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Ambitions of a global city: arts, culture and creative economy in 'Post-Crisis' Singapore

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This paper chronicles some of the key policies pertaining to the arts and culture in post-independent Singapore. A brief summary is first provided of the early (1960s and 1970s) cultural policy focusing on the harnessing of arts and culture for nation-building purposes, followed by the subsequent (1980s) recognition that the arts and culture had tourist dollar potential. The paper then expands on the cultural/creative economy policy of the 2000s, in which arts, heritage, media and design are recognized for their economic value (beyond their role in tourism to include their export value and their importance in attracting global workers). The paper then turns to the most recent policy attention paid to the social value of the arts and culture. The more broadly 'cultural social policy' direction emphasizes the value and integral place of the arts and culture in everyday lives. This is in part in recognition of the fact that for Singapore to be a truly global city, there must be a lively arts and culture scene and high levels of participation by residents. Finally, the promises and challenges that Singapore faces in its efforts to realize its ambitions as a global (cultural) city are discussed.

Keywords: Singapore; cultural policy; creative economy

Introduction

This paper is about the ambitions of a global city, or more accurately a city-state – Singapore – that aspires to be one of the great global cities in the world. Its aspirations are both economic and cultural in nature, and in this paper, I examine the policies that have been promulgated especially in the last decade that address the connections between them. In particular, I examine the efforts to develop a cultural (or creative?) economy, as distinct from those that encourage broader participation in arts and cultural pursuits for personal, aesthetic and social reasons. I evaluate the challenges that stand in the way of this city-state in achieving its ambitions, and the promises that give cause for optimism. In the process, the nature of government policies becomes clarified, so that the conceptual confusion, and often conflation, of 'creative industries/economy' with the more traditional notion of 'arts and cultural industries' in the literature and in policy discourses is disentangled.

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Arts, culture and creative industry

The creative industries have taken a firm hold in policy and academic discourses in the recent decade. In both arenas, there is often terminological confusion. In this section, I briefly outline the conceptual entanglements. Conceptual clarity is important as there are implications for 'theory, policy and its practical application' (Galloway and Dunlop 2006, p. 11). With the 'terminological clutter' (2006, p. 2) resulting from the confusion and conflation of the two different concepts of 'culture' and 'creativity', the creative industries discourse is 'increasingly incapacitated in understanding the shape of emerging global trends and advancing both theoretically and practically engaging responses' (Cunningham *et al*. 2008, p. 25).

The problem with the 'creative industries' is that it conflates two already existing entities – the creative arts and the cultural industries (Hartley and Cunningham 2001). The term 'cultural industry', originally coined by Adorno and Horkheimer to distinguish between traditional creative arts and industrially produced commodities like TV and movies (Galloway and Dunlop 2006), was one of contempt for the dumbing down of the masses that were easily distracted by such assembly line products. It was reintroduced in a better light in the 1970s and 1980s to persuade regional governments to support arts and culture for the economic good (Hartley and Cunningham 2001), and today mostly refers to the subsidised arts (Cunningham 2002). The first usage of 'creative industries', accredited to the British New Labour government's first Creative Industries Mapping Document in 1998 and little altered since, was a political move that brought arts into economic policy discourse (Pratt 2005), moving the creative industries 'from the fringes to the mainstream' (Department of Culture, Media and Sports 2001, p. 3). However, the creative industries today are moving away from the arts and towards 'new and broader applications of creativity', and are more global, less national and tend towards smaller firm sizes than the cultural industry's mainstay of broadcasting and flagship arts companies (Cunningham 2002, p. 6).

The creative/cultural confusion stems from the seemingly interchangeable use by policy-makers of the terms 'creative industries' and 'cultural industries' over the years, with little official clarification between the two. Cunningham (2002) notes that in Australia, for instance, the concept of cultural industries has 'strong currency' in academia (2002, p. 6), but is seldom used in media industries, which tend towards the use of 'creative industries'. Galloway and Dunlop (2007, p. 29) argue that the creative industries concept is an 'amorphous entity' with no cultural content. Others point out that the term 'creative industries' is 'of little analytical value per se' (Pratt 2005, p. 6), as most industries and activities are creative in one way or another – plenty of other businesses and services can be 'creative' too (O'Connor 1999). The problem may be that 'creative' is too broad a term, with no allowance for distinction between scientific and cultural innovation (Pratt 2005).

With such conceptual confusion, the question remains as to what constitutes cultural policy, cultural economic policy, creative economy policy, arts policy and other such permutations. How are they different or similar, and why does it matter? In what follows, I attempt to elaborate and clarify Singapore state policies in this area and distil the essence of several state policies to derive an understanding of the various terminologies.

