

**IPS 20th Anniversary Edition of
The Young Singaporeans Conference (YSC) 2008
“Cultivating a Singapore Creative Class”**

CONFERENCE CONCEPT

Following on from the topic of the Young Singaporeans Conference (YSC) in 2006, “Building a Community of Citizens for the 21st Century” where the question of developing a sense of rootedness and purposeful citizenship was discussed, YSC 2008 will look at how we can cultivate a creative class in Singapore. This refers to a core of innovators, designers, artists and other high-skilled knowledge-workers in various fields that we hope will generate economic value and cultural buzz and take Singapore firmly into the next stage of development.

What is the potential behind the idea of cultivating a creative class? In an analysis by Chief Executive Officer of Gallup, Jim Clifton, he cites how the United States (US) gross domestic product had been projected 25 years ago to lose its first place ranking behind Japan and Germany but the economists got it wrong. The projections were off by US\$ 1 trillion and the result of innovation, and the migration of talent to the US. Clifton argues that 1000 special American-based star innovators created this unforecasted US\$1 trillion. These stars also had great teams behind them. In general, such people migrate to where they are most likely to maximise their entrepreneurial talents and skill. As Clifton puts it, “When they choose your city, you attain the new holy grail of global leadership – brain gain.”

This conference challenges young Singaporeans to think about what they and the rest of Singapore can do to develop an ecosystem that builds up our own local talent and attracts foreigners with creative and entrepreneurial talents here. How do we make them all ‘choose our city’? Do our efforts to attract talent prejudice the likelihood of the retention of Singapore born and bred talent? What more can we do to ensure that even Singaporeans abroad can contribute to writing the next chapter of our Singapore Story?

Recognising that the government in Singapore has tried to promote innovation and creativity (as demonstrated by the Ministry of Information, Communications and The Arts’ Creative Industries Development Strategy, the National Framework for Innovation and Enterprise as well as the creation of the National Research Foundation), the conference entitled, “Cultivating a Singapore Creative Class” will explore the question of what more can be done with specific regard to four groups of people or stakeholders in our country:

- (i) the Government, that sets the social, economic and political framework;
- (ii) citizens, who shape this framework to ensure they have a meaningful place and role in a thriving creative Singapore;
- (iii) civic groups, that often push the boundaries of the possible in terms of the socio-political landscape; and,
- (iv) the business community, that must seek to cultivate and tap the creative class, and develop business opportunities around them.



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PROGRAMME

(As at 12th November 2008)

**20 – 21 November 2008
Orchard Hotel**

8.45 am Registration

9.00 am – 9.15 am **Welcome Remarks**
Dr Gillian Koh
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

9.15 am - 10.45 am **Session I**
Where are the Singapore Stars? Two Views

Moderator
Ambassador Ong Keng Yong
Director
Institute of Policy Studies

Speakers
Professor Kishore Mahbubani
Dean
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Mr Ho Kwon Ping
Chairman
MediaCorp Pte Ltd

The new creative economy is no longer an economy of nations; it's an economy of places with cities around the world competing for highly mobile talent. The mobile nature of the creative economy has broken the age-old connection between where people are educated and where they work.

Richard Florida

Singapore seems to be strategically poised to take advantage of the new phenomenon we could term, 'the rise of the creative class' since the location of the creative economy is located is no longer tied to the geographical position of traditional factors of production, or the size of a country's population. We do not need a hinterland, and an immediate market base to succeed

in this knowledge-driven economy. This creative and knowledge-driven economy relies on 'brain power', innovation, the spirit of enterprise as well as an intangible power to attract more creative talent to create a lively 'scene'.

First, is it anachronistic to think about country and nation? Depending on how they answer the first question, speakers are asked if we have cultivated our own creative talent – the Singapore Stars. How hard should we try? Should we claim naturalised 'foreign talent' as Singapore Stars? Do we need Singapore Stars to be based here? Or can we count those among our 'diaspora' as our own? How can we tap that 'diaspora' better? What more do we need to do to get talent to choose our city? Participants are asked for their own responses to these.

Open Discussion

10.45 am - 11.05 am

Coffee Break

11.05 am – 12.45 pm

Session II
Society and Creativity

Moderator
Dr Gillian Koh

Speakers
Dr Mansoor bin Abdul Jalil
Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering
National University of Singapore

Mr Haresh Sharma
Resident Playwright
The Necessary Stage

Ms Joelle Teo Woan Yee
Lifestyle Journalist
LianHe Zaobao

Do we have a society – the people climate - which provides the larger ecosystem by which a creative class can emerge? We ask our speakers this question.

