

Arts, Culture and Media Sector Workshop Report

Changi Village Hotel Quad 1: 2 – 3 July 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. IPS Prism is a platform for Singaporeans to think about the future and how we will govern ourselves in 2022. A series of seven workshops were conducted over June and July 2012. This is a report of the workshop featuring participants from the arts, culture and media sectors.

2. At the workshop, participants were invited to form teams that convened to discuss how Singapore might evolve over the next 10 years and what the driving forces of change might be for various scenarios.¹

Method

3. Teams 1 and 2 used the deductive method to create their scenarios, while Teams 3 and 4 used the inductive method. Both Team 1 and 2 developed their scenarios in the traditional matrix, guided by two orthogonal driving forces at each axis. Teams 3 and 4 adopted the scenario table to guide them in developing their scenarios; both teams worked with four driving forces each.

4. Each team produced at least four sets of scenarios, with each scenario fleshed out by a description on the state of governance and, in some cases, with hypothetical media headlines. Each team's presentation was followed by a discussion. Finally, the scenarios were put to a vote, to select the most plausible as well as challenging set.

Driving Forces

5. Driving forces are defined as trends in the external environment that drive the plot of our scenarios, have an impact on the future and determine the outcomes. They are usually outside the immediate locus of control of one group or organisation, and would impact all the constituents in the system in one way or another.

6. Team 4 focused their attention on the ruler and the ruled, comparing current leaders who tend to be rational with the possibility of an emotive or charismatic leadership. It also raised a broader question of whether individuals in society would continue to remain compliant with traditional government authority and support the maintenance of general social order.

7. Similarly, Team 3 focused on the People's Action Party's (PAP) ability to adapt their way of governance to suit the increasingly critical attitude of the electorate.

8. Teams 1, 2 and 3 also went beyond domestic issues and considered Singapore's relationship with other nations, both regionally and globally. Team 2 envisioned a future

1. Please refer to the Appendix for the list of participants.

with geopolitical pressure acting as a driving force, while Team 3 assumed on-going globalisation of the world and considered Singapore's ability to cope with it.

9. With regard to changing demography, Team 2 put forth that an increasingly diverse population could see new immigrants bringing along different skill sets. Teams 1 and 3 considered whether Singapore would have the social and physical infrastructure needed to contain an ever-increasing population.

10. Interestingly, the role of the media did not receive much mention in this workshop.

Winning Scenario

11. The set of scenarios developed by Team 3 won with 22 votes, followed by Team 4 with 10 votes. Team 3's scenarios were derived from the convergence of four driving forces — "PAP's ability to change", the population's "sense of belonging", the effect of "globalisation" and Singapore's "population growth".

