

**YOUNG  
SINGAPOREANS  
CONFERENCE**



## Cultivating a Singapore Creative Class

**20-21 November 2008  
Orchard Hotel**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The Institute of Policy Studies held its Young Singaporeans Conference on 20-21 November 2008 entitled "Cultivating a Singapore Creative Class". The Creative Class refers to a core of innovators, designers, artists and other high-skilled knowledge workers in various fields that generate economic value and cultural buzz. The conference addressed different aspects of how a creative class could be cultivated in Singapore. It was attended by 70 outstanding young Singaporeans from all sectors of society. The programme sheet with the list of speakers can be found at the end of this report.

### **Session I: Where are the Singapore Stars? Two Views**

2. Speakers of the first session explored the overarching questions of who we might consider Singapore's creative talents and how we could nurture more. Dean Kishore Mahbubani said that Singapore had many 'stars and heroes' but this was not evident as the country constantly undersold itself. He chose to cite the 'stars' in political leadership and the public sector who contributed to public policy innovations and the success that Singapore was today. Even emerging giants like China and India, he said, recognised these innovations. Singaporeans needed then to find ways to talk about and celebrate all manner of creative talent and not wait for affirmation of that talent from overseas, or by the Western media.

3. On how to nurture more creative talent, Mr Ho Kwon Ping said he would prefer to approach the question of what were the right conditions and environment for talent to arise from 'anywhere and everywhere'; from open competition at every level; rather than to focus resources on hot-housing people picked to be champions at some early age. That was a model that worked primarily in the sporting arena but had limited application for other fields of endeavour. He cited how some of today's celebrated creative talents dropped out of the formal education system. There needed to be opportunities for people of alternative talents to go through broad-based educational curriculums. Or there needed to be experimental education systems that could throw up such talent.

4. Dean Kishore and Mr Ho also emphasised the need for a Singapore ethos or 'mental infrastructure' that welcomed new ideas, foreign talent, cultural, social and political diversity. This was certainly an area of concern to participants. Participants also mentioned that the Asian virtue of modesty made it difficult for us to develop narratives to 'brag' about our creative talent.

### **Session II: Society and Creativity**

5. Speakers of second session explored the more specific question of how society or the 'people climate' of a place would affect the emergence of creative talent. Associate Professor Mansoor bin Abdul Jalil said the national psyche had change to be more conducive for research. People here were constrained by the exam-oriented, problem-solving culture, as well as their fear of failure, lack of conviction and passion. Singaporeans were good at dealing with defined problems but were less equipped to

define problems or deal with less structured information needed for creative endeavour. They would need to learn to question received wisdom of experts.

6. Mr Haresh Sharma said social pressures and the education system tended to 'discourage creativity' or the pursuit of the arts. Singaporeans used to say that the arts was what people who failed in the mainstream did.

7. Ms Joelle Teo Woan Yee compared Singapore with other sinic cultures in vibrant societies like Hong Kong, Taiwan as well as Japan, and suggested that traditional Chinese cultural heritage was not necessarily the barrier to creativity that it was thought to be.

8. In response to participants' questions, speakers agreed that first, the exercise of creativity could be found in many arenas and even in the everyday negotiations of life; we needed to remove the mindset, or 'the cop in our heads' that told us that there were limits to what we could achieve. Second, the broader community needed to be in a place where it would support creative endeavour, rather than punish 'failure' and risk-taking. Different East Asian societies had different national ethos that supported creative endeavour which was lacking or not immediately obvious here.

### **Session III: Business and Creativity**

9. The speakers of the third session shared their views on whether there was a business ecosystem that supported innovation in Singapore. Dr Ting Choon Meng discussed the difficulties he encountered in securing funding from the government for his innovation, describing what he called the 'IBM mentality' which was the preference to support well-established players rather than the unknown start-ups. He suggested that the government play a critical role in funding the 'proof-of-concept' stage to spawn greater home-grown technological innovation.

10. Mr Allan Lim described the process by which he had sought out simple, modest and affordable means to over-come the lack of start-up and venture funding for innovation - fabricating his own machinery, tapping on the community and creative marketing to develop and market his product.

11. Ms Elim Chew said she believed there were no limits to what one could do in a business although she found greater receptivity to her creative ideas overseas. She said that starting a new business venture overseas was difficult though gratifying, and asked if more help could be given to Singaporeans who wished to do so especially for those not *au fait* with the operating culture out there.

12. In the open discussion, the importance of optimism, perseverance and pragmatism were emphasised as key value to making creative businesses flourish. Entrepreneurship had to be driven by a strong and enduring motivation rather than on the prospect of profits or idealism alone. A 'can-do' attitude towards innovation, a 'can-change' attitude with regard to the business environment and a greater synergy

between business and society-based stakeholders would help to foster more innovation-rich industries in Singapore.

#### **Session IV: Politics and Creativity**

13. Speakers of the fourth session discussed the question of how politics might affect the development of a creative class in Singapore. If the core of creative endeavour in the artistic sphere was the transformation or re-configuring of everyday objects and relationships, then, the first speaker Dr Kenneth Tan argued that a close nexus between the state, market and art as suggested by government initiatives to develop Singapore as a 'renaissance city' or a 'creative city', was problematic. The compromises that arts would have to make to the profit motive or its co-optation by the state would affect its capacity for alternative imagination.

14. Mr Azhar Ghani, the second speaker, assessed Singapore against Richard Florida's three key values critical for fostering the growth of the creative class – technology, talent, and tolerance. The access to the latest technology in Singapore was not in doubt, and Singapore had become a magnet of talent signalled by the number of foreign companies that relocated their headquarters here. Over the years, the government had also signalled its tolerance for greater social diversity and what remained was its low tolerance for political diversity.

15. Along those lines, the third speaker, Mr Siew Kum Hong used the regulation of the Internet space to illustrate how he felt restrictive laws constrained expression and creativity, as well as opportunities for spontaneous citizen engagement. It would be citizen engagement he argued, that could help to root otherwise highly mobile foreign talent as well as Singapore's own indigenous creative class.

16. While speakers and participants felt that Singapore was moving in the right direction in terms of political liberalisation, there was no consensus on whether enough Singaporeans wished to be engaged in dealing with broader social and political issues; whether they wished to be 'rooted and cared'; or whether they were just too fearful to step out to take the risks they felt that would entail.

#### **Session V: Dinner Talk**

17. At the dinner session, Mr Nickson Fong illustrated with his life journey, how the development of creative talent was unpredictable, and had to be sustained by a strong sense of self-belief, and making the most of chance meetings and lucky-breaks. Mr Fong had been expelled from school but as he always dreamed of becoming an animator, he went to the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and later the Savannah College of Art and Design where he excelled at it. He gained significant experience in Hollywood as well as Taiwan but was disillusioned with the way that the industries operated in these places. He returned to Singapore and set up his company by accident and owed many of his initial lucky breaks to the mention he received by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in the latter's 2004 National Day Rally speech.

18. At discussion time, Mr Fong emphasised how a risk-taking appetite was necessary for the creative industries to take off. Exposure overseas was also important. Finally, Mr Fong said that he envied how the Koreans made great strides in the creative industries as their sense of nationalism helped to provide the crucial element of self-belief for creative talent, and also garner support from the large Korean companies which wanted to promote indigenous creative endeavours.

#### **Session VI: Singapore and Other Creative Cities**

19. The final speaker of the conference, Mr Peter Ong addressed the question of how Singapore ranked as a 'creative city' that could attract talent and make them happy. Man's desire for progress, a better life, and personal fulfilment meant that places that promised these were attractive, especially to people of talent. The challenge for Singapore was how to improve the number of positive moments that people could experience by living here. Some of the areas that needed to be addressed, especially in attracting the creative class were about people feeling that they were respected; that they were connected; that they could be of value to their community; and, opportunities for personal expression – to be able to be who they want to be.

#### **Session VII: Dialogue Session with Guest of Honour, Minister K Shanmugam**

20. The conference participants presented their thoughts and ideas to Minister K. Shanmugam. In a world defined by change, the key performance indicators of success and winners in any field of endeavour were also constantly changing, they said. Everyone, not just educators should be engaged in this process of redefining and beating out alternative paths to success. The cultivation of a creative class had to start with the family, where parents would learn to tell stories of unconventional success and encourage the sense of self-actualisation in their children. The government had put in the effort to foster creativity and a creative class over the years, but was this approach sustainable in the long run without sufficient ownership from the ground, without such support? Singapore needed its 'superstars', and more should be done to attract them and other Singaporeans overseas, home by the opportunities to take on design projects here. Greater tolerance for diversity would be important and it would be important to ensure that rules, regulations and even grand plans to 'nurture' a creative class did not crowd out creative endeavour.

21. Minister Shanmugam emphasized the need to welcome diversity and foreign talent. The Americans had done this and as a result, the USA outshone the economic achievements of Germany and Japan over the past twenty-five years. He said that Singapore had to realistically identify and develop its own strengths rather than replicate the ways of other countries and places if it would like to be an effective talent magnet. The key ingredient for success was in maintaining conditions such as a basic level of law and order, and a good quality of life, on top of a certain vibrancy, to attract talent from everywhere. Talent could be left to "create" and work with other bright individuals.