Cultural policy in early post-independence Singapore

Singapore as an independent state is a relatively recent development. The city that found itself ejected from the larger Malaysian Federation in August 1965 was then one of squalor, poverty, disease and precariousness. The early post-independence years were dire, and policies were necessarily focused on the development of infrastructure and the building of a more robust economy (Kong 2000). The country's primary and most pressing aim then was to develop itself economically so that its citizens could enjoy a better standard of living. In the words of Dhanabalan (1983, p. 16), Minister for Culture in 1983:

> We often talk of improving the quality of life in Singapore as distinct from improving the standard of living. We have concentrated, and rightly so, on improving the standard of living of Singaporeans ... Without better standards of living – more jobs, more housing, more education, better health – one cannot hope to improve the quality of life.

In those first two decades after independence, arts and cultural policies rarely featured in the minds of policy-makers, and when they did, were aimed at using artistic and cultural activities for nation-building purposes, especially in instilling 'appropriate' values, such as a sense of patriotism, in its citizens. Local arts and culture were viewed as ways in which the influence of western values and lifestyles could be circumvented before they tarnished the value system of Singapore's youth (Kong 2000). The concept of creative industry/economy had not yet been invented, and if it had, would have had no place in a country predominantly reliant on trade and secondary industry (manufacturing). The policy space was thus occupied by what might best be described as straight 'cultural policy'.

Cultural economic policy in the late twentieth century Singapore

As standards of living improved and Singapore moved out of its Third World conditions, policy attention began to turn more fully to arts and culture in the late 1980s and 1990s. A landmark report was produced in 1989, the Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, dubbed the 'Ong Teng Cheong Report' given the leadership of the then 2nd Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong in the crafting of the report. It was a significant report, marking the first dedicated recognition of the value of arts and culture for a maturing nation. Consistent with the broader ethos of the period, part of the impetus was economic in nature, recognising the ways in which arts and culture can 'contribute to our tourist and entertainment sectors', though the report was equally marked by a broader appreciation of the value of arts and culture in personal and social terms, giving due acknowledgement to the importance of the arts as 'personal enrichment', that is, 'broaden[ing] our minds and deepen[ing] our sensitivities'; 'improv[ing] the general quality of life' and 'strengthen[ing] our social bond' (Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, 1989, p. 3).

Notwithstanding the acknowledgement of multiple values of arts and culture in Singaporean life and economy, the economic realities of the 1980s and 1990s pushed the economic agenda to the foreground. Singapore had been in the midst of an economic recession in 1985 when a thoughtfully assembled Economic Commit-

tee, drawing on some of the leading thought leaders in various sectors presented its ideas for growth. This erstwhile group identified the arts and cultural sector as one of the service sectors that could be developed for economic gains. This acknowledgement of the economic potential of artistic and cultural activities represented a departure from the cultural policy of the preceding two decades. The recommendations focused on performing arts, film production, museums, art galleries, entertainment centres and theme parks and attached importance to their multiple roles in enhancing Singapore as a tourist destination; improving the quality of life and helping Singaporeans become more productive; and creating a vibrant cultural scene to attract foreign professionals to work and develop their careers here (Report of the Sub-Committee on the Service Sector 1985, p. 211).

The ambitions were not trivial: Singapore began to put increasingly more resources into developing culture and the arts, and in 1995, the goal of making itself into a 'global city of the arts' by the year 2000 was articulated by both the (then) Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) and Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) (MITA and STPB 1995). In 1997, the then Chairman of the National Arts Council (NAC), Liu Thai Ker, emphasised that there was nothing wrong in the arts being 'aligned with economic impetuses'. He stressed that while the arts was traditionally associated with the need to be subsidised, the government recognised that the economic gains were potentially far greater than the expenditure, which made government spending on the arts justifiable. His opinion was that investing in the arts was the act of a 'responsible government' (Kong 2000, p. 415).

With a newfound role for the arts and cultural activity, the government channelled significant effort and resources into policies and strategies to exploit the economic potential of the arts. Here, the language of 'creativity' began to emerge. In the 1990s, the Economic Development Board came up with a Creative Services Development Plan as the blueprint for the development of the film and music, media, design, and arts and entertainment sectors (MITA 2002). Infrastructure development was also carried out through the injection of up to S$1 billion (USD 762 million) to develop new and upgrade old cultural facilities (Kong 2000, p. 417) to create a city throbbing with arts and cultural activities that will be attractive to investors and international talents. The new Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, the Singapore Art Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum, as well as the National Museum expansion, are all the results of that money pumped in by the government during this decade to achieve the aim of making Singapore a regional hub, or a 'global city for the arts' (The Straits Times [ST] 1 June 1997a; 27 Aug 1997b; 1 Apr 1998).

