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### **Richard Florida's, 'The Rise of the Creative Class'**

In the mid-1990s, Richard Florida noticed a rather unusual trend going on at the time. Instead of people moving to where the jobs were at, he was finding that companies were moving to or forming in places that had skilled people. He then began massive research on the factors that were making some cities and regions grow and prosper, while others lagged behind and the result was this book. Florida's main thesis is that there is a new "creative class," a group of people that create things for a living. Their main resource exists in their knowledge, much as natural resources existed beneath the ground in the old world industrial industries. He believes that America is moving in the direction of creative pursuits, and that the working class and service sector will continue to suffer while the "creative" people will thrive.

Florida begins by comparing the cultural and social changes that have taken place between two periods of time: 1900-1950 and 1950-present time. A time traveler from the 1900s who found himself in the 1950s would not see a lot of changes except maybe improvements on a lot of things like systems and technology. However a time traveler from the 1950s who finds himself in the present will be shocked at social and cultural changes. He would find a new dress code, new schedule, and rules. Individuality and self-expression will be valued over conformity and organizational norms. He would see different ethnic groups in greater numbers and even women and non-whites as managers. Florida credits the huge transformation that has taken place in our economy and society to the rise in human creativity. We now value creativity more highly than ever both at work and in other spheres of our lives. Creativity is defined as, "the ability to create meaningful new forms. More importantly society is changing because we want it to. He also notes that in virtually every industry, the winners in the long run are those that can create and keep creating.

The economic need for creativity has brought the rise of a new class, which Florida calls the Creative Class. It is made up of 38 million Americans, who make up about 30 percent of all employed people. Its core includes people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and content. Around the core we have a group of creative professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields. These people engage in complex problem solving that involves a great deal of independent judgment and requires high level of education or human capital. In the early 1900s, the Working Class used to be dominant class but has since declined and surpassed by the Service Class. Although the Creative Class is smaller than the Service Class, it is still the most influential because of its crucial economic role. The key difference between the Creative Class and other classes lies in what they are primarily paid to do. Those in the Working Class and the Service Class are primarily paid to execute according to plan, while those in the

Creative Class are primarily paid to create and have considerably more autonomy and flexibility than the other two classes to do so.

According to Florida, all members of the Creative Class share a common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, merit and diversity. Individuality refers to members not wanting to conform to organizational or institutional directives and resisting traditional group oriented norms. Merit is strongly valued by the Creative Class. It favors hard work, challenge, stimulation as well as peer recognition. Diversity of peoples is favored first of all out of self-interest. Many members of the Creative Class when seeking a job may for example ask the interviewer if the company offers same-sex partner benefits even if they are not gay just to see if there is an environment open to differences. The book also touches on how the workplace has changed into a 'no collar' workplace. It is very normal to see people (professionals) dressed in jeans and shirt and not the old corporate dress code. Also a lot of companies are moving away from the cubicles to a more open space to encourage creativity. Managers are also changing their methods and giving employees more space and responsibility. Work schedules are now more flexible although the Creative Class still works the hardest.

So what is the relevance of all this? Well, it is important for those cities that want to develop or maintain what they already have to know how they can attract or keep talent and use the creativity to further develop their cities. Creativity flourishes in a unique kind of social environment: one that is stable enough to allow continuity of effort, yet diverse and broad-minded enough to nourish creativity in all its subversive forms. Florida says there are "three T's" that a city needs in order to stay ahead of the creative curve. A city needs technology, talent, and tolerance. People need technology to provide the jobs, talent from universities or education, and tolerance—meaning that they have to be accepting of immigrants, gays, and new ideas. Florida believes that cities attract talented people with education and good culture. He strongly believes that the key to improving the lot of underpaid, underemployed and disadvantaged people lies not in social welfare programs or low-end make work jobs nor in somehow bringing back the factory jobs of the past, but rather in tapping the creativity of these people, paying them appropriately for it and integrating them fully into the Creative Age.

I found the book to be very enlightening in understanding how communities develop and the factors that make them thrive. I was also amazed at the amount of research Richard Florida put in to come up with this book. I guess my only concern is that if a city is to focus its development plans on one class, won't this lead to huge gaps between the classes. Overall I enjoyed reading the book!