22. Noting that a broad spectrum of people were of the sentiment that the PAP dominated political space and perpetuated its political power by limiting freedom of speech and assembly, Minister Shanmugam said that it was necessary to put things in context. Some of the perspectives arose from historical and anecdotal reasons, and from people's own interpretation of the government's actions. The tension between welfare of society and rights of the individual had to be balanced. The policy of not allowing insensitive remarks on race and religion was based on this consideration. Going forward, the government was likely to be more tolerant of diversity and would try to empower citizens. It would, however, take time for Singapore to evolve into what he described as a civilised society where citizens themselves learned to respect each other and pay attention to those from the weaker segments of society. The government could also be expected to be supportive of creative endeavours. At the same time, the government was required to be prudent in doing so as it would be spending public funds on innovations and new ideas from individuals which might not yield the desired results.

23. Recommendations based on the views from the conference that can be taken up by the public, private and civic sectors are:

- A festival to celebrate Singapore's creative talent.
- Studies on what motivates excellence and creativity among Singaporeans at the elite level as well as grassroots level.
- More funds from the government and other sources for the 'proof-of-concept' stage of innovation.
- Modification of the government review process for funding approval of innovation projects.
- Harmonise the Singapore Brand overseas.
- Allow creative enclaves with cultural hybridity to develop organically.
- Allow for Singapore talent to be given substantial design projects here.
- Increase the availability of tertiary-level fine arts and performing arts programmes to change parents' mindsets about careers in these areas.
- Support the establishment of arts and design journals to raise level of excellence.
- Support the establishment of popular science journals to raise awareness of Singapore's contributions to scientific and technological developments.

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## Welcome Remarks

1. Dr Gillian Koh, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies introduced the conference theme and structure to participants. After screening slides of different attractive cities in the world, she asked participants to contemplate where they would rather be in the world. Was it possible to cultivate the 'creative class' in Singapore today? Was it possible to attract creative talent like the participants to choose to stay in Singapore?

2. What was the 'creative class'? Dr Koh cited Richard Florida's concept of the creative class where it comprised of the 'super creative core' and 'creative professionals': The super creative core produced new forms or designed products that could be widely made, sold, and came up with theorems or strategies that could be applied in many cases, or created art forms, music, visual arts. The super creative core consisted of the thought leadership of modern society, such as scientists, engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers, architects, writers, editors and other opinion makers. Creative professionals worked in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries and engaged in creative problem solving, and drew on complex bodies of knowledge in seeking innovative solutions. According to Florida, the creative class values included individuality, meritocracy, diversity and openness. In addition, Dr Koh shared Florida's observations that economic growth tended to happen in areas of high technology, where it was densely populated by talented individuals, and there was tolerance for diversity.

3. What was the economic potential of this creative class? Jim Clifton, in the Gallup World Poll (2007), discovered that the United States had \$10 trillion in unforecasted growth which was generated as a result of 1,000 star innovators and rainmakers consisting of innovators, entrepreneurs, super stars and super mentors choosing to live in the United States. This raised the question of how talent could be attracted to a country and a city. Florida, in *Who's Your City* (2008), expressed that personal life, work, place and finances were factors that shaped the place happiness of the 27,000 Americans surveyed. Job satisfaction, financial status, and place accounted for a quarter of the variance in overall life satisfaction.

4. Florida noted that that the psychological mechanisms which influenced 'place happiness' included whether people felt that place was a source of excitement, stimulation, the source of sense of self and the source of pride and attachment. The factor of the aesthetics of place amongst individuals surveyed on their choice of place ranked the highest. This was followed by the basic services available in the place and the level of tolerance and openness.

5. At the level of the individual, the attractive factors of the choice of place boiled down to the two factors of where one was in the stage of the life cycle, and psychological fit. Individuals' personalities were shaped by five key factors of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Different cities tended to attract different personalities. For instance, Chicago city attracted the outgoing people, those who portrayed high levels of extroversion, low

levels of conscientiousness and neuroticism. There was Atlanta which attracted people who were high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, extroversion and low in openness and neuroticism. Creative cities and regions were found to be conducive for people who were high on openness, neuroticism, low in conscientiousness, extroversion and agreeableness. People who lived in San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles enjoyed 'doing their own thing' with for diversity and openness, but these places were also low on social capital.

6. Dr Koh noted that the Singapore government had put in a lot of effort in making Singapore a global talent magnet. The Renaissance City Report (1999) highlighted the vision of having culture of creativity permeate the lives of every Singaporean, particularly in our schools and in the everyday living environment.

7. Charles Landry's conception of what it meant to be a creative city, Dr Koh said, was where the city was viewed as a living work of art, something that citizens could involve and engage themselves in the transformation of space. In his study of Singapore, Landry observed that "Singapore's strengths embod[ied] its weakness. The advanced industrial model it excel[ed] in implie[d] instrumental rationality, linear and convergent thinking." He saw that Singapore "was better at creating the containers rather than the contents, the hardware rather than the software"; focused on bringing about creativity rather than just allowing it to happen. Dr Koh asked how conference participants felt about the comments as they thought through the broader question of which city they would like to choose to live in as part of the existing creative class in Singapore.

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## Session I

### Where are the Singapore Stars? Two Views

1. The first speaker was Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Executive Chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, and Chairman of MediaCorp Pte Ltd. Mr Ho said that the question of 'where are the Singapore Stars' missed the point and was irrelevant to the core issue of creative talent. Like celestial stars in the sky, Singapore Stars were "everywhere and nowhere". The visibility of these stars was affected by the conditions around them and perceptions of people. Creative talent was also like wild flowers in the field, where it would be difficult to determine the conditions that would result in growth of the species. The paradox of creativity was that the greater focus placed on the cultivation of a few specific stars would reduce the likelihood in which one would end up with any at all. Singapore had taken a top-down approach to identifying and cultivating talent. While this might be possible, say in the area of grooming of sports and athletic champions, this was far more difficult with other creative talent. Even then, it was a pleasant surprise that Singapore won our gold medal at the Paralympics and not at table tennis at the Olympics with all the effort made in that area. The right question then was 'how do we create the right environment for talent to arise?'

2. There were three points to bear in mind in trying to do that. First, creativity, he said, did not manifest itself so readily in academic credentials. Creativity could not be so easily measured. There were fashion designers and even Nobel Laureates that did not do well in school in their early years.

3. Second, seeds of creativity were found in diversity. Uniformity and conformity defined so much of life of Singapore. To address this, for a start, the education system would need to be broad-based and we should learn to value the inquisitive amateurs rather than technocratic specialists. The boundaries of acceptable social behaviour had to be broadened and foreign talent, welcomed, to promote greater diversity.

4. Third, the hallmark of a creative society was its level of tolerance rather than "hipness". The government had taken a planned approach to having fun and creating buzz. Singapore needed to demonstrate it could celebrate, not just tolerate, diversity. He felt the acceptance of gays in society was indeed a signal of tolerance of diversity – a sort of final frontier for tolerance. If there was a flourishing gay community, it would most certainly mean that society would accept the geeks and nerds.

5. Finally, was it anachronistic to speak of 'nation' and 'state' in the context of creating the right conditions for creatives to arise? Yes and no. It was still important for policy makers to think in these terms when framing policies; it was important for them to promote the national interests, because other governments did that. However, the creatives today were not constrained by national boundaries. Competition in the global landscape was locational with talent being centred around vibrant cities.

6. Mr Ho said that the government might like to spot and hot-house talent as they did with the civil service but it would be better to take a different approach with creative talent by ensuring the conditions existed so that creative talent could fulfil their potential no matter how or where they emerged.

7. The second speaker for this session was Dean Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Dean Mahbubani drew the analogy of a Somalian who, because of the rife injustices witnessed in society, would see Singapore as a 'heaven', and be puzzled by how this could happen without the input of stars or heroes in the country. Singapore had many stars and heroes but it did not appear so because the country consistently undersold itself.

8. Dean Mahbubani said there were three different historical phases of stars and innovation that made all the difference to Singapore. In the first wave, Singapore had the three founding fathers Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and Rajaratnam who navigated Singapore through difficult times and made creative decisions in times of crisis. In illustrating how stars were created through the use of narratives, Prof Mahbubani compared Singapore to America, that say, through Mount Rushmore, celebrated its former presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt in a very public manner despite their flaws. We did not do likewise.

9. The next phase saw the rise of stars like J Y M Pillay who made Singapore Airlines into the best airline in the world and Sim Kee Boon who made Changi the best airport in the world. There was Philip Yeo who attracted billions of foreign direct investment into Singapore.

10. The third and current phase has seen the institutionalisation of innovation with, say the Public Utilities Board that had just won the Stockholm water award, achieving the amazing feat of creating water sufficiency in one of the most highly populated countries in the world and the National Parks Board, which has transformed Singapore into one of the greenest cities in the world and finally the Urban Redevelopment Authority with its urban planning.

11. Dean Mahbubani explained that he thought Singapore undersold itself because our minds had been colonised and we chose to believe in the narratives of others rather than create new ones for ourselves. He referred to how we celebrated Nobel Laureates when we needed to realise how much decisions were based on political consideration as much as on merit. Prof Mahbubani said that Singapore was indeed the most creative city in the world today. Chinese leaders and later Indians were inspired and had learnt from what Singapore had achieved, in developing their own countries.

12. He challenged participants to decolonise the mind, relinquish the Western narrative that dominated the media of recognised stars only if they fit that narrative. The time had come for Singapore to listen to itself.

