

Young Singaporeans Conference 2018: Disruptions

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Background

We live in a time of disruptions. The population is ageing, technologies are changing, and so are the values and norms that once defined success. Young Singaporeans are constantly contending with old ideas of success, work and family as defined by parents, institutions and authorities, against what they see, hear and experience as citizens in a globalised world. What do our youths have to say about their own generation? How can they contribute and be supported so that our youths and society can flourish together?

The 2018 Young Singaporeans Conference (YSC) was convened against this backdrop. A biennial flagship event of the Institute of Policy Studies, the one-and-a-half-day conference was an opportunity for 80 Singaporean youths from diverse backgrounds — students, public servants, educators, freelancers and private sector professionals — to articulate their views on the various forms of disruptions they have experienced. For the first time, the 2018 YSC was also opened to members of the public, who were encouraged to respond to an Open Call to register their interest in the conference.

We collected their voices, ideas and aspirations through various ways. Prior to the conference, participants were encouraged to make a creative submission on the topic of “Disruptions” in the areas of work, family and culture. They were also invited to participate in a pre-conference activity in the form of a mobile diary, where they communicated their thoughts, ideas and aspirations through a series of prompts sent through the “Telegram” app, a mobile messaging platform. During the actual conference itself, participants were divided into groups and tasked to identify an issue, then formulate ideas and action plans to address it. Their ideas and solutions were presented at the end of the conference.

This report captures the conference activities, which includes the participants’ input from the pre-conference activities as well as their action plans. The conference also featured a panel of three distinguished speakers — Mr Chng Kai Fong, Managing Director of Economic Development Board; Dr Ad Maulod, Research Fellow at Centre for Ageing Research and Education; and Dr Crystal Abidin, Lecturer at Deakin University and Postdoctoral Fellow at Jonkoping University — as well as a dinner dialogue with guest of honour Ms Pocket Sun, a venture capitalist and Founding Partner of SoGal Ventures. The key points made by speakers during the panel discussion and dinner dialogue were published in an earlier report¹.

Pre-Conference Activities

Creative Submissions

To express their interest in participating in YSC 2018 and to allow for greater diversity, participants were encouraged to make a creative submission on the topic of “Disruption” in the areas of work, family and culture. This exercise also served to acquaint participants with the conference topic.

Participants could submit any form of written work of no more than 1,500 words; a video of no longer than 5 minutes taken in landscape mode; or a photo essay of 6 to

¹ The report can be found at: https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/enews_ysc2018.pdf

15 photos with no more than 200 words per caption. Close to 40 creative submissions were received. Most were written work that touched on the issue of disruption as a whole, while others submitted essays on niche topics such as “The Period Problem”, “The Social and Cultural Capital of Singapore’s DIY Electronic Music Scenes” and “Artificial Intelligence” (see Appendix 1). Some submitted photo essays documenting their daily routines or thoughts on disruptions, and a couple submitted videos of them performing “improv” theatre or playing the drums. These submissions highlight the individuality and varied and broad interests of Singaporean youths.

Mobile Diary Study

After participants for the conference were selected and confirmed, they were invited to partake in was a three-week long mobile diary study, from 22 October till 11 November 2018. The aim of this activity was to capture the lived experiences, aspirations and viewpoints of the participants and to prepare them in the lead up to the conference. This was an opt-out activity, meaning participants could inform the organisers by a certain date if they did not want to participate. Those who chose to participate in this activity had to have access to 4G or a Wi-Fi network, and download the “Telegram” mobile messaging app if they did not already have it. They then had to respond to a series of prompts that were communicated to them through a secure and private “Telegram” channel called the “YSC Telegram Channel”.

A total of 25 prompts — either “Personal” or “Topical” — were sent to participants over the duration of the study (see Appendix 2 for the list of prompts). Participants could respond to all, one or none of these prompts. Their responses could take the form of photos, videos, texts, gifs, stickers and even emoji. To help select the list of final prompts to be used in the study, a pilot test was conducted with IPS research staff.

Nearly half of the conference participants took part in the activity. Some participants dutifully submitted responses to all 25 prompts. Others only responded to prompts that resonated with them. For example, there was one participant who only responded to the prompt “what are some of the values that define you?” His response was “Integrity. Taking responsibility and ownership [sic]. Doing the best that we can [sic]”.

Their responses were analysed through visual and content analysis by the organisers and synthesised into 12 themes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes from the mobile diary study

	Themes	Description
1.	Cities & Countries	Thoughts about living in Singapore and abroad
2.	Elephants in the Room	Features of society that are hard to change
3.	#Goals	Aspirations and achievements at the individual or societal level
4.	Happiness	What happiness means
5.	How Do We Live?	Ideal living environments, lived experiences and the role of Artificial

		Intelligence in our lives
6.	Identities	Values that shape our identities
7.	I Remember	Memories and places of significance
8.	Mission Impossible	Alternative lifestyles and practices for society and self that may or may not be possible
9.	Rights & Obligations	Our rights and obligations as citizens in Singapore
10.	Salient Issues	Salient issues in Singapore that need to be addressed
11.	What is Family?	The meaning of family, the institution of family, and family life
12.	Who is Your Community?	Who are your friends, neighbours and other social relationships that make up your community?

These themes were presented at the conference through thematic poster boards (see Appendix 3), as well as an artwork by graphic recording company Sketch Post.

Conference Day 1

The conference kicked off with the pre-conference dinner. The dinner was an opportunity for participants to get to know one another and meet the mentors and facilitators who would be guiding them in their activities.

