

Renaissance City and Asia on the Move

Report on Singapore as a Renaissance City: Search for a Vision

In 1998, the then-Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) commissioned the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) to study the concept of a Renaissance City as a metaphor for Singapore's development as a culturally vibrant city.

The project was led by Arun Mahizhnan, who is now IPS' Special Research Adviser. He authored the report together with art critic and curator Lee Weng Choy, and theatre educator T. Sasitharan. The two-part concept report examined key developments of the European Renaissance and the lessons they hold for Singapore.

The reports argued that "if Singapore were to truly transform itself into a Renaissance City, it needs to shed old assumptions and practices that treated culture as secondary to and separable from the economy." Singapore needed to replace these old ways with a comprehensive and coherent cultural policy in much the same way as it approached economic development.

The reports also envisioned two cultural development scenarios for a future Singapore as a Renaissance City:

- A syncretic model in which the end-state will be a unique Singapore culture, developed from the syncretic selection of what is best from many different cultures;
- A multicultural model in which the existing indigenous cultures are strengthened and promoted to exist separately but in symbiotic relationship with each other.

These arguments and conclusions remain valid today. The Arts, Culture and Media research cluster of IPS is releasing the reports ([Part I](#) and [Part II](#)) now for the public to set the context for Singapore policies, and to continue the discussion.

New Book: Asia on the Move: Regional Migration and the Role of Civil Society

IPS Senior Research Fellow Dr Mathew Mathews and Research Associate Debbie Soon have contributed a chapter to the book *Asia on the Move: Regional Migration and the Role of Civil Society*. Focusing on cross-border migration arising from increasing globalisation, the papers in this volume outline current trends in China, Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia; analyse existing government efforts to manage migration; and explore the unique role that nongovernmental organisations can play in helping to protect migrants and to harness migration to the benefit of the region.

The chapter written by Dr Mathews and Ms Soon is set within a broader discussion of people movements in Asia, and discusses how cultural, advocacy and welfare based civil society organisations (CSOs) in Singapore play an important role in the integration and protection of migrants. The authors provide their reading of the current state of affairs and prognosis of the future of CSO involvement in the space of migration. To this end, they discuss the potential conditions and strategies required for CSOs to continue to thrive in their quest to represent the needs of migrants in Singapore.

Asia on the Move: Regional Migration and the Role of Civil Society is available [here](#)

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