

ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE: GLOBAL DREAMS BY TWO ASIAN CITIES

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Abstract

Global cities have been characterized as networked nodes, with multiple and intensive global flows of people, goods, services, ideas, and images. These often share more in common, and identify more with other such cities than with urban hinterlands in their own countries. Given the myriad external linkages and orientation, this paper will argue that some Asian cities progress is not only aimed at economic and social emancipation, which are only tools to attain global city status. It will particularly examine the cultural production of new urban spaces due to economic growth, and compare between two Asian cities of Hong Kong and Singapore.

Keywords

Culture; city; economy; global; Hong Kong; Singapore

Introduction

The global economy spatially impresses urban spaces as expressed in mixed infrastructure, retail, industrial, leisure and residential facilities. Yet, cultural and iconic spaces as part of imaging strategies have been used to attract and sustain global human and economic flows

(Chang, 1997); these created exciting cities in the global urban hierarchy. Cities with global aspirations are now recognising the need to create new cultural spaces and structures, often monumental, to support a vibrant cultural life and attract and sustain global flows. Besides economy, government vision, local aspirations, planning and development efforts are geared towards achieving the above. The paper shall examine and compare the economic strategies to attract international finance and flow of tourists, and building up cultural assets by two Asian cities: Singapore and Hong Kong in this paper.

The Concept of Global City

The concept of global city explains globalisation created, facilitated and enacted in strategic locales in hierarchical importance in the world of finance and trade. It is a complex entity that exerts a direct and tangible effect on the global affairs through socio-economic means. The terminology was first used by Sassen (1991) in reference to London, New York and Tokyo, three undisputed world cities.

Role of Economics

Many research groups and authors have tried to classify and rank cities; the criteria based on a 'yardstick value' or on an 'imminent determination' can affect cities other than few top ones. The common criteria are: name familiarity; influence on world affairs; population; major airport; advanced highways and multi-modal network; international cultures/communities; foreign businesses/expatriate communities; international financial institutions, law firms, headquarters (HQs) and stock exchanges; advanced high-speed communication; world-renowned cultural institutions; lively cultural scene (film festivals,

thriving music/theatre); orchestra, opera, galleries, street performers; influential media with international reach; a strong sporting community and major facilities; and the experience to host international sporting events.

The Globalisation and World Cities Study Group and Network (GaWC) made an attempt to define, categorise, and rank global cities in 1998, based on provision of 'advanced producer services' (accountancy, advertising, finance, law) into three levels and few sub-levels. The roster generally notes cities in which multinational companies (MNCs) provide financial and consulting services rather than noting cultural,

Alpha	++:	London, New York City
	+	Paris, Sydney, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing
	:	Milan, Madrid, Moscow, Brussels, Toronto, Buenos Aires, Seoul, Mumbai, Kuala Lumpur
	-:	Warsaw, Sao Paulo, Zurich, Mexico City, Dublin, Rome, Amsterdam, Istanbul, Lisbon, Vienna, Chicago, Frankfurt, Stockholm, Budapest, Athens, Prague, Caracas, Auckland, Santiago, Jakarta, Bangkok, Taipei
Beta	+	Melbourne, Barcelona, Los Angeles, Johannesburg, Bogotá, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Bucharest, San Francisco, Helsinki, Berlin, Oslo, Geneva, Cairo, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Manila, New Delhi, Tel Aviv, Dubai, Riyadh
	:	Luxembourg, Munich, Kiev, Dallas, Lima, Boston, Miami, Bangalore, Jeddah, Kuwait
	-:	Sofia, Rio, Düsseldorf, Houston, Nicosia, Montevideo, Nairobi, Bratislava, Montreal, Beirut, Guangzhou, Karachi, Ho Chi Minh City
Gamma	+	Panama City, Casablanca, Brisbane, Quito, Stuttgart, Vancouver, Denver, Seattle, Zagreb, Guatemala City, Cape Town, San Jose, Ljubljana, Minneapolis, Santa Domingo, Chennai, Manama, Shenzhen
	:	Guadalajara, Riga, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Lagos, Philadelphia, Perth, Manchester, Detroit, Guayaquil, Wellington, Portland, Amman
		Edinburgh, Porto, Tallinn, San Salvador, St. Petersburg, Port Louis, San Diego, Calgary, Almaty, Birmingham, Vilnius, Islamabad, Doha, Colombo

Table 1: The GaWC's 2008 Roster of Leading World Cities.

Source: "The World according to GaWC 2008". <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2008t.html>.

