

New Citizens Sector Workshop Report

Changi Village Hotel Quad 1: 16 – 17 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 who were new citizens.
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. Two of the teams in the New Citizens Sector Workshop opted for the inductive approach to developing their scenarios, while one team used the deductive approach. Each team produced at least three scenarios, with each scenario fleshed out by a narrative depicting the state of governance. The presentations were followed by a discussion among all participants. Finally, the scenarios were put to a vote, to select the most plausible as well as challenging set.

Driving Forces

4. 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.
5. Participants focused on issues concerning value systems and social cohesion when developing their driving forces. Team 1 contrasted an individual-oriented society where there is a high tolerance for diversity, with a communally-oriented one in which the good of the community shapes the governance system. Team 2 compared the incentives that drive society; a value system where society is largely driven by economic or monetary incentives at one end of the spectrum and a society driven by pro-social ideas at the other. Team 3 looked at the effect that inequality, exclusion and social mobility would have on governance.
6. Another cluster of driving forces was political. Team 2 looked at the effect of political unpredictability and created scenarios where the level of political participation by the public increases, remains at the same level as it currently is, or dwindles. Team 3 used the credibility and trust that the public has in the governance process as one of its driving forces.
7. New ideas about driving forces emerged in this workshop: Team 3 introduced the idea of economic competitiveness — namely, Singapore's

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

ability to maintain “The Singapore Premium”. Team 1 looked at the sustainable use of Singapore’s resources.

Winning Scenario

8. The winning set of scenarios was the one developed by Team 3, which had three driving forces: an economic driving force that focused on Singapore’s ability to maintain her economic competitiveness; a political driving force based on the credibility and trust of the public in the governance system; and a third driving force focused on the ability of the country to manage the level of social inequality. The first round of voting resulted in a tie among the scenarios produced by Team 2 and Team 3. The latter prevailed in the run-off between the two teams.