## **Open Discussion**

13. A participant raised the issue of extending diversity and tolerance beyond the social, cultural and economic realm to the political sphere. Mr Ho raised the question of whether growth and creativity came with being the best planned city in the world, which Singapore probably was. The examples that Dean Mahbubani cited, Mr Ho said, were all from the government sector - all part of the same institution, and dominated by another narrative. Dean Mahbubani said that it was possible to find open minds in a politically closed society and also closed minds in an open society. For instance, China was a closed society with an open mind in its ability to adapt to change despite the lack of political freedom, while one could find closed minds in a politically open society like India. The world today was not black or white but different shades of grey.

14. The problem was that there was only one national narrative, and that the presence of other national narratives would reveal more Singapore Stars. Mr Ho opined that a culture where more heroes and stars could arise should be created, and referred to the owner of the highly acclaimed Iggy's restaurant who was a secondary school drop-out and was rejected by many in his job application process. It would be good to know of more of such stories.

15. Another participant raised the question of whether it was appropriate to identify Singapore Stars before they even started working and asked if it was better to pick winners for the enterprise or let winners pick the enterprise. Dean Mahbubani agreed with Mr Ho that winners should not be picked but allowed to emerge and that there was no substitute for open competition.

16. On foreign talent, a participant said that it was not an issue of whether it was right or wrong but about the social compact between them and the locals. Did the speakers think that Singaporeans had been disadvantaged with the policy of attracting them in? Dean Mahbubani said that great cities in the past 2000 years succeeded when they allowed for the inflow of foreign talent. The Tang Dynasty, for instance was the greatest period in Chinese history because it was the most open. China subsequently declined as it became increasingly closed. The paradox of New York was that while it had third world infrastructure, it was extremely vibrant in its 'mental infrastructure' because it was open. Mr Ho said that Singapore could not have a closed society, and that Singapore would only be able to compete on a global scale if it was open to foreign talent. He advocated the cultivation of a Singapore 'ethos' that was nationality-blind as long as foreign talent would share in the development of the country's progress, similar to how for instance, Banyan Tree had created a corporate culture that was able to include people of many nationalities among its employees. Mr Ho was also of the view that the issue of nationality would become less relevant in an increasingly global society.

17. A participant asked whether financing should and could be provided for Singaporean Stars for instance in the form of venture capital. Mr Ho replied that stars usually succeeded despite the presence of adversity and that one had to be wary of the

issue of dependence. In fact, if there were hurdles that entrepreneurs had to jump over, then that was the point at which they could differentiate themselves.

18. A participant said that perhaps the colonisation of minds had come from Eastern not Western culture, where Asians were uncomfortable with self-promotion or with bragging as that could be seen as arrogance in contrast with say, Steve Jobs who had marketed himself as the inventor of the iPhone. Dean Mahbubani said that the fundamental problem was that the global narrative was the Anglo-Saxon one and cited the story of how an ethnic Chinese was sacked for boasting about how well the Beijing Olympics had been on German television. The Western media was closed-minded yet there was a common assumption that it was not. Mr Ho on the other hand, felt that Singapore should seek to break out of the baggage of colonialism that was driving the discourse on the need to fight neo-colonialism. He agreed that Asians who tended to be too self-effacing and consensual in management styles. Was it possible to change this?

19. Was the philosophy behind cultivating a creative class focused on generating economic revenue with little regard about whether some actions might not be socially responsible, asked another participant. Dean Mahbubani said that it was a challenge for well-planned Singapore to allow for some chaos that came with the pursuit of the Arts. Mr Ho said that if the focus on the creative class was purely instrumental or for economic value then it would fail anyway. Creativity should be an end goal in itself. He emphasised the need for broad-based education and cited how experimental schools graded students on effort as well as achievement but these different measures would allow for the less academically inclined yet talented individuals to find ways to shine.

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## **Session II**

### **Society and Creativity**

1. The first speaker was Associate Professor (A/P) Mansoor bin Abdul Jalil, Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, National University of Singapore. He said that hard sciences were not usually associated with the creative process due to their cold and rational image, but at the cutting-edge, the research required profound insight is found only in a creative process. People like Albert Einstein had overturned years of scientific orthodoxy with a single remarkable insight. In technological terms, a seemingly simple invention like the transistor facilitated the creation of devices that helped post-war development.

2. A/P Mansoor laid down some key questions. What conditions were necessary to creative research, and was the Singaporean environment conducive? Singapore had some core strengths: her people were highly educated, and students were determined to do well. However, the exam-oriented culture could present certain constraints in this age. Comparing Singapore and Switzerland which had a similarly-sized population, Switzerland achieved far more in terms of research. Why was this? First, Singapore's exam-oriented culture. Singaporeans were good at answering questions, and this habit was reinforced by pedagogical methods which encourage rote learning with model answers. Second, Singaporeans tended to accept well-structured bodies of knowledge but got lost when information was presented in a less structured form. Singaporeans also tended to regard existing knowledge and the work of experts as gospel truth rather than question these to improve on them. Third, there was a fear of failure which meant that few go off the beaten track, leading to lack of diversity. Few also go into professions that demanded hard work and apprenticeship at least in the beginning. We would jump onto "hot" band-wagons, depending on which fields were in the public eye and attracted funding. Finally, we lacked conviction and passion. If we did not believe in our own output and present it as such, it would be difficult to win converts. Research operated as a marketplace of ideas. The lack of conviction and passion reduced the chances of one's work gaining traction.

3. A/P Mansoor proceeded to identify the traits of four groups of people who did well in research: First, the Japanese. They did not follow Western models of development and had a national characteristic of not being afraid to spend years in quiet solitude in the chosen fields of endeavour. In Japan, there was a whole community that worked below the radar, below the stars that we knew of. Second, the Mainland Chinese. The students and researchers are fearless, flexible, resourceful and nimble. Third, the Westerners. They defined their own success and did not depend on external yardsticks of achievement. Finally, the Jews. Their achievements belied their numbers. They were passionate about their ideas and scholarship, and were zealous in coming up with ideas that challenged existing dogma.

4. Singapore still had some way to go in creating an environment conducive to research. There needed to be a change in our national psyche and this process could take more than a generation.

5. The second speaker was Mr Haresh Sharma, Resident Playwright at The Necessary Stage. He shared the story of how he arrived at his current position of finding and pursuing his passion because of perceived failure through the school system – not getting into the science stream and taking three years to complete his ‘A’ levels. This had given him the room, and special opportunities to take Theatre Studies at university and find his passion in theatre.

6. There were two reasons that Mr Sharma and his friends devoted their time to theatre in university: a ‘serious love of literature’ as well as the desire to give Singaporean voices a place alongside the Shakespeares and Chekhovs of the world. Mr Sharma also enjoyed the social support in collective work, and it was this experience that led him to write plays later on. The first staging of his play took place the year he graduated from university.

7. Mr Sharma felt that it was crucial that one enjoyed the work he or she was doing, and he made the choice to follow his passion even if it had meant some financial sacrifice. However, there were certain social pressures that he faced along the way: in school, the education system discouraged creativity, and it was felt widely that an arts education even at university level was not a ‘practical’ choice.

8. Mr Sharma had certain questions about the way in which the term ‘creativity’ was now being used. Previously, if one failed in the science stream, one would be termed ‘creative’, and then suddenly, the government wanted ‘creativity’ in a hurry. Things seemed to have changed. One of his works, *Off Centre*, was commissioned by the Ministry of Health in the 1990s but later rejected as the non-positive ending was deemed ‘not educational’. Sharma said that he then returned the commission and staged the play himself. However in 2007, the play became the first Singaporean text to be included in the national syllabus for the GCE ‘O’ Level examinations. Mr Sharma used this story to ask implicitly if this ‘change’ in attitudes was real. He felt that Singaporeans were not yet ‘creative’, since we were not to be able to express ourselves in the myriad of ways others did.

9. For Mr Sharma, creativity required the room to operate without fear, and to be accepting of failure. Singapore could afford to have some creativity, but we had to consider how far we wanted to ‘buy’ creativity in favour of cultivating home-grown talent. He left the audience with the following questions: why were we talking about ‘creativity’? Were we talking about creativity as means to an end, or as the end in itself? How did creativity function as part of civil society?

10. The third speaker was Ms Joelle Teo Woan Yee, Lifestyle Journalist at Lianhe Zaobao. She compared Singapore with to two other largely-Chinese societies, Hong

Kong and Taiwan, and suggested that traditional cultural heritage need not be the sort of formidable barrier we thought it was. She also posed some questions to the audience:

- Was creativity measurable?
- How could we compare creativity across cities, when we say that one city is more creative than another?
- In measuring creativity, whose definition of creativity should we use?

11. Having lived in Hong Kong and been exposed to Hong Kong cultural history and productions for a period of time, Ms Teo noted that Hong Kong was very creative both in terms of content and packaging. In addition, Hong Kong media was very involved in the political life of Hong Kong, and news professionals were not afraid to take sides and insert commentary even as they reported on news events. She attributed this liveliness in Hong Kong cultural life to a 'can-do' spirit that present-day Hong Kongers had inherited from their forebearers. Hong Kongers focused on efficiency, operated on the principle that there were always better ways of doing things when constrained by the lack of time and resources.