While the traditional arts and cultural activities – performing arts, museums and such – received policy attention and support, which translated very materially into funding support and subsidy (e.g. the Esplanade cost S$600 million [USD457 million]; the museum developments involving the Singapore Philatelic Museum, Asian Civilisations Museum, National Museum and Singapore Art Museum amounted to S$246.53 million [around USD188 million] in capital investment) (National Heritage Board [NHB] 2008, p. 8), what had hitherto remained in the commercial sector, with success or failure determined by market forces, now also received official attention. The film, media, music and design industries came to be viewed as among the range of industries that could produce exports for the country, and if harnessed and supported with careful planning, clear policy and strategic purpose,

could create economic value for a country that could no longer rely on trade and manufacturing. It was with the inclusion of these industries in the policy fold that the term 'creative services' was introduced. The underlying assumption seemed to be that these industries involved the creation of new content and new products where the traditional arts, cultural and heritage activities drew on existing resources. Despite the introduction of the notion of 'creative services', however, the major focus of policy and funding support was on the cultural infrastructures to support artistic and heritage activities, which was in turn motivated by the potential economic benefits through tourism. Relatively little gain was made in the official development of the 'new creative industries' during this period (Kong 2000). In that regard, the dominant conceptual thinking that gained material support was rooted in the economic value of 'cultural' activity, rather than that which assumes the creation of new content, or the value of arts and culture for personal enrichment and social value, the Ong Teng Cheong report notwithstanding. The dominant approach of the 1980s and 1990s might thus be appropriately labelled a 'cultural economic policy'.

'A global city for the arts': (cultural) creativity and cultural participation in 'post-crisis' Singapore

Whereas the cultural economic policies in Singapore prior to the turn of the century have been documented previously (e.g. Koh 1989, Kong 2000, Chang and Lee 2003), recent policies that have been introduced since 2000 have not yet been given the same attention, particularly those formulated post-economic crises of 2003 and 2008 (although, see Chong 2005a, Tan 2007, Ooi 2010). It is to these that I now turn. It is not my intention to be comprehensive in coverage. Rather, I will highlight key directional shifts that demonstrate two key prongs in policy thinking. The first is economic in nature, and builds on the cultural economy policy approach of the 1980s and 1990s, emphasising the need for more 'creativity' in the knowledge-based economy of the twenty-first century. The shift to active support for 'creative industries' is marked, with multiple policy prescriptions and strategies, as outlined below. The second is more cultural and social in intent, emphasising the value of participation in cultural activity for personal, social and cultural reasons. The discourse here is rooted in the idea that a global city is characterised by more than economic and financial success, but must embody a vibrancy and *joie de vivre*, with a lively cultural scene. This is a more recent emphasis, for which specific policy actions are still being formulated.

Policies to foster (cultural) creativity for the economy

Following the cultural economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s, one of the most significant developments in the 2000s is the adoption of a 'creative industries' policy (Kong *et al*. 2006). With official recognition that Singapore's continued economic success has to be predicated on successfully navigating a much more globalised world and a much more intensively knowledge-based economy, the potential of the 'creative industries' was promulgated by several government agencies. The language of 'creative industries' and 'creative economy' became much more liberally adopted, carving a conceptual and policy space where 'cultural industries' had not in earlier years.

Space for the 'creative economy' was first carved out officially with a definition and a conceptual framework for the creative industries. Creative industries have officially been defined as 'industries which are inspired by cultural and artistic creativity and have the potential to create new economic value through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (Ministry of Information, Communications, the Arts [MICA] 2009). They comprise three major sectors – arts and culture, media and design. The 'arts and culture' sector includes performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, photography, crafts, libraries, museums, galleries, archives, auctions, impresarios, heritage sites, performing arts sites, festivals and arts-supporting enterprises. The 'media' sector comprises broadcast (including radio, television and cable), digital media (including software and computer services), film and video, recorded music and publishing. The 'design' sector includes the following industries: advertising, architecture, web and software, graphics, industrial products, fashion, communications, interior and environmental design (Creative Industries Working Group Subcommittee 2002). The government has set a target, to increase the contribution of the creative industries to GDP from 3% in 2004 to 6% by 2012. Statistics have been collected and continue to be tracked, in the process giving further shape to the place of the creative industries in Singapore's economy (though see Kong 2011 for an elaboration of the difficulties in this regard). For example, from 1995 to 2005, the creative industries cluster grew at an average of more than 8% per annum, higher than the 5% average growth rate for the whole economy (Lee 2007c). In 2004, the total value-add of Singapore's creative industries was S $6.7 billion (USD5.1 billion) (Lee 2007a). In 2009, the creative industries accounted for about 115,000 jobs, or 3.9% of total employment (Ng 2009).

