

Singapore as a Creative City in Globalisation: Cultural Policies and New Cosmopolitanisms

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Abstract

Singapore is a global city-state under an on-going cultural globalisation. This paper shows the experience of Singapore as a global creative city examining its cultural policy and everyday-cosmopolitanisms. Different from the cases in the United States and in the European Union, in a recent half century Singapore has reached at the stage of an elaborated “cultural-state” in its unique way. Particularly interesting is the role of the Singaporean Government in the developmental process of cultural policy formation. To illustrate the fascinating policy development process, I advocate utilizing two key phrases, overlapping identities and everyday cosmopolitanisms.

Key words: cultural globalisation, cultural policy, creative cities, Singapore, overlapping identity, everyday cosmopolitanism

Cultural Globalisation as a Problematic Context

Globalisation is “a process in which various kinds of phenomena and events are evolving in a global scale” (Kawasaki, 2006: 64). Globalisation, analytically speaking, consists of the following four subtypes: 1) economic globalisation, 2) political globalisation, 3) social globalisation, 4) cultural globalisation (Sassen, 2008). Since the Information Technology (IT) or Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) revolution around the 1980s, we have gradually recognized the reality of globalisation on multiple or “plural” levels - by establishing electronic network structures in a global scale and by enabling a global communication on our personal level. As a result of such plural globalisation in the past 20 years, a “global scale” cultural change has gradually shown “plural” aspects of social phenomenal transformations on local levels. In recent years, an increasing number of research projects have started examining cultural changes in globalisation. Yet, few studies have covered cultural development processes of rising city states investigating policies, identities, and stratifications in globalizing East Asia.

Singapore is an ideal case to study because, since the 1980s, Singapore has emerged as a leading city state in the process of cultural globalisation. Particularly after the 1990s, it has not only played a crucial economic and commercial function in the global economy, but also become a unique global city with flourishing cultural elements. Singapore has shown itself as a unique and creative significance of non-Western and non-American model. In this paper, thus, I elaborate the cultural policies and development processes in Singapore as a creative city exploring its identities and new cosmopolitanism on the context of cultural globalisation. Globalisation has essentially altered the world structure of social stratification and inequality. It has produced a new divided system. That is to say, there has occurred “a new divided stratification,” although most economically advanced societies have achieved a high level of cultural life particularly in their global cities. The new social stratification is accompanied with a new cultural stratification. Singapore shows the trend as well. Therefore, I pay particular attention to the newly emerging cultural stratification and policies in Singapore as a creative city state.

World Cities, Global Cities, and Creative Cities

From World Cities to Global Cities

Theoretical understanding of cities has shifted its trends from “World Cities Hypothesis” (Friedman, 1986) to Global Cities (Sassen 1991, 2008). John Friedman’s “World Cities Hypothesis” (1986) suggested re-examinations of the significance of cities and their functions for social development in a context of globalisation. World cities are “modes of integration in cities among world economy and its grade” (Friedman, 1986: 69). Functions endowing cities in new space division of labours are becoming stronger and stronger. As a result, such cities show some significance for nodes and purposive positions. The hypotheses include stratification among world cities, and centre-periphery or primary-secondary city relationship. In a configuration of thirty world cities, Friedman included financial centres, plural states, and segmentation of city function as crucial elements. Singapore, however, was not located particularly high among the thirty cities then.

World cities theory became transformed for global cities theory (Sassen, 1991, 2008) after the 1990s. Global cities are 1) post-industrial production sites (Sassen, 1991) and 2) main places for productive services, though they are neither nation state nor local places. Such cities are structured with 3) urban hierarchies. In the beginning of the 1990s, economically competitive conditions occurred among main cities. At the same time, new functional sharing emerged among them. Sassen (1991, 2008) paid attention to the contrasted new functions; inequality of income distribution began to be re-structured. Thus, urban economy was reorganized and advanced its contents. Global conditions were transferred from nations to cities, numbers of transnational enterprises increased, and new industrial standards emerged with all varied consequences. To be specific, huge investments into the business-centre arose and little interest into lower-income districts appeared. Namely new centre-periphery relationship was born in the process. In such a transformation processes, Singapore soon emerged

as one of the most powerful global cities with Hong Kong during the 1990s.

