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World Geography #2

Chapter 33 Response - Cultural Geography of Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica

Simply put, Australasia (Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the Outlying Islands of Micronesia and Melanesia) *needs* immigration to truly thrive to its maximum extent. Population is good in near all circumstances, but for an area as "feast-or-famine" geographically as Australasia is, it is especially important to have a large population where it can be supported.

The first example of this is the Australian Outback. The Outback is a vast, arid desert that covers the majority of the Australian continent. It is a harsh, unforgiving environment that is not suitable for large-scale agriculture or industry. However, with a large enough population to support it, the Outback could be terraformed and turned into a thriving agricultural and industrial region with comparatively little effort in comparison to the potential benefits. It could become the second great-plains of the world, with its vast resources and open spaces being put to good use. The problem now isn't lack of ability to do this, the technology to do this exists--specifically water desalination, irrigation, and enclosed mass-transit systems--but there aren't enough people that can't fit in the tiny strip of habitable land on the coast to make it worth it at this point. The coastal spit of land that is habitable is so dense as to make it very expensive, but not dense enough (due to the expense) to make it worth it to terraform the Outback.

The second example is the islands of Oceania. The islands of Oceania are small, isolated, and have very little in the way of resources. However, without a large enough population to actually make industry worth it--why one of these islands hasn't become the world's tech capital is beyond me--they are stuck in a cycle of tourism and imports, basically running hard to stay in one place. They aren't poor, they are just stuck in middle-income status. This is a surprisingly un-nuanced problem, in-effect, the economies of scale to make living on these islands cheap and easy just don't exist yet, and in-order to build them, you need either an outside force or the economies of scale themselves. This is a classic cold-start problem, but applied to a region instead of a company. Still, I think there is

a big potential for growth here, it would only take one country to make immigration and industrial development so attractive that the growth would be exponential.

The final example here is New Zealand, the little-island-that-could. New Zealand, while not small, is geographically isolated--so much so that it keeps getting cut off maps--but despite this is temperate, fertile, and holds a few resources. It has developed a small, if high-tech, economic base that is growing at a steady pace. This is a simple case of "more is better", New Zealand could increase density and just go "up-and-to-the-right" economically, geostrategically, and in terms of quality of life(where it is already doing well). Make it easier to build things, make it easier to start companies, get government out of the way, and New Zealand could be a major player on the world stage despite its isolation. There is a pathway here for New Zealand to start "grabbing" talented engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs from around the world who can't get into the US or Europe due to poor immigration policies, and build itself a massively resilient, rapidly growing economy as a tech-hub. Please do this New Zealand, I beg of you.

In conclusion, population is awesome and Australasia needs more of it. The potential for growth in the region is massive, and it is largely being held back by a series of cold-start problems that could be solved with a concerted effort by just one nation to make Australasia easy and attractive to move to. Samoa could drop immigration restrictions to near-zero and create the next Silicon Valley, Australia could terraform the Outback and become the world's breadbasket, and New Zealand could be the world leader in robotics. Get on it Australasia, I believe in you.