12. Similarly, she found Taiwan to be rich in cultural life and Taiwanese of all ages eloquent on all issues imaginable. Even though both Taiwan and Hong Kong could be termed very much as 'Asian' in areas such as culture and had hierarchical social structures, these two societies had vibrant cultural life. Historically in Chinese culture, the emphasis on central control had also been tempered by elements 'at the bottom', as illustrated by historical anecdotes and sayings, and the same could be said for instance of Hong Kong today as local politicians and activists retained their voices in spite now being part of the People's Republic of China.

13. Ms Teo suggested that being creative meant we should be able to solve problems, and perhaps the people should look beyond the government to do that.

### **Open Discussion**

14. A participant asked if the establishment of a welfare system would encourage creativity as perceived to be so in Scandinavia. This was especially since in Singapore there was such a stigma associated with failure. While the usual Singaporean take on the welfare system was negative, A/P Mansoor felt that such a system was indeed important for some segments of society. People should not be punished by failure so hard that they were discouraged from pursuing their dreams. In Japan for example, there was widespread respect for artisans and craftsmen who could spend many years creating a sword. The community respected and supported such endeavour. In the same way, in the West, parents did not pressure their kids to take a different path if they wished to go into research. There was also no stigma attached to those who say, terminated their doctoral studies after two years to join industry. The experience was counted as valuable. Nor was there stigma attached to taking a long time to complete the doctoral studies as people aimed to perfect their work. Such spoken and unspoken support from the community would be very helpful.

15. The same participant asked what it meant to be talking about a 'Singapore' creative class. What did speakers think was the Singapore identity and how did it matter? He had been struck by how he was drawn to interact with fellow citizens in his two and a half year stint in India. Mr Sharma said that Singaporeans could identify each other easily through the way they spoke English. Singaporeans were certainly self-effacing, afraid of sticking out, and lacked a certain passion to bring creative projects to fruition. Ms Teo said that in her experience as a journalist, people seemed to have little to say 'on the record' but once she went 'off the record', they became very passionate. In response, another participant added that Singaporeans had a complaint culture but Taiwanese and Hong Kongers in comparison would fight for something better. Even when his acquaintances opted to move out of Singapore, they did not change their mindset. Hence the issue was more of one of attitude than of the environment or society one found himself or herself in.

16. Another participant asked how creativity was linked to civil society. She shared that she had initiated several community projects but had a patchy response with people sometimes citing the fear of persecution by the authorities as that which deterred them from participation. Mr Sharma agreed that sometimes there seemed to be passion but also a lot of constraints and self-censorship that hampered creative social action. Individuals needed the conviction to act and get around 'the cop in the head'.

17. A participant asked if the concept of the 'Singapore Creative Class' itself needed to be examined. Was there a need for a 'Creative Class' per se? She wondered if it was possible that all Singaporeans could be creative, rather than be dependent on a class of creative elites to bring the society through. Another asked how important the question of 'pedigree' was citing how applications for a government scholarship required information about one's history through all the school years. One other participant asked Mr Sharma how was it then that he had 'made' it looking back in his past and what more could be done in Singapore to replicate that.

18. Ms Teo noted that different societies were motivated in different ways. The Japanese were motivated by the thirst of 'revenge'; the Hong Kongers, with the sense that they lived on 'borrowed land, and borrowed time' motivated to find ways to do things quickly. Singapore she said, was a young country and time to develop some clearly definable traits. Mr Sharma said that it was the presence of community support for individual aspirations that would be important. He shared that while he could have chosen to reside say, in New York, he preferred to be in a place with 'his people'. We needed to get rid of the 'cop in our heads' or we would convince ourselves not to do something that we wished we could do.

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## **Session III**

### **Business and Creativity**

1. Mr Hsieh Tsun-Yan, Director of McKinsey and Company Singapore Pte Ltd opened the session as moderator with the assertion that business and creativity were alive and well in Singapore but the challenge was how to allow for more of it to happen.
2. He acknowledged that innovators faced many challenges to gain acceptance of their products. It was inevitable and common for revolutionary innovations to be rejected by businesses. Mr Hsieh gave examples of Kodak turning away the innovation of the photocopier, Xerox turning away the idea of the personal computer, and the Beatles being turned away by music companies.
3. However, Mr Hsieh pointed out, the chances of succeeding for innovators were higher in today's globalised world and level of technology as they were likely to find support and appropriate business strategies for their innovations. The Internet had given rise to greater publicity of ideas and innovations. Mr Hsieh told of the story of the 'accidental innovator' who took the video clip called The Battle of Kruger. He had offered it to National Geographic and Animal World but was rejected. He eventually posted it on YouTube and the clip has received 38,000 hits – a lost opportunity for the two channels. It also illustrated the potential that the Internet represented.
4. He highlighted the importance for innovators to have product knowledge of their innovations and the associated target market segments – an understanding of the innovation's 'natural catchment area'. It is also equally important for innovators to be receptive to new industry players who were willing to develop their products. Businesses on the other hand should adopt an open mind towards new ideas and innovations.
5. Dr Ting Choon Meng, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of HealthSTATS, the first speaker on the panel made the assumption that the business environment in Singapore did not lack creativity. He expressed the concern of not recognising its presence
6. He stated that the process of getting funding from the government was an arduous one that perhaps should change. This was because middle management in government lacked confidence in Singaporean innovators and made-in-Singapore products. There was a preference for more established brands and products from overseas and Dr Ting described this as the 'IBM mentality'.
7. Dr Ting suggested that a way to promote innovative business was to try to 'outsource' risk. Government agencies could take on good ideas and help them come to fruition through a proof-of-concept process that they could fund.

8. The second speaker, Mr Allan Lim, Chief Executive Officer of Alpha Synovate Pte Ltd provided an account of the establishment of his company. The company generated renewable energy in the form of biodiesel from waste, and was the first company in Singapore to retail biodiesel. Prior to the establishment, the founders of the company had no background knowledge in this technology. In the early days, the company received negative feedback on its business viability, and made unsuccessful attempts to raise funds and other support for the innovation.

9. Mr Lim found the solutions to his initial setback. He used simple and affordable methods to develop his innovation, fabricating his own machinery and tapping the community for resources. He also adopted creative marketing as he felt that he would take the opportunity to educate the public on alternative fuels.

10. Mr Lim had this advice for innovators and entrepreneurs

- Be crazy – but not stupid
- Innovation is key – keep trying
- Be honest with yourself – develop a gut feel
- If no one believes you – keep talking
- Stand by your product
- Good things really do happen to good people
- Help yourself before ‘Ah Kong’ helps you

11. The third speaker Ms Elim Chew, founder of 77<sup>th</sup> Street (S) Pte Ltd began her presentation with a video of her work and outlook. Ms Chew said that she found greater receptivity to her creative ideas overseas. She also suggested that there were no limits to what one could do in business and cited creative ideas and strategies that she executed in her business. For example, Ms Chew had created a database for her customers and had introduced membership and subscription fees for her company.

12. In the same vein as the other speakers, Ms Chew stated that starting a new business venture was difficult. The company had met challenges and made losses when branching overseas, for instance, she had been blackmailed. She asked if more help could be made available to overseas Singaporeans especially in dealing with such crises. She said that in contrast, her relative in the similar situation received help from the British High Commission since he was from the United Kingdom.

13. On a different note, Ms Chew spoke of social entrepreneurship. She encouraged individuals and entrepreneurs to contribute back to society. She demonstrated how a publication, ‘Voices’ that she had put together had surfaced the need to listen to and understand youth, resulting in a radio programme along the same lines with greater recognition of youth in general. She suggested that we had the capacity to garner support and participation and had the power to change certain things and influence policies.

14. Ms Chew ended her speech with these questions.
- Could we work collaboratively?
  - Could we grow 'champions'?
  - After finding champions, would we leave them to their own devices or would we groom them to be global players

### **Open Discussion**

15. One participant noted that for creative business to flourish, it was important to have entrepreneurs who had a healthy dose of optimism and determination. Is Singapore a society that rewards optimism and determination? Ms Elim Chew said that there was a lack of support for Singaporeans and especially so for those overseas. The same could be said of social entrepreneurs - that they fell between two stools – government agencies that dealt with social needs and economic policy. She urged Singaporeans to assist and to create change in policies. While he agreed on the need for optimism, Mr Allan Lim also said that it should not be borne from a false sense of exuberance on profits and lofty ideas. He felt that it was good also to be realistic about the dynamic business environment. Dr Ting said that people should not have this notion that getting funding from the government for their ideas was a birthright. It was a privilege. Also that monetary gain alone was not enough to sustain entrepreneurship. It was important to be driven by some stronger and more enduring motivation. Money would just be a pleasant side effect of having succeeded.

16. Another participant said that while strong networks were important, they could not be just the government ones but community ones too. The other point he made was that innovators should be more careful about protecting their intellectual property. Ms Chew agreed that it was important to connect with others. Mr Lim said that research was not coming out of the universities. The system by which to bring ideas in the universities out to the market needed to be strengthened, and barriers, reduced.

17. One participant asked the speakers to name some positive traits in Singapore that drive creativity in the local business environment. Mr Hsieh responded that Singapore's advantage was that it was a microcosm of the world. It had good connectivity and was up-to-date with technology. Dr Ting added that we had a good foundation where people were meticulous but how could we get three steps ahead? Our research community valued integrity so that the world could trust that the work we did was honest. Mr Lim felt that Singaporeans had a good 'can-do attitude' which was valuable to business and enterprises. What was needed now was the 'can-change attitude'. Ms Chew responded by stating that Singapore was efficient and effective but needed to find ways to achieve synergies among various local stakeholders. She urged government agencies to do more to support small-medium enterprises and develop local creative talent rather and not just spend a lot of resources on commissioning foreign firms to do work for them.