To align with the principle of team-based discussions and small groups, the participants were grouped into 10 groups of eight. Care was taken to ensure that each group had a diverse mix of students, public servants, educators, freelancers and private sector professionals. A facilitator was also assigned to each group.

A short icebreaker activity was conducted for participants to find their groupmates and facilitators based on a series of clues provided to them. Participants could proceed to dinner once they were successful in finding their groupmates and respective facilitator.



Two participants comparing clues to find their teammates.

As they dined, they also browsed the artwork and thematic boards that illustrated the themes from the mobile diary. On each of the thematic boards, a list of questions based on the respective themes was attached. Here, participants had to select one of the questions for discussion with their groupmates. Following the group discussion, which was guided by the facilitators and with input from the mentors, participants were then asked to identify an issue related to disruption of interest to themselves. The purpose of these activities was to get the groups to start discussing about their topics of interest and to serve as inspiration for the next day. Table 2 shows the questions that were provided for each theme.

Table 2: Questions that were provided for each theme

	Themes	Questions
1.	Cities & Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to 30% of young Singaporeans have considered emigrating (moving away from Singapore either long term or short term) in the next five years. Is this an issue for Singapore? • What makes Singapore home?
2.	Elephants in the Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can Singapore be a post-racial society? • Elite vs elitism? • What's stopping us from giving less meaning to grades?

	Themes	Questions
3.	#Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is doing well academically the only way to reach your goals? If not, what can we do to change this perception? • How can we address the gender imbalances in achieving goals?
4.	Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness, but at whose expense? • What is something/someone/someplace that makes you happy, but that can be taken away?
5.	How Do We Live?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (How) can we live with 6.9 million? • Fill in the blank — man_machine
6.	Identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does race still divide us? Why or why not? • What are the emerging identities in Singapore?
7.	I Remember	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should we balance development and conservation? • How should we evaluate the value of a place? Do we rely on public or expert opinion?
8.	Mission Impossible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Singapore a good place to experiment niche lifestyle?
9.	Rights & Obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there trade-offs between individual and collective rights? Why or why not? • How would you care for those who fall through the cracks? (e.g., delinquency, adults with special needs?)
10.	Salient Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick one of the issues on this board. How would you address them? • Other than the issues highlighted here, what are other salient issues? Why does it matter?
11.	What is Family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes a family? • Is it important to start a family?
12.	Who is Your Community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we create more opportunities for shared experiences? • How can we create communities in diverse spaces?

Conference Day 2

The second day of the conference featured a welcome address by Mr Janadas Devan, Director of IPS, and a panel of three distinguished speakers: Mr Chng Kai Fong, Managing Director of Economic Development board; Dr Ad Maulod, Research Fellow at Centre for Ageing Research and Education; and Dr Crystal Abidin, Lecturer at Deakin University and Postdoctoral Fellow at Jönköping University. The session was moderated by Dr Natalie Pang, Senior Research Fellow at IPS. Each panellist injected depth and shared insights in three specific areas of disruption: work, family and culture. Mr Chng reminded participants of Singapore's relationship with our regional neighbours; Dr Ad highlighted the need to re-humanise ageing; and Dr Crystal spoke about how the Internet has disrupted traditional discourses of sociality, self-presentation and identity.



(From left to right) Dr Crystal Abidin, Mr Chng Kai Fong, Dr Natalie Pang and Dr Ad Maulod.

Following the panel session in the morning, participants got into their teams to start work on the day's activities. These were divided into three parts. The first was another round of identifying the issues they would like to work on. This was followed by a lightning session where each group was given two minutes to briefly present the issue they had selected and why they selected it. After lunch, the groups worked together on a concept plan, where they delved deeper into their selected issue and brainstormed solutions that addressed their issue. Their solutions were then presented to the conference participants during dinner.

Throughout the day's activities, the groups were supported by their facilitators, as well as mentors who roved around and provided comments, suggestions and insights on their solutions.

Overall, social divides, or the lack of social mixing, was highlighted as a key issue by an overwhelming number of groups. In turn, the solutions proposed attempted to offer some way of encouraging or inducing interaction between people from different backgrounds. Often, groups suggested doing so by "matching needs to resources", or by bringing people together through common interests. Proposals also commonly focused on fostering social interactions within specific geographical areas, such as the neighbourhood, and encouraging volunteerism.

Group Presentations

Group 1

The group identified social divides in Singapore as the issue to be tackled. They explained that social divides exist based not just on social class among Singaporeans, but also with other "disenfranchised communities" including migrant workers and children with disabilities. Current efforts, the group noted, were either ad-hoc and transactional or hierarchical, and thus they called for initiatives to build long term and meaningful relationships through consistent interaction. Doing so would allow us to develop a sense of empathy and greater understanding of diversity, as well as understand the needs of each target community and thus provide support accordingly.

The group proposed two initiatives. First, they suggested tapping on existing popular mobile applications such as platforms to match resources to needs. For example, they said that the popular GrabFood mobile application, a food delivery service, could have a function integrated into it that allows users to order an additional meal to be donated to those in need. They also proposed integrating a skill-matching feature, in which users indicate the skills they possess and in what ways they would like to utilise them to help others, with the app matching these users with those in need of those skills. Furthermore, the app could integrate a feature that promotes community events that would appeal to the shared interests of a broad range of residents — for example, sports activities, groceries swaps and financial literacy classes. They explained that this would help foster interaction during the course of participation.

Second, they proposed "place interventions" to support integration of various communities in Singapore. For the workplace, they proposed a "Lunch Tags" initiative, where employees are encouraged to have lunch with someone they would not normally do so, be it with colleagues from a different department or building, as a way of bridging divides between groups. They also suggested that employers grant their employees two days of "Corporate Social Responsibility Leave" annually as an incentive for employees to partake in volunteering.