To reach the GDP target, the Singapore government has introduced a number of policies and strategies to spur the growth of the creative industries. The following demonstrate the broad spectrum of policy approaches that range from offering economic incentives to addressing infrastructural needs, to attracting foreign expertise, to efforts at more fundamental change, particularly in the education system.

Providing economic incentives

To encourage even more investment in the creative industries and to generate more returns on investment, the government continues to put in large amounts of funding to market and grow the sectors. Using the digital media industry as an example, the EDB pumped in S$500 million (around USD381 million) to develop the industry between 2006 and 2010 (Lui 2008). A further S$500 million (USD381 million) has been set aside for the next five-year period (Ooi 2006, p. 6) while another S$70 million (USD53.3 million) will be set aside to entice international research centres to Singapore to boost the current research and development efforts (Lui 2008).

There are also numerous government assistance schemes that are available for companies and individuals in the industry. The Media Development Authority (MDA) has put in place various development and funding schemes to help media professionals and enterprises in various aspects such as content development, digital technology development, film grants and co-production agreements (www.mda.gov.sg, retrieved 12 July 07). For instance, grants are available to give budding entrepreneurs and start-ups a first leg up under schemes such as the Start-up Enterprise Development Scheme (SEEDS) which matches each dollar invested by third party investors in a startup. The government would also provide tax concessions exempt-

ing 90% of royalties earned by individuals in the fields of design, interactive and digital media (Business Times [BT] 18 Feb 2006). In addition, a new Productivity and Innovation Credit scheme means that businesses can deduct 250% of qualifying expenditure from their taxable income if they spend on approved industrial and product design projects in the years of assessment 2011–2015 (ST 2 June 2010c), the aim of which is to encourage businesses to develop innovative and creative product designs. In the interactive digital media sector, the government will provide S$7.5 million (USD5.72 million) in funding to support up to 150 start-up companies (BT 6 March 2009b).

Addressing infrastructural needs

Besides the economic incentives, the government has also taken steps to address the infrastructural needs of the 'creative class', developing creative clusters so that communities of creative workers can be housed together. These are based on the assumption, drawing on the experience of other cities, that clustering creates positive externalities, culturally, socially and economically. Even while specific analysis of the dynamics of some of these clusters suggests that the assumptions are not always borne out (see Kong 2009), the influence of the normative policy script (encouraging the development of clusters) is apparent.

One direction taken in this regard is the conversion of existing properties into studio offices, offering creative workers such as artists, photographers and designers a place to live, create and exhibit their work. Two examples are Workloft@Chip Bee and Workloft@Wessex (BT, 17 Feb 2006; Cheah, 'Creative workspace' 2006). Another example is an art complex at Mount Sophia, converted from former school buildings, covering almost 80,000 square feet and housing tenants from the artistic and creative fields (ST 5 May 2008b). Space has also been newly created to offer the flexibility of dual home and office use, and attractive particularly to the creative workers. The SOHO@Central is a prime example.

At the other end of the scale from the small studio offices for individual creative workers is a large 19-ha project called Mediapolis, launched at the end of 2008. When fully completed in 2020, it will cater to Singapore's expanding media industry. A collaboration involving the JTC Corporation, MDA, the Infocomm Development Authority and EDB, the concept of Mediapolis is basically to create a big cluster, a self-contained community supporting the media industry, housing soundstages, digital production and broadcast facilities and media schools (BT 10 Mar 2009c).

Attracting foreign expertise

One of the fastest ways to grow the sector is to import the talent and expertise necessary, and to attract niche players to Singapore. Efforts have thus been made to attract renowned companies to locate here and generate 'spin-offs' for the creative industry. In the digital media market for instance, attracting LucasFilms, Electronic Arts and Koei from Japan – key players in the digital animation industry to set up offices here – has allowed Singapore to quickly become an important player in this area. Other international bodies like the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers' decision to locate in Singapore also help to cement Singapore's position in the international design community and provide greater accessibility for local designers in the creative exchange and learning with international designers.

The arrival of such key players has not been accidental. International marketing efforts have been underway for some years in this regard. The efforts have been targeted, such as attracting key industry players exemplified above, but also broad-based, introducing audiences overseas to Singapore and Singapore productions, in order to project the image of a Singapore that is interesting, vibrant and attractive as a destination. One key example of such an effort in cultural diplomacy is the Singapore Season, held in leading cities such as London, New York, Beijing and Shanghai, and a successful showcase for Singapore's unique multicultural heritage, vibrant arts scene and attractiveness as a hub for global business.

