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richard aedy

PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS. (EDUCATION, DEMOGRAPHICS, HUMAN GEOGRAPHY, HUMANITY, COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES & ANYTHING ELSE THAT MAKES ME THINK)

tuesday, march 25, 2008

Location, location

I spent a part of my Easter break finishing Richard Florida's *Who's Your City*. It was very impressive, though this (first) edition is very much aimed at the US market. Put it this way, Sydney gets two mentions while Madison, Wisconsin, (a much smaller place that's home to an excellent university but not a lot else) gets 11.

Essentially, Florida's thesis is that where you live matters a great deal. So much so that it's one of the three most important decisions you'll ever make: up there with who you choose to spend your life with, and what you do. Actually, Florida argues that it's the key decision - because it affects the other two.

He's got a point. Holiday romances aside, you tend to meet the person you fall for in the place that you live. Actually you tend to meet them through the places where you socialise, and - overwhelmingly - where you work. You tend to find a job in the place where you live too, although many of us know people who moved for love or their career, or both.

So place matters to you and me. But it also matters to economists and politicians and planners because cities are the great engine rooms of the world economy. Indeed, Florida has identified 40 mega-regions in the world that are home to 1.5 billion people. That's a lot of people - 18% of the world's population - but they're responsible for 66% of economic activity and a staggering 86% of patented innovations.

Mega-regions are very important and *very* big. Bigger than cities, most of the time anyway. Tokyo and London each get one to themselves, as does Mexico City. But most have cities as mere components. Bos-Wash - the almost completely built-up conurbation that stretches down the US eastern seaboard from Boston to Washington, DC, gives you the flavour of the thing. Australia does not get a single guernsey here - not Sydney, not Melbourne, not Syd-Melb, not anything. We're not big enough.

There's a lot in the book about this kind of thing - cities and regions as cradles for innovation and economic drivers which are becoming increasingly

about me

Richard Aedy

Richard Aedy presents the Life Matters show on ABC Radio National - Australia's ideas network. He is part of a large family.

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