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## Session IV Politics and Creativity

1. The first speaker for the session was Dr Kenneth Paul Tan, Assistant Dean (Academic Affairs) and Assistant Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Dr Tan opened his remarks with an overview of his two books: The first, entitled *Renaissance Singapore? Economy, Culture and Politics*, is a collection of essays by civil society activists, artists, and academics, written in response to a cluster of images of Singapore as a 'renaissance city'. The publication painted a picture of a forward-looking nation where qualities such as creativity would come to the forefront, and where discourse was undergirded by economic logic. Dr Tan suggested that the concept of what a renaissance city was had a lot to do with the way capitalism had evolved into a global structure that made it necessary for countries to open their doors to capital, labour and tastes, requiring what could be considered fundamental reconfiguration at the level of the nation state. Dr Tan's second book, *Cinema and Television in Singapore: Resistance in One Dimension*, explored the notion of a 'Creative City' that Singapore had been trying to adopt. Dr Tan said that it could be argued that creativity suffered with state efforts to develop Singapore as a creative city.

2. In providing an overview of the nexus between politics and creativity, Dr Tan drew out the three spheres of the market, the state and the arts. The market sphere essentially involved production, consumption and exchange, and was driven by customer satisfaction and the profit motive. The state as government protected the entity of the nation-state from external threats as well as the individual citizen. At times, the state would step in to correct the market, and in its most maximal manifestation, took charge of nation building, values and identity. The state was driven by logic based on technical expertise and tended to solve problems based on a very finite set of principles.

3. State and market activities required limited creativity for the purposes of problem solving. In contrast, creativity in the artistic sphere was of a richer form and could bring about the aesthetic transformation of everyday objects and their necessary relations. As art operated on a different set of logic as the state and the market and enjoyed freedom from the constraints of necessity, it also provided a re-imagination of how things could be done differently, causing one to reexamine the existing world. The state was often able to co-opt art for the performing of propagandistic functions, through for instance, the use of funding. Art was a fragile thing, and thus had to constantly struggle to step out of the control of the market and the state. Art becomes a highly commodified object in the creative economy, and gets subsumed into the legitimacy-seeking functions of the state and profit making motivations of the market. As art becomes deeply implicated in the logic of the market and the state, it can no longer perform its functions. In Singapore, there is a strong partnership between the state and the market. The notion of 'Creative Cities' in this sense would make genuine, detached, art difficult, and result in the loss of capacity for alternative imagination.

4. The second speaker for the session was Mr Azhar Ghani, Information and Risk Consultant and former chief of the Straits Times Indonesian Bureau. Mr Ghani provided an assessment of the nexus between politics and creativity in Singapore based on Florida's formula of the 3 T's of economic growth, which were technology, talent and tolerance. Mr Ghani said that he would focus on the aspects of talent and tolerance in his presentation.

5. Mr Ghani commented that Singapore was strong in the aspect of quality of place which accounted for the fact that many foreign companies chose to relocate their headquarters in the country. The Singapore government had done well in this aspect and he posed the question of whether a different government could have done the same, and whether a stable one party dominant political system allowed for this to happen. In commenting on the level of tolerance in Singapore, Mr Ghani commented that Singapore accepted gays but shied away from making an official stance with Section 377A of the Penal Code. Drawing examples from the Singapore Malay-Muslim community, Mr Ghani was of the view that the country had become more tolerant of gays. This was contrasted with the stance on political diversity with the Singapore government's recent comment that Singapore was not ready for two-party politics, and that change had to come from within the People's Action Party.

6. Mr Ghani observed that many in the high technology industries of the United States were South or East Asian, and raised the question of whether these individuals were attracted to the diversity of the high tech industries, or to a place that would feel more at home because there were more Asians. Mr Ghani noted that migrants were not likely to be too interested in local politics, and that the Singapore government very likely had strict rules on the participation of migrants in local politics. He raised the question of whether Singapore had lost out on other kinds of talent (e.g. from NGOs) but expressed that it was too early to conclude if the current political climate had driven away local talent.

7. The third speaker for the session was Mr Siew Kum Hong, Nominated Member of Parliament and Senior Counsel of Yahoo! Southeast Asia. Mr Siew said that the distinction between political and economic liberalisation in Singapore was artificial and would pose a problem for Singapore in the long run. While economic deregulation had occurred on a continual basis in Singapore, the political sphere remained relatively controlled. Mr Siew emphasised the importance of building an indigenous creative class in keeping local and foreign talent rooted within the country. Mr Siew observed that foreign talent chose to work in Singapore for pragmatic reasons (such as tax breaks) and could be easily persuaded to work in other cities if better incentives were offered. Mr Siew said that public policy should be geared towards getting foreign talent to sink their roots and contribute to Singapore. Mr Siew was of the view that there was a strong relationship between the degree of political liberalisation and the creative class, although he qualified that it would be difficult provide quantified proof of this.

8. Mr Siew conjectured that the evolutionary path of the Internet was difficult to predict as it was highly dependent on its users. Singapore laws created an environment that was restrictive which has inhibited the creativity of some Singaporeans. Mr Siew said that the Films Act which prohibited the making and distribution of party political films provided a very broad definition of what 'party political films' entailed. This constrained the creativity of Film makers and others. The broad law that sought to prohibit content prejudicial to public interest, public order and offences against good taste and decency was theoretically very restrictive and could have a chilling effect on online speech. Even then, sometimes the laws were flouted, Mr Siew questioned the impact that this would have on the respect for the rule of law. The Internet could not be controlled, and any attempts to do so would result in negative effects on areas such as the rule of law and freedom of speech. In sharing a personal anecdote, Mr Siew spoke of Yahoo!'s initial intentions to set up a micro-site to provide coverage for the Singapore General Elections in 2001 which were set aside in the face of a long list of not-to-dos in the laws. This illustrated how restrictive laws in Singapore politics prevented a possible beneficial outcome of allowing for more citizen engagement.

### **Open Discussion**

9. Ambassador (Amb) Ong, also Director of the Institute of Policy Studies and the moderator for the session said that the timing was everything in political expression, and if spoken sincerely and was well-intentioned, it would certainly be received without recrimination by political leaders.

10. A participant asked Mr Siew whether he thought that the recent liberalisation of the Speakers' Corner was a sign that Singapore was moving towards a more liberal political landscape. Mr Siew responded that this was a movement in the right direction, but the question was in whether liberalisation was happening fast enough. Dr Tan agreed with Mr Siew, but pointed out that as Singapore opened spaces, attention was also drawn to those that were closed as well. The incident where the police tried to stop some former Raffles Girls School girls who were selling 'white elephant' T-shirts demonstrated creativity and invested citizenship. Mr Siew added that a restrictive regime could be discouraging to civil society. Dr Tan added that while political leaders may be open-minded, the execution process by lower level staff was less clear. He suggested that it was better that the government develop a repertoire of ways (such as the Speakers' Corner or the internet) for engagement to take place between the citizen and the state.

11. A participant shared an analogy of monkeys who were socially conditioned over a period of time to not reach for bananas at the top of their cage which paralleled the situation in Singapore where Singaporeans had been socialised over time not to speak up. If the speakers themselves were afraid of engaging in discussing politics, how much more so for the average Singaporean. Dr Tan said that fear and inaction were underpinned by complex psychology. He raised the possible alternative conjecture that Singaporeans stayed away from politics because they were lazy. He added that it was the responsibility of citizens to speak up, although it was not always easy to carry this

out in light of competing personal (e.g. family or work) demands. Mr Ghani shared that as an ex-journalist, political boundaries and guidelines were very real to him in his observations of the reaction of the Singapore government in the coverage of elections.

12. A participant asked if agents for change in Singapore tended to be the cosmopolitan and educated and raised the question of whether civil society could be trying to effect change that the rest of Singapore was not ready for. Mr Siew replied that members of civil society in Singapore comprised of a fairly broad spectrum and did not come from any particular social strata. What he saw as consistent and desirable amongst civil society members was that they usually felt strongly about a certain issue which might not directly pertain to politics and wanted to effect change. Mr Ghani added that civil society leaders could have ideas that were good for Singapore, and that civil society was not always in opposition with the Singapore government. Dr Tan added that civil society often functioned as the conscience of society and was a space where blind spots in society were highlighted and articulated. This should be seen as for the policy maker. It helped make policy more implementable and more responsive to the public's need. Civil society had further uses in allowing citizens to get out of their mode of being disenchanted and self interested. Amb Ong added that the civil service and civil society should indeed not be categorised in tight boxes where there were no exchange of views.

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## **Session V**

### **Dinner and Talk**

1. Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman of IPS, introduced the audience to Mr Nickson Fong, CEO of Egg Story Creative Production, who he described as a star in the area of digital animation. Despite a “bad boy” childhood, Mr Fong eventually went on to the Savannah College of Art and Design (one of the premier institutions of design in the United States) and was involved in major Hollywood productions such as *Stuart Little* and *Matrix Reloaded*. Mr Fong returned to Singapore four years ago to set up Egg Story and was on his way to realising his dream of creating his own animated feature.