We usually think that a people climate which welcomes social and political diversity, and tolerates, if not promotes new ways of doing things would be the sort of seedbed that is required. Yet, we also usually think of Singapore as a highly regulated, disciplined society where conformity to the rules is desired. There are set paths to the sort of success that would be celebrated. What role does formal education play and what are the other influences that contribute to this people climate? What do our creative talent think is the sort of people climate that would make the difference in fostering the rise of the creative class in Singapore? Have they thrived because of what Singapore is today or in spite of it? What are the other

experiences outside of Singapore that we can benchmark ourselves against?

Participants are asked if they think conditions here promote the emergence of creative talent and if not, what and how these can change. What are their reference points when they think of cities that are attractive to live and work in?

Open Discussion

12.45 pm – 2.00 pm

Lunch

2.00 pm – 3.40 pm

Session III
Business and Creativity

Moderator

Mr Hsieh Tsun-Yan

Director

McKinsey and Company Singapore Pte Ltd

Speakers

Dr Ting Choon Meng

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
HealthSTATS

Mr Allan Lim

Chief Executive Officer
Alpha Synovate Pte Ltd

Ms Elim Chew

Founder
77th Street (S) Pte Ltd

We recognise that the emergence of innovative businesses requires not only the creative talent at the heart of it. It also requires a business ecosystem where there are entrepreneurs, technologists, venture capitalists, management and marketing experts that cluster around innovation and build it into viable products, services and industries. We ask speakers, people who have made a business out of creativity and innovation: what are the business elements that have been critical to their aspirations in creating thriving companies. Is anything missing in Singapore? What is it in the other creative capitals in the world we wish we had?

Participants are asked what are the creative global companies they admire and what they think, based on speakers' insights it would take for such companies to emerge in Singapore or for such companies to emerge from Singaporeans any-where else in the world.

Open Discussion

3.40 pm – 4.00 pm

Coffee Break

4.00 pm – 5.40 pm

Session IV
Politics and Creativity

Moderator
Ambassador Ong Keng Yong

Speakers
Dr Kenneth Paul Tan
Assistant Dean (Academic Affairs)
Assistant Professor
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Mr Azhar Ghani
Information and Risk Consultant,
Former Chief, Straits Times Indonesia Bureau

Mr Siew Kum Hong
Nominated Member of Parliament and
Senior Counsel
Yahoo! Southeast Asia

To complete our 360 degree review of the conditions that help to cultivate a Singapore creative class, we ask what the connection is between politics and creativity.

Time and again, commentators claim that there is a close nexus between the two in Singapore. The lack of political pluralism and the regulation political expression and assembly are often spoken of as stumbling blocks to a more pervasive culture of creativity. This is because the creative class is said to thrive where a diversity of views, values, and lifestyles is tolerated. Members of the creative class choose to be in places where this diversity and tolerance exists. They wish to be in places where there are in principle, no limits to what they want to do, how they want to live, what and how they wish to 'create'. It is also understood that they need to feel a real stake in the place and the community they live in. Although they may not engage in traditional politics, they like to self-organise and this maybe around social issues that give them the impetus for creative acts.

Speakers are asked if they feel that there is such a connection between politics and creativity and if so, what is that connection? Do the political conditions and the laws in Singapore then help foster or hinder the emergence of a creative class here? Wherever they may be, is it likely that creative Singaporeans would wish to 'do it' for Singapore? How important is that?

Open Discussion

5.40 pm – 6.30 pm

Break

6.30 pm - 9.00 pm

Session V
Dinner and Talk

Moderator
Professor Tommy Koh
Chairman
Institute of Policy Studies

Speaker
Mr Nickson Fong
Chief Executive Officer
Egg Story Creative Production

We ask the speaker to share about his life journey and especially about the 'paths not taken'. This should flesh out the decisions made and offer participants insight into what makes all the difference for people wanting to find and develop their creative talent.

9.00 pm

End of Day 1

Day 2

9.00 am – 10.00 am

Session VI **Singapore and Other Creative Cities**

Moderator
Professor Tommy Koh

Speaker
Mr Peter Ong
Managing Partner
Gallup Singapore, Hong Kong, South-East Asia

How does Singapore rank when we think of creative cities, or cities with a buzz that talented people are attracted to? What makes a city attractive to such people? What do our participants look for; what do they wish for in Singapore?

Open Discussion

10.00 am -10 30 am

Coffee Break

10 30 am – 12.30 pm

Session VII **Group Reflection Time**

Participants are asked to work in their groups to come up with key messages they would like to put across to the Guest of Honour and their fellow participants based on their reflections from the preceding sessions of the conference.

12.30 pm – 12.45 pm

Break
Participants to move to lunch venue and be seated by 12.45pm.

12.45 pm – 2.30 pm

Session VIII **Lunch and Dialogue Session with Guest of Honour**

Moderator
Ambassador Ong Keng Yong

Mr K Shanmugam
Minister for Law and
Second Minister for Home Affairs

Groups will be invited to make presentations of their reflections from the conference to the Guest of Honour. This is followed by an open dialogue session with the Minister.

2.30 pm

End of Conference