Furthermore, the group explained that migrant workers currently largely congregate within certain enclaves, hence we should increase their accessibility to other places, in order to broaden the range of places in Singapore that we can all come in. To

that end, they proposed introducing concession entry to migrant workers at places such as museums and cinemas.

Group 2

The group engaged the issue of being able to have civic conversations with one another, noting the importance of having a common space where diverse views are respected. To achieve this, they stated four conditions that needed to be met: first, we have to be ready to create “safe spaces” for such conversation; second, we need to be equipped with the emotional literacy to accept different viewpoints; third, stakeholders should be encouraged to look beyond narrow self-interest to consider the collective good; and fourth, clear objectives for the conversations should be set so that participants discuss with an end in mind to achieve something beneficial.

The group provided two suggestions on how the common space for civic conversations can be crafted. First, free activities that draw diverse participants should be organised, with activities that involve face-to-face interactions and sustained conversations so that participants can build an understanding of others’ perspectives and the rationale behind their thinking. Second, facilitators of these activities — for example, art instructors — should act as “influencers” to imbue participants with the appropriate values for having civic conversations.

Group 3

The group also identified social divides in Singapore as a salient issue to be addressed. They espoused the need to create conditions where people from different backgrounds can collaborate with one another. They proposed a mobile application that would encourage and facilitate volunteer work as a way of fostering social mixing, but acknowledged that volunteerism is not seen as important to Singaporean youths.

Therefore, they explained that the app should abide by three principles. First, as a shared platform, it should be accessible to all and open to anyone to develop. Second, it should allow users to share their experiences of what they had done, as a way of getting buy-in from users. Third, the app should function as a marketplace in which anyone can contribute his or her ideas.

The app will thus allow users to post available volunteer activities for others to partake in, and serve as a channel for matching activities to what users have the bandwidth for. The group also suggested a “black box” feature, in which users commit to an unknown volunteer activity that would only be revealed to them after they have selected their “black box”, citing the appeal of similar products available commercially.



Participants brainstorming solutions for their selected issue

Group 4

The group looked at the issue of matching manpower to employment and volunteering opportunities. They recognised that information asymmetry impedes effective matching, which leads to an untapped labour pool that includes housewives, seniors and students who have the time and desire to work and volunteer. They also highlighted the need to include those who are looking for casual or part-time employment by creating flexible arrangements for them.

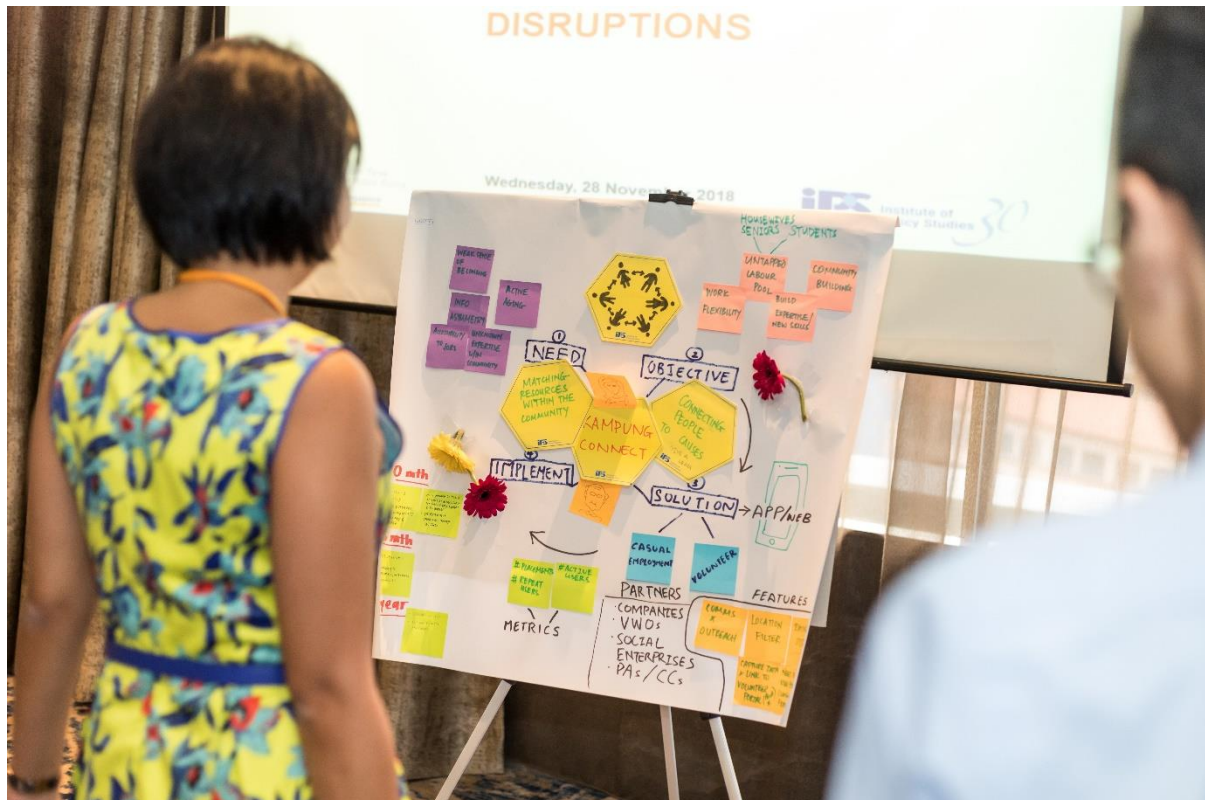
To address the problem, the group proposed a platform they named “Kampung Konnect”, which would be available as a mobile application and/or website. They suggested liaising with enterprises that are hiring, so that users on the platform can be matched to positions available. For volunteering opportunities, they proposed partnering with Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs), the People’s Association and other community-based organisations to help amplify the reach of those organisations. They also stated that the platform would allow users to search for opportunities by location, have a rating system through which users can review the employers and organisations, and be available in different languages.