Creative Cities and New Middle-Stratification

Creative cities have evolved as outcomes of global cities. They are full of “‘creative milieu’ where by creative activities of citizens, growing up leading arts and rich life-culture, advocating innovative industries” (Sasaki, 2006: 160). This definition weights on fine-arts culture with implications of both popular and contents cultures. Originally, creative cities themselves were architects of cultural economics which had actually been leading from urban and cultural planning. Cultural cities were based on cultural recourses and cultural capital for urban re-generation against the urban decline right after the Second World War. It was one of the major reasons why most creative cities could be revived with creativity. Creativity itself is to be generated from individuality. Yet, in creative cities such creativity goes beyond the individual level and develops toward two directions. One is a collective creativity and the other is an institutional creativity. Thus, creative industries and cultural policies drive creativity on two different levels (Landry, 2007).

Such creative cities and creative industries are products of the creative class. Richard Florida’s (2008) three “T’s” characterise the creative class with Talent, Technology, and Tolerance. Among those, the most important category is the first one, talent. Such a talented creative class includes two social categories: 1) super creative core and 2) creative professionals who support the core (Florida 2008). This originally U.S. reality based indicators, creative class and its “T’s”, soon were extended to European and then to global levels. The creative class in different locations in our global society includes three possibilities. First, most of them are New Rich, that is, newly emerged middle or upper-middle class. Second, they belong to relatively high in cultural stratification in social structure. And lastly, they overlap with the middle class in contemporary society. Creative class plays a crucial role for the formation and development processes of creative cities.

Both global cities and creative cities play increasingly important roles in the process of globalisation. In a sense, both cities could transform and threaten positions of modern nation states. In global society, the power of such a single nation state will diminish; rather mixtures of different local interests and subjects will become more realistic and essential. We can consider them as a weakly tied integrity or united collectivities. In such a local condition in global society, a fundamental problem arises in the new middle class. In past modern societies, most people had grown up wide and thick middle class. In a good or bad way, such middle class had been supporting the stability of societies. However globalisation has produced a new “two-pole society” and destructed the old but stable middle class structure. Thus today, the middle class actually shows quite a large variety of income levels and life styles. And new middle class is emerging. In most advanced societies they have experienced the similar transformation like Sassen has explained with typologies (Sassen 1991, 2008). In Singapore the situation seems to be the same; restructuration of social class has been taking place.

Singapore: “A Global City for the Arts (1995)”

Today a leading cultural city state, in the past, however, Singapore was called as a cultural desert. In 1995 they declared a famous cultural planning to orient themselves as a global city for the arts. Despite its past, the longitudinal plan steadily brought Singapore forward for the realization of global cultural city of arts. I illustrate the transformation process of Singapore as a global city of arts with the following three characteristics: 1) historical situation of city state, 2) national location under the crevasse between Malaysia and Indonesia, and 3) political transitions and challenges. Then fundamental challenges recognized in contemporary Singapore are whether the development of Singapore continues and how global competitiveness as a cultural state can be maintained.

History of Singapore as a Multicultural City

Before colonization, Singapore was only a small island covered by tropical forests at the tip of Malay Peninsula. In 1819 Sir Stamford Raffles landed on the island. It was incorporated into the colonies of the British Empire. Since its separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore had experienced major economic crisis three times. In the 1990s, Singapore began to establish itself a global city state and kept its stable economic growth. Soon after, it climbed up to the top of the Gross Domestic Product average per person (GDP per capita) among Asian countries in 2007. At the first term of the development, Singapore stayed only at economic and commercial field. Starting around the early 1990s, Singapore has developed its “global cultural policies” and the level of cultural standard has risen in that period with the globalisation process of the world economy. From the “cultural globalisation” perspective with which few scholars have picked up, I elaborate Singapore as a leading global city state with its following multicultural aspects: 1) language, 2) religion, and 3) ethnicity. Singapore has balanced itself among these factors and its culture has been influenced by the multicultural aspects.