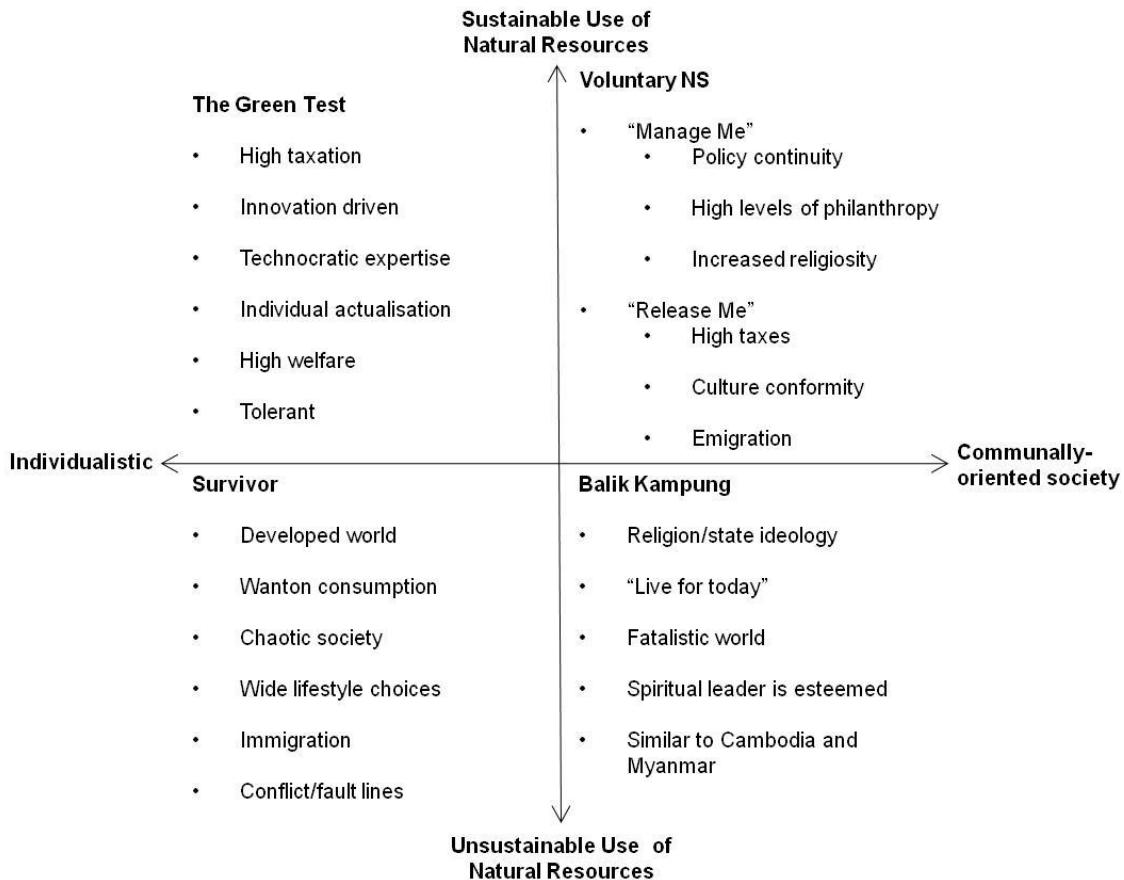
THE SCENARIOS

Team 1

9. Team 1 used the emergence of a communally-oriented society as the driving force on the horizontal axis. They used the level of sustainability in Singapore’s use of natural resources, such as water, energy and land, as the driving force on the vertical axis. They felt that this idea of sustainability seemed to be missing in the discussion, and that it was an important determinant of governance.

10. Singapore is now in the “Voluntary NS” scenario, but it may move to “The Green Test” or the “Survivor” scenario over time.

Figure 1. Team 1 Scenarios



Balik Kampung

11. This scenario describes a Singapore that faces many challenges. It is a communally-oriented society that uses natural resources unsustainably. The team created the scenario narrative that is shown below.

12. Here, no matter how hard the PAP leadership tries — they work hard and give us everything we want — we still do not like them. After the General Election of 2016, there is a cabinet made up of members from the PAP and the WP in office, instead of the all-PAP cabinet in previous years. By the General Election of 2021, the cabinet includes members from many more parties. The population have gotten their desire for more political choice, but there is now bureaucratic confusion aplenty as the bureaucracy is unsure which party's orders they should follow and how they should behave. Life is a mess.

13. In this situation of high uncertainty, the population turn to their spiritual leaders. Singapore moves away from the economically-driven model that has resulted in great income inequality. Now, no one is thinking about how to increase economic growth, and Singapore's role as a regional economic hub has diminished. The confusion in government sees our resources used unsustainably due to a lack of monitoring. We are no longer a key driver of the region's growth — instead, we are now the wagon hitched to the Iskandar

Development Region in Malaysia. While Singaporeans still hold their red passports, they are essentially a part of the greater Malaya again.

The Green Test

14. Here, Singapore has a society that is highly individualistic, and yet uses her natural resources sustainably. The government is a forward-looking one, and there is a strong focus on maintaining the sustainability of natural resources. Singapore remains an open country, but with new selection criteria for immigrants — The Green Test, where, “if you’re not green, you’re not in”. Immigrants are required to use resources sensibly and to contribute to the sustainability of resources. However, there is a high cost to maintaining this society, and Singapore has to increase her taxes to cover this. This increase in taxes comes with a higher public provision of social services.

15. Society is accepting of immigrants; the only selection criteria for immigrants is that they be green rather than be of a certain race, religion or socioeconomic standing. The individual-oriented society is likely to result in a rise in the total fertility rate as the desires of individuals are respected — those who would like children are free to have them, while there is no pressure on those who do not.

Voluntary NS

16. This scenario describes a Singapore that is communally-oriented and which uses natural resources sustainably. The team created the scenario narrative that is shown below.

17. In 20XX, an energy crisis hits Singapore. Her industries suffer substantial pain as she is not prepared for this situation and does not have alternative energy sources. A group of charismatic people who strongly believe in political openness emerge to offer themselves to Singaporeans as leaders who would govern Singapore very differently — in a communal way that recognises that the best way for the whole community to survive is to solve the problems at the collective level. This group of charismatic people, who represent the best of Singapore, are able to decide on legislation among themselves. There are no political parties so politics is not party-based, similar to that of the republic of Athens’. They form the government, and a “Singapore model” is born. This model is built on consensus and on a set of communally-oriented values. For instance, marriage remains a strictly heterosexual concept with homosexual unions being banned, and where only children born in wedlock are accepted by society. It is restrictive in maintaining the sustainable use of natural resources — for example, the population is only allowed to eat meat three times a week, and there is little wastage. Those who do not follow this model are asked to leave, and immigrants are only allowed into Singapore if they are willing to abide by this model.