Group 5

Starting from the premise that low-income families and their children may lack financial literacy and role models for success, Group 5 proposed a family engagement programme that tethered incentivised financial goal-setting and literacy training to the child’s educational achievement, targeting both parents and children for intervention across the same time span. Working with family service centres, this programme would target low-income families with near-working age youths. Families

would also have access to financial literacy experts who are able to advise them on how to set financial goals.

The group planned for an initial start of five families, with each family receiving \$400 in cash incentives over a year as long as they have fulfilled certain conditions (e.g., the child's performance at school or parents meeting their financial goals). Children would also receive tutoring sessions, as well as short-term employment stints at certified agencies. The latter could also provide a leg-up for children to obtain good jobs in the future and expose them to corporate settings.



An example of a solution created by participants and presented during the conference dinner.

Group 6

The group proposed a “disruption” to the education system by switching the emphasis from grades to skillsets. First, they suggested new criteria to determine scholarship recipients. Instead of awarding scholarships to students with stellar educational performances, it could also take into account students with less stellar grades, but who have a passion in the arts, music or sports. Second, they suggested that schools could prepare students earlier on for work by developing their skillsets, connecting them to the right people and providing networking opportunities. Lastly, they suggested a hybrid model of tertiary education, where students will spend two years specialising in a specific skillset such as accountancy and then be pushed out to complete apprenticeships or internships.

Group 7

The group chose to discuss the education system in Singapore, identifying it as one of the factors behind fundamental issues such as social mobility and social cohesion. The main question they decided to address was: how can we integrate new forms of education into the current structure? This involves catering to different sectors of society, different personalities, interests and learning aptitudes and relying on stakeholders other than government agencies or formal institutions to enact change. One way to do so was to engage the private sector more closely. For example, corporations and other organisations could be consulted in the development of the curriculum and invited to participate in ad-hoc school activities to educate students about their career options and the kind of skills that are needed in the future.

The group also suggested the establishment of pilot projects to introduce more diverse programmes to students in Singapore through holiday camps, which could be part-funded by corporations. This will allow students to come into contact with diverse peers and form communities beyond their own schools, as well as explore specific extra-curricular interests like arts and sports. The camps could also involve mentorship programmes among students, with pairs or groups selected with AI algorithms to match learning strengths, interests and personalities.

Exchange programmes could also be developed with alternative education institutions in other countries (e.g. Indonesia's Green School, India's Valley School) to expose local students and educators to other ways of teaching, learning and growing. After allowing several years for educators to learn about how these systems work elsewhere and for students and parents to grow more accustomed to the idea of new systems and models of education, one or more new schools could be established to pilot an alternative system of education to supplement (not replace) the existing one, allowing students more choice and autonomy over their education.



A participant presenting her group's solution to help residents who are struggling to make ends meet.

Group 8

The group cited the lack of social mixing in Singapore as the issue to be addressed. They noted that while void decks had traditionally been the epicentre of residents' social interactions, void decks in newer public housing estates tended to be less suitable for such a purpose.

They proposed a mobile application, which they named "Neighbourly", as a solution designed to encourage residents to work together, connect with one another and thus increase social mixing. They expressed that the purpose of the app was for communities to craft ground-up ways of meeting and interaction, to form meaningful and purposeful relationships and thus improve social cohesion.

To that end, the app would have four features. First, it would be a platform to match residents who require help to those who are able to offer assistance. For example, neighbours could offer to help take care of children whose parents have to work at night. Second, it would encourage meetups within the community by promoting common spaces for doing so. For example, the group proposed converting void decks into "makerspaces" — which are communal creative spaces where people work on projects together — for children to play and interact in a collaborative, non-competitive way. They also pointed out that this could help low-income children acquire skills for operating the technological tools that they otherwise may not have access to.

Third, the app would assist residents in giving away things that they no longer require to others who want them. Fourth, residents would be able to create and respond to polls to elucidate the needs and sentiments of the community, which could then be addressed through the first three features of the app.

Group 9

The group was concerned about the people struggling to make ends meet. Calling themselves "Kampong Kakis", they recommended that any solution or strategy aimed at addressing this complex challenge has to be grounded in the notions of "integration with community" and "inclusion of community". For any solution or strategy to be relevant and effective, the starting point entails listening to the stories and concerns of the members from a particular community and taking into account their voices. Based on conversations with one of the conference's mentors, the group decided to limit their project to one housing block in the Cassia estate, which comprised the former residents of Dakota Crescent.