Arts Policies in Singapore

The role of the Government of Singapore is the key to understand the development of the city state as a successful global city of arts today. Accompanying with Hong Kong where had been in a similar situation as colonial cities in British Empire, Singapore had been called as a cultural desert until the early 1990s. After the Singaporean Government overcame the past two economic crises, it began to make a long term goal to establish itself as a global city for the arts. In 1989, the Government of Singapore sent study groups to some cities which were instructive of helpful for them. In 1991, Singapore launched its National Arts Council (NAC) in the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA). At first NAC began to establish art infrastructures and to support a variety of art activities such as visual arts, music, performing arts. Then in 1995, they announced a

long term goal and strategies to achieve the goal. Since then, every 5 years NAC has scheduled a new middle term goal for the development of arts in Singapore. They have also collaborated with other related Ministries and Agencies to elevate the cultural level of Singaporean. As a result, Singapore has achieved marvellous outputs. The infrastructures for arts have been highly developed and national level of artistic behaviours has risen in these 20 years. Table 1 shows a brief historical summary of Singapore's cultural policy.

Branding Strategies of "Singapore Arts Festival"

Singapore Arts Festival has a relatively long history since 1977 (Ishimine 2009). Originally, the festival was oriented to direct ethnic harmony making it a symbolic event in Singapore. The programs at the festival includes innovative or experimental projects, horizontal works over time-axis, fields, and nations, re-creation of traditional and contemporary Asian arts, and works which have scarce opportunities to play and promoting both for international cooperation and for international collaboration. And these programs consist of Singaporean, Western, and other Asian works, collaborated projects between Western arts organization and Singapore artists/arts organization, and others. The goal of the festival has been soon accomplished. Let's take some examples. In 2007, during one month period a total number of

attendants were only 7,200 thousand; however, NAC and other art organizations continued to appeal the event positively. Most of the programs at the festival were free. In addition to local Singaporeans, the art festival attracted around four thousand visitors from abroad as art travellers. In sum, substantially Singapore Arts Festival began targeting more and more international visitors. Figure 1 shows increasing numbers of visitors to Singapore Arts Festival since 1997.

Social Meanings of Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA)

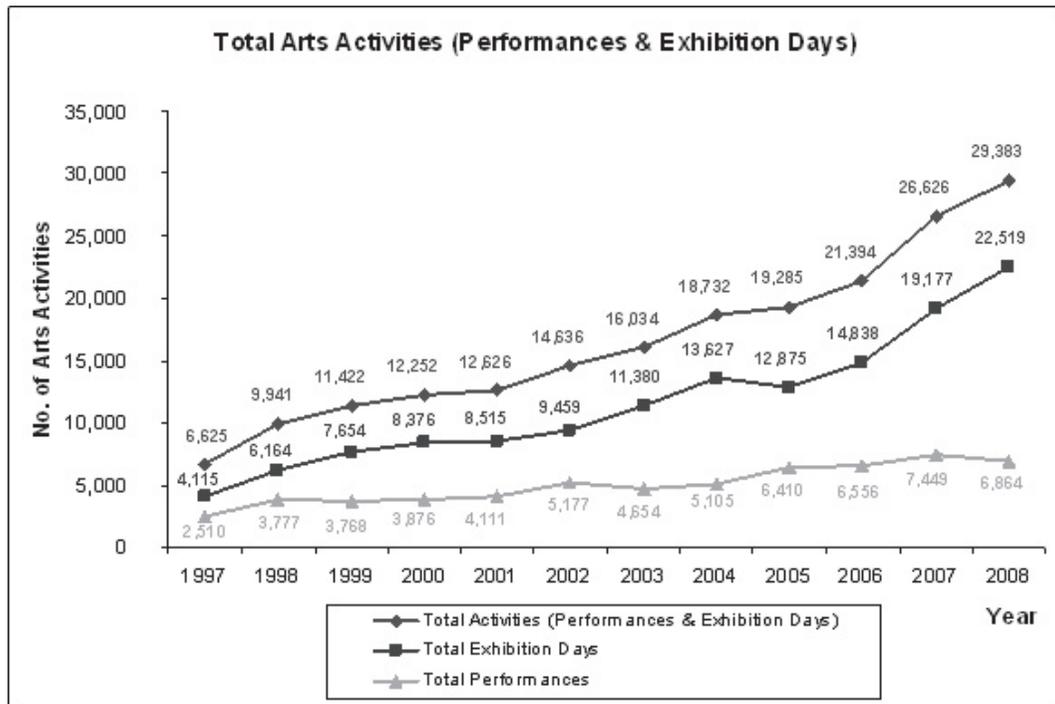
Singapore Arts Festival is only an example of many successful projects and planning that Singapore experienced with its cultural and economic development processes. Why was cultural policy in Singapore successful? The most important factor would be middle and long term strategies made by policy makers in the Government of Singapore fitting for their method of policy evaluations or reflective attitudes. The Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA) in Singapore usually deals with all information policy including computer, broadcasting & communication, library, and cultural heritage policies. They have repeated transformations and reorganizations of middle and long term policies. Adequate evaluations and reflections follow such regular planning and policy