Beyond attracting companies and organisations, the Singapore government has also tried to facilitate the entry of talented individuals into niche industries Singapore has identified as strategic. This includes talents for the creative industries. An example of a pertinent policy is the development of a strategic and skills-in-demand list categorised by the industry sector that is published on the Ministry of Manpower website (see http://www.mom.gov.sg/skills-training-and-development/skills-in-demand/Pages/skills-in-demand.aspx, accessed 10 Nov 2010). This list identifies the industries which are actively soliciting talent, among which are the creative industries.

Rethinking education and training

While bringing in foreign expertise has a relatively prompt effect on enhancing the growth of creative industries locally, perhaps the more enduring efforts at developing a workforce for the creative industries, and even more fundamentally, a generally more creative workforce for Singapore, are educational reform policies. The government has embarked on developing local talent for the creative industries through a series of measures, including beefing up arts, design and media education programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels, and attracting top foreign arts schools to set up here.

At the pre-tertiary level, a dedicated School of the Arts opened in 2008 to offer the opportunity for artistically talented young Singaporeans 'to discover, develop, celebrate, experiment and express their love of the arts' (Lee 2008a). Within the non-specialist mainstream schools, new art and music syllabi have been introduced with 'Higher Art and Higher Music' courses open to more students (ST 16 Feb 2008a). In 2009, students from three secondary schools were given the opportunity to learn about media and create their own films in a new course offered at the standardised national examinations (ST 29 Nov 2008c). To further encourage more schools to develop an artistic and cultural environment, those that have successfully created sustainable programmes for arts are recognised annually through the National Arts Education Award (MICA Annual Report 2009).

At the tertiary level, key initiatives include the establishment of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore in 2001, in collaboration with the Peabody Institute of the John Hopkins University; the establishment of a new School of Art Design and Media at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in 2005 which offers a four-year Bachelor in Fine Arts degree; and a new Master of Arts in Interactive Design in partnership with Domus Academy in Italy starting in 2011. Local polytechnics have also rolled out new courses such as diplomas in arts management, theatre production design, motion graphics

and broadcast design (ST 22 Feb 2005; Liaw, 'New Poly courses zoom in on creativity and hospitality' 2007; ST 5 Jan 2007).

In addition to enhancing and expanding local arts education, well-known arts institutes have been lured to Singapore to complement the efforts taken locally to develop an 'indigenous' creative class. An example is New York's prestigious Tisch School of the Arts which opened its first campus outside the USA in Singapore in the second half of 2007. It offers three-year masters' degrees in film production, animation and dramatic writing (ST 9 Oct 2007).

For those already in the creative workforce, the Workforce Development Agency's (WDA) Creative Industries Workforce Skills Qualification Framework (CI WSQ) was developed to allow them to improve their skills and competencies necessary for the industry. The first CI WSQ was launched in 2007 and more than 1000 professionals from the creative industries have successfully obtained their WSQs within three years (Lui 2010). For job-seekers and mid-career professionals who wish to switch industries, the WDA has developed several training programmes for entry into the creative industries. These programmes are heavily subsidised and the first launched in March 2009 was the Professional Conversion Programme for interactive and digital media professionals (BT 12 Feb 2009a). In 2010, another new scheme run by the WDA known as the Creative Industries Apprenticeship Scheme was announced. This initiative would look into the training needs of the creative industries by co-funding about 150 apprenticeships over the next two years (ST 22 May 2010b).

Creative Industries Scholarships were also introduced in 2006 to encourage young talents to pursue their studies and subsequent careers in the creative industries, and to groom and develop talents in the different areas of the creative industries, assist Singapore's creative talents in achieving their full potential while also developing their marketing and business management skills to help them manage their own future careers (Lee 2007b).

'Master plans' for the arts, media and design sectors

The policies and strategies are many, and the risk of poor coordination is real. Thus, platforms for coordinating and implementing the various policies were introduced in the form of three ambitious 'master plans', each targeting the arts (Renaissance City Plan), media (Media21 Plan) and design (DesignSingapore initiative) sectors, drawing together some of the key strategies outlined above for each of the three sectors.