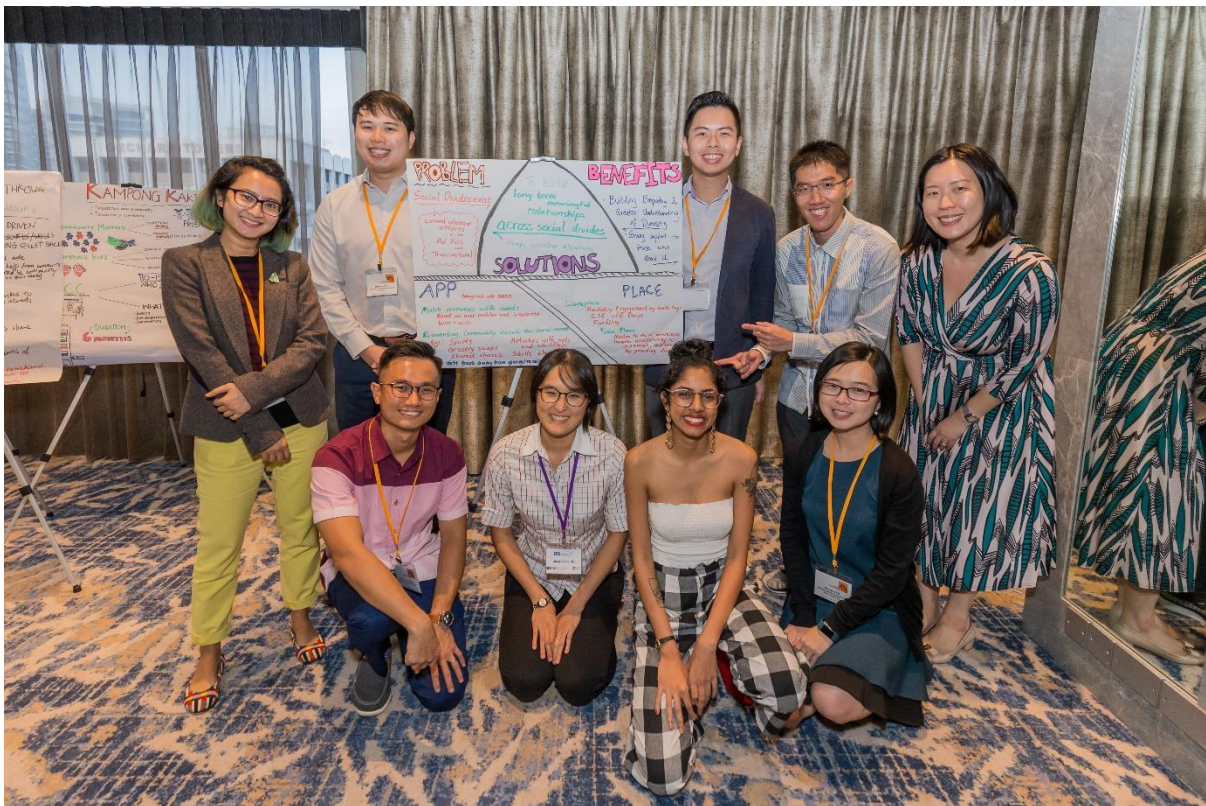
The first phase of the group's proposed six-month project would see them carry out "community mapping" to identify the leaders from the community, in addition to other stakeholders such as family service centres, who could help to introduce the group to the wider community. The second phase, called "Kampong Kopi", would consist of sessions to establish rapport with the residents and surface their concerns. This process of engaging the community and having continuous dialogue would culminate in the formation of a Cassia Community Council in the final phase. Besides the residents, the council would be made up of social workers and researchers, and the aspiration of the council would be to "transform residents' perspectives into policies". A policy advocacy report would be published eventually and perhaps more

importantly the key points raised in the discussion would be disseminated to the residents.

Group 10

The group proposed building a space where users could share their views openly and honestly. Thus, they proposed an online platform that could facilitate proper conversations around highly divisive topics, akin to a “Tinder for social issues”². This platform would “match” users based on their views on a specific topic. For example, users who have opposing views on topics such as whether to repeal section 377A of the Penal Code would be paired together and they would then have an open and genuine discussion on the topic. The purpose of such conversations is to build empathy by understanding the other person’s perspective on an issue. In order to ensure that the app only attracts serious conversationalists, the group suggested a rating system based on the quality of the conversation and interaction. The group also hopes that these online interactions could spill over to the offline space and that two people with opposing views could end up learning to befriend one another.

Most of the proposals reflect current debates on inequality and social divides in Singapore. It is the hope of the organisers that the ideas generated by the participants, although in their infancy, could be picked up and further developed or inspire new initiatives to tackle an issue that clearly has traction with the broader Singaporean public.



Participants at the end of the conference with their presentation board

² “Tinder” is a mobile dating app.

Conclusion

Young Singaporeans Conference 2018 set out with the following aims: a) to provide a platform for participants of diverse backgrounds and interests to come together, b) to provide opportunities for youths to reflect and engage in issues of concern to them and to brainstorm for creative solutions and ideas to resolve them. These aims were achieved through scaffolded activities involving participants in the process of identifying, reflecting, engaging and creative production of ideas. These would not have been possible without in the first place, a committed cohort of participants, facilitators and mentors.

Useful feedback was provided by facilitators about the conference as well as their suggestions on how future YSCs could be improved. For example, while some of the facilitators appreciated participants' diversity in terms of age and profession, others pointed out the lack of representatives from the people sector, specifically, non-governmental organisations. One facilitator also pointed out the positions of privilege and class that the conference participants enjoyed, in the sense that those with certain privileges and of a certain class make up a dominant proportion of participants in the room. Such reflections evoked important questions we need to ask in any dialogue, sandbox, or participative meeting in Singapore: Who gets to participate? How can an inclusive and safe environment be created for people of different backgrounds to participate? While some facilitators felt that the task of designing a solution to an issue was challenging, especially given the limited amount of time they had, they did enjoy the various conversations and discussions that took place. Even antagonistic viewpoints were met with patience and a willingness to listen and understand those views.