2. Mr Fong talked about how he became an animator. He first decided to work in the field of animation at the age of eight or nine after being bowled over by a certain animated feature. According to Mr Fong, he was a “non-performing” student who was expelled in secondary school, something he was thrilled about at that time. Despite his then-school principal telling his parents that he was “useless” and suited only for a job at Macdonald’s, Mr Fong kept his self-belief and continued to pursue his dream of being an animator.

3. Mr Fong had the aptitude for drawing to go along with his dream of working in animation. In school, he earned extra pocket money by using his skills to decorate his schoolmates’ school bags with the designs of their choice. Leaving secondary school did not sound the death knell for Mr Fong. Having found his niche and having been set free to pursue his passion, Mr Fong blossomed. He was able to attend the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and then the Savannah College of Art and Design.

4. Mr Fong’s career took off even before he graduated from Savannah. At school, Mr Fong performed extremely well, beating even seasoned professionals in design competitions. He was hired by a Japanese game developer while he was still in school, and later by DreamWorks when he graduated. At DreamWorks, he broke new ground again by being the first animator of Chinese ethnicity at the company, which was rare in a time when Asians (let alone Singaporeans) were rarely heard of in the profession.

5. One benefit of Mr Fong’s subsequent years in Hollywood was that he had the opportunity to work with the very best in the animation trade and gained insights into how the industry worked on projects. However, he craved artistic integrity and control, decided to seek new pasture, and returned to Asia, first to Taiwan and then back to Singapore.

6. Coming home to Singapore and setting up his own company was an “accident” according to Mr Fong, who had to deal with several obstacles in the last few years. He worked at a Macdonald’s fast food restaurant for four months to take advantage of the free wireless Internet provided. A project he had hoped to secure fell through, leaving

him with five thousand square feet of office space and no commission. Even worse, no bank would grant him a loan as he had no credit history in Singapore.

7. However, several elements came together for Mr Fong at this juncture. The Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong had just mentioned his embryonic set-up in the National Day Rally speech of 2004, and this mention had made him “famous overnight”. His recognisability and PM's mention of the creative industry in his speech led to deals with equipment providers and financiers that helped him to establish his firm. This mention also helped him to land his first project in Singapore. Accumulated goodwill from his previous employments in the United States and Taiwan helped to pool a team of twelve creative professionals within two weeks.

8. Another challenge to Mr Fong's business was a legal threat from his former employer, DreamWorks, which claimed that the title of his on-going project, *Kungfu Gecko*, violated the copyright of the major studio's *Kungfu Panda*. DreamWorks' lawyer sent a letter to Mr Fong demanding that he change the title of his film. However, Mr Fong was not cowed, and managed to establish that the name of his animated feature in fact predated the naming of *Kungfu Panda*, thus avoiding a costly legal battle in the process.

9. In the period of four years, Mr Fong's outfit had grown to include a studio, a servicing firm, and an animation school. Of the school, Mr Fong stated that it gave him tremendous satisfaction to see talented youngsters getting the opportunities to develop under the tutelage of professionals and professors who he had scouted from overseas. Kids who would otherwise be up to trouble could now have an outlet for talents which were not quite acknowledged by the education system.

### **Open Discussion**

10. A participant noted that Mr Fong had brought in friends from Taiwan and the US in the beginning stages of his company. Would he consider training Singaporeans and helping Singapore develop a viable industry? Mr Fong said that training Singaporeans for the industry was the mandate for the school, and added that one of the reasons he roped in an international team at the beginning was that he did not know any one when he came back. In fact, his ‘first friend’ and business mentor in Singapore was Ms. Elim Chew, who he met through the Prime Minister. He stated that his school received strong support from some government agencies, and 60-70 percent of the school population was local. Admission to the school was not based on paper qualifications; what was needed was talent and creativity.

11. Another participant said that there were students in the mainstream who were equally talented. She expressed concern that an over-emphasis on students who did not fit in the education system might lead to a situation where yet another stereotype would be impressed upon our next generation. Mr Fong recognised that there were students who did well in school and were artistically inclined. He said that his general

point was that determination helped tremendously in one's pursuit of his or her dream even if there were seemingly-insurmountable obstacles in the way.

12. Another participant asked Mr Fong the kind of changes he had seen in Singapore. What changes would he like to see? Mr Fong replied that he would like to see Singapore take more risk. Singapore was trying to change very quickly, but was in danger of trying to accomplish too many things at once. The creative industries were after all very new in Singapore, and the country might need more time to figure the process out. We were still operating in a very rigid system, but the creative industry was by definition very unstructured. Creating a hit was really a 'hit and miss' process, and sometimes one could only make a bet. A risk-taking appetite was needed for the creative industry to take off.

13. Another participant noted that while Mr Fong was Singaporean, he was also "foreign talent" in a certain sense. Was it possible, he asked, that we could nurture Singaporeans completely on Singapore soil, or was it necessary to send them to cultural mecca like Hollywood and then have them come back? Mr Fong replied that overseas experience was useful in order to get a taste of the cultural industries and to meet and learn from other people. For instance, there was more knowledge and respect for intellectual property overseas, unlike in Singapore. Mindsets in Asia were hard to change, but opportunities could be created in Singapore through bringing in foreign talent and companies.

14. Another participant asked what it would take for Asian animators to make films along the lines of *Kungfu Panda* and *Shrek*. Mr Fong said the Koreans presented one possibility. They were very nationalistic, and had huge organizations that could help shoulder some of the financial risk. He emphasised that in a risk-taking environment, people must be allowed to make mistakes. Asia had all the talent, but lacked the requisite organisational resources. There was a reason major studios like DreamWorks and Pixar were able and willing to lay out vast amounts of resources for a big facility that could hold hundreds of creative professionals, since the nurturing, cultivation and exchange amongst creative professionals was crucial to the success of the enterprise. In contrast, there was no such facility in Asia. China and India had most of the key pieces of the jigsaw puzzle in place other than the sales and marketing expertise.

15. Following up on Mr Fong's point, another participant asked if nationalism propelled the talent there. Mr Fong replied that based on his personal experience, Koreans chose to buy Korean-made products. He drew the conclusion that believing in one's own company or product was crucial to success. This participant also asked how Mr Fong managed the different pulls of the state and the market to keep his art 'pure', following from a discussion on this topic by A/P Kenneth Paul Tan in a previous session. Mr Fong said that he and his employees made every effort to move ahead in spite of this pull in opposing directions. Trust and integrity were the touchstones of his company.

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## **Session VI**

### **Singapore and Other Creative Cities**

1. The Speaker for the session was Mr Peter Ong, Managing Partner for Gallup Organisation in Singapore, Hong Kong and South-East Asia.

2. Mr Ong began by highlighting how we lived in the age of the City. With the increasing rate of urbanisation, people had more options in where they wanted to live. Cities had to compete for talent by creating the most liveable cities that provided opportunities to progress. People liked that freedom of choice and promise of social mobility and these attracted the creative 'stars' of the world.

3. Referring to the book "The Republic" by Plato, he said that likewise, everybody in today's cities should be allowed to play roles that made the best use of their talent. Cities were mankind's greatest creation as they embodied the environment people developed to fulfil dreams and allow the human spirit to flourish.

4. Hence, to cultivate a Singapore creative class, we needed to find ways to create an attractive lifestyle and niche environments that encouraged creativity in all the different sectors of its society. Mr Ong explained Richard Florida's concept that the world was spiky with enclaves of communities specialising in their niche areas. For example, New York and London were financial hubs that attracted talented people in finance and banking. In addition, the world was also flat in the sense of globalisation through communications, people movement and technology. According to survey findings, close to 280 million people across Asia (excluding China), expressed an intent to migrate. This was a large pool of human resource that Singapore could tap.

5. Mr Ong introduced a new behavioural economics model for societies that guided a Gallup poll of residents in key cities in the world. The model put forward ideas on how people sought to fulfil different needs in the choices about where they lived. Basic and rational needs included stable law and order conditions, provision of food and shelter, availability of work and the economic situation of a city. Other goals were to achieve health, sense of well-being, and citizen engagement in the community. Once these stages or life goals were attainable in a place, it would experience a 'brain gain'. The key finding of the study was that Singapore needed to look beyond economics and work which respondents said it more than catered for, and move on to developing the 'emotional needs' of residents in order to attract the creative class here.

6. Mr Ong explained behavioural economics and the importance of paratelic which were things people did that they found fulfilling. He emphasised the importance of having an environment that supported lifelong learning; the pursuit of achievement and excellence; and, one that created memorable 'positive moments' for residents. Positive moments were associated with a good quality of life, being treated with respect, and having learned or experienced something interesting. A person could experience up to 20,000 moments a day and that 5 positive moments were needed to counter 1 negative

moment. The challenge then was to maximise the positive moments and minimise the negative ones by mollifying physical pain, worries and sadness. According to survey findings, people in Singapore were very satisfied with the city and that negative experiences were relatively minimal. However, Singapore could better itself by continuing to ensure that the basic necessities were affordable, that people enjoyed rich social relationships and many more paratelic experiences.

7. He spoke about the relationship between creativity and the city. Creativity flourished when a city fostered virtue, ability, talent and happiness. The right conditions had to be in place so that the creative class saw Singapore as a home and not a host city. It was this way that Singapore could create an environment where creative 'stars' or creative classes felt 'nourished'. There was also positive reinforcement – as more creative stars came together there would be synergy that created even more energy, hope, optimism, vitality that would in turn attract more stars and upcoming talent to the place. This was a good counter to being an ageing society.

8. Mr Ong spoke on the concept 'Soul of the City' and said that it was important to understand how the different segments of the population experienced the city differently rather than think of them as one homogenous group.

### **Open Discussion**

8. The moderator, Prof Koh asked Mr Ong how Singapore could improve the sense well-being among its people, as well as levels of citizen engagement, two points on which it did not fare so well on in his comparative study. Mr Ong said policy makers needed to take into consideration the emotional well-being question. To achieve this, Mr Ong spoke of the need for a change in mindset. The safest strategies in governance, and in how people managed their personal lives, career choices, may not be the most satisfying and effective. It was also important to be conscious that different segments of the population needed a different mix of things to achieve a high level of well-being; it had to be different strokes for different folks. With regard to citizen engagement, Mr Ong said that recently converted citizens were an especially good group to work with as they tended to be keener to engage.

9. A participant asked if there was a more effective way of developing Singapore's environment to a level that was comparable to other more attractive and older cities such as New York. Mr Ong commented that New York was different because of its hinterland, the United States. There was stiff competition in New York because of the relative size and diversity of citizens in the hinterland that were attracted to the city. If and when they chose to go to New York, they were determined, resilient, and prepared to face the competition. To promote engaged citizenry, it was important to allow for a networking of people with similar ideologies, social standing and goals.

10. Another participant asked if there were any areas that Singapore had neglected in thinking about how to foster an engaged citizenry. Mr Ong said that the drivers for the relatively well-off and the mobile populations were the aesthetics and the emotional

requirements while the drivers for relatively more vulnerable and less mobile populations were the basic necessities.

11. The last question was on the new behavioural economics model. The model suggested that the higher the level of well-being, the more creative the city got. The participant asked if this conflicted with the impression that creativity usually flourished in adverse conditions; not when creative talents were comfortable. Mr Ong said that artists always strived to be in places and cities that provided whatever was the appropriate environment for them to hone their craft. Haresh Sharma, speaker in Session II, chose to stay in Singapore when he could be in say, New York. He chose to be in Singapore and be part of the community here. It was then important to understand such motivations in order to answer the question.

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## **Session VIII**

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

#### **Group Presentations by Conference Participants**

1. The first presentation was by the 'deep purple group'. The group showed two videos – one of a chaotic street scene in India where there were no traffic lights to manage heavy vehicular traffic; and the other, of Chinese railway officials pushing and packing passengers into a crowded railway carriage. The group suggested that people in these videos still managed their daily lives with some ingenuity, without top-down structure. Singapore on the other hand, was often thought of as a heavily structured and controlled society. It seemed difficult to 'get creative' in such a 'neat' place. The group's basic premise was that creativity could be found in everyone; it was almost instinctive and should simply be allowed to flourish. It could not be steered and managed by a set of guidelines, frameworks for operation, or conferences. It certainly could not be confined to only a certain group called the 'creative class'.

2. The second presentation was by the 'dark green group'. The group argued that in a world that was constantly changing, the 'key performance indicators' (KPIs) by which we defined success and the winners in any field of endeavor were likewise, constantly changing. They urged everyone, beyond the usual constituencies of educators, politicians and entrepreneurs, to be engaged in defining and re-defining the different things that success could mean in our society. The group felt that the typical social indicators of success like income levels were not what made a city vibrant. Creativity ought not to be spoken of as an end in itself, but understood and appreciated as a process of human endeavour. For this to happen, Singapore needed to make a clear transition from the 'survival mentality' to 'first world mode', and operate on the broader parameters more suited for a world-class city. In terms of economic strategy, this meant re-focusing our efforts from building up one industry after another, to building up different types of expertise in different niches.

3. The third presentation was by the 'blue group'. The group observed that Singapore tended to focus its economic strategy on developing industries with immediate and tangible benefits as it was a small city state with a perceived, small margin of error. While this was understandable, it also limited the concept of 'success' that we had. The group hoped the government would provide opportunities and support for local entrepreneurs to break out of the mold. The government should indeed strive to be more 'inclusive' and welcome alternative paths to success and acknowledge different types of creative talent in our society. It would help too to show greater support for civil society groups, and move away from an 'efficacy-based education system'. Singaporeans of various backgrounds would then be motivated to strive for their own success and in so doing, add to the level of national accomplishment.

4. The fourth presentation was by the 'red' group. The group said that Singapore should try to learn and implement the best practices from other cultures and countries in trying to nurture a creative class that would take us to the next wave of development.

Singapore had structural constraints and less room for error, in comparison to, larger countries like the United States or United Kingdom that could weather say, a five-year economic crisis. It would be good to create a culture that tolerated failure and political openness; where the government was not seen to use a sledge-hammer to deal with all those who could not accept the official position. It was not necessary to drown all the voices that were not in consonance with the government. The group was mindful however that the emergence of a creative class could result in greater income disparity and social inequality as there would more segments of the population that would be left behind in those relative terms.

5. The fifth presentation was by the 'grey' group. The group illustrated their point by drawing the picture of a tree. The tree grew from a seed planted in the soil. If the soil was rich and the environment salubrious, the tree would flourish. It was important to look at some of the internal conditions under which our creative talent had to emerge. One key condition was the nature of the education system in Singapore. Could we move away from 'the paper chase'? Would Singaporeans be prepared to sacrifice success as commonly defined by mainstream society, to pursue their own dreams? Under the right conditions, the tree would bear fruit, and these would be the creative talent. In addition, Singapore labored under many different characterisations. The country was being represented by too many different government agencies with different 'faces' to the external world. There was no one 'hero shot' of Singapore that people out there could associate it with. On the other hand, we did not want to be a mere 'wannabe'. In short, branding Singapore in multiple images was problematic. We should find a holistic and distinctive identity and build it up consistently.

6. The sixth presentation was by the 'apple green' group. The group felt that the 'cultivation of a creative class' in Singapore had to start with the family. Many families, especially those that were less well-off tended to encourage their children to take the shortest, safest and surest route to social mobility and success. These would be the parents who would never let their children take up Theatre Studies as a subject. The group wished all parents would learn to tell stories of unconventional success, and encourage the process of self-actualisation in their children, instead of just telling them to study hard and do the tried and tested. The group suggested a more provocative approach with the provision of government scholarships – in addition to fulfilling their bonds, scholarship holders could allowed toto devise workable business ventures that at least equaled the value that was invested in their overseas education. The group also suggested that key performance indicators for a maximum number of failures should be applied when supporting creative or research endeavours to provide more room for failure instead of defining key performance indicators by positive achievements only.

7. The seventh presentation was by the 'yellow' group. The group recognised that the government had put in the effort to foster creativity and a creative class over the years, but they asked if this top-down approach could be sustained in the long run if there was insufficient ownership from the ground. Singaporeans displayed apathy and

a lack of engagement on many fronts. Allowing for greater openness in society, with different notions of success would help to address this. The group wanted creativity to be viewed as an end itself that would allow room for individual self-actualisation. It should not be to simply foster a creative class as an economic strategy. Singaporeans needed to be open-minded regardless of political and social conditions so as to ensure that the country remained relevant in an ever-changing global context.

8. The eighth presentation was by the 'orange' group. The group observed that Singaporeans tended to leave for other countries because of the pull factor - the desire for greater self-development, and the push factor - discontent with Singapore. Singapore needed its 'superstars', and more should be done to attract them and other Singaporeans overseas to return home. A few issues needed to be addressed in order to create the right conditions for that. First, more of the substantial design projects in Singapore should be given to Singaporean rather than foreign designers than was currently the case. This would give the much needed opportunity for Singapore talent to develop. Second, the general mindset was that the creative design and arts industries were for the less academically inclined. Fine arts courses were only available at private schools and not at the local tertiary institutions. It was important to change the mindset of parents so that their children could pursue careers in the creative industries. Third, Singapore needed a stronger pool of people who could critique endeavours in the creative industries. The coverage in local papers and magazines were very superficial, when compared to say, Hong Kong, where one could always find extremely well-researched, in-depth, substantive articles. This broader ecosystem was needed for the creative class to flourish in Singapore.

### **Dialogue Session with Guest of Honour, Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Law and Second Minister for Home Affairs**

9. In response to the point made that parents would not want their children to pursue Theatre Studies, for instance, as a subject, Minister Shanmugam, said that parents might be more inclined to allow their children to read subjects if they really understood the positive impact it had on creativity, happiness and success.. He drew the distinction though between necessary and sufficient conditions for success. Not everyone who read Theatre Studies, which was a necessary condition for success in pursuing related careers, would have the brilliance, which was the sufficient condition, for success in this field.

10. A participant asked if the Minister thought that Singapore was doing enough to celebrate, or 'brag' about its creative stars. This was in reference to Dean Kishore Mahbubani's earlier point in Session I that if there were more narratives on Singapore, then it would help us identify the stars that we had not yet talked about and appreciated. The participant cited the example given earlier in the conference of Steve Jobs, Chief Executive Officer of Apple who demonstrated great showmanship and 'bragging power' even if he did not possess the technical prowess to create an iPhone and was now associated with this innovation. In reply, Minister Shanmugam referred to Jim Clifton's

observations about how the United States (US) was able to attract, integrate and celebrate the successes of foreign-born creative talent and in the process increase the US's gross domestic product (GDP). In contrast, while Germany and Japan had progressed quite far as a result of their own capabilities, their GDP growth had stagnated as a result of being comparatively less open to the influx of foreign talent. Stars or talent that could not achieve success in their country would be attracted to develop themselves in places where they could. The key ingredient for success was in maintaining conditions such as a basic level of law and order, a good quality of life, on top of a certain vibrancy, to attract talent from everywhere. Talent could be left to 'create' and work with other bright individuals.

11. This participant also asked Minister Shanmugan to comment on the presentation by the 'deep purple' group that the removal of structure would lead to creativity as seen in the video screened by the group, where the use of roads by pedestrians and vehicles amidst the lack of traffic lights or rules in India appeared self-regulating and the results were obtained though not in an orderly manner. Minister Shanmugan replied that the video did not show the fact that the level of mortality from road traffic accidents in India was high. It also did not show the resulting social and psychological costs to the individuals, the family and society as a result of that lack of structure. The notion that there would be greater levels of creativity in the absence of government intervention was not conclusive. Other relevant factors and local conditions had to be taken into account.

12. Another participant shared his observation that many ethnic Indians, who went to the US to start a career could be attracted to Singapore rather than India if they had to move out of the US. This was because Singapore appeared to be a safer and convenient place and that there were also other Indians. Structure was not necessarily a bad thing. It was good also to think about how to foster greater creativity. Minister Shanmugam said that Singapore had to realistically identify and develop its strengths rather than replicate the success and attractions of other places. Singapore had many positive aspects which included cultural and geographical diversity, a world-class education system, law and order and the acceptance of a variety of pathways to success. Such a framework would allow Singaporeans to maximise their own potential and broaden their minds as well as serve as a foreign talent magnet.

13. Director Ong Keng Yong shared the comments of participants in earlier sessions of the conference which suggested that they were held back by certain political constraints. He wondered how far the envelope could be pushed to foster a more creative society. Minister Shanmugan said that a broad spectrum of people were of the sentiment that the People's Action Party (PAP) dominated political space and perpetuated its political power by limiting freedom of speech and assembly. Some of these perspectives arose from historical and anecdotal reasons and from the people's own interpretation of the government's actions.

14. Minister Shanmugam said that by focusing on the building blocks of nation building such as housing, education and healthcare, Singapore had achieved excellence in these areas by world standards. Many regarded Singapore as having the best accomplishments in these aspects. Singaporeans were one of the best read and travelled people in the world. Singapore's approach had brought it to where it was today so it was important to listen to our own interpretation and voice, instead of conforming to the norms set by other countries. He said that the government would always welcome other views and ways of doing things if these were not done for personal gain, and done responsibly where people got their facts right.

15. Minister Shanmugam said that the Singapore Constitution guaranteed a full range of freedoms and that no one would be charged in court unless the law was violated. The same law was embodied in laws of many civilised countries. Minister Shanmugam said that the PAP's first-generation leaders used an aggressive style and dominant approach because they were focused on making sure that Singapore moved from the bullock cart to the Information Technology Age. Singapore today was a relatively free society in comparison with other parts of the world but there were, of course, accepted limitations with regard to issues of religious and racial sensitivities. He cited the fact that Austria could jail those who denied the Holocaust actually happened. Minister Shanmugam also said that the space for the freedom of speech, and freedom to organise should be maximised. The tension between welfare of society and rights of the individual had to be balanced. The policy of not allowing insensitive remarks on race and religion were based on this consideration.

16. In response, a participant said that instances where members of the academic community were publicly reprimanded by the authorities, or quietly penalised for what they had said reinforced this sense that there were political constraints. These sent the wrong signal to the academic community. He referred to Mr Peter Ong's earlier presentation on how Singapore was doing well in many aspects as a creative city, but did not score well on Singaporean respondents' sense of being an engaged citizenry and sense of well being<sup>1</sup>. His question was how could Singapore's performance in these two areas could be improved?

17. Mr Peter Ong informed the Minister that Singapore's score in these areas had to be read in the comparative context of 21 global cities, and that the absolute score was not low. Minister Shanmugam said that this mindset of the lack of space for freedom of expression could have resulted from Singapore's earlier stages of nation-building and economic development. There was no time for dealing with political opposition as the leaders were anxious to move Singapore quickly from a third to first world country. Minister added that as the government and the citizens grew the culture

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Peter Ong, of Gallup, clarified that this referred to the sense of emotional well being, or the presence of positive emotions rather than the absence of negative emotions. One of the questions asked for this category was 'Were you treated with respect yesterday?' This was a key indicator for a civilised society, where respectful behaviour would permeate the workplace and communities. Three out of four Singaporeans indicated that they were treated with respect, which was not a low figure.

of engagement, Singaporeans would increasingly experience a more open and inclusive society.

18. Minister Shanmugam understood that many were concerned about the Government's practice of rebutting comments robustly and added that this was a fair practice if the comments were baseless and libelous. This was not about the government insisting on having its say. Openness did not mean anyone could make statements that undermined or called into question the integrity of the leaders of the country. Apart from that, he said that in the new economy where everyone should be empowered to maximise their potential, it was accepted that a new way of dealing with the issues of expression was necessary and this would most certainly evolve over time.

19. In response to the point on emotional well-being, Minister Shanmugam said that although Singapore had improved its physical infrastructure, GDP and education system dramatically in 45 years, the issue of showing respect to others and the development of civic mindedness would have to come with time. One of the key indicators of a civilised society was in the way in which weaker segments of society for instance, the destitute, foreign workers and even animals were treated. He referred to media coverage of cases of abuse of domestic helpers and a case where a foreigner was knocked down by a bicycle and was ignored till some foreign workers came forward to help. These suggested to him that Singapore had some way to go in becoming a civilised society where people had a social conscience.

20. Another participant related the experience of some entrepreneurs, who were turned away by government agencies which they approached for support; government officials who tended to prefer 'safe' ideas. What could be done about that? Minister Shanmugam related the case of Creative Technologies, which was celebrated in Singapore only after it became successful in the US. From the perspective of the Civil Service, civil servants who were not experts in these areas were required to make careful assessments as a substantial sum of public money was involved, in addition to the fact that small entrepreneurships tended to have a rather high failure rate. There was the tension between the possibility that the entrepreneur would turn out a good product and the need to spend public money responsibly given the chance he might not succeed. As public money was used, there was the issue of accountability, unless society indicated that it was prepared to lose money to such causes. Minister Shanmugam said that policy-making in Singapore was constrained by a number of conditions. He also noted that a number of international publications had credited Singapore for its well-managed civil service, for its high quality in leadership and for its record in producing high growth. There was clearly, sound policy-making and creativity behind this.

21. Referring to an article in the Straits Times published two weeks earlier on how more non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were attracted to Hong Kong instead of Singapore, a participant said he felt Singapore would be able to attract NGOs to Singapore by increasing the perceived sense of freedom of expression. This would

benefit Singapore as NGOs embodied principles of civil society and brought perspectives to issues that people often did not see. Minister Shanmugam said that the perception of the lack of freedom of expression would take some time to go away, as it had been continuously perpetuated by the Western media's reporting of what it perceived to be a hardline approach of the government on say, defamation law. He said that the laws on defamation in Singapore were the same in other countries such as Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. While it was fine for the Western newspapers to criticise, it was another matter of course, when accusations of corruption and nepotism were made and the tough action that the government necessarily had to take against this may have reinforced that view of the lack of freedom of expression. Even someone like Tony Blair had commented that the modern British press with its penchant for the sensational and negative coverage, say on his role in the Iraq war, made governance impossible.

22. Minister Shanmugam felt that good governance in a modern democracy sought to ensure that competing viewpoints in various segments of society were brought together and reconciled. Good governance in Singapore meant that government, the media, civil society and the people worked together for the best interest of society. While Singapore had received backlash in a number of Western newspapers for her policy on defamation, it had not prevented Singapore from attracting billions of dollars of foreign direct investment into the country. Likewise, he was sure that NGOs would also come to understand that Singapore could afford them better protection many other places in the world today.

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

**PROGRAMME  
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
- 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 Woon Yee**  
Lifestyle Journalist  
Lianhe Zaobao

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  
77<sup>th</sup> Street (S) Pte Ltd

	Open Discussion
3.40 pm – 4.00 pm	Coffee Break
4.00 pm – 5.40 pm	<p><b><u>Session IV</u></b>  <b>Politics and Creativity</b></p> <p><b><u>Moderator</u></b>  <b>Ambassador Ong Keng Yong</b></p> <p><b><u>Speakers</u></b>  <b>Dr Kenneth Paul Tan</b>  Assistant Dean (Academic Affairs)  Assistant Professor  Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy</p> <p><b>Mr Azhar Ghani</b>  Information and Risk Consultant,  Former Chief, Straits Times Indonesia Bureau</p> <p><b>Mr Siew Kum Hong</b>  Nominated Member of Parliament and  Senior Counsel  Yahoo! Southeast Asia</p> <p>Open Discussion</p>
5.40 pm – 6.30 pm	Break
6.30 pm - 9.00 pm	<p><b><u>Session V</u></b>  <b>Dinner and Talk</b></p> <p><b><u>Moderator</u></b>  <b>Professor Tommy Koh</b>  Chairman  Institute of Policy Studies</p> <p><b><u>Speaker</u></b>  <b>Mr Nickson Fong</b>  Chief Executive Officer  Egg Story Creative Production</p>
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

Open Discussion

10.00 am -10 30 am

Coffee Break

10 30 am – 12.30 pm

**Session VII**  
**Group Reflection Time**

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

2.30 pm

End of Conference