18. This group of leaders use their charisma to convince the population to remain a united society. National Service is “voluntary” in this new era, but it is not voluntary in the true sense. While citizens believe strongly in, and hence opt to do National Service, this belief is built on an ideology that is designed to produce this very outcome. Some of the population realise this and began to Prism Project_New Citizens Sector Workshop Notes

feel that the society has become too conformist. These individuals start to emigrate, while others outside of Singapore are attracted by the stability and the “Singapore model” and choose to put down their roots here.

Survivor

19. Here, Singapore is an individualistic society that uses natural resources unsustainably. The team created the scenario narrative that is shown below. In it, an individual from 2022 tells a group what Singapore was like in 2012, and how it became the way it is ten years later.

20. Today is 17 July 2022. Ten years ago, in 2012, Singapore was a very strange society. It was a top-down, highly structured and conformist society with an electoral system that made it close to a one-party system. The population also did not believe that the elections held were real elections. Yet, it was perceived to be a highly successful society, and many of its citizens were happy. However, there were some who were not happy and who desired change even though life was comfortable, because they felt there was a lack of opportunity and colour in the society. Singaporeans were also unhappy that the government was allowing the arrival of workers from Ethiopia and Kenya who were perceived to be taking away jobs from Singaporeans. This gradually resulted in a strong movement that demanded more change. In order to remain in power, the government was forced to ask society what they wanted. The people wanted ideas, opportunities, rights and jobs.

21. Now, decisions are no longer top-down, and instead are made from the bottom-up. It was felt that politicians should not think too far ahead when crafting policies as there was a risk that these politicians would operate in an ivory tower detached from the community. Today, citizens have more space. The Botanic Gardens, which occupied a huge piece of land and preserved as the former Prime Minister was fond of jogging there, was turned into a super office block a few years ago. This huge business centre then gave a boost to the financial sector in Singapore. It was also decided that it was silly to have Jurong Island entirely dedicated to the chemical industry, and it was turned into a place where people could work and play. Homes and offices were built there.

22. However, society is a lot more competitive today as the state no longer takes responsibility for providing jobs and welfare. Some friends have been unable to compete, and they have left, while others have been attracted to Singapore, changing its texture. Some of you may not have heard of COE² and ERP³ — they have been removed, and now the population has the right to own and drive cars as they like. The downside to this is that the roads now are a lot more congested. There is also a strong emphasis on providing for oneself, and it is an individual’s own problem if they cannot afford basic necessities. This is life today — like it or not, you choose.

2. Certificate of Entitlement

3. Electronic Road Pricing

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Discussion

23. A participant asked why the energy crisis was able to set off the chain of events described in the Voluntary NS scenario. A team member said this was because the population realised that the existing leadership and policies were unable to handle the situation. This makes it likely that people will support a group that arises to build consensus across society on how to respond to the crisis.

24. A participant asked if the same Voluntary NS scenario was a euphemism for a military takeover of Singapore. A team member agreed that the model was akin to a military takeover. However, the green agenda was used to keep the scenario neutral, and to prevent it from disintegrating into a military dictatorship.

25. When asked to clarify what a “communal society” would be like, a team member responded that it would be similar to Japanese society of the past. It would be a society where the population believes that the good of the community reigns over individual priorities.

26. Another participant expressed that the Survivor scenario was like the view from the participant’s own house — one was able to see the Marina Bay Sands in one direction, juxtaposed with the view of prostitutes, couples and homeless families sleeping in tents in the other direction. The participant had become desensitised to this jarring scene and was starting to view it as something permanent. The participant wondered what it would be like in 2022.