The Renaissance City Plan was developed to coordinate the strategies in the arts and culture sector to prepare Singapore for the transition from an industrial to a knowledge economy. The overall vision was to transform Singapore into a 'Distinctive Global City for the Arts', where arts and culture would enhance the attractiveness of Singapore as a place to live and work, benefit individual Singaporeans, and boost the nation's profile as an arts hub. The Plan was carried out in three phases. In 1999, a Renaissance City Project (RCP I) was initiated to develop Singapore's cultural software – its 'capabilities, audiences and vibrancy' – through the following ways: provision of grants to the arts community (art companies, artists and art groups), training grants, scholarships and bursaries; launch of arts and heritage education programmes and improving key arts festivals. To support this, the government boosted the operational budgets of the NAC and NHB by an additional S$10

million (USD 7.62 million) per year (MICA 2008, p. 6). In 2005, Renaissance City 2.0 (RCP II) was introduced to focus efforts on an industry approach for developing arts and culture. It aimed to build new arts and cultural industry capabilities, create more arts/culture–business partnerships and internationalise Singapore arts. Ways of achieving this included assistance schemes and incentives for commercial arts projects, and participation at major international arts events like the Venice Biennale (MICA 2008, p. 6). The Renaissance City Plan III (RCP III) launched by MICA at the end of 2008 indicated that the government would spare no effort to develop the creative industries in Singapore, pumping $115 million into the arts and culture sectors over the next five years (ST 2 Jan 2009). The purpose of RCP III was to further build Singapore into a place attractive to international talent by 2015 (MICA 2008, p. 17), and encourage the community to be involved in developing and preserving their own arts and heritage (MICA 2008, p. 35). Recommendations by RCP III included building a world-class cultural and entertainment district, promoting Singapore as an arts hub and destination, showcasing locally made content internationally, and creating arts clusters. In addition, proposals more targeted towards community development aimed to improve arts and humanities education, strengthen community relations through arts and culture, and provide incentives to encourage greater philanthropy and sponsorship to the arts.

Singapore's Media21 plan was launched in 2003 to coordinate strategies for the media sector, with the aim of developing the nation into 'a leading media marketplace and financing hub, producing high quality content and digital media development'. It sought to increase GDP of the media cluster by 1.44% in 10 years, and increase job opportunities for Singaporeans (MDA 2003, p. 1). Key strategic initiatives included attracting media companies to Singapore, exporting locally made content, encouraging digital media production, internationalising Singapore media enterprises and nurturing media talent (MDA 2003, p. 4).

The DesignSingapore initiative was also initiated in 2003 to coordinate strategies in the design sector, with the vision of positioning Singapore as Asia's hub for design excellence, and creating a vibrant design services cluster and culture. Spearheaded by DesignSingapore Council, the national agency in charge, it is currently working on developing capability for a globally competitive design cluster, enabling enterprises to leverage good design, and making Singapore the leader in design innovation and IP creation (culture360.org 2011).

Policies to encourage greater cultural participation

Beyond the policies to foster greater cultural (creativity) in the economy (primarily focusing on enhancing production), greater effort has been made to increase arts appreciation among the general populace (that is, a focus on facilitating consumption). Attention has been paid to the ways in which arts and culture can be made more accessible. For instance, the Esplanade offers hundreds of free concerts annually, and besides the Singapore Arts Festival and the Singapore Film Festival, there are now also individual festivals for Chinese, Malay and Indian arts and cultures. New community outreach programmes have also been launched by government agencies. An example would be the District Arts Festivals staged by the NAC, People's Association and the Community Development Councils (CDCs) at various Housing and Development Board estates around Singapore (Lee 2008b). In 2008, it was also announced that the NAC will invest up to S$1 million (around USD

762,000) every year in the Arts For All programme in collaboration with the CDCs to bring arts to the heartlands. Additionally, NAC also implemented a Community Participation Grant which will 'encourage more community-initiated arts projects and participation' (Lee 2008b). Another example would be the 2010 Singapore Arts Festival which strove to be as inclusive as possible by inviting the public to participate in a mega line dance event that closed the festival and where accessibility was carefully considered in the choice of programming (BT 12 Feb 2010). As Singapore becomes more culturally exciting, local residents are being encouraged to become more sophisticated consumers of creative products (Ooi 2006).

These efforts have received a significant boost recently. The Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) was launched by MICA in 2010 to plan for Singapore's cultural development up to 2025. While the review is ongoing, the interim announcements signal that a primary objective the review committee recommends is to make arts and culture an integral part of the lives of all Singaporeans. By 2025, it aims to double the proportion of Singaporeans – from 40 to 80% – who attend at least one arts and cultural event a year. It also hopes to increase the proportion of Singaporeans who actively participate in arts and cultural activities from the current 20 to 50% (MICA 2010). Most recently, in August 2011, the ACSR proposed preliminary recommendations under three themes: (1) arts and culture for everyone, every day; (2) arts and culture everywhere; and (3) building capabilities and raising new peaks of excellence. The first theme is about engaging people of all ages and walks of life in arts and culture, and providing support for practitioners. The second theme focuses on improving infrastructure to make the arts more accessible, such as building performance arts centres in the heartlands and affordable rehearsal facilities. The third theme involves greater efforts to nurture the creative ability of people and institutions in Singapore, including all levels and genres of art (Lui 2011).

