

Selected bibliography

ANTONI GURGUÍ



FLORIDA, Richard (2008). *Who's your city? How the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision in your life*. New York: Basic Books

Richard Florida belongs to the group of gurus frequently quoted in relation with new economic trends. His subject is not really talent, but as the appeal of a territory is a key element in seizing and retaining talent and Catalonia intends to be well positioned in this respect, we have thought it convenient to include this book into the bibliography of the *Paradigmes* monograph on talent.

Florida's thesis is that among the key decisions we take in life – usually the choice of career and partner – there is also the place we decide to work and live in. This contradicts openly Thomas Friedman's idea in *The World is Flat*¹ in that the place has become irrelevant in the new global world thanks to ICT. Besides, this thought is very much to the point to us as we Europeans, especially Catalans, tend not to move from where we have spent all our lives. Just as Americans consider it absolutely normal to move thousands of miles to take up a new job, which they do often, we Catalans even struggle with moving into a new neighbourhood within the same city. We are not talking about traditional life quality conceptions – climate, landscape, culture, etc. – but purely economic issues related to the possibility of developing to the maximum the potential based on work, effort and talent of people.

The new ICT paradigm – in Friedman's thesis – is that in an interconnected world it does not matter where we are. Florida suggests that this is not true, and that the power of the cluster effects to cultivate talent are spectacular, as shows the concentration of innovation in given locations. Hence the title of the book, focused on demonstrating the relevance of the city we choose to move in. It has to be said that in fact, the whole analysis of data and simulations leads Florida to the concept of *mega-regions* rather than cities, which in our case he refers to as Barce-Lyon, embracing the Mediterranean rim up to Lyon, with 25 million people and a 610 billion dollar GDP. In this respect, he agrees with Ohmae on the economic importance of regions as defined in a wider sense rather than nation-states.

Florida gets away from philosophy and compares arguments with data and an analysis of the facts he introduces, in some cases quite originally – for instance, housing ownership being a great obstacle to labour mobility and thus the domination of ownership over rent penalising overall competitiveness



of a country. So it turns out that the dreadful Spanish legislation, which almost wiped out rent housing, is also a burden on the top use of talent of our professionals!

All in all, this is a recommendable book to think about our competitiveness as a country as well as the necessary mobility of our citizens to get the maximum profit of their talent in developing their professional career.

HEWARD, LYN; BACON, John U. (2006). *Cirque du Soleil. The Spark*. New York: Random House

The most admirable innovations are often those made upon more traditional activities. For instance, El Bulli and Ferran Adrià have been on the cover of the main world publications, not so much for the latter being an excellent chef – which he is – but especially for reinventing something as simple and basic as eating and his contributions to food preparation technology. The case of Cirque du Soleil is similar: how is it possible to be so successful in something as decadent, ludicrous and old-fashioned as a circus? But more, creating a big multinational based on this activity in a world dominated by audiovisuals and forcing customers to go to a tent – forget about sitting comfortably in your couch at home with the DVD player and TV set. A true quadrature of the circle, or maybe better a somersault with four twists, with elephant and no net...

The book *The Spark* explains the spirit of this undertaking through the story of a frustrated manager who is invited to join the organisation. Though written in a slightly childish style, it is easy to read and shows the distinctive features that have led Cirque du Soleil to be what it is – talent, of course, and also lots of enthusiasm and self-discipline. Those who know many companies from inside will have no problem in identifying that «little something» characterising organisations with very motivated people who collectively live up to their job. At

some organisations people spend their time; in others, they work; and in a few, they live and grow.

The success of Cirque du Soleil is the result of a well executed good idea, but this alone would just serve for selling out a travelling show with extremely high ticket prices, acclaimed anywhere it goes to. But on top of all this, only a few years after its creation in 1984 it had become a company with 4000 employees from 40 countries, seven permanent plus eight travelling shows, planning to run with twenty simultaneous shows all over the world in 2009. To give an idea of its complexity, its disguise workshop produces 20,000 pieces every year, more than some highly reputed fashion designers – a great paradigm of talent taken to its last consequence.

JERICÓ, Pilar (2008). *La nueva gestión del talento. Construyendo compromiso*. Madrid: FT Prentice Hall

Those with no time or not keen on reading a lot on the change of the economic and business model in recent times will find in this book a good summary of the most frequent cases, stereotypes and quotations on the subject. Pilar Jericó reminds us the historical evolution of an economy turning first around land, then labour, more recently capital and today especially knowledge, eventually pointing out the value of talent as the main driver of wealth creation in developed societies.

It is basically a reiteration of the main subject of the *Paradigmes* issue no. 0, focused on innovation. To Pilar Jericó, «innovation equals talent raised to the power of technology», an equation mathematically challengeable (why not the other way around?) but conceptually very reasonable. Doubtless, innovation requires talent, and technology enhances the application of talent in wealth creation and value capture.

Many of these texts have the problem that once they are read, they leave an impression like saying «OK, you convinced me, so what?», the more so as having chosen them already means that you fully agree with them. Pilar Jericó asserts: «A person has talent only if they are able to create value in their team». So talking about it, the main value of this book is the translation she makes of the importance of talent into a set of key items in business management for this talent to emerge and be useful to the company.

The equivalence between managing talent and the ability to create commitment is noteworthy, and this commitment is up to two parties – professionals and the company. So here goes a question to the entrepreneurs reading us: do you think that a competitive salary and the fear of losing the job is enough to have the staff committed to your project? If so, you better have a look at this book. It is written by a talented person.

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Notes

1. FRIEDMAN, Thomas (2006). *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.