Team 2

27. Team 2 used the effects of political unpredictability as their first driving force. Their second driving force compared a society that was driven by economic incentives to one that was driven by alternative incentives. In a society driven by economic incentives, there are a lot of monetary incentives given to the population. The team emphasised that they had no problem with strong economic growth — they felt that Singapore should not give up the goal of economic growth. Rather, their argument is that in 10 years, Singapore may have moved to a system where all the incentives individuals receive are not only monetary ones.

28. They created two sets of scenarios comprising five scenarios in total — three political scenarios, and two economic scenarios.

Figure 2. Team 2 Scenarios: Political

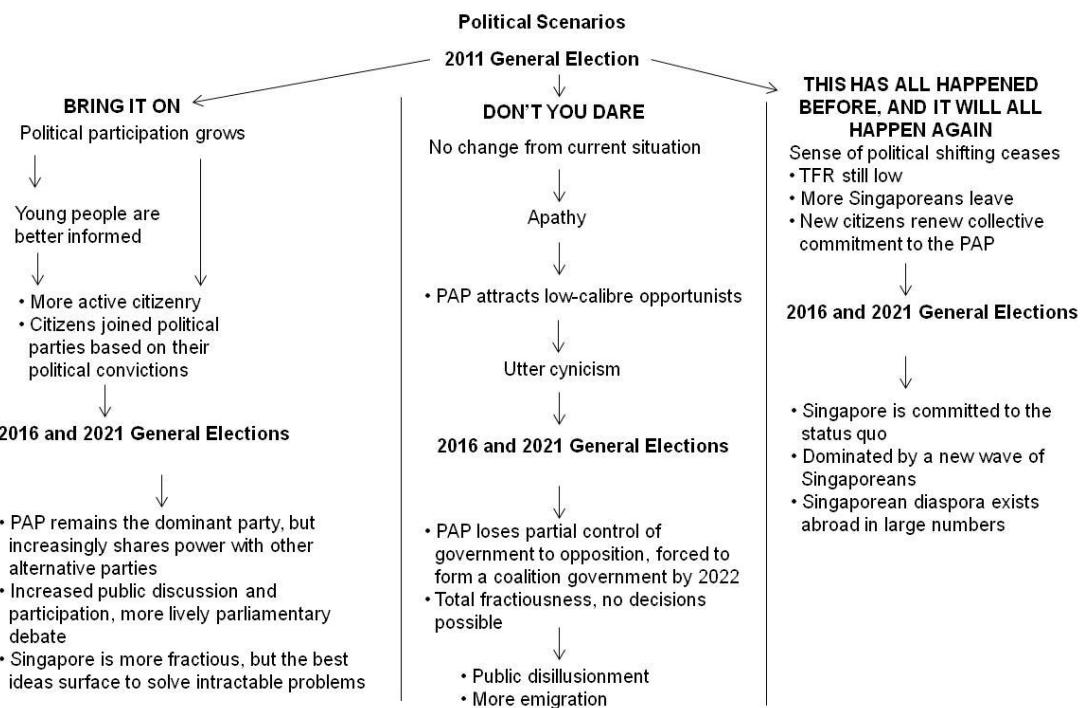
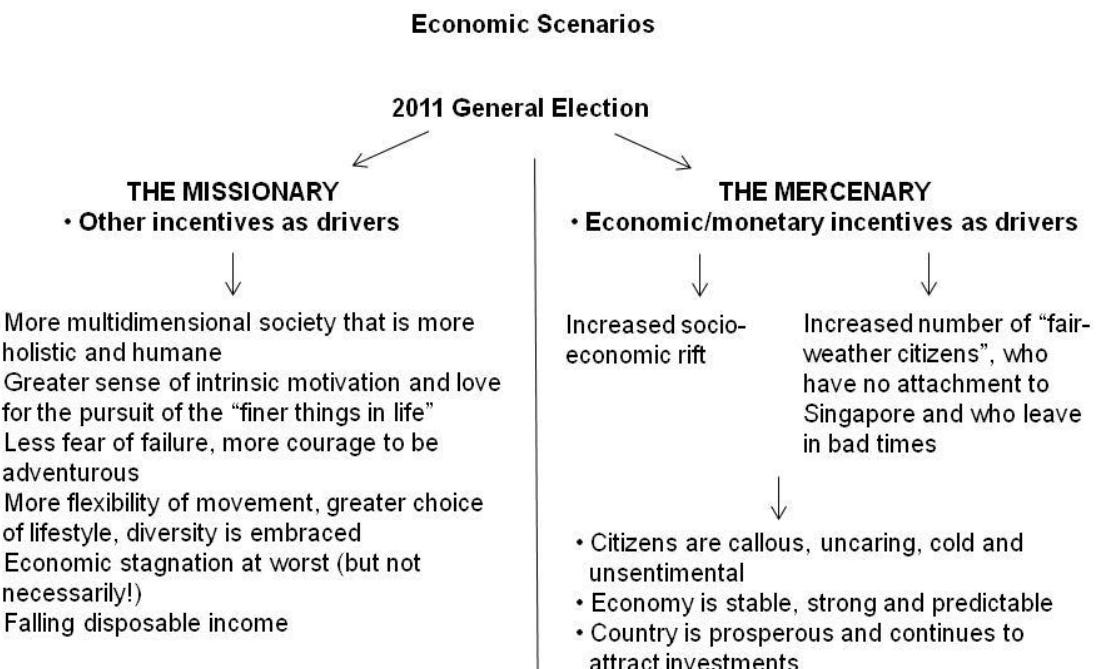