These broad-level objectives are translated into more specific recommendations, as follows. To foster community engagement and participation, some of the ACSR proposals are to establish one community arts and culture club in each constituency to support arts and culture hobby groups; develop library spaces and programmes to promote arts and culture; build a network of reading communities to encourage appreciation of the literary arts; enhance exposure to the arts at school and the workplace, as well as tap mainstream and new media to engage the public. To create more vibrant places for arts and culture, ACSR hopes to utilise public facilities and business spaces for arts and cultural activities; build a downtown arts and cultural district and relax censorship to encourage artistic spontaneity. Finally, to support the creative development of people and institutions in Singapore, ACSR recommends a mentorship and apprenticeship programme to support emerging talent; support for continuing education and training for arts and culture professionals; provide full scholarships, better tertiary arts education opportunities in terms of enrolment capacity and diversity of degrees, as well as developing the pedagogical skills of arts and culture instructors. As for support for institutions, it has proposed more funding, content development and availability of infrastructure/facilities for the Esplanade, theatre companies, local orchestras, dance centres and other major players in the arts and cultural sector here (MICA 2011).

The ACSR recommendations are in a public consultation phase at the time of writing. They represent a cultural policy that emphasises the social and cultural benefits of arts and culture rather than the economic benefits per se. In this

regard, they come closer to the spirit of the Ong Teng Cheong report of 1989, where those dimensions did not receive the policy and strategy follow-up in the 1990s. These recommendations, if accepted and implemented, would make cultural policy of the next phase a 'cultural social policy'. The impetus for such a shift is rooted in recognition that Singapore has come a long way in its economic development, and that in the next phase of building a community and a nation, the arts and culture can enrich the lives of individuals. As reported in the draft of ACSR recommendations:

> Singapore has come from third world to first, and now enjoys fairly stable economic growth. We now have the resources and latitude to pursue higher-order needs – broadening our minds, exercising our creativity and finding greater purpose in life. In addition, given the increased mobility of Singaporeans to travel overseas and the ability to access information online, Singaporeans would have greater exposure to and interest in different cultures, perspectives and opportunities for learning. (MICA 2011, p. 3)

Ambitions of a global city: promises and challenges

For all the official efforts at promoting cultural/creative production and cultural participation/consumption, few would suggest that Singapore's cultural and creative 'quotient' can rival the great global cities like London, Paris and New York. It is worth asking why that is the case. What challenges and promises hold as Singapore strives to realise its ambitions as a global city?

In production, several challenges remain to be overcome. In the design sector, Singapore design firms are still seen as a niche sector, lacking the size and multidisciplinary depth to tackle large-scale projects of a technical nature (BT 1 Dec 2005). In addition, local businesses attach relatively low importance to design and branding as a means of adding value to their products (Lee, 'Designing a career; Design school teaches aspiring designers how to succeed in the industry', *TODAY* 11 Sep 2006; BT 11 May 2007). In the arts sector, Ooi (2006) argues that there are constraints on creative expression in Singapore, describing the situation as one of 'bounded creativity'. Others argue that if the government wants to benefit from the economic value that these 'industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent', then the existing 'paternalistic and authoritarian modes of rule must eventually give way to more liberal and permissive political exchanges' (Leo and Lee 2004, p. 214). Indeed, arts practitioners have voiced their concern as to whether a genuine creative economy can be created simply by pumping in money to the industry. They cite the necessity of reviewing censorship policies to make the local environment more conducive and less restrictive for artistic expression (ST 6 Feb 2010a). Beyond the views of arts practitioners in Singapore, a global city becomes one only when others recognise it as such. Since all global cities 'require cultural legitimacy from the international community of transnational professionals, creative class and international opinion-shapers who have the power to confer it recognition', Singapore can ill afford to globalise on its own terms (Chong, 'The front door's open, the backyard's locked; To be global, must we rethink our conservative outlook at home?' *TODAY* 12 Dec 2005b).

