

Conference

on

Civil Society

Monday, 11 November 2013
Grand Ballroom (Level 4)
Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel Singapore

PROGRAMME

(as at 7 November 2013)

8.00 am – 8.30 am **Registration**

8.30 am – 8.45 am **Opening Remarks**

Mr Janadas Devan
Director
Institute of Policy Studies

8.45 am – 10.15 am **Session One – Change**

This first section of the conference called 'Change' looks at three trends that have brought or might bring change to civil society in Singapore. These are the rise of new and social media or broadly, the changes in information technology; the changes in the demographic landscape; and finally, prognostications of change in politics, laws and the rule of law that relate to civil society over the next decade in Singapore. They are called 'Technology', 'People' and 'Politics' for short.

Chairperson

Professor Kishore Mahbubani
Dean
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Technology

Dr Carol Soon
Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

What sorts of technological developments in the past decade and a half have had the greatest impact on the life of civil society in Singapore? Clearly, the rise of new and social media change the way that social networks and identities are formed and mobilised. The broader developments in the information revolution have changed the accessibility and longevity of information. These affect the way that a nation speaks to itself - people choose what they want to access which

may not be the information, ideas or sources of communication that may have broader social and national importance. These trends will be examined for their significance in shaping civil society, specifically, in Singapore.

People

Ms Yolanda Chin
Research Fellow
Centre of Excellence for National Security
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Nanyang Technological University

How has the presence of foreigners as workers and immigrants affected the nature and agenda of civil society in Singapore? What are their impact on social norms and the way that different communities organise themselves here? What role does civil society have in responding to this important social trend? This will be discussed in order to highlight ways in which this issue creates social diversity that enriches as well as divides civil society.

Politics

Professor Walter Woon
David Marshall Professor of Law
and
Deputy Chairman
Centre for International Law
National University of Singapore

Politics has become a far more competitive field in Singapore since the 2011 General Election. More importantly, Singaporeans anticipate that a post-Lee Kuan Yew era will be very different, although it is less certain how that will be so. Will the rule of law, social discipline, the tone of political debate be affected? Will civil society precipitate that change, or will it respond to that change? Looking ahead, is there a need for a clear boundaries to demarcate the difference between civil society and political society?

Question-and-Answer Session

10.15 am – 10.45 am **Coffee Break**

10.45 am – 12.15 pm **Session Two – Continuity**

The second section of the Conference called 'Continuity' looks at three areas which affect or are central to the operation of civil society in Singapore on an on-going basis. These are its relationship with policymakers; its capacity for intra-sector cooperation and collaboration and with other non-government sectors of society and finally, the tension between the different impulses that drive civil society here. These are called 'Engagement', 'Collaboration' and 'Ideals' for short.

Chairperson

Associate Professor Cherian George
Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
Nanyang Technological University
and
Adjunct Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

Engagement

Ms Faizah Jamal
Nominated Member of Parliament

There are some aspects in the operation of civil society in Singapore or even internationally, that should be examined. In so far as civil society exists to advocate for changes in public policy and state legislation, activists will have to interact with the policymakers in the civil service. The two groups of people have the same goal – to achieve ‘the good society’. What are the experiences of that interaction in Singapore across different public policy issues over the past decade and a half? What are the effects of that interaction as well as the lessons for effective advocacy between the two sectors, in this regard? Are there any other behavioural and inter-personal takeaways, or procedural processes that would make for useful civil service-civil society engagement in the future?

Collaboration

Mr Alvin Tan
Artistic Director
The Necessary Stage

There have been some efforts for parts of civil society to collaborate to create traction in social campaigns over the past decade and a half. This presentation will review some of those effects and their effect both on the causes they were focused on and on the learning that took place that is related to collaboration within the sector. What is the case for collaboration within civil society and what are the challenges in doing that? What are the considerations in deciding when it is ideal? There should be a discussion of the types of resources that are needed to facilitate such collaboration when it is indeed desirable to do so, and also what is needed to mitigate the challenges of conducting such efforts.

Ideals

Associate Professor Kwok Kian Woon
Division of Sociology
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nanyang Technological University

There have always been several theoretical conceptions of civil society; underpinning each is a view of how society functions. In Singapore, the key contest in theory and praxis is between the liberal and the communitarian concepts of civil society. This has emerged as there is a government notion of ‘civic society’ and a ground-up notion often referred to in resistance to the first, of ‘civil society’. This presentation

will review the emergence of these two notions, review the life of the two components of associational life in Singapore and take a stand on whether they have to be viewed as being dichotomous.

Question-and-Answer Session

12.15 pm – 1.30 pm

Lunch

1.30 pm – 2.30 pm

Session Three (Parallel Sessions) – Agenda

The Future of the ‘Many Helping Hands’ Approach to Sustainable Social Impact

Chairperson

Ms Yew Lun Tian
Political Correspondent
Lianhe Zaobao
Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

Speakers

Ms Ang Bee Lian
Director of Social Welfare
Ministry of Social and Family Development

Ms Corinna Lim
Executive Director
Association of Women for Action and Research

The Future of Civic Education for Thriving, Deliberative Democracy

Chairperson

Ms Dawn Yip
Director and Principal Consultant
Soulbreath Consulting

Speaker

Associate Professor Kenneth Paul Tan
Vice Dean (Academic Affairs)
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

The Future of Youth Activism in Singapore

Chairperson

Ms Bernise Ang
Co-Founder
Syinc

Speaker

Mr Tong Yee
Director
The Thought Collective

The Future Legislative Landscape Relating to Civil Society in Singapore

Chairperson

Mr Nicholas Fang
Executive Director
Singapore Institute of International Affairs
and
Nominated Member of Parliament

Speaker

Dr Kevin Tan
Immediate Past President
Singapore Heritage Society

The Future of Ethnic-Based Civil Society in Singapore

Chairperson

Mr Amrin Amin
Committee Member
Suara Musyawarah

Speaker

Dr Sharon Siddique
Director
Sreekumar.Siddique & Co Pte Ltd
and
Visiting Professorial Fellow
Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities
Singapore University of Technology and Design

2.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Coffee Break

3.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Session Four (*Presentations*) – Crafting our Future

Chairperson

Dr Gillian Koh
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

4.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Session Five – Dialogue with Guest of Honour, Minister K Shanmugam

Chairperson

Professor Tommy Koh
Special Adviser
Institute of Policy Studies

Guest-of-Honour

Mr K Shanmugam
Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Minister for Law, Singapore

5.00 pm

End