Figure 3. Team 2 Scenarios: Economic



Bring It On

29. It was the night of Thursday, 5 May 2011, at the PAP rally for Aljunied GRC. In the closing moments, a hush fell over the crowd of five thousand, as George Yeo asked the crowd to give him a mandate to transform the PAP by

re-electing him. However, on Saturday, 7 May, the election was held and Aljunied GRC fell to the WP.

30. After the General Election of 2011, political participation grew. Young people become better informed and gradually become active citizens that join political parties based on their political convictions.

31. The General Elections of 2016 and of 2021 become increasingly exciting, as there are more opportunities in the political arena. The PAP remains the dominant party, but it increasingly shares power with alternative parties such as the WP. There is more informed public discussion and participation. Parliamentary debates are lively and more fractious — but this is not necessarily bad. The best ideas to solve some of Singapore's most intractable problems surface through this process of debate. Singapore's political system becomes a hybrid one — it has not become a completely multiparty democratic system in the 11 years since the General Election of 2011, but there *has* been a move away from the previous political system that was dominated by a single party.

Don't You Dare

32. In the General Election of 2011, the PAP sees its share of the vote drop to 60%, and six members of the WP, along with several NCMPs⁴ enter Parliament.

33. However, in the aftermath of the election, the population's level of political participation remains stagnant. This political apathy results in the PAP attracting lower calibre opportunists, leading to a great deal of worry about the 2016 General Election. This apathy is also transformed into cynicism with the system, and the PAP eventually loses partial control of the government in the General Election of 2016. However, they lose this control to another set of political opportunists, and Parliament is formed from a mediocre mix of individuals.

34. Eventually, the 2021 General Election produces a fractious coalition government. This occurs as individuals in government are not driven by political conviction, but rather, are interested in holding office for personal profit. Singapore's intractable problems become worse, and there is total public disillusionment. While this may not translate to riots in Singapore, the country will see increased emigration. The economy and the social fabric also become weaker.

This Has All Happened Before, And It Will All Happen Again

35. In 2011 and 2012, there is initially a sense that political shifts are occurring — there is a stronger citizen voice and social media, and Singapore's political atmosphere seems to be liberalising. This shift is eventually revealed to be superficial, and comes to an end. The reality of life in 2012 becomes entrenched — the cost of living remains high, working hours are long, and third- and fourth-generation Singaporeans become increasingly frustrated with

4. Non-Constituency Members of Parliament

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a nation driven solely by economic imperatives. As a result, more Singaporeans emigrate. This, combined with Singapore's low total fertility rate and liberal immigration policies, increases the rate at which Singaporeans are replaced by immigrants. By 2022, there is a strong possibility that Singapore will be dominated by a new wave of Singaporeans — new immigrants, none of whom were born or raised in Singapore. They come because they believe in the Singapore ethos and in an economy driven by economic imperatives. They are committed to the status quo, and do not understand why Singaporeans are continually complaining about their country. This scenario will see the PAP regaining a much more substantial majority of 75 or 80%, as the new wave of citizens desire the status quo, while those that dislike the system leave, re-entrenching the status quo.