More generally, there are barriers to entry that those who want to be creative workers face which relate to the status and opportunities associated with the

creative industries. One view amongst those in the design industry feel that the industry is still regarded poorly particularly among the more conservative and thus does not necessarily attract everyone with talent and ability. In the arts, the generally unknown and uncertain career path causes parents to frown on children who choose a career in the arts. However, the steady increase in enrolment figures in arts, media and design schools points to a new generation of Singaporeans that is perhaps more appreciative of these areas and more open to careers in these sectors as awareness of the possibilities in the field grows (Business World, 'After getting down to business, Singapore goes arty' 27 July 2005; ST 14 Dec 2008d).

The low tolerance of failure and the expectation of efficient and quick success are other challenges that creative industry players believe hamper Singapore in its true development into a culturally vibrant and creative global city. 'People in Singapore expect everything to be efficient. The creative industry doesn't always work like that' (Loh, 'The creator of creative minds; NTU Dean wants students to succeed in the global niche creative industry', *Today* 25 Sep 2006). As a result of such misguided expectations, financial returns and other quantitative measures such as audience numbers and box-office figures have been used to measure 'success' in the creative industries. However, these do not say much about the quality of the art produced. Singapore needs to learn patience in reaping the economic benefits of its cultural policies.

In terms of consumption, efforts to encourage participation in the arts are generally measured in terms of attendances at cultural events and visitorships to museums. Depending on the category of arts or cultural event in question, different trends have been observed over the last several years. In terms of attendance at *ticketed* performances, participation in 2008 compared favourably with 2007, as attendance rose from 1.427 million in 2007, to 1.468 million in 2008. Thereafter, however, participation figures for ticketed performances declined, dropping to 1.4 million in 2009, and eventually to 1.378 million in 2010 (Singapore Cultural Statistics 2011). On the other hand, in terms of attendance at *non*-ticketed performances, a steady upward trend was observed from 2007 to 2010, with total attendance rising from around 14.3 to 20.8 million. Similarly, museum visitorship also showed an upward trend over the same period, increasing from 5.2 million in 2007 to around 7.6 million in 2010 (Singapore Cultural Statistics 2011).

For the arts and culture and creative industries to flourish and for Singapore to develop as a nation of cultural consumers, and more than that, as a nation of cultured people, visitorships and attendances at cultural events may provide useful indicators but cannot capture the sense of a larger milieu, one that values and is steeped in culture. For that, there is a need for a gamut of supporting instruments to develop the appetite and critical appreciation of consumers. While putting up cultural venues and events is important, so too is the availability of 'countless newspapers, books and magazines illuminating these works for society at large' (Kwek, 'S'pore needs arts critics for a truly creative sector 2007; ST 9 Mar 2007). There is simultaneously a need for a reading culture and a critical, discursive milieu where ideas are shared, discussed and debated. This is premised on the principle that 'art does not, and cannot, exist in a vacuum; the works of artists must be assessed from an aesthetic and historical perspective.' At the moment, Singapore still lacks such a milieu.

Conclusion

Singapore's ambitions as a global city, particularly as they relate to arts, culture and creative economy, are probably as important as those that relate to economic achievements and the location of the city-state in global financial flows. It is thus fitting that attention be paid to what constitutes as official policy for the arts, culture and creative economy, in terms of what the larger vision is, what the specific objectives are, what strategies are most appropriate to achieve the objectives, and what challenges stand in the way. This is what I have sought to clarify in this paper, and which I now summarise below.

In the early days of post-independence, the policies focused on the political roles of arts and culture, and should most appropriately be described as 'cultural policy'. By the 1980s, the recognition that the arts and cultural activities had the potential to bring in the tourist dollars and, latterly, contribute to an export economy, turned the policy impetus to an economic one. The focus was still largely on the arts and heritage, with the bulk of funding channelled to the construction and refurbishment of museums and theatres. While there was acknowledgement of the value of other industries such as film, media and design, the major focus was on the more 'traditional' arts and heritage activities, so that the policies of the late twentieth century might most appropriately be described as 'cultural economy policies'. By the early 2000s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, the influence of the creative economy normative policy script had turned attention to defining the sectors that would make up a 'creative economy'. These include both the arts and heritage activities that had hitherto received policy attention, but extend to other industries in media and design that had previously been left to the private sector. The economic emphasis and the 'creative economy policies' continue to find their place in the present, but they appear set to be joined by a new emphasis on the social value of the arts and culture. This policy extension to include social objectives expands the creative economy policy of the 2000s to embrace what might now be described as a 'cultural social policy'. From the political to the economic to the social, Singapore's cultural policy has adopted different emphases at different points in the country's history and development. The ability to successfully balance the impact of arts, cultural and creative activities on the social, economic and political well-being of the city-state will determine how well it achieves its ambitions as a global city.

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