Appendix 1: List of Creative Submissions

	Name	Title of Submission	Genre
1.	K. CHENG	The Social and Cultural Capital of Singapore's DIY Electronic Music Scenes	Written work and photo essay
2.	N. CHOO	Disruption	Written work
3.	E. CHUA	Commencement Speech to the NUS Graduating Class of 20XX: Disruptions	Written work
4.	GOH T.H.	Disruptions in Work, Family and Culture	Written work
5.	J. HU	Disruptions	Photo essay
6.	J. KOH	Closure	Written work
7.	T. KWEK	Confronting Disruptions	Written work
8.	V. KWEK	Disruptions in Work, Family and Culture	Written work
9.	LAU Y.C.	Game of Inequality	Written work
10.	J. LEE	Changes in Family Structures	Written work
11.	J. LEE	NA	Photo essay
12.	LEE J.J.	Artificial Intelligence: The Greatest Disruption in the Future	Written work
13.	T. LIM	Drums	Video
14.	LOO Z.	A Facebook Status	Written work
15.	LOOI C.H.	NA	Written work
16.	D. MENON	NA	Written work
17.	N. MERCHANT	Disruptions: Views of a Singaporean Millennial	Written work
18.	A. NG	"Disruptions"	Photo essay
19.	NG B.G.	Five Implementation Principles to Help the Elderly into a Smart Nation	Written work
20.	G. NG	The Critic's Guide to #HFWSG	Written work
21.	D. ONG	NA	Photo essay
22.	ONG Y.L.	Disruptions — A Lack Paradigm	Written work

	Name	Title of Submission	Genre
23.	J. PARANJOTHY	The Period Problem	Written work
24.	POH S.H.	Perspectives	Written work
25.	POW J.K.	Sex Disrupted: Mediating 377A between Belief and Position	Written work
26.	K. SHIA	The Impact of Generation “Swing” on Technological Disruptions	Written work
27.	SWEE X.P.	Impact of “Disruptions” to Work	Written work
28.	P. TAN	Insidious Beth Splice	Video
29.	TAN S.M.	A Photo Essay	Photo essay
30.	S. TAN	Disruption of Technology in the Community	Written work
31.	TAY M.L.	NA	Photo essay
32.	A. WAGLE	A Disrupted World of Work: A Singaporean Youth Perspective	Written work
33.	D. WAN	NA	Written work
34.	D. YAM	NA	Photo essay
35.	K. YAP	NA	Photo essay
36.	YONG Y.Q.	Disruptions	Written work
37.	S. ZAINAL SHAH	“Disruptions” in the areas of Work, Family and Culture	Written work
38.	N. L. ZAINUDDIN	NA	Written work

Appendix 2: List of prompts featured in the mobile diary study

Personal Prompts

1. Describe your day. Was there anything of particular significance or worth remembering?
2. Take a picture of something that frustrates you or brought you happiness now. Provide a caption.
3. What is your biggest fear?
4. Are we all head and no heart?
5. What are some of the values that define you? For example, meritocracy, kindness, honesty, integrity, aspiration towards equality?
6. Think about the one person in your social network who is different from you. In what ways are they different?
7. How was your commute today?
8. If you had a choice of living abroad or in Singapore, which would you choose? Where would you go and why?
9. If you could bankrupt any person, company, country or organisation who would it be?
10. What's the least important thing to others but it's very important to you?
11. What are you proud of, but never have an excuse to talk about?
12. If you could intervene during any historic event, changing history, what would it be?
13. If you could instantly become an expert in something, what would it be?
14. What does success mean to you?

Topical Prompts

1. #ReadyForRepeal or #keep377A? Why?
2. Do you prefer to make a choice or allow an algorithm to decide for you?
3. Who should care for the older population in Singapore?
4. Do you agree with this statement: Everyone in Singapore is racist. Why?
5. What is the one pertinent issue that Singapore is currently facing? How would you address it?
6. Describe your ideal living arrangement and environment.
7. Describe and explain one place in Singapore that has special significance to you.
8. Would you support a move to ban plastic bags from supermarkets?
9. What is one alternative lifestyle that you heard about and would like to try?
10. Could you describe a shared experience within your neighbourhood?
11. If you could control Singapore Budget, how would you spend it?

Appendix 3: Thematic poster boards

"While in the long term, I would like to settle in Singapore, I would also like to spend some time living in another ASEAN country. Particularly I am keen to spend time in Indonesia. With the largest population and GDP in ASEAN, Indonesia is also a growing entrepreneurial hot-spot. The country has a young population and is culturally vibrant. It would be an exciting place to explore professional and personal opportunities."

"I will choose to stay in Singapore. This country has given me so much - from an education to a scholarship. I realised that what I have today is because of the system that was built by our forefathers and our leaders. I have a duty to make sure Singapore a better place for future Singaporeans."

CITIES & COUNTRIES

"Europe (UK or Germany) great work life balance, more open mindedness, better socialising skills as compared to Asian countries."

"I'd like to live in Switzerland and experience the Swiss standard of living. I'd probably relocate with my significant other. And we'd both be professionals/expat educators tapping on Singapore's branded education system."

"Safe, clean, four seasons and not all humid!"

"I have the internet. I can communicate with the outside world in the safe home base of Singapore."

"We need to stop using assessment for placement and sorting purposes only. Broaden the criteria for admissions to schools and companies, and give meaning to the grades that students are getting."

"I think social mobility is the main issue at hand. As an educator, I believe it starts young and education plays a big part as a social leveller/booster."

"Opinions are so tethered to emotion, which in turn develop thick [unyielding] ideology. This is made much worse by most people's apathy to explore outside what they know (meaning they never learn after a certain point). There could be more platforms for different viewpoints to meet through friendships."