36. In addition to this, Singapore has a large, growing and significant diaspora abroad. These citizens form a part of Singapore that is geographically unbounded and non-territorial. How will this diaspora govern itself?

The Missionary

37. Here, society is less one-dimensional, and the population has a more holistic and humane approach to providing incentives. For example, as opposed to the government offering couples a tax break or cash incentives to have more children, the government instead ensures that they improve the infrastructure of the neighbourhood and increase the provision of daycare. This may also result in a population that is less afraid of failure. In a society driven by economic imperatives, there is no support in the case of failure. However, in a society driven by alternative incentives, there is a safety net available, allowing individuals to take risks with the knowledge that, in the case of failure, their families will not face immediate adverse consequences.

38. However, the population in this system has less disposable income. In its extreme, this emphasis on alternative incentives may also lead to economic stagnation.

The Mercenary

39. Here, society is driven by economic incentives. There are greater socioeconomic rifts in the population, and Singaporeans may lose their drive to succeed. This could also be a careless, uncaring and unsentimental society. However, the economy is strong, stable, and predictable.

Team 3

40. Team 3 identified three driving forces that they felt were most important, and built three scenarios, each starting from a different driving force.

41. The first driving force was economic and focused on whether Singapore could retain "The Singapore Premium". As Singapore has no hinterland and cannot rely on an agriculture-driven economy, it is a society that is centred around the economy. The team emphasised that the economy is central to governance, and that economic growth is the basis for Prism Project_New Citizens Sector Workshop Notes

determining the type of political structure and social policies a country has. Here, economic growth does not necessarily have to be high, but it has to be sufficient to sustain society's needs.

42. The second driving force was political and referred to the credibility of governance — whether the population believes that any formula presented as the solution to public policy issues is a credible one. The team felt that institutions, as opposed to individuals, were important. They made the comparison between a situation in which key institutions function well, and one in which they deteriorate.

43. The last driving force was social and covered inequality, exclusion and social mobility. They gave an example of education, comparing an education system where elitism in schools diminishes, and where multiple pathways to success are created.

Table 1. Team 3 Scenarios

	A	B	C	D
Economic (Maintaining "The Singapore Premium")	Depression	Recession	Muddle Through	Resilient Economy
Political (Credibility and trust of public in governance)	Crisis	Status Quo	Democratisation	Gridlock
Social (Level of equality and inclusion; social mobility)	Harmony	Discord	Riots	

Scenario 1: Our Lehman Moment

- Economic depression → Political crisis → Social discord → Political gridlock

Scenario 2: Durian Garden

- Social discord → Political crisis → Political democratisation → Resilient economy and social harmony

Scenario 3: PAP Bahru

- Social riots → Political crisis → Political gridlock → Economic recession

Our Lehman Moment

44. It is 2012, and Singapore has experienced four years of economic crises. In these first four years, the population has had enough faith in the government, as the policies that they implemented were thought to be credible. However, the crises continue to multiply, and Singapore's economy is very strongly affected by external events. Local companies face very high levels of unemployment, and there is no job creation. "The "Singapore Premium" disappears, and many in the population find their savings wiped out. In short, we are in a situation where we have "deployed all the bullets".

45. This situation calls into question the political credibility of the government, and forces the population to reconsider what was previously

thought to be exceptional about Singapore — its strong economy and “The Singapore Premium”. The situation also tests the population’s belief in meritocracy and the current system of politics. A political crisis results, and the Prime Minister decides to seek a new mandate for the government. However, after the election is held, the mandate is inconclusive, and causes even more discord. This also results in political gridlock as the government moves to declare a state of emergency.

Durian Garden

46. This scenario is the team’s most optimistic one. The name implies that it is a sweet situation, albeit with some bitterness as it is not a comfortable time. In the same way that the durian’s taste and smell is polarising, the Singapore described here may not be to everyone’s liking.