Table 1: An Historical Chronology of Singapore Cultural Policy

Time	Cultural Policies
1960s-1970s	No Cultural Policies
1980s	Economic Function of Art Culture Recognized Beginning to Arrange Infrastructure for Art Culture
1990s	National Arts Council (NAC) (1991) Established NAC First Policy Plan - Toward "A Global City for the Arts (1995)" NAC Arts Culture Planning and Coordinating Fully in Progress
2000s	NAC New Middle Term Plan - First "Renascence City Report" and Nurturing Creative Industries NAC Policy Plan - "From a Global City to a Global Creative City"

Source: Made from Kenichi Kawasaki(2006)

Figure 1: Total Arts Activities: Performances & Exhibition Days in Singapore 1987-2008



Source: (Singapore Cultural Statistics 2003-2007: 6)

making. The goals for MICA’s policy planning are to produce 1) Creative People, 2) Gracious Community, and 3) Connected Singapore. The mission is to develop Singapore as a global city for information, communications and the arts, so as to build a creative economy, gracious community and connected society with a Singaporean identity rooted in our multicultural heritage. These strategic government lead cultural planning has enabled Singapore to transform itself as the most prosperous and culturally rich city state in East Asia today.

My evaluations for the accomplishments of political strategies by MICA in Singapore include both positive and critical analysis of the nature of such policy formations. Surely, there appears a contradiction between government-leading nationalism and global policies. The population of Singapore is predominantly Chinese-Singaporean; however, national cultural policies always advocate and make practice with ethnic harmony with Malay, Indian, and other groups of Singaporeans,

supporting the ‘Singapore National Identity’. Such unified national identity establishment and reinforcement have been also the goal of MICA. Despite, each ethnic identity still strongly functions in society and keeps Singaporean unified national identity away.

At the same time a global city Singapore needs actually “globality” that MICA has advocated in recent years. Globality is. In fact, globality is constructed through close relationship with middle class non-Singaporean residents in Singapore and Singaporean high-academic-achievers. They have gotten a global identity. The conflicting and dynamic relationships among ethnic, national, and global identities have now given positive influences toward the identity construction of Singaporeans. Ethnic hybridity affects such identity formation processes in Singapore and other societies. Recent trends on ethnicity in Singapore show two interesting points (Yamakawa, 2009; Saito, 2009). According to the Statistics on Marriages & Divorces, Singapore (2008, 2009), first, in these

twenty years a number of marriages between different ethnic groups have apparently increased in Singapore. Among every ethnic group in Singapore, we can find out such a similar tendency. Second, particularly among Malay-Singaporeans such a trend has been clear and particularly among high academic achievers. Growing inter-ethnic/cultural marriages is just one example. Such a social change in a local society would bring new possibilities and cultural opportunities for emerging global cultures.

centralized role on the one hand; yet, there emerge some cases in which states play rather negative roles to establishment of international society. For examples, not effective actions to 2008 global economic crisis, and global warming countermeasure, etc. Then what will the situation change?