"I do think there is a growing want amongst the Millennials and Gen Zs to stop using race as an identifier. That what race we belong to shouldn't affect what we achieve in life and that we therefore shouldn't see race. On the other hand, there's an argument for the preservation of culture and heritage [which] is tied closely with race. And that by celebrating those elements of one's heritage, you can't be entirely post-racial."

"I feel people I am surrounded with [people who] generally don't prioritise systemic discrimination as an issue of concern. I think it's because people don't really give much thought to structures. They tend to focus on individual agency without thinking about the contexts that shape choices."

ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM



"Success to me means being healthy, contented, having clarity in thought, pursuing something you enjoy (need not be work), being able to give and love, being loved, and being with family and friends."

"I would spend more on effort to cushion the negative effects of gentrification"

"Being a young working mother, and managing to juggle work, my kid, family and other commitments! Every day is a little victory."

"Success means being able to be in my 'ikigai', which means being able to do something I love, which is also what I am good at, also something the world needs and something that I can be paid for!"

"While there are many people who pursue alternative routes in education, there are just not enough narratives to convince people that scoring As and having an university education is not the only route; and other routes are definitely not lesser in any way."

"Success, to me, is reaching the pinnacle of what one could possibly achieve in one's chosen field."

"I wish there were more platforms to experiment, undefined spaces for adults to roam and pick up a new craft easily. The possibility is there but the perceived social boundaries are quite offputting!"

"I joined the force truly based on passion and the love for the job. Not because of the money, choices I was forced to make etc."

"Spending the weekend here with my husband and we had a lovely day walking around Taipei, shopping and snacking. But the highlight of my day would most probably be our unplanned stop at the Johnnie Walker pop-up store in the 新光三越 (Shinkong Mitsukoshi department store) area. It was particularly nice to take a moment away from our planned itinerary, have a drink and just chill for a bit."

"Happiness is when I get to pursue my hobbies, such as sketching."

"Chill holidays in the Maldives with no care for the [world]."

"Quality time with my daughter."

"#truelove"



"Commuting on the train was okay today!! But the buses were too crowded!!! I missed two buses before getting on."

"An algorithm could be useful in suggesting an outcome, but I would prefer to retain the ability to decide. I think that it is a learning experience - both in terms of the decision making process and the need for me to face the consequences of my eventual decision."

"My ideal living arrangement is to have my parents in an adjacent unit so that I can check on them or help them whenever necessary. In an ideal situation, there should be a garden for both young n old to use (for gardening, play, relaxation and exercise) and ample me-spaces for each family member. This makes living together comfortable."

HOW DO WE LIVE?

"A place that is safe, clean and functional; one with a strong communal/community spirit; one with rich bottom-up and grassroots initiatives; one where people are free to speak and express their opinions respectfully and differences are honoured; one that is kind and caring; one where every individual is given equal opportunity to succeed in life; and one where excessive stress and competition can give way to a more relaxed and less demanding way of life."

"I would prefer to have the best of both worlds - algorithm to suggest options & I get to decide! Like what Netflix and YouTube videos are doing already."

"It was a fairly good experience taking the MRT today. People should not complain over the price hike because our public transport system is affordable, pleasant and efficient compared to other global cities, and so if people want an even better travel experience, they should be prepared to pay a little more."

IDENTITIES

"Hufflepuffs value hard work [with] dedication. They're kind, just and fiercely loyal. I guess those qualities do define me to a certain extent."

"Being an IJ girl I was taught many values and morals. Which shape me to who I am today, a vocal, fearless and god fearing person."

"As the sole breadwinner of the family, job security is important to me. I also want my wife to be happy taking care of our child. So when my wife gets stressed or upset, I actually get anxious due to my inherent need to take care of my family."

"Being able to make a positive difference - be it to an individual, a group, or even society at large. Being able to do the above, while still being able to keep to my own personal principles."

"I ground myself on working towards equal opportunities."

"I used to live by the value of meritocracy but I am starting to doubt this value. [Do] our merits define our life, especially when how our merits are assessed may not be [fair] to everyone?"

"Tampines, a neighbourhood centre. Words probably cannot describe the place. Just like this kiddie ride which has been removed since I last took a picture of it earlier this year."

"I miss the Virtualand arcade that used to be in the Bugis Junction basement. I made so many friends there. Now it's just a Challenger flagship store."

I REMEMBER...

"Commonwealth secondary school. It's the place that I discovered myself, and also met my childhood sweetheart (whom I'm marrying next month)."

"There are many spots in Singapore which are strongly linked to particular stages of my life - where I had my first job (Tanjong Pagar Central), where I used to hang out with my friends after secondary school (Orchard) or JC (Tampines Mall), where I had my first home and started my family (Serangoon North). I wouldn't pick any one of them over others - each was special to me at a different stage in my life and for different reasons."

"Commonwealth/Queenstown has a lot of significance to me because it was where my grandmother lived and where I spent a lot of time as a kid but also when I went to university. Being there also reminds me of Singapore, as we juxtapose the growing development with the heritage of this town."

"Marina Bay Area. When I host overseas partners, I always bring them to see the view at night, something I'm so proud of Singapore."

"Tanjong Pagar is a place of special significance to me. It's where my office is, and so it is like a second home to me. It is a place I feel proud to show my foreign friends around as it has a good mix of HDB (old blocks at Tanjong Pagar Market and newer ones like Pinnacle@Duxton), shophouses, offices, hawker centre and heritage all within the city centre. As such, I feel it is the best example of a microcosm of Singapore, and a true mixed used district. Being in between Chinatown and Raffles, Tanjong Pagar enjoys the confluence of characters between the other 2 districts."



