

Australian Centre for Asian Business, UniSA

**ICT enabled Rural Community Development:
Australia and Malaysia Experiences**

“Digitally enabled uplift of rural and regional communities by increasing innovation and entrepreneurship capacity, creating enterprise/employment opportunities, and opening the way to Asian markets and investments through strategic partnerships”

Workshop 19 August 2013

Attendees:

- Mr Zurin Azhar [ZA], Executive Director, Cypress Diversified
- Mr Nuril Hadi Abdul Wahab [HW], Executive Director, Cypress Diversified
- Mr Mustaffa Manaf [MM], Senior Adviser, Cypress Diversified
- Mr Nordazy Razak Norhalim [NN], Senior Manager, B40 Communities, Multimedia Development Corporation
- Dr Andrew Allan [AA], Senior lecturer, School of Natural & Built Environments, UniSA *
- Dr Jantanee Dumrak [JD], Graduate, School of Natural & Built Environments, UniSA
- Ms Nicolle Jachmann [NJ], Economic Development Manager, Regional Development Authority, Murraylands and Riverland
- Prof Andy Koronios [AK], Head, School of Informational Technology & Mathematical Sciences, UniSA *
- Mr Simon Molloy [SM], Managing Director, Systems Knowledge Concepts (SKC)
- Ms Nikki Parker [NP], Regional Director, Freelancer
- Mr Stephen Radeski [SR], ANZ Bank *
- Prof Ying Zhu [YZ], Director, Australian Centre for Asian Business, UniSA
- Dr Deepak Sardana [DS], Research Fellow, International Graduate School of Business, UniSA
- Dr Robert van der Veen [RV], Research Fellow, International Graduate School of Business, UniSA
- Dr Ke Xing [KX], Program Director, School of Engineering, UniSA
- Mr Bill Chin [BC], Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Australian Centre for Asian Business, UniSA
- Adjunct Assoc Prof David Ness [DN], Research Affiliate, ACAB and Barbara Hardy Institute.
- Ms Vanessa Wood [VW], Centre Administrator, Australian Centre for Asian Business, UniSA.

* Denotes unable to attend Plenary

Apology: Mr Azhar Harun, Chairman, Cypress Diversified.

Key topics:

1. Joint Ventures/ strategic partnerships
2. Cross-cultural understanding between communities & businesses
3. Capability development: entrepreneurship, leadership, management & planning
4. Possible opportunities for new collaborative research & funding

With the above topics in mind, it was decided to ascertain needs of various participants:

Tourism/food products/branding

Speciality in/from Riverland - what is the unique selling point of Riverland or the brand essence ? [JD]

Current tourism message: "expect the unexpected" [NJ]. Potential topic for further research.

Identify possible areas of tourism and promotion.

Capitalise on houseboats, tranquil atmosphere, health/well-being, relaxation [MM, others].

What do people miss who have left? (possible research)

High value gourmet products [SM].

Possible shop in Kuala Lumpur (e.g. KLCC) to showcase Riverland products.

Need for "strategic coherence", packaging together a number of elements [SM]. Echuca example [NP].

"What do Asian tourists want?" [NP]. Eat, shop, and more.

Tourists need to be able to enjoy river as locals do e.g. water sports, fishing [NP].

Overseas students in Adelaide could take weekend break, or working holiday [KX].

Summer school, e.g. environmental education [YZ].

Tourism Portal [SM]: Note that "Destination Riverland" website portal being launched soon and can be capitalised upon [NJ].

Currently no big push to promo Riverland for tourism (unlike Barossa and Kangaroo Island).

Age demographic for tourism? [NP]. Barossa <30, Riverland >30?

Air Asia potential [BC, YZ]. Air Asia is arranging tourism packages, is involved in hotels too. Could Air Asia help build hotel? Potential flight connections to Riverland via Adelaide.

Riverland Food and wine festival held October [NJ].

POKoK

What can Riverland learn from POKoK? [DN] Base line data, needs and capabilities, infrastructure POKoK micro-sourcing.

Information technology

Research on ICT enabled business for youth in Riverland.

RDA Riverland creating 'Digital Advocate' program ('Champions' may not go down well within Australian culture). Potentially coupled with award program.

How to get Riverland businesses online? [BC].

Needs somebody to drive, develop business model for everyone.

Bring together demand and supply [BC].

Opportunities for Riverland to encourage eCommerce participation among the SMEs and Local Entrepreneurs.

Can be modelled on the Malaysian approach by identifying and supporting a local ICT SME as the "driver" to lead with a pilot or proof of concept project to get the rest on board (buddy system, first movers).

Children aged 7-12 take iPads home: good way to digi engage household [NJ].

Can tourism be booked online? [NP].

Crowd Sourcing platform should be seriously considered within the employment creation strategies and plans. Freelancer can be 'tool' for Riverland businesses [NP]. Can assist with tourism promotion, translations.

Perhaps starting from within i.e. Riverland community providing small tasks within Riverland?

Jobs can be seasonal, one-off, or repeats.

These can be targeted to current available (supply) resources e.g. single mothers, or those going back to workforce seeking part time or casual employment.

New opportunities can be coupled with the tourism promo initiatives.

Needs to be Riverland 'broker': to draw together various offerings [SM].

UniSA needs to coordinate various programs focused on Riverland, including our work, Prof Andy Koronios and Dr Jing Gao, and others [DN]. Dr Johannes Pieters (School Natural & Built Environment) and others in NBE were involved with Riverland e.g. placements of planning students to study Remark airport & other topics, also the 'What Future primary Industries Project' with PIRSA and others. Nicolle also mentioned a Riverland group examining the airport future.

Research /Grants

Grant agencies look at demonstrating economic benefits e.g. generate x jobs. Simon offered to assist with economic analysis of proposals [SM].

The POKoK Foundation was possible source of funding, included University Sains Malaysia and UniSA was being invited to participate.

Postscript [SM]:

Simon Molloy subsequently put forward following helpful suggestions:

There needs to be consideration given to the overall strategy ('strategic coherence'), sequencing and feasibility of the higher level plan that was emerging from the discussion.

For example (and as a quick response only) I would suggest the following:

- 1. Is the Murrylands strategic emphasis on tourism sufficiently robust and well-resourced to move decisively on making the region capable of delivering an attractive package in the food/eco-tourism/indigenous culture space. The idea of wrapping this type of experience into a 'river journey' context could be potentially be very appealing but market research is required.*
- 2. What would be the marketing strategy in the tourist marketplace (Malaysia, China etc) and what evidence is there that it might be successful?*
- 3. I think the idea of partnerships with organisations like Air Asia is essential.*
- 4. How could the state/Federal government be brought into play to support this type of initiative?*

Key areas moving forward (based on YZ, SM, DN thoughts):

1. Develop overall strategy ('strategic coherence'), sequencing and feasibility of higher level plan. Package various elements together [DN, KX, A/Prof Mike Metcalfe, all].
2. Use Youth to lead/drive entrepreneurship /social entrepreneurship [DS + BC]
3. Delivery - Vice Chancellor keen to deliver research to reality /commercialisation of IT, Andy's new 'Digi Innovation & Entrepreneurship Centre' [BC with AK]
4. Community links with markets: to bring Riverland tourism to international markets, work with Air Asia [RV]
5. Cross cultural training for Adelaide Airport - delivery to meet Asian incoming demand [RV]
6. Diversification of regional economic activity
Connecting up/packaging diverse elements
Product/service innovation and synergies, sharing of resources and infrastructure
Infra and related areas, risk assessment [DN + KX].
7. Micro-sourcing – help promote Freelancer, create awareness, job opportunities [YZ]
8. International comparisons - rural social entrepreneurship
Thailand – funding opportunities? [JD]
Other countries.

Addendum

Reflection and notes on Riverland visit 20 August [DN].

After traversing the distance from Adelaide, the Riverland offers sunny, healthy, relaxing and clean destination with diverse experiences and with townships clustered together around river, all within short distances.

A number of elements could be connected up e.g. relaxing houseboat/riverboat tourism could be accompanied with Apps highlighting experiences along the route, with stops and exploration e.g. food & health products, biodiversity/ecology/ environmental education, indigenous culture /bush food& outback experiences, golf courses (Riverland has 5). Wrap together into river journey context, as Simon Molloy suggested. Further market research required, also a 'strategic coherence', system mapping exercise.

Revival of airport for travel from Adelaide (possible AirAsia partnership) could be associated with Flying School (suggestion of Margaret Howie, Trade Start Adviser, Austrade). UniSA already has flying school at Parafield. Flying can be linked with tourism e.g. gliding (Waikerie) and ballooning. 'Air parks' also suggested, with private hangars adjacent airport. An industry park was also zoned adjacent airport.

The Riverland was suitable for conferences and summer schools, which could enable visitors to remain several days and enjoy visits to attractions. But it lacked suitable conference centre: a possible area for investment.

Other areas for possible investment included a health resort with medical treatments to capitalise on health facilities and nursing and other staff in the region, and the clean relaxing environment.

There is opportunity for stronger UniSA presence in region for education and research (viz Centre for Regional Engagement). Build upon Andy Koronios "Dig Innovation Hub", interns, and student placements of School Natural & Built Environment.

Margaret Howie highlighted need to consolidate high end specialised food products: into container for air freight export via Adelaide. At present, products are sent via Melbourne. At present, around six products were export ready. RDA could assemble food group to discuss. Australia-Malaysia Free Trade Agreement was a bonus. Showcase local products not only in Malaysia/Asia but also in local restaurants, with Halal certification and cross-cultural understanding. Ying suggested this all presented an opportunity for Bill Chin.

In addition to those we visited i.e. Banrock, Illalangi, Lavender farm and Wilkadene, local products/offerings included fish e.g. yabbies/shrimp, Murray crayfish, redfin, cod etc, also citrus (fruit fly free), table grapes, almonds (99% of SA output). Almond Board of Australia HQ is in Riverland. Lindsay Point almonds also mentioned.

Tourism and eco-lodges overlooking wetlands and river (e.g. Banrock) were discussed. Berri already has an eco-lodge. Nicole explained how high end tourist lodges were also under construction on river cliffs at Paringa, with tourism services including pickup from Adelaide, river canoeing etc.

A world class environmental education centre was being mooted in Riverland.

Artists, bird watchers were among other source of tourists, using flat bottom boats e.g. Captain Carl, and fruit pickers and backpackers. Many were from overseas.