisis, is a city that was built on the basis of the game, and what I find interesting is that, over time, try to become a general entertainment destination, with Cirque du Soleil, concerts I find it interesting ... that Las Vegas is working as hard as possible to be more like Madrid or Barcelona. In any case, I think the game works well there. They know how. "

I remembered then that, as the Government repeats, which occupy the surface of casinos in Spain would be minimal, around 3% of the total area (also quoted the figure of 5%).

"Why do the project without the casino. If the casino is not significant ... replied Florida. This is largely a charade. We hear the same thing in Toronto [where also discussed a proposed casino and entertainment center, which opposes Florida] is not a casino but an entertainment complex. And another thing: What makes cities Madrid and Barcelona? Organically have been developed over a long period of time. They represent all that, as [Jane Jacobs](#) , was a great city have the fabric, are authentic, they have old buildings, have art and culture ... Jane Jacobs wrote of New York, and cities of its time, late fifties, I think in Europe, where the imposition of large-scale public projects such neighborhoods broke, broke the pedestrian fabric with skyscrapers, highways ... Now, 40 or 50 years later, knowing all this, there is another round of megaplanificación, and this time is even worse. Casinos! We can do better. Our big cities do not need this type of intervention. I understand that we all need money, but you should not sell your soul. And this is the risk for Madrides Eurovegas and Barcelonas of the world: selling your soul. It is this type of project that will make them stronger to these cities. In the long run weaken the urban fabric and make them less attractive. It is very interesting from the point of view of the brand. Madrid and Barcelona have a great appeal around the world tourist destination, quality of life, fabulous food, chances to walk ... It's like putting a sign in Spain saying, 'Please do not come and visit'. It would be a big step backwards. I think that actually damage the marketing. I do not think that helped. Hurt tourism. And in any case, [harm] as a location for doing business. Twitter, for example, just selected Berlin as the site. More and more companies look real cities, people-oriented. "

Richard Florida uses the concept of "casinoización of all places," a phenomenon of this era. "It is revealing of our time who believe that cities and governments to develop their cities must attract builders of casinos," he said. "In the long term, with the possible exception of Las Vegas, most casinos have places that have been unmitigated disaster. Look at Atlantic City and elsewhere. They create a kind of development that will scare off other types of development most innovative, creative, entrepreneurial, highly qualified. "

Eurovegas, however, would not be in the center of the city, but in the case of Barcelona, near the airport or other location, in the suburbs.

"I still believe that the question is: Barcelona wants to be known as the center of gambling in casinos in Spain? I think this would bring a variety of problems and social costs or Barcelona or Madrid should want, "said Florida. "It ceases to amaze me how the smell of money and the smell of easy income does change the opinion that, on the other hand, is often sensitive, local government and local leaders. I look at what makes great cities Barcelona and Madrid,

and is what I call quality of the place. Put it where you put it, damage the quality of the place. There's no doubt. "

I remembered the context of economic crisis in Spain, high unemployment, and the promise of tens of thousands of jobs it can create Eurovegas, Florida said: "Yes. So come with this project now. But I think for Spain, Barcelona and Madrid, city history, who have overcome major crises and difficult times, it would be a big mistake. I would urge governments to think deeply about what city handed over to their children and grandchildren. Economically, the casinos end up costing more money than they generate. There is the promise of a short-term benefit. But in the long term the city should manage the cost, the city must manage the families in bankruptcy, the city and the community should manage the problem gamblers, the city and the community must manage the crime. "