"I would like to try a minimalist lifestyle."

"There are no silver bullet solutions, and it could impose undue cost on the lower income as there many second or third uses for plastic bags."

"I hope to experiment a socialite's life. Why does eating Michelin-starred cuisine warrant Instagram posts, [is] the food really so delicious, and wouldn't Jamie Chua get sick and tired of collecting Birkin bags?"

"Yeah why not [ban plastic bags]. Granted, we'd need to educate the public on the pros of doing so but I gather if you start charging for bags, people will start bringing their own to supermarkets. #cheap"

"Fewer working days! Where additional [non-working days] can either be used to pursue interests or skills in a structured way, or social projects."

RIGHTS & OBLIGATIONS

"#ReadyforRepeal We cannot equate what some consider to be [a] sin to be written in our law as a crime."

"There should be more support from the government for the needy older people. In my neighbourhood in Tiong Bahru there are a few old uncles and aunts that have to straight out ask for help, that I see sleeping on people's door stoops. One lady grew up in the area - she recounted to me about experiencing the Bukit Ho Swee fires over breakfast one day. (She sat across from me eating half a sandwich that someone came to give her.) At first I found it quite presumptuous for people to straight out ask for help but [I've realised] it's become our job to support them because the [government] certainly isn't doing enough."

"Education and health care should continue to receive solid funding as these are important pillars to the future of our country."

"#ReadyforRepeal because giving equal rights to LGBT individuals does not in any way infringe on the rights of non-LGBT individuals."

"Everyone should care for the older population."

"It is unconscionable that we as a society are choosing to criminalise the innate behaviours and desires of a group of people within our society."

"[But] also, the older population should care for themselves! Get out, meet people, learn new things, [and] remain energised!"

"Everyone [should take care of the elderly]. Without them, there is no Singapore. Every one of them played a significant part in turning Singapore from a 3rd to 1st world country."

"I'd say to keep 377A as this is the most pragmatic stance for Singapore given a fairly large proportion of the population who still believes in the traditional definition of marriage. Notwithstanding the law is not actively enforced, keeping it is the best compromise for all parties at this stage."



SALIENT ISSUES



"If I could control the Budget, I would invest more into entrepreneurship which is really not our strength at the moment."

"Demands of work place are changing. Jobs today may not stay the same [tomorrow]. Can't rely on same skill set till retirement."

"To create a more compassionate and future-ready society, I would set aside budget to support more start-ups and ground-up initiatives to help the arts, sports, social service and grassroots scene to flourish. Funds can also be set aside to help and level up the truly needy in society - those with special needs, mental illness, and other chronic illnesses. Those who are stuck in an inter-generational poverty trap should also benefit from this help."

"I would devote more resources to the young, particularly in rekindling and entrenching a love for reading in the face of a countrywide obsession with technology. Awareness of national affairs and the world around us is frightfully low among some segments of our youth and population. Reading - in all forms including newspapers and books - must become a way of life if we want to build a more empathetic, compassionate and well-informed society in the long haul, and counteract the fixation on technology which is growing among the young."

"I think social mobility is the main issue at hand. As an educator, I believe it starts young and education plays a big part as a social leveller/booster."

"Mistrust from the Gen Y or millennial Singaporeans of the top-down, authoritarian approach of governance, which worked well in the founding years, but now requires more transparency, openness and ground-up voices and initiatives."

WHAT IS FAMILY?

"As someone who doesn't plan to marry, I would love to cohabit with other single friends."

"I'd say to keep 377A as this is the most pragmatic stance for Singapore given a fairly large proportion of the population who still believes in the traditional definition of marriage. Notwithstanding the law is not actively enforced, keeping it is the best compromise for all parties at this stage."

"I've always been excited by the idea of retirement villages. Where older Singaporeans can live independently, mingle with friends and participate in meaningful activities. Of course, medical services will be available within the village itself but by and large our older adults will be able to live independently. I'm excited to hear feedback from residents of the Admiralty retirement Kampung after a couple of years of staying there."

"One pertinent issue Singapore is currently facing: declining birth rate. I think this is a result of our lifestyle and preference. To tackle the root of the problem, we have to understand why it is important to start a family, and to reproduce."

WHO IS YOUR COMMUNITY?

"My friend from the States who is working in SG. Japanese Nigerian who grew up in the UK and States. [Different] upbringing and [different] cultural background. But we are connected by our faith and independent and driven nature."

"I feel people I am surrounded with [people who] generally don't prioritise systemic discrimination as an issue of concern. I think it's because people don't really give much thought to structures. They tend to focus on individual agency without thinking about the contexts that shape choices."

"Every Diwali, my neighbours share their desserts and snacks with us. They pass us a box containing different types of murukku, poori and traditional sweets. Likewise, during Chinese New Year and Raya, my family visits our neighbours and we share pineapple tarts and homemade dishes. I find this exchange of food a bonding experience as it fosters greater relationships between us neighbours which is important especially since we live in such close proximity."

"I often meet up [with] my old buddies from secondary [school] through a sports [session], either soccer or basketball."

"Soccer at the void deck. Running away from police who come to check and advise against it."

"The hawkers know their customers and vice versa, people help one another, people say hi to one another. It's a very heartwarming place."

"I live in Aljunied GRC and before that Hougang SMC, so every GE, the neighbourhood bustles with excitement. The vibe is totally different from anywhere else in Singapore. As if the entire country has pinned [its] democratic hopes on this one area of Singapore. I could be exaggerating but come by next GE and experience it yourself. A truly unique Aljunied-Hougang experience."