Table 2: Increase of Inter-Ethnic/Cultural Marriage in Singapore 1988-2008 (%)

	1988	1998	2008
Women's Charter	4.3	8.7	13.8
Muslim Law Act	10.4	20.4	30.9

Sources: Statistics on Marriages & Divorces, Singapore (2008, 2009, Table1-4, : 7)

Table 3: Increase of Inter-Ethnic/Cultural Marriage 2008 (%)

Women's Charter	1.49.7%	Chinese Groom & Other Ethnic Group
Muslim Law Act	1.24.7%	Malay Groom & Other Ethnic Group
	2.19.7%	Other Ethnic Group & Malay Bride

Sources: Statistics on Marriages & Divorces, Singapore (2008, 17 Jun 2009)

Between Modern State and Globality: Necessity of New Cosmopolitanism

Globalisation and Modern State

What brings cultural changes when globalisation has been accelerating? Modern society has been transforming. Since the 1980s, modern nation-state has been transforming its principle on which the society has been supported by centralised ways. Nation-states' privatization processes delegated their power and authority to subsystem of the nation state. Thus, they tend to orient themselves as "a small government". However both in an international system like the United Nation (UN) system and in transnational society like European Union (EU) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the nation state began to take their new role more as a coordinator and mediator. Consequently, the nation state still maintains its

Human Cultural Systems or Global Cultural System?

Necessity of New Cosmopolitanisms

The answer is the following. In contemporary society, it is difficult to define the content of a global cultural system exactly. It is because this is the first time when human species have an actual global cultural system, like the global financial system and the Internet today. But of course its constituent and function are very plural and complicated. Ordinary we have believed that most important component of modern society was "modern state" and its element was thought as "national citizen" and their "nationalism". At last we need something for overcoming "national" borders and nation dividing "nationalism" or something for substituting them in order to actualize a global society. We can put the next five

levels - native, local, international, transnational and global. Thus, new values overcoming national values operate on international, transnational, and global levels. Actually both international and transnational level do not achieve until mature level to overcome national level. On a global level, an electronic globalism has gradually become the reality; so far, substantive globalism has not yet established. Here I would not deal with this kind of huge area, but only focus on cosmopolitanism that has been developed and shared in our history. Exactly speaking, the idea has been human heritage as thought and value that could overcome nation state. Originally, such a social category as cosmopolitan existed since old ages. I would give types on it into the following three.

1. Bohemian Type: Those who never stay one place and wonder lots of areas. Bohemians and Gypsy are the typical examples.
2. Local type: Those who are persisting their own view and value, and on the basis of the locality they imagine human species and their culture.
3. Transcendental type: This type has a huge scale of idea and like F. W. Nietzsche's superman who tends to act crossing various states and regions. I. Kant's 'For Eternal Peace' seemed to be a germ of new cosmopolitanism. And recent examples are Davos Forum in Switzerland and Super Global Class, who share such a new cosmopolitanism in some degree. But ordinary people do not have any contact with them and have very poor actuality.

However in the 1970s a stratification who shares a new cosmopolitanism had appeared and began to support emerging a global cultural system. The examples of it are the following two.

1. Permanent Travellers (PT): Those who are new type of cosmopolitanism. Their typical behaviours and thought are the following. They tend to change their living space in a short period to get most benefit able condition and to avoid their own highly imposed taxes.
2. Ecologist: They are tackling with environmental protection activities and most of them are seen as typical social activists. To protect global

environment, they tend to activate from the standpoint of global value having a most priority. Idealistically speaking, they might be approximate with a new cosmopolitanism. Activists like NPO and NGO are included into this type.

At present such cosmopolitanism will be basically transformed or drastically changed. In other words, it will transform towards various directions. Then the cosmopolitanism begins to be matured. The following two types could be crystallized.

1. Plural Cosmopolitanism: It is not orthodox universalistic value that both America and Europe have cultivated, but prominently a value from periphery countries or societies. Particularly from a circumstance countries of Europe or middle-eastern countries.
2. Everyday Cosmopolitanism: It's an ordinary cosmopolitanism. Traditionally cosmopolitanism had been dealt under a context of idealism, but everyday cosmopolitanism is a new one and with everyday practices it is necessary to realize step by step. Such a new cosmopolitanism was firstly advocated from Europe and Southeast Asia and it is a new value that will be influential in near future.

Moreover additional new conditions will be the following two. The surrounding of them might be advanced or developing informative environment. Particularly I would show both leading cognitive science and pluralisation elaboration of computer program. First, at the beginning of the 1990s since an internet usage was permitted by the U.S. Government, Internet environment has developed radically. Second, harmony/unity between broadcasting and electronic communication recently is accompanied by revision of a law system and has a symbolic meaning of contemporary transformation. And the unification is making radical reorganization of communication environment. These two changes of conditions have connected with hybridity each other and have penetrated into our everyday life widely and

deeply. Contemporary cosmopolitanism is supported by advanced informative environment. And on the one hand it develops further the past cosmopolitanism and on the other hand also develops new electric cosmopolitanism that is consisting of new idea's complexity. Singapore and Tokyo have such typical examples and I would like to show my next paper in near future.

Overlapping Identity and Transformative Culture

Groping for new identity seems to be going on steadily in Singapore. I would try to arrange it theoretically. In Singapore ordinarily or everyday harmony of everyday life among multi-ethnic and multi-cultural situation is to be admired. Surely core of individual identity exists on ethnic identity. But on the one hand construction of national identity has been developing, and on the other hand as a result high-academic achievers have gradually shared some kind of a global identity. Consequently on the basis of two elaborated identities - national one and global one, the quality of each ethnic identity began to change or transform. That is to say, more complicated or hybrid, plural and multi-layered identity of ethnicity has been grown up. It's just 'Everyday cosmopolitanism'!

In Islamic culture, such tendency is not artificially conspicuous because of the strict legal system. But in every ethnic culture, both pluralisation and muti-layerisation of cultural practices develop in the present. For example, hybridization of marriage ceremony is easily imagined. New identity begins to evolve more plural and more multi-layered. And new identity has two characteristics, that is to say 'overlapping identity' is just born now. Surely the new identity might have a little different nuance or shifts with famous concept "Overlapping Communities of Fate" (Held 2004). In near future, everyday cosmopolitanism has a possibility to support more humanistic new cosmopolitanism and to wear on new idealistic complexity who will have by mainly new middle class. A background of everyday cosmopolitanism and overlapping identity are existed on new transformative culture. The components of it are 1) transformation, 2)

hybridization, 3) self-reflexivity (Kawasaki, 2006).

Concluding Remarks: Contrasts of Singapore Reality

Every city and state has always both light sides and dark sides. Sociologists tend to keep certain distance from total system. Particularly, we are aware of our responsibilities to deal with shadow aspect of each society carefully. To solve challenges in social stratifications we provide suggestions to realize our social system more equal and fair. In these contexts I summarize the outcomes of the above consequences.

Singapore is an advanced model as a leading creative city and successful global city state in the world. Particularly from a standpoint of a new idea based on globalisation context, overlapping identity is growing new type of self-reliance. It is just different birthplace compared with both American individualism and European cosmopolitanism. I am really a little bit anxious that Singaporean overlapping identity is not emerged from intrinsic strong self-insistence. Rather it is an outcome as a result in the process of social management and generation of "transnational creativity", in a bicycle-riding city state. Moreover it is also a fact that along the process Singapore has transformed from local character to global one. As Singaporeans always try to internalize "creativity based on global competitiveness" led by the Government of Singapore. Singapore has very plural aspects in ethnic dimensions; stratification structure is quite complicated and invisible. And natural environment is also very severe to keep cosy situation for Singaporean. However, original and unique global cultural system is surely emerging in Singapore today. *Singapore: a global creative city state* is just an exact description now.

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Note: The article has dealt with Singapore Society and its cultural policy before 2008. After 2008, the situations in Singapore have considerably transformed and they launched a new long term plan. So I would like to refer to the new phenomena in my next paper in near future.