47. In this scenario, there is social discord — voices are more splintered, single-interest groups are more active and there are more scandals. The citizenry becomes more engaged and active, and there is an increased demand for transparency and accountability from political leaders. Unfortunately, the PAP is not able to find and attract good candidates as the educated members of the citizenry begin to look to the opposition as an alternative platform for their voice. The use of social media increases, and non-governmental organisations become more engaged and active. Society also begins to get used to uncertainty and dialogue, and the democratisation of Singapore’s society occurs.

48. In the next General Election, the PAP barely manages to hold on to power. However, society does not lose its core values, and the political system remains intact. Institutions are preserved and strengthened as a result of the greater democracy in the system. Singapore remains corruption-free, and there is trust within communities. The economy becomes more resilient, and we retain our economic premium. Singapore also continues her search for a national identity.

PAP Baru (New PAP)

49. Economic inequality continues to rise after the last election, and immigration remains an issue. One day, a fight between two boys from public schools — one a local Singaporean and the other a migrant, occurred. This event causes tensions to escalate, and riots to occur. The PAP are unable to handle the riots, as they are trying to prepare for the next General Election and are at a moment of transition.

50. The looming General Election creates a crisis within the PAP, and it splits into two. At the same time, the opposition parties are stronger and more savvy, and capture the votes of the well-educated young in Singapore in the election. It also wins the support of the middle-class. The General Election results in a hung Parliament as no party has a majority. A coalition may be formed, but political gridlock still results. This situation defines Singapore politics until 2022 and may result in Singapore losing its economic premium, leading to a recession. This is a scenario in which there is high uncertainty.

Discussion

51. A participant asked about the cause of the riot in the PAP Baru scenario, and how it reflects the social driving force that was used by the group. The team responded that the riot is likely caused by both racial and income divides. However, they felt that the cause of the riot is less important than what it triggers. The riots that occur after the event will only occur if the underlying conditions already exist. In this case, the riots coincide with a period of political transition before the looming General Elections. The team also clarified that political transition refers to the challenges of certain political crises that build up over time, for example, transparency, neopotism and cronyism.

52. Finally, a participant commented that often, agitators take the opportunity to “stir the pot” in times of transition, such as in China near the start of the 2008 Olympic Games. The participant distinguished between those who precipitate trouble and those who use the ensuing trouble as an opportunity to push their agenda, and pointed out that often, the opposition in Singapore is viewed as merely being present, but they can also be quite proactive in creating trouble.

VOTING

53. The participants voted on the scenarios they felt were the most plausible and challenging. The first round of voting resulted in a tie among the scenarios produced by Teams 2 and 3. Team 3 prevailed in the second run-off. The results of the voting are shown below.

Table 2. Voting results

Team	Number of Votes	
	First Round	Second Round
Team 1 • The Green Test • Voluntary NS • Balik Kampung • Survivor	3	N/A
Team 2 • Political Scenarios • Bring It On • Don't You Dare • This Has All Happened Before, And It Will All Happen Again • Economic Scenarios • The Missionary • The Mercenary	16	4
Team 3 • Our Lehman Moment • Durian Garden • PAP Baru	16	13

APPENDIX: LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Mr Tony Du, Founder and Managing Director, Asia-Link Technology Pte Ltd and President, Tian Fu Association

Mr Christopher Gee, Research Associate, Institute of Policy Studies

Professor Andy Hor, Executive Director, Institute of Materials Research & Engineering, Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)

Mr Matt Hu, Chief Executive Officer, F&H Fund Management Pte Ltd

Mr Hasan Jafri, Director, Strategic Relations, Temasek International Pte Ltd

Dr Lai Ah Eng, Senior Research Fellow, Asia Research Institute

Mr Asad-Ul Iqbal Latif, Visiting Research Fellow, Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Mr Liu Chunlin, Chief Executive Officer, K&C Protective Technologies Pte Ltd

Dr Mathew Mathews, Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies

Ms Vinita Ramani Mohan, Co-Founder, Access to Justice Asia

Dr Md Mizanur Rahman, Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies

Mr Michael Rebaczonok-Padulo, Senior Lecturer, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, Ngee Ann Polytechnic

Dr Ori Sasson, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Simulation Software & Technology (S2T) Pte Ltd

Mr Anil Kumar Singh