THE SCENARIOS

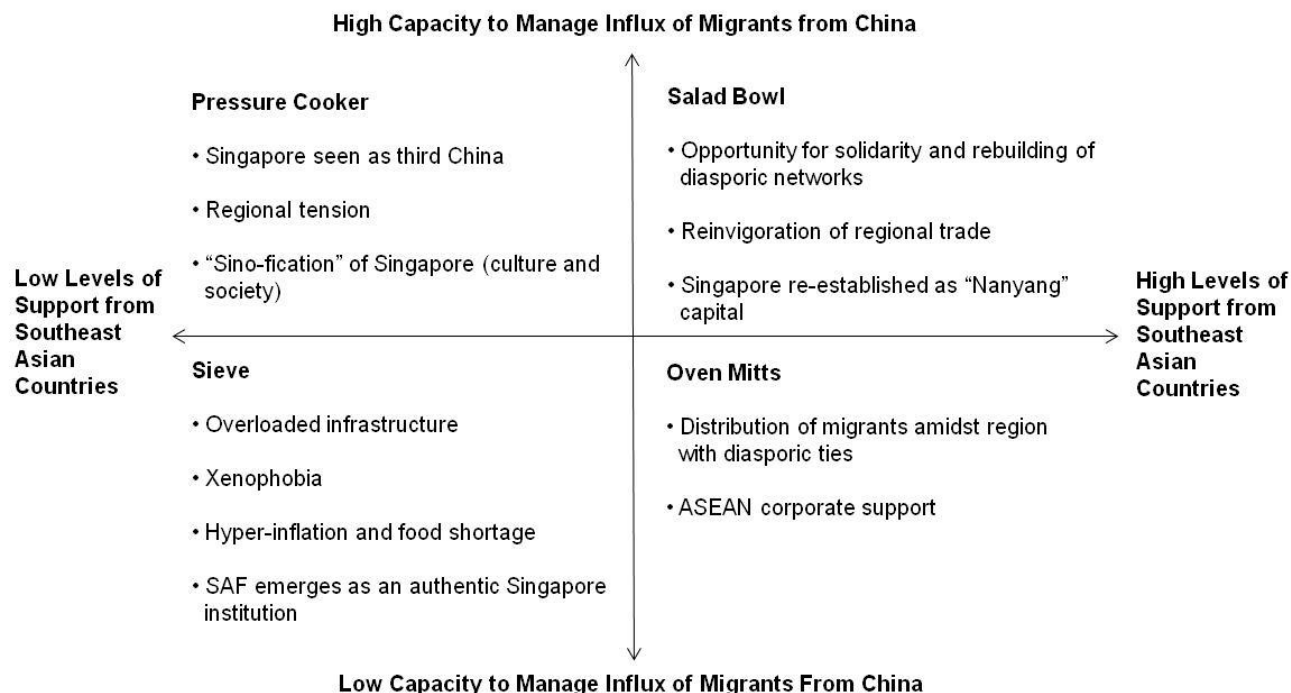
Team 1

12. Team 1 used the deductive method to come up with their scenarios. However, they also incorporated an element from the inductive method to flesh out their narrative.

13. The team looked at Singapore and her relationship with Southeast Asia and China. The two key driving forces were Singapore's capacity to handle an influx of immigrants and the level of regional support Singapore would receive from Southeast Asian (SEA) nations to support these excess immigrants. Singapore's capacity and the level of regional support received would affect the ability of social and physical infrastructure to assimilate immigrants. The team's starting point was a trigger event in which a large number of Chinese flee China, perhaps due to a leadership crisis in 2022 during the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, natural disasters or a civil war, resulting in many affluent middle-class Chinese coming to Singapore. The group made the implicit assumption that Singapore would have to receive the migrants.

14. On one end of the horizontal axis, neighbouring countries are willing to accommodate any excess immigrants, while at the other end, Singapore does not receive support from SEA neighbours while receiving the Chinese immigrants. The vertical axis refers to Singapore's ability to manage this influx of upper-middle class Chinese.

Figure 1. Team 1 Scenarios



Pressure Cooker

15. In this scenario, while neighbouring SEA nations are unwilling to receive the excess immigrants, Singapore has the infrastructure to accommodate this influx. Its demography changes rapidly to one that is even more predominately Chinese. The locals’ resistance to this sudden influx creates tension as all the races, including the Singaporean Chinese, find themselves culturally and economically challenged. These affluent mainland Chinese compete for jobs in key industries, and many are unwilling to assimilate, instead creating many enclaves. Outside of Singapore, the previous threat of Singapore becoming a “Third China” becomes a reality for her neighbouring countries. Regional tensions with the surrounding Muslim countries increase as more mainland Chinese obtain citizenship in Singapore. As the scenario name suggests, pressure builds up and a catalytic event causes an inevitable explosion.

Salad Bowl

16. In the next scenario, Singapore has a high capacity to handle new immigrants, and regional countries equally welcome these Chinese migrants. The team created the scenario by looking at policies of the past, where the onset of nationalism in SEA, expressed through “Speak Mandarin”² campaigns and Singapore’s unique use of simplified Chinese script, resulted in diasporic ties being cut off, and old *towkay* networks, such as schools sponsored by clan associations, being replaced by national structures. The team proposes that the spread of Chinese immigrants across the region

2. As opposed to various Chinese dialect languages.

might result in the re-establishment of these diasporic networks and the subsequent reinvigoration of regional trade networks. Although this is beneficial in revitalising the economy of SEA, other races may feel marginalised, increasing the potential for conflicts.

Sieve

17. This scenario is the team's nightmare scenario and is characterised by Singapore's low capacity to handle the influx of immigrants and a reluctance of neighbouring countries to support her. Singapore's geographical and physical limitations are showing, and there is growing tension between locals (who do not want these new immigrants to assimilate) and these new immigrants (who are equally resistant to integration). There is growing xenophobia and signs of impending racial riots. The strain on limited resources also results in hyper-inflation and food shortages. In this situation, the Singapore Armed Forces becomes a rallying point for Singaporeans, as it is one of the few truly Singaporean institutions left.

Oven Mitts

18. In this scenario, Singapore has a low capacity to handle these new immigrants, but there is huge regional support which allows the immigrants to be diverted to other countries. This occurs as SEA countries accept that Singapore is a part of the region, as opposed to the view that Singapore should solve her own problems. There are some positive outcomes in this seemingly bad situation as diasporic networks spread across the region, providing more extensions of support to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) infrastructure. There is a rise in regional co-operation and support in times of crisis. The region is also empowered geographically, deterring bigger nations from interfering in domestic affairs of smaller nations. Singapore, if accepted as a crucial part of ASEAN by other ASEAN nation, can help lead the region, and in turn hold greater influence otherwise limited by its geography.

Additional Scenario

19. The team also created a narrative for an additional scenario, which is shown below.

20. Major breakdowns on the Circle Line of Singapore's Mass Rapid Transit system, corruption cases involving a few highly placed officials and ministers, the appointment of a megachurch pastor as the chairman of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, and floods in Bukit Timah, Orchard Road and Marine Parade, all occur within a very short span of time. This perfect storm of misfortune results in a situation that might otherwise have taken several decades to reach. The repressed anger in society suddenly boils over and the population loses faith in the government. Justifiably or not, the government loses its credibility and the population demands greater accountability and participation in the political process. Any organisation that is linked to the grassroots or the government, such as the People's Association, Mendaki, or the National Trades Union Congress, is discredited. Foreign investors leave Singapore and popular opinion results in divestments by government-linked corporations. Singapore's relationship with other countries also deteriorates, and she becomes more vulnerable to foreign interventions.

21. Civic and religious groups then move into the void left by discredited grassroots and government-linked organisations. Entrepreneurship flourishes with the diminished role of the government and government-linked companies in the economy. The media is also liberalised, in a similar way to that in Taiwan and Russia. There is a more independent civil service, more active trade unions, and existing infrastructure, such as town councils, are used to build grassroots democracy.

22. The team pointed out that, when viewed from different perspectives, this narrative can be seen as both positive and negative. They concluded by stating their belief that Singapore would be able to make it through such a situation.

Discussion

23. With regard to the question as to which of the scenarios was the most challenging and provided the most opportunities, one team member highlighted that the most important issue to consider is the function of regional groups such as ASEAN. This will dictate the level of commitment from the countries involved. There is also a danger of overlooking the region and looking instead to groupings of more powerful nations such as East Asia or Europe, and this will undermine the power that the SEA region can have. There is a need to re-engage the region because this influx of new migrants will be a regional problem and Singapore, by herself, has limited capacity to handle it.

24. A participant asked what would happen to the arts in each of the scenarios. One team member replied that it would flourish significantly in the additional scenario due to greater liberalisation of the media. Another team member added that it was important not to leap-frog over the SEA region. The same team member said that the arts scene in Singapore is very much influenced by the region as opposed to other forces. As a result, Singaporeans should be educated about SEA art and develop the capacity to appreciate it, as this would enrich the local arts scene.

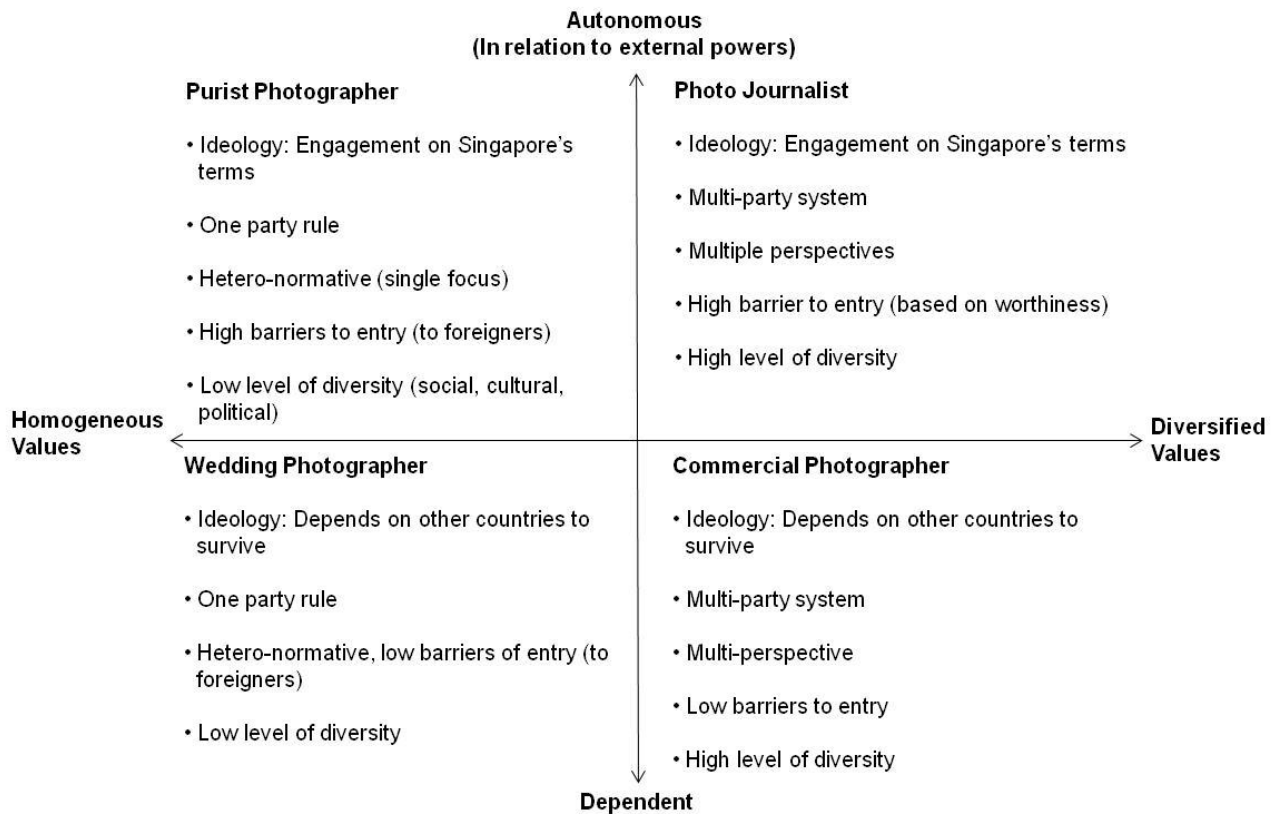
Team 2

25. Team 2 also used the deductive method and built their scenarios around two key drivers: Singapore's autonomy in dealing with external powers and the degree of homogeneity in her society's values. On the horizontal axis, the driving force was how the values held by society are affected by the political, social and cultural diversity of groups in society and whether these groups are able to get along, with the different skill sets that these groups can offer Singapore being a key factor. On one end, a society with homogeneous values is united and government decisions can be made easily. However, this could also result in "group think" and in a lack of creativity, as a diverse society could benefit from different skill sets, which make a nation competitive.

26. On one end of the vertical axis, Singapore has autonomy in her relationship with external powers. She is perhaps less open to partnerships with other countries that are not on her terms. This self-sufficiency implies that governance is not influenced by external pressure. For example, a Singapore that has autonomy in its relations with external countries could engage with bigger nations on her own terms, either by restricting the inflow of immigrants or by only signing particular trade agreements. On

the other end of the spectrum, a dependent Singapore will often have to adapt to her environment and give in to external pressure. It is necessary to keep the concerns of external powers in mind when making policy decisions and is more open to partnerships with other countries.

Figure 2. Team 2 Scenarios



Purist Photographer

27. The first scenario is characterised by high autonomy and a society with homogeneous values. Here, Singapore is ideologically strong and other nations have to engage with her on her own terms. The homogeneity of the society also means that there is very little diversity, and tolerance for people holding different values is also low (i.e. society is hetero-normative). Such a Singapore has high barriers to entry, if not a completely closed-door policy to immigration. Civil society is not active as groups such as those advocating gay rights or a multi-party system are not welcomed. The nation is also dominated by one party that is able to push through policies quickly and efficiently. The nation is strong with many achievements, although many see it as “boring”.

28. The headline Team 2 developed for Purist Photographer was “Singapore has its own set of ISO standards!”.

Photo Journalist

29. In this scenario, the nation continues to be autonomous in relation to external powers, but the local citizens hold diverse values. This diversity is however limited to the existing citizenry, as the nation is still not open towards foreigners. Ideologically, this nation is principled and holds its own diversity in high regard. The electorate is also open to a multi-party system. However, the barriers to entry are high, as immigrants must be deemed “worthy” in order to qualify for citizenship. This measure of “worthiness” is determined by the nation.

30. The headline Team 2 developed for Photo Journalist was “Anti-immigrant party wins thirty seats in first election with proportional representation!”

Commercial Photographer

31. Singapore in this scenario is dependent on other nations due to either a lack of resources or its weakness as a periphery nation dependent on core nations to sustain its economy. There are diverse views in society, with different segments of society holding different values. However, society is relatively united due to its tolerance of differences. This also translates to a multi-party government appealing to these different segments of society. The nation is likely to remain weak and dependent on other nations, as it finds that legislation can be hard to push through and that decision-making often results in a gridlock.

32. The headline Team 2 developed for Commercial Photographer was “Singapore follows Malaysia in repealing the ISA”.

Wedding Photographer

33. In this scenario, society holds commonly shared values. However, these values are prone to dilution, as the nation remains very dependent on other nations. Society welcomes foreigners for their expertise as the local pool of talent is very limited and not very creative. A paucity of diverse views also gives rise to a government in which one party is dominant. The government is willing to orientate the country in whatever direction as long as money can be made.

34. The headline Team 2 developed for Wedding Photographer was “SentoSAR: Singapore sells Sentosa to China as a new SAR!”.

Discussion

35. One participant asked what factors and events might lead the country to the scenarios described. Geopolitical pressure, the degree of political, social and cultural diversity as well as tolerance were highlighted as factors that will influence the outcome in terms of scenarios.

36. Another team member reiterated the analogy of the different photographers. Singapore is portrayed as a photographer who is able to determine which specialisation to pursue. However, the intertwined nature of nationhood creates external pressures, and this, together with the values, diversity and tolerance seen in a society, can alter the “specialisation” chosen.

37. Lastly, a facilitator commented that individuals in communities cannot be assumed to be identical. Using Singapore as an example, the facilitator said that even today, Singaporeans are not seen as a single, homogeneous group, and that it is important to consider what the divisions in society might be. The team responded by explaining that, even though societies may have many divisions, they could still grow in a certain hetero-normative way by allowing different groups and values to flourish and by accepting these differences.

Team 3

38. Team 3 built their scenarios using a scenario table that incorporated four driving forces. Their first driving force was the PAP's ability to change. This included the PAP's responsiveness to feedback from the ground, its ability to read the electorate well and to adapt to changing political situations. A low ability to change would represent a PAP that disregards the citizenry and insists on its own way.

39. Their second driving force was the population's sense of belonging. On one end of the spectrum, if the sense of belonging is high, people are connected geographically and are also willing to engage with the community. However, the citizens do not sacrifice agency. The team provided the example of the Nordic model, in which individuals have a strong sense of self, but also see themselves as part of a larger community. On the other end of the spectrum, a global citizen is one that would very easily leave Singapore.

40. Two variables are considered in the third driving force that is globalisation. There is a need to consider whether globalisation will continue or if nations will start becoming more protectionist in response to a more hostile international environment. The team also considered if Singapore would have the capacity to remain economically competitive if globalisation continued.

41. The last driving force was population growth. Again, the team considered two variables in this driving force — whether the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) would return to the replacement level of 2.1, and whether Singapore would welcome immigrants.

Table 1. Team 3 Scenarios

	Monkeys in Paradise	Angry Birds!	The Boiling Frog	Cool Cats
PAP's ability to change	High	Low <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitosis • Lose Power? • Increase in civil society 	Mid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business as usual 	Low
Sense of belonging	High	Low	Low	High
Globalisation continues	Yes, but Singapore can manage	Yes, but Singapore cannot manage	No	Yes, but Singapore can manage
Total Fertility Rate, Immigration Rate and Total Population Growth Rate	TFR ³ is at replacement level, low immigration and population growth	Low TFR, high immigration and population growth	Low TFR, low immigration and a decline in the population	TFR is at replacement level, low immigration and population growth
Description	Adaptive and pro-active community	Power vacuum, revolution, disruption	Slow transition, decay	Dispersed power, empowered populace, self-reliant

Monkeys in Paradise

42. The narrative below is written in the form of a news article.

43. After the consecutive losses the PAP suffered in the General Election of 2011, the party started to implement radical changes to respond to Singaporeans. In turn, the electorate responded readily to this favourable change, and the next General Election saw the PAP being returned to power with complete dominance in parliament. The Prime Minister thanked Singaporeans for their support and confidence and promised that the government would continue to be a “people’s government”. The Worker’s Party (WP) acknowledged defeat, congratulated the PAP and urged them to continue serving the residents of the East Coast, Aljunied and Hougang constituencies in good faith.

3. Total Fertility Rate

44. Political analysts have attributed the electoral swerves of the PAP to their ability to change and their willingness to respond to the wants and needs of Singaporeans. Research from the Institute of Policy Studies noted that the PAP had managed to reduce Singapore's previous over-reliance on new immigrants and foreign labour while managing to keep her economy vibrant.

45. Citizens have also cultivated a strong sense of belonging to Singapore. Young Singaporeans have also been encouraged to form families with government incentives, and Singapore's fertility rates have reached 2.1 — the natural replacement ratio — for the first time in decades.

46. Analysts have also noted that the phasing out of the political "old guard" and the appointment of a fourth-generation Prime Minister have made the new government more willing to take a softer approach to various issues. A second round of reforms is likely to result in the remaining five GRCs being dissolved, and the abolishment of the Nominated Members of Parliament and Non-Constituency Members of Parliament. Economists, however, express caution about the numerous schemes that dip once and again into the national reserves.

47. The headlines Team 3 created for the Monkeys in Paradise scenario were "Nation votes in favour of a PAP that listens!", "PAP listens!" and "Nation votes for 100% dominance!"

Angry Birds!

48. In this narrative, the PAP has splintered, and scenario description below takes the form of a post-election letter to one of the leaders of a PAP faction.

Dear Mr Tamasamy,

Congrats on winning forty out of the hundred seats in the Singapore elections yesterday. While this is not enough for you to form the government, I would strongly suggest that you join forces with Mr Low of the WP to form a coalition government, instead of bringing back Mr Tee. Mr Tee has damaged the PAP irrevocably by choosing to participate in the elections under the new party he had formed with renegade ex-PAP members. That was a terrible decision, as seen from the electorate's rejection of his party. Look, his new party only won 18 seats, which is less than the WP's 30 seats! Your consultative skills have resonated more than Mr Tee's hard-line remarks — what does he think we are? Robots? Stupid?

By working with the WP, you will have a two-thirds majority in the Parliament, even though your first instinct may be to make up with Mr Tee. The electorate needs your leadership at this critical time when globalisation has overwhelmed our society. We need your acumen at this

point. That is much more important than ethnic considerations for a Singaporean leader.

Your consultative nature plus WP's grassroots reach will help us to reach out to the new immigrant society which has been such a nuisance to live with. I still haven't gotten used to them over the last 10 years — don't think I ever will, but I know something needs to be done. We need an inclusive PM to work with our civil society members who are beginning to sound like quarrelling birds (but I know that after all, they are just "making love" to Singapore)....

49. The headlines Team 3 created for the Angry Birds! scenario were "Splintered PAP forms coalition with the WP", "PM leads coalition with Worker's Party" and "PAP splits".

The Boiling Frog

50. This narrative is in the form of a letter from an angry Singaporean to the Forum page in *The Straits Times*, titled "Goodbye Singapore".

If the loss of four GRCs⁴ still does not stir the government from its drugged state, I am not sure what would. We have long left the heyday of high growth and of being the preferred destination for foreign talent. However, this government continues to hold tight to its governing ideals and its incompetent candidates. As a local born-and-bred Singaporean, I no longer feel like this is a place where I can think about my future but rather, I can only think about living from day to day. I urge the government to rethink its strategy — but for me, it's too late. I take my leave to join my other family members who have left earlier.

Ex-Singaporean

51. The headlines Team 3 created for The Boiling Frog scenario were "Investors pull out of Singapore after the PAP barely clings onto power", "PAP wins a slim majority as globalisation retreats", "PAP says: 'Reserves cannot be touched', even as protectionism grows" and "Singapore in slow decline as the dominant party's power declines".

Cool Cats

52. This scenario adopted the following analogy:

53. There was an island of cats, living rather happily. They were happy doing their own thing. They remembered the time when their king told them what to do, how to live, when to make kittens and how to sharpen their claws against the neighbours of nasty dogs. They were happy those days were over — they were happy they no longer faced that level of interference. These days, some cats wore clothes, others were naked, and

4. Group Representation Constituencies

yet others covered their fur in rainbow hues. They loved the meowing songs and poems that they wrote. Some cats owned their businesses and invented all kinds of innovative products, such as self-cleaning kitty litter and chains of luxury cat spas.

54. However, one day, the neighbouring island had a fight and all the nasty dogs started fleeing their homes. They boarded boats and came to the island with their puppies and old dogs. “They looked pitiful”, thought many of the cats who were naturally apathetic and nice. The cats were also busy doing their own things and could not be mobilised, and the cat king and the lieutenants could not resist the influx of the new dogs and were swamped under. The cats and dogs did not live happily ever after, biting and scratching one and other all their days.

55. The headlines Team 3 created for the Cool Cats scenario were “Businesses and markets unfazed by the delay in the formation of the coalition government”, “Record number of civic groups form after green movement’s success in changing legislation” and “Government unable to cope with influx of boat people after Indonesia’s domestic strife”.

Discussion

56. Referring to the Cool Cats scenario, one of the facilitators asked why there was a cat king when power is supposedly dispersed. Team 3 explained it was more for narrative purposes, since traditionally, tribes have kings. They also explained the rationale behind using cats in the scenario — cats are self-sufficient and also potentially indifferent. This is similar to how the electorate could be apathetic towards Singapore’s political issues.

57. One of the participants asked what part the media plays in each of the scenarios, and specifically, how information is disseminated. One of the team members thought that if the PAP were more adaptable, a more liberalised media environment would allow a freer media. Another member added that the government would probably be better at engaging with social media users.

58. When asked how the media would behave in the Angry Birds! scenario, one of the participants replied that there would be a lot more resistance manifested in the form of an underground media. Team 3 added that the traditional media would face a loss of credibility because of tighter government control. The same can also be said for the Cool Cats scenario where media ties are dispersed.

Team 4

59. Team 4 started building their scenarios by considering the questions “who will rule” and “who will be ruled” in Singapore in 2022.

60. Team 4 thought it was problematic that the discourse on governance was always centred on the ideas of traditional government and its various institutions. The team felt that power could appear instead in insidious, invisible and non-traditional forms that would catch Singapore off-guard. In this “new world”, the phrase “governing ourselves” would then be rendered irrelevant, as government and governing forces come in forms

that we are unable to identify, and hence unable to act against. An example of this could be global and corporate powers, and even the media, as they control the flow of information. In an age of decreasing privacy, those who determine what is worthy information will hold power. The changing face of Singapore's citizens, and how these citizens interact was also considered to be important in answering the question of who will be ruled.

61. The group came up with four driving forces. Singapore's resources were deliberately left out as a driving force because it is beyond the control of any governing body. In addition, the resources that are deemed valuable would also depend on how society views itself.

62. The first driving force, "Power", had four variables: "Obvious", "Invisible", "Concentrated" and "Dispersed". The different combinations of these variables produced four different models of power: "Dictator", "Democracy", the "Puppeteer"/"Mutant Charismatic" and "Invisible Hands".

63. The next driving force refers to what the citizenry might look like and is determined by two factors, "Cohesion" and "Engagement". A cohesive citizenry is one in which the community shares the same values and goals, while a fractured citizenry has multiple and different definitions of welfare. When the citizenry is engaged and cohesive, they produce what the group called a "Democratic Utopia". An engaged but fractured citizenry results in the "Babble" situation. A cohesive but disengaged citizenry results in the "Night of the Walking Dead" and lastly, a fractured and disengaged citizenry will result in an "Atomised" situation.

64. The last driving force presented is that of the individual, denoted by "I". While Singaporeans are not identical to each other, here the team refers to situations where the majority of Singaporeans fall into these broad descriptions: Individuals are described as either compliant with or resistant to authority; and as community-oriented; or as "I"-oriented. An individual that is compliant and "I"-oriented was described as "Mr Kiasu", while an individual that is resistant and "I"-oriented was described as "The Rebel". A community-oriented individual who is resistant to authority was described as an "Occupy Wall Street" type of individual, while someone that is both community-oriented and compliant would be described as a "Worker Ant".

65. These driving forces combine to create sixty-four potential scenarios. Of these, the team selected what they felt were the most compelling scenarios, which are shown below.

Table 2. Team 4 Scenarios

	Cult	Conspiracy Theory	Me vs. You vs. Them	Leave Us Alone!
Power/ Ruler	Invisible, concentrated power (Puppeteer/ Mutant Charismatic)	Invisible + distributed (Invisible Hands)	Obvious + concentrated (Dictator)	Democratic
Citizens/ Society	Engaged + Cohesive (Democratic Utopia)	Engaged + Fractured (Babble)	Engaged + Fractured (Babble)	Disengaged + Fractured (Atomised)
“I”	Compliant	Compliant	Individualistic + Resistant to Authority	Resistant
Resources	Equal	Monopoly	Monopoly	Equal

Me vs. You vs. Them

66. In this scenario, “Power” as a driving force is both obvious and concentrated in a dictator or in an oligarchy. Power in this instance includes both political power and wealth, both of which are concentrated among certain members of the population. The citizenry has a desire to be engaged, but society is fragmented as different segments have their own agendas, which divides and weakens the citizenry. Society is also characterised by an individualistic citizenry that resists authority. As a result, the population fights against the powers that be, as well as amongst themselves. This is a chaotic scenario as everything is there for the taking.

Conspiracy Theory

67. Here, power is invisible and distributed, described as an “invisible hands” situation. These “invisible hands” could appear in the form of media moguls, advertising, sovereign funds, private investors, etc. The seat of power is influential but not obvious, and the danger lies in the citizenry not knowing who holds this power. Society is engaged but again, fractured. However, individuals are compliant and willing to listen. The team named this scenario “Conspiracy Theory” because the citizens can only guess who has control, and hence are unable to act against these “invisible hands”. Society is then characterised by neurosis, paranoia and in-fighting, as groups in society are unsure how much of this power other groups in society hold, if at all.

Cult

68. The team was very concerned about the appearance of a force — for example, an individual, or social media — that is able to successfully appeal to the citizenry by pushing the “right buttons”. Past Singapore governments have focused mainly on rationality, and the technocrats who operate these government institutions are also taught to govern and work in a very similar manner. Future governance is then vulnerable to a power that is and continues to remain unidentifiable. The inability of the citizenry and existing governing bodies to recognise this force could be due to the lack of emotive and non-traditional forms of communication in education that leaves Singaporeans unable to defend themselves against this force. The current government is also focused on rationality and on being seen as capable leaders, leaving the door open for the individual who can connect with the citizenry on an emotional level to take power.

69. Religion was used as an example of a force that could cause this. Religion speaks to our emotions, and if used for good, can provide citizens with comfort. However, religion could also be used to manipulate the citizenry if its power and influence is concentrated, has a private agenda and remains invisible. Social media was also used as an example of a force that could cause this “Cult” scenario; it could become a force that is difficult to recognise until it is too late. Shockwaves of information could easily overwhelm Singapore, as the traditional governance institutions that operate with statistics and numbers will find it difficult to counter such power.

70. The state of education in Singapore and the methods through which students learn were also raised. Education is increasingly outsourced to media such as the National Geographic, Discovery and Nickelodeon channels seen on the television. This could provide the “Puppeteer” or “Mutant Charismatic” with a platform to influence the citizenry and gain power. The media and the news are exceedingly hard to control. However, while all nations are vulnerable to the media, Singapore will be especially vulnerable as our vocabulary is “extremely limited” — the words we often use are limited and are not emotive.

Leave us alone!

71. In the last scenario, while power is democratised, the people are fractured and disengaged. Society is segmented as individuals fight for their own agendas, and people are apathetic about governance as the nation is being governed well. Governance is relegated to traditional governing bodies and society is resistant when the government tries to engage them. This scenario is similar to that of an extreme liberal democracy in which government has become irrelevant to the citizenry and only operates in the background.

Discussion

72. A facilitator asked the team why the population would be susceptible to control, and would be compliant in the “Cult” scenario. A team member responded that this would be possible because the citizenry would not know where the controlling force is coming from. Also, it is scientifically possible to manipulate emotions. The team used the example of theatre, where lighting and music can be used to induce the audience to

cry, despite audience members not feeling sad. A team member also emphasised that the current government sees emotions as something that should be ignored and downplayed.

73. A participant then asked if this invisible force could also be used for good, as it could potentially transcend class and language divides. The team replied that while puppeteers have already appeared, they have not had an agenda, or have been only interested in personal enrichment, resulting in only a small group of people being hoodwinked. However, nations need to start to learn to speak and engage in a different manner lest an overly ambitious puppeteer hoodwinks a whole nation.

74. Another participant asked if the puppeteer would be someone who is able to meet an unmet need, and have people follow him without informed consent. The team explained that people convinced by the puppeteer would most likely never even have been presented with a conscious choice. The puppeteer is able to exert control just by virtue of his power. They referred to the recent General Election of 2011, where such puppeteers, who could potentially rally large numbers of people to their cause, emerged. However, these puppeteers were hindered by their “limited” language, and their words could only resonate with certain groups, and on a smaller scale than that described in the “Cult” scenario. They also pointed out the need for a President that could act as an “alternative puppeteer” and who could counter such a force — for example, a poet President that is also able to connect emotionally with the population.

75. In response to a participant’s question, the team agreed that this puppeteer could also be a positive, altruistic one — in which case the scenario would be renamed “Heaven”.

76. A participant commented that symbolic violence is exercised when controlled people are unable to imagine an alternative to their current situation; and that now, the existing framework of governance is seen as the only way. Man loses his potential to live fully when he cannot exercise agency. In the “Cult” scenario, individuals have no agency. The same is true for the “Heaven” scenario that was suggested; such a situation would not be a utopia if individuals were told that “cakes and ale” were what they should desire.

77. Another team member raised the issue of control, and how control might be able to transcend national boundaries in the future. If this occurs, the population will not be able to give their consent to this control through elections, as our institutional structures are not set up to allow citizens to choose a government that is hidden and beyond our national boundaries. The team also agreed that advances in technology could also result in the holder of this control being non-human. An audience member provided the example of search engine optimisation, and of how stories that appear on Facebook feeds are engineered.

78. Lastly, a team member suggested that the population should learn to “sing and dance” in order to guard themselves against the power of a “Mutant Charismatic”.

Another team member commented that the effect of a “Mutant Charismatic” or a “cakes and ale” populist is magnified by the concentration of power that is not democratic.

VOTING

79. The participants voted on the set of scenarios they felt were the most plausible and challenging. Team 3’s scenarios received the highest number of votes. The votes are shown below.

Table 3. Voting results

Team	Number of Votes
Team 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure Cooker • Salad Bowl • Oven Mitts • Sieve • Additional: Perfect Storm 	1
Team 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purist Photographer • Photo Journalist • Commercial Photographer • Wedding Photographer 	7
Team 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monkeys in Paradise • Angry Birds! • The Boiling Frog • Cool Cats 	22
Team 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cult • Conspiracy Theory • Me vs. You vs. Them • Leave Us Alone! 	4

APPENDIX: LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Mr Robin Chan, Political Correspondent, The Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

Ms Rachel Chang, Political Reporter, News Desk, The Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

Ms Cheong Kah Shin, Research Assistant, Institute of Policy Studies

Mrs Rebecca Chew, Principal, School of the Arts

Mr Fong Hoe Fang, Director, Ethos Books, Pagesetters Services Pte Ltd

Ms Ho Shoe Be, Correspondent, Lianhe Zaobao, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

Mr Dominic Khoo, Business Manager, Dominic Khoo Photography

Ms Janice Koh, Actor; and Nominated Member of Parliament

Dr Lai Chee Kien, Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, School of Design and Environment, National University of Singapore

Ms Lee Huay Leng, Assistant Editor, Lianhe Zaobao, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

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