	City	Best in Category		City	Best in Category
1	New York City	Business Activity, Human Capital (1)	16	Sydney	Human Capital (8)
2	London	Cultural Experience (1)	17	Berlin	Cultural Experience (8)
3	Paris	Information Exchange (1)	18	Vienna	Political Engagement (9)
4	Tokyo	Business Activity (2)	19	Moscow	Cultural Experience (6)
5	Hong Kong	Business Activity, Human Capital (5)	20	Shanghai	Business Activity (8)
6	Los Angeles	Human Capital (4)	21	Frankfurt	Business Activity (11)
7	Singapore	Business Activity (6)	22	Bangkok	Political Engagement (13)
8	Chicago	Human Capital (3)	23	Amsterdam	Business Activity (10)
9	Seoul	Information Exchange (5)	24	Stockholm	Information Exchange (13)
10	Toronto	Cultural Experience (4)	25	Mexico City	Cultural Experience (9)
11	Washington DC	Political Engagement (1)	26	Zürich	Information Exchange (8)
12	Beijing	Political Engagement (7)	27	Dubai	Information Exchange (14)
13	Brussels	Information Exchange (2)	28	Istanbul	Political Engagement (8)
14	Madrid	Information Exchange (9)	29	Boston	Human Capital (9)
15	San Francisco	Human Capital (12)	30	Rome	Cultural Experience (15)

Table 2: The Top Thirty World Cities according to the Foreign Policy Journal.

Source: "The 2008 Global Cities Index". Foreign Policy (Nov./Dec. 2008). http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4509.

political, and economic centres. It repeated the exercised in 2004, adding few new indicators but put economics ahead of political or cultural aspects. In 2008 it re-sorted the roster through categories of 'Alpha', 'Beta', 'Gamma', 'high sufficiency' and 'sufficiency' (Table 1), which may exclude other cities of global significance or elsewhere on the spectrum due to specific criteria.

Other categorisations like Well rounded cities (very large contribution, smaller contribution

and with cultural bias, and incipient global cities), Niche cities (specialised financial or socio-political contributions), Subnet articulator cities (cultural, political, social) and Worldwide leading cities (economic or non-economic contributions), were based on world city formation (strong, some, minimal) (Wikipedia). In 2008, the Foreign Policy journal and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs jointly ranked cities by consulting expert. It noted that the world's biggest, most interconnected cities help set global agendas, weather trans-

national dangers, and serve as the hubs of global integration; they are the engines of growth for their countries and the gateways to the resources of their regions. It used 24 metrics in business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience, and political engagement (Table 2).

Global city concepts are dominated by the HQ of MNCs, and a locus of advanced services and information-processing activities. Sassen (1991) showed these as the locus for the critical servicing of global capital. She put them in hierarchy using professional services as the main basis. New York, London and Tokyo were commanding the world economy most, as locations for finance and specialist services, and also innovations. Frost and Spence (1993) confirmed them who also acted as markets for the products and innovations. Castells (1996) advanced the theories of the world city network. Taylor (1997) noted their hierarchical tendency, engaged in complementary activities in a network while competing to attract investments. Reed (1981) identified a 5-level hierarchical structure of financial centres. Friedman (1986) showed that world cities act as control centres for world capital accumulation, and acquire certain economic and social structures; many followed him to measure and rank world cities.

Investment and Institutions

The global cities competing for investment is set by structural changes, globalisation and IT. Ambience affects the competitiveness (inter-firm competition based on global competitive environment, competitive strategy and organisational structure) as creation and sustenance of its advantages depends on

the role of a nation (Porter, 1998). Kresl (1995) identified a dichotomy between economic (factors of production, infrastructure) and strategic (policy factors, institutional design) determinants. Thus individual city authority and private sector entities can enhance its competitiveness and enable it to achieve the most desirable economic outputs. However, the actors have to ensure coordination and sector interests (Duffy, 1995). Foreign direct investment (FDI) flow is related to the stage and structure of a country's economic development (Dunning, 1993). Dicken et al (1994) stated that though governments should strive to provide an attractive 'business environment' to enable international companies to operate and attract investment.

Organisations behave and perform within both formal (laws, regulations) and informal rules (norms, conventions, traditions, customs) set by the political, legal and social institutions, and creating diverse economy in various localities (North, 1990). The performance of local economies in a globalising world depends on the presence of such institutions to provide the basis for the growth of local practices and collective representations, high levels of interaction, development of dominating structures or patterns of coalition resulting in the collective representation, and a set of institutions with common agenda (Amin & Thrift, 1994; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). By establishing legitimacy and trust, this will continue to encourage and foster entrepreneurship and consolidate an embeddedness of industry. Places can reach the global status by constructing and adapting 'right' institutional mixes (Amin & Thrift, 1994).

Global City and Culture

Global city status is not gained solely by economic advances; it also needs certain cultural capital developed in a people (e.g. human development for cultural producers and consumers), product (creation of cultural products) and place-oriented strategy (e.g. infrastructure and property development for cultural activities, ambience and ballast) (Kim, 2001; Kong, 2007). Cultural institutions should sustain global flows by drawing investments and tourists through contributing to an enriched lifestyle befitting of a global image. 'The power of cities' and their connectivity show Tokyo as a global command centre, and Tokyo and Hong Kong as dominant centres (Taylor et al, 2002).

Iconic Architecture

Cities with monumental projects and architectural icons can attract investors, professionals and executives. "It is always the image of the building, rarely the diffuse and ungraspable city, and even less, the imagined community, which is used to fix our gaze" (King, 1996). Thus a prospective global city has imageable and striking buildings by international architects, distinctive heritage structures, world-reputed performances and exhibitions, a lively entertainment scene, a creative buzz in a highly liveable space, populated by a global population, branded for world's consumption, a vibrant city for living, working and playing (Kong, 2007).

The skyscraper has dominated the imaginations of city-planners, ensuring that their cities are at centre of attention. "The massive high rise tower is used by Asian countries as a magic wand, stuck metaphorically into the terrestrial globe,

to transform the Third World into the First" (King, 1996). Such giants like Burj-al-Arab or Petronas Twin Towers have for long been used to symbolise corporate power, personal ambition and eminence (King, 1996). They alone cannot bring global status, but "capture the public's imagination and a shared historical sentiment through novelty and size" (Tuan, 1974), and play a key role in making a city known.

"Significant, high profile and prestigious developments play an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration" (Temelova, 2005). A flagship development mark out 'change' for the city to extend "beyond the physical boundaries and contribute to the development and the economic and policy base" (Smyth, 1995). It essentially is "a development in its own right", "a marshalling point for further investment" and "a marketing tool" (Smyth, 1995). Such developments are often associated with 'culture-led' regeneration efforts as cultural policy has an impact on place image and thus attracts visitors and businesses to their shores (OECD 2005). For example, Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, a cultural flagship boasting a high profile innovative design, shifted from structures that 'scrape' the sky to other kinds of urban symbols and monuments. The architectural design privileging iconic status boosts city competitiveness, contributes to economic regeneration, and offers a source of civic pride and social cohesion (De Frantz, 2005).

Dynamic Asian cities like Hong Kong and Singapore aspire to achieve global city status, competing to increase their 'soft power', "in which success depends on their ability to draw capital from the region and the world, attract corporations to set up offices, bring in visitors,

business travellers, conference participants, and tourists" (Tamotsu, 2002). Hence they have constructed icons –Esplanade or West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), amidst varied economic trajectories and different nation-building imperatives. Due to the visibility and materiality, the development of monuments offering tangible evidence of cultural capital was a strategy favoured by all these cities in the competition for global status (Kong, 2007).

Asian Cities

Tokyo has long been recognised one of the top global cities even before the concept emerged. By several measures Hong Kong, Singapore and Seoul have been regarded in the top category too. Other cities frequently making to the top in different counts, but not yet in overall consideration are Beijing, Bangkok, Jakarta, Taipei, Shanghai, Dubai and Mumbai. More cities with potential and the aspiration to become a world city are Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Osaka, Delhi, Tel Aviv and Riyadh, followed by Bangalore, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Colombo, Beirut, Manama and Abu Dhabi .

Mumbai, Shanghai, Karachi, Delhi, Seoul, Tokyo, Jakarta are in the same bracket along with 5 other world cities that have large population living either in the city proper or within the metropolitan area. In terms of percentage of foreigners, 7 Asian cities occupy the top 10 spots with all but Macau and Hong Kong from the middle-east (Dubai, Kuwait, Doha, Manama and Muscat). The Chinese cities became multi-cultural under the Europeans, and then as manufacturing and financials hubs. The increasingly prosperous gulf cities made up the manpower shortage with foreigners.

Hong Kong, Mumbai and Tokyo make to the top 10 of cities in terms of number of billionaires; this shows gradual strength of investment, technology and living standard of the Asian cities. In terms of per capita gross product, Tokyo and Osaka made it to the top 10, indicating innovative and industrious nature of the Japanese people. In terms of air and multi-modal mass rapid transit, Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing made the top list along with 14 other developed world's cities. Singapore did not feature in the league despite having a well-developed MRT and busy modern airport because of a smaller population and area.

Mega cities with colourful cultural scenes are common in China and India. Yet poverty, lack of infrastructure including transport and IT, technological backwardness, poor economy, low investment, and underdeveloped tertiary sector have precluded many Asian cities from entering the top list. Asian mega-cities like Dhaka, Karachi, Lahore, Kolkata and Tehran fall behind in many areas. The reason for many middle-eastern or south-east or eastern Asian cities gradually making the list is their continuous high economic growth enabling them to improve upon infrastructure, basic welfare, human resource, and often in governance and socio-cultural scene.

Hong Kong

The autonomous Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong, constitutionally and territorially a part of China, is shaking off recent economic problems. Apprehensions were made even before its merger with China that "unless it maintains its special international status and



Figure 1: Instantly identifiable architectural icons in 3 Asian cities. Left- Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur (source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/razuