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Using Sister City relationships to access the Chinese market

New avenues for SMEs in regional Australia

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to offer a new approach for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Australia to engage in sustainable trade with China through the use of Sister City relationships. The reason for writing this paper is to address this research gap with the aim of influencing government policy at the national and the local level.

Design/methodology/approach – The main methods used is a historical literature review, a critical review of the effectiveness of the Sister City relationships and an examination of a special Sister City relationship between Latrobe City in Australia and the Chinese city of Taizhou.

Findings – Throughout the course of the paper it was established that Sister City relationships had been insufficiently utilized as commercial facilitators and especially SMEs in regional Australia. This was especially evident in terms of trade relations with China.

Research limitations/implications – This conceptual paper will require further research at different levels. Future research should establish what Australian sister cities with China are actually doing and how a more focused relationship utilizing SMEs in their territory might be utilized. This is clearly a limitation with this conceptual paper, which it is hoped will be overcome with new research planned by the authors.

Practical implications – The practical implications emerging from this paper is that Sister City relationships can be refocused from their current role to becoming structurally integrated into trade facilitators for SMEs in pursuing trade with China. Most Sister City relationships do not have a trade focus in the first instance. As a result of this paper we are hoping that local government policy makers and state government trade facilitators will see Sister City relationships in a new light.

Originality/value – This paper brings to attention cases of Sister City relationships which have gravitated towards a trade focus (an exception like Latrobe City) in which results are already evident. A paper of this kind is directed at governments at all levels as well as SMEs who wish to work better with government.

Introduction

This paper proposes the use of Sister City relationships to enhance trade with China for Australian regional small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The Chinese market and economy has become a important part of Australian trade though many struggling SMEs especially in regional Australia have failed to get access to this market. Sister City relationships were
originally conceived and focused on cultural and educational activities and not commercial. This research paper investigates how these existing Sister City relationships can become vehicles for promoting sustainable trade vital for the life of SMEs in regional areas between countries such as Australia into the emerging market such as China. This research is novel that through the example of the Sister City relationship between Latrobe City in regional Australian and a small city in Taizhou, China. This paper seeks to explore how the Sister City relationship may promote trade in regional areas. As research suggests that the major barrier in business between Australia and China is cultural differences (Chung, 2008). This paper explores the potential of how Sister City relationship may assist SMEs in regional centers by overcoming such barriers in order to embrace a stronger economic and business relationship.

Background

In researching this paper the authors were astonished at the sheer lack of academic and theoretical debate and one might add, the dismissal of these relationships as a force in furthering relationships between countries, be they cultural or trade. It is in our view a lost opportunity. It was also evident that the small amount of theoretical research that emerged was mostly from the European and English speaking countries reflecting the narrow base from which our studies are based. The European Union was an important location of Sister City (twinning) arrangements but this does not necessarily further the strategic understanding of the future role of sister cities and their potential for enhancing trade relations like China and Australia.

Researchers in the field of local government and Sister City relationships have highlighted the lack of serious research in this area overall (de Villiers et al., 2007, p. 9). Much of the literary discussion has originated from the press, from the city councils themselves and from anecdotal sources which have failed to provide far reaching insights other than the immediate net effects of a relationship in a specific country or locality. While the nature of twinning or sister cities is heavily treated by entities like the European Union and their committee of the regions, little is offered in the way of theoretical literature background.

Why is China important for Australia?

As a major emerging market, China offers great potential (Economist, 2007). China now accounts for 33.8 percent of the world's crude steel output and 46.6 percent of the world's pig iron output (Hua, 2007). Moreover, China has had a consistent double digit economic growth for the past five years since 2003 (DFAT, 2007). The rapid economic growth of China is expected to continue until at least 2011 (DFAT, 2007), and China's growth has been the single largest contributor to global growth over the past five years (DFAT, 2007). China is now Australia's largest trading partner (DFAT, 2007), and its importance to the Australian economy has grown with China's increasing economic, political and strategic weight in the Asia-Pacific region and global economy (DFAT, 2007).

In terms of trade, by April 2006, over 3,245 Australian companies were exporting to China, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT, 2007). Major areas of opportunity include mining and energy, agribusiness, manufacturing, construction, technology, management, consultancy (for the Olympic Games), regional development, financial, legal, education, engineering and architectural services (DFAT, 2007). Major exports from Australia to China include iron ore, wool, copper ores and coal (DFAT, 2007). In terms of services, Australia's major exports to China were education and related travel, and personal travel, excluding education (for example Chinese visitors to Australia). Australia represents China's seventh principal import source in 2006 (DFAT, 2007). From sources
within Austrade, there are an estimated 1,000 Australian exporters entering the Chinese market each year (Austrade, 2007), and there are about 400 Australian businesses operating in China, engaged in manufacturing, property, business services, finance, insurance, education, mineral exploration and information services (ACBC, 2007).

Australian companies have been pursuing the Chinese market with other international multinational corporations for over two decades, since the open door policy established in 1978 (Tian, 1996). The result of this pursuit, however, has been inconsistent. There have as many unsuccessful companies as there have been successful Australian companies entering the Chinese market. One reason why Australian businesses might be unsuccessful in China may be as a result of a lack of understanding of Chinese culture and the approach towards doing business there. Recent research suggests that cultural barriers are a major impediment for Australian businesses when entering the Chinese market (Chung, 2008). However, the successful outcomes for Australian companies have not been fully translated into solid growth to Australian SMEs especially in regional areas. How can SMEs in regional areas better enter the Chinese market and do so successfully? How can regional government best utilize their limited resources in supporting SMEs to enter the uniquely challenging Chinese market? Regional areas in general suffer from lack of resources and support and often these companies operate under even more severe conditions and difficulties. Therefore, assisting these companies in regional areas can be a major challenge for the country as a whole as well as the regional local government concerned. Base on the cultural barrier argument, this project is set to explore to what extent the Sister City relationships may be utilized to overcoming the cultural barrier when doing business with China because of the closer and more intense direct relationship which sister cities provide.

The origins of the Sister City concept

As products initially of attempts to promote peace, sister cities, when they were first devised, were primarily promoted established to promote goodwill relations with a greater cultural and educational focus. In the aftermath of the second world war, former rivals France and Germany made efforts in reconciling their differences by, amongst other things, undertaking “large numbers of twinning schemes between towns on either side of the Rhine” (European Commission, 1997, p. 180). There are some 20,000 towns and cities across the worlds which have a relationship of one description across borders. The figure continues to grow by the day. Moreover, they have very different roles in different parts of the world. In some parts of the world like Germany and Europe they have been instrumental assisting peaceful relations and collaboration before and after the end of the Cold War. Formally rival nations, Germany and France have used Sister City relationships to pursue peace and establish better relations. Casagrande from the European Council of European Municipalities (CCRE) indicated that “twinnings have not only improved relations, they have made them possible” (Weyreter, 2003, p. 37). The European Union also recognized the importance of finding new instruments of social inclusion across the wide and diverse frontier of Europe. Immediately proceeding the end of the cold war in 1989, the EU instituted as part of its Phare program (Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring their Economies) funding to promote the Sister City (or twinning of cities) as a way to bring cities of the West and East closer together (European Commission, 1997). The commission has expressed that sister cities can be an important bridge. This heightened awareness in Europe obviously did not assume that friendship associations were a thing of the past. The struggle to bring nations, regions and cities closer in the conglomerate of European member states made the necessity of tools such as twinning and sister cities a very effective vehicle. This is how the European Commission described its task ahead in this matter.
Today, European societies are confronted with certain social tensions which, to different
degrees of intensity manifest themselves on local, regional, national and European levels.
These tensions are caused by various socio-economic factors such as unemployment,
discrimination and the fragmentation of society. Social relations become fragile, and the very
concept of active citizenship is questioned. Many Europeans choose not to participate in
public life and in the democratic processes. Therefore, we need actions that reinforce the
values underpinning the European integration process such as solidarity, equal opportunity,
tolerance, social inclusion and inter-cultural understanding. For this reason the European
Commission supports wide range of activities in the area of active European citizenship. For
example, some 1,400 town twinning projects receive support every year. In the future years
similar activities will be supported through the new “Europe for Citizens” programme
(European Commission, 2006).

Like the immediate needs of the European Union in pursuing Sister City arrangements for
purposes of peaceful coexistence and integration, sister cities around the world have
promoted these relationships for similar reasons though in different circumstances. Before
proceeding any further it is important to understand the origins and the reasons for the
emergence of sister cities in order to better understand how they can evolve and pursue
different directions.

The evolving international Sister City relationships

Sister cities are defined in different ways across different countries. They are referred to as
sister cities, twin cities, friendship cities, *partnerstadt* (in Germany) and *Gemellaggio* (in
Italy). On the whole however there is little confusion about what they actually do. A Sister
City relationship is a broadly-based, officially approved, long-term partnership between two
communities in two countries (O’Toole, 2001, p. 403). A Sister City relationship becomes
official with a signing ceremony of the top-elected officials of the two local jurisdictions,
following approval by the local city councils. Sister City programs are also unique in that
they inherently involve the three main sectors in a community: local government, businesses,
and a wide variety of citizen volunteers (and civil society or non-profit organizations).

The Sister City, county and state affiliations date back to the immediate aftermath of the
Second World War. Two towns, one Ludwigsburg in Germany and Montbeliard, France were
in 1950 the first such Sister City arrangements. However, the concept was most embodied
and driven by the US and developed into a national initiative when President Eisenhower
proposed the people-to-people program at a White House conference in 1956. The history of
the Sister City relationships as a post-war phenomenon is most comprehensively presented by
Cremer et al. (2001). However, it is important to note that when the Sister City Program
began in 1956, it had little or no explicit reference to international trade and economic co-
operation as one of the objectives of the relationship and its significance in the globalisation
and economic development of both Australia and China.

The nature of sister cities and twinning of cities is not one that remains fixed. In 1997, the
European Commission in establishing and circulating the types of (Sister City) exchanges
indicated three forms: education; culture and sport (European Commission, 1997, p. 23). It
did not provide other established forms of exchanges. The concept since the late 1990s and
over the decades has evolved. Different roles have emerged for the sister cities as O’Toole
(2001) has identified. O’Toole highlighted how the emphasis of Australian sister cities in the
recent period has changed from friendship ties to those of exchange of economic
development. In part definitions of the relationships have reflected this change of emphasis
especially in the last decades of the twentieth century characterised by growing forces of globalisation (de Villiers et al., 2007).

O'Toole (2001) has developed a model for Sister City studies to understand the levels of development and maturity of Sister City relationships. He had evidenced the evolutionary nature of the sister cities into the following stages:

1. associative phase (twinning based on friendship, cultural exchange);
2. reciprocative phase (twinning based on educational exchange, people exchange); and
3. commercial exchange phase (twinning based on economic development).

This model highlights the very real way that sister cities have evolved and in which they mirrored the new priorities of governments in the post-war period. O'Toole further explains that the commercial exchange phase is a phase which developed in a later period but, interestingly not at the expense of the Associative and reciprocate phase. It was in effect an additional activity (O'Toole, 2001, p. 405). More to the point the additional commercial phase reflected the changed geo-political circumstances in which not only was there the end of the Cold War and an opening up Eastern Europe, but more importantly the Chinese economy underwent significant reforms allowing for global trade relations with the West like never before.

Alongside the O'Toole model is a comprehensive approach of successful benchmarks of successful and less successful Sister City arrangements. de Villiers et al. (2007, p. 10) has listed four criteria which have according to their study covering sister relationships in South Africa defined their relative success or otherwise. In an abbreviated version they include:

- proper partner selection;
- marketing of the Sister City to all stakeholders;
- management quality; and
- well conceived business plan.

While the criteria offered by de Villiers et al. (2007) has a “motherhood” quality, it also illustrates that Sister City relationships have in the past failed often for more basic reasons than a lack of vision and relevance. The authors in their study concluded that their success factors required further research to ascertain the validity of the above findings.

To those seeking to address the effectiveness and direction of sister cities one has to tackle the annoying and shallow approach with which sister cities are represented within the world media. Because of their historical emphasis on instruments of peace and goodwill, too often they have been the subject of tabloid style ridicule as exampled by this following scenario from Australia.

Dandenong's Sister City relationship with Xuzhou (China) has again come under fire after the council agreed to send Mayor John Kelly and CEO John Bennie to China to celebrate the anniversary of the international sister cities exchange program. The council accepted an invitation to Mr Bennie from the Foreign Affairs Office of Xuzhou to attend the anniversary celebrations in Nanjing from October 25 to November 2. Despite, the celebrations being close to the municipal elections, council officers recommended the mayor also attend as a show of cultural goodwill. While all costs for the pair in China will be met by the city of Xuzhou, the trip will set ratepayers back an estimated SA$6,000 for return economy flights, some accommodation costs and ancillary expenses (Bell, 2008, July).
The media in tabloid fashion has often utilized the failure to achieve commercial outcomes as the cause celebre to declare Sister City arrangements as failures. It has become in many circumstances the goading element as demonstrated by the following citation in a local paper of a small Australian city:

Greater Dandenong and the Chinese city of Xuzhou established a Sister City relationship in 1996. However, to date there have been no business relationships resulting from the friendship. Greater Dandenong Council's corporate services executive Jenny Kurjan said there was an allocation in the 2008-2009 budget of $29,000 to provide for the hosting of delegations and for the council to represent Dandenong in China (Bell, 2008).

**Sister cities in Australia**

In Australia, the genesis of a Sister City relationship occurred in 1939 when the Shire of Parkes, New South Wales, (NSW) claimed a Sister City affiliation with Coventry in England. A relationship was established between Saddleworth in South Australia and Saddleworth Parish in the UK in 1941, while one has existed officially between Hunters Hill and Henley-on-Thames since 1950, and one between Bega, NSW, and Lyttleton, Colorado, USA of America, since 1956. Recently, Australian cities have over 475 Sister City agreements in place throughout the world and this number increases every year (ASCA, 2007).

The evolving nature of the Sister City agreements is in fact influenced by a fear of investment and equally hysterical attitude of the “financial return”. In other media outlets accusations of “junkets” and other critical commentary because in essence the “peace” factor is no longer sufficient to justify this allocation of local government funding and government can no longer live simply on playing a social and political role but must also respond in economic terms. These new political pressures on local government to fend off these criticisms make Sister City relationships very difficult to pursue.

Over the last decade Sister City relationships and local government have received unfavorable publicity about their so-called “money wasting” approach Sister City relationships. There is increasing pressure for local governments to improve their economic performance on the return of investments in Sister City relationships. One example of the media attention on the question of Sister City relationships involved the debate over Christchurch in New Zealand. It may well have been any city in the world. Negative media coverage was sparked by the following incident:

An independent study which shows Christchurch gains little economic benefit from its Sister City relationships has some senior councilors questioning the international links (Watson, 2003).

A similar incident, and again in New Zealand, received the following media coverage:

A council report [in Palmerston North] to Monday night's meeting noted that the city needed “to be realistic” about how much money should be spent on international relationships. It could be difficult to justify this spending as the most effective way to achieve council growth targets. Benefits were more likely to be social or cultural (Matthews, 2003).

Sister City partnerships have the potential to carry out the widest possible diversity of activities of any international program, including every type of municipal, business, professional, educational and cultural exchange or project. It is common at times for academics to highlight the scarcity of literature on a certain theme or interest of study. Sister
City relationships fall into this category also. It suffers not from a lack of journalistic exposure and debate, where it does well (Macnicol, 1998; Matthews, 2003), but from more rigorous academic and critical scrutiny.

Over the recent period a very few number of scholars have examined international Sister City relationships as a policy instrument to facilitate business relationships between countries with different cultures (Ramasamy and Cremer, 1998). As has been demonstrated this includes the ability of local government to play a role in promoting business and being a facilitator between its own jurisdiction and business with other countries. Some have even postulated that this relationship provides a hybrid form of entrepreneurialism “municipal-community entrepreneurship” in which is a valuable facilitator of economic and social vibrancy of cities (Cremer et al., 2001, p. 377).

### The role of local government and globalization in Sister City relationships

There is no doubt that the nature of local government and the role it plays in economic development, sustainability and trade promotion can be more significant than it has traditionally been. O'Toole (2001) acknowledged that for Australia there is no “direct overarching public policy directed at Sister City relationships.” Moreover, new interpretations of the functionality of Sister City relationships in Australia have shifted towards an inclusion of a consideration of the commercial utility of such relationships and not solely cultural (O'Toole, 2001). Sister City programs inherently involve a unique kind of partnership and involvement of the three main sectors that make for a vibrant, productive community: the local government, business and private voluntary sectors. Sister City programs—perhaps more than any other international program—involves the widest possible diversity of exchanges and projects. Basically, anything that goes on in a community can become and has, in one city or another – the subject of a Sister City project, including every type of municipal, business, professional, environmental, educational and cultural exchange.

Germany's twinning arrangement, another term for Sister City have been documented as being primarily cultural except:

[...] in the case of China (where 16 twinning with Germany had existed even before 1989) inter human aspects were not a priority, but helping to build local Chinese infrastructure, transferring technology and introducing Germany's unrivalled vocational training system in China were. In return Germany was rewarded with a huge new market to sell new technology (Weyreter, 2003, p. 42).

Zelinsky (1991) claims that Sister City arrangements are not random but based on specific and shared concerns, one of these is clearly economic.

As early as 1990, Zelinsky made the observation that shared economic interests actually account for numerous Sister City relationships within the USA. These included examples such as Pittsburgh with metallurgical centers such as Sheffield in the UK, Houston is twinned with oil rich Baku in ex-Soviet Union Baltimore twinned with ports like Genoa and Rotterdam in The Netherlands (1990). As such the use of sister cities was also seen as a trade and economic mechanism of economic enhancement. In closing Zelinsky (1990, p. 46) summarized the economic potential in the following way:

The right sort of Sister City partnership can only be positive for almost any American town. The immediate reward is cultural enrichment. Later with luck and ingenuity, such cooperation can bring real economic dividends.
Forth and Howell (2001) have indicated in their paper the manner in which Sister City relationships with China have enhanced trade between China and Australia and have provided ever increasing important “sub-national relationships” between different layer of governments between the two countries. They state:

Since 1979, an important aspect of this relationship has been the development of 42 Sister City type formal agreements between Australian and Chinese state and local governments (Forth and Howell, 2001).

Experts in trade have been reticent and at times skeptical about Sister City relationships and their impact on trade. Former Australian Trade Minister, Fischer (2002) once remarked:

Where it is properly managed, it [Sister City relationships] would give impetus and support to small and medium sized exporters opening up new markets with new products.

With limited exceptions Fischer's words have not been heeded. While the Sister City relationships are assuming, an economic emphasis, they are still distant from being effective instruments for SME sustainable growth. The Latrobe City and Taizhou example provides a successful initial model for this to happen.

**Australia and China: an example of Latrobe City and Taizhou**

The Sister City relationships between in Australia and China co-exist within a framework of strong economic trade between the two countries. The economic importance of China to the world and to Australia is clearly evidenced by rapidly increasing trade figures. Trade between Australian and China has grown from $A13 billion in 2002 to $A45 billion or 14 percent of the total trade in 2006 (DFAT, 2007). Since 2004 China has been Australia's second largest trading partner and in 2006 it became the largest source of imports reaching $A25 billion or 15 percent of total Australian imports (DFAT, 2007). China has become an essential economic partner for the Australian economy and has altered the pattern of trade.

In the period between 1945 and 2005, while world trade growth grew 20 fold, GDP growth only increased by six times. Moreover, the ratio of world exports to GDP has more than doubled since 1950. Globalisation is today more than just an activity for large corporations. Global business involves more and more the SMEs. While in Australia only 4 percent of all companies actually export, this figure can be increased (Austrade, 2007).

For SMEs located in Latrobe City in Victoria, 150 kilometres east of Melbourne, China can represent significant opportunities for future growth and sustainable trade. Out of the total 2,835 businesses in the Latrobe City, 2,632 are small and 161 are medium-sized businesses (ABS, 2002). Moreover, it is an SME base which has transformed itself from a semi-depressed economic state of the 1990s to an actively engaging community. In 2000, Latrobe city established a Sister City relationship with Taizhou city in Jiangsu province China. The relationship was initiated by the Taizhou City in 1998 with a strong economic and trade desire in its earlier visits from Taizhou city. Latrobe city however has been following the long tradition of establishing cultural ties parallel to its exiting Sister City relationship with Takasago Japan. All delegations have been to China for the purpose of cultural exchange with the exception of the one in 2007, a group of local business people took part in this delegation.

Business relationships with Chinese are strongly relationship based (Chung, 2006a, b). This is strongly supported by research (Chanthika, 1999; Li and Wright, 2000; Demers, 2002).
This Chinese specific cultural factor is underpinned by the ability that organisations are able to build trusting business relationships. Recent research suggests that cultural barriers are a major impediment for Australian businesses when entering the Chinese market. This impediment has been costing businesses dearly (Chung, 2008). Therefore, can Sister City relationships be capitalised as effective market entry drivers between cities and regions and their external partners such as Latrobe Valle and its Sister City in China, Taizhou? Can SMEs in the Latrobe City enter the Chinese market more effectively building on the existing Sister City relationship? In another word, will they be able to build a trusting business relationship with Chinese within a shorter timeframe which otherwise would not be available to them. We set to further research on how the Latrobe Sister City arrangement will be able to assist in transforming and strengthening the role of SMEs within the local business community to the benefit other regional centers and nationally. This research is significant as SMEs in regional areas are otherwise restricted to market entry opportunities.

Building on the strong economic growth of China in the recent years and the increasing important role of China in the world economy, Latrobe City has been actively pursuing a more proactive role in establishing a working relationship with China. In part economic officers within local government are obliged to provide this form of local government marketing and business development. According to Taylor (1997):

Most local governments in Australia now have economic development officers whose role it is to ensure that there are strategies in place to ensure “growth” in the local economy. Even though there is no typology of local “growth” in the local economies and therefore no strategy for local economic development, many localities still assiduously look for ‘models’ that they can emulate.

Billington (2007), Latrobe City's Senior Economic Development officer, suggested:

I have learnt a great deal about the importance of the business relationship – what it is based on and how it is built. Having a strong and effective relationship network (guanxi) is one of the single most important factors for business success. There are vast differences compared to what we do here but this is all part of learning and understanding cultural differences.

The example of Latrobe City and its relationship with Taizhou is one of many relationships of regional centers in Australia with equivalent cities in China. For future research it would be a valuable tool to develop a trade model utilising the Sister City arrangements which would provide the evidence, impetus and sustainable driver strategies to overcome cultural barriers for regional Australian cities to engage in more intimate and sustainable trade with their counterparts in the Chinese market. This research proposal resonates strongly with the City Council's strategy of “supporting existing business investment and facilitating investment opportunities” (Latrobe City, 2007). The model developed and lessons learnt from the La Trobe City-Taizhou experience could then be applied in other regional areas throughout Australia to the benefit of both these regions and the Australian economy as a whole.

Trade between China and Australia has become important and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. Given the resources trade boom with China, regional Australia has a special case in seeking out trade opportunities not normally provided. What many are seeking are sustainable methods and approaches which will enhance this relationship and provide it a commercial focus alongside the cultural one. Cremer et al. (2001) postulated that this trade-oriented Sister City relationship can provide a hybrid form of entrepreneurialism “municipal-community entrepreneurship” which is a valuable facilitator of economic and social vibrancy.
of cities. The paper examines the tentative approaches made by these two cities to further their relationship in an economic sense using their traditional Sister City relationship as the means for this.

Conclusion

This paper sought to underscore the role of existing Sister City relationships and how they can become vehicles for sustainable trade and for invigorating the contact between SMEs in regional Australia and China. Like other Sister City relationships, the relationship between Latrobe City and Taizhou started in traditional cultural and educational exchange fashion and slowly progressed towards a more enduring and economic one. Few Sister City relationships have progressed this far as most remain fixated on their cultural and political relationship. It has been demonstrated that much of the initial steps of European integration and unification were assisted by Sister City (or twinning arrangements). They too reached the point where they were questioned as to their ongoing efficacy and future role. In part the evolution of Sister City relationships has been influenced by the growing world globalisation and making the world smaller. Where Sister City relationships were quite stable and established they also sought to meet the specific needs of the respective business communities in the Sister City countries.

This kind of ridiculing treatment along with the very desolate level of academic attention and research requires that not only Sister City relationships be restored but that they also be re-directed. For this reason, this paper seeks to shift the discussion on these relationships and propose that they become stronger tools of sustainable trade and economic promotion.

In the Australia-China case study it was evident that the economic officers in both cities were conscious of this necessity and pro-active in their determination to pursue these economic ventures. There is only circumstantial evidence to confirm the validity of these sister cities and more and properly measured tests are needed to establish that Sister City relationships can become effective and successful vehicles for economic transactions and trade in a sustainable fashion. The research case study intended and emerging from this paper seeks to establish the necessity but also the validity of this hypothesis and a model applicable to other Australian cities especially in regional and rural Australia.

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Further Reading


About the authors

Bruno Mascitelli was employed by the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) in Italy for over 17 years and was primarily engaged in export promotion of Australian products into the Italian market. On returning to Australia, he was employed with the Commercial Office of the US Consulate which involved assisting US companies entering the Australian market. He joined Swinburne University in 2000, and specialised in European Studies and International Business. He completed his Masters in International Business in 2001 and his PhD at Melbourne University in 2005. His additional interests include Italian Political Economy and Italian politics. Bruno Mascitelli is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: bmascitelli@swin.edu.au

Mona Chung is an expert in doing business with China. She addresses the major issue in doing business with China – overcomes the cultural gap. Her specialises in strategic planning, management and marketing practice for international organisations with the understanding of the culture of Chinese market first. As a bi-cultural person she short-circuits processes and produce results that increase efficiency by between 70 and 50 percent. She is a frequent guest speaker at public forums and tertiary institutions and is the author of an extensive list of publications in cross-cultural business studies. She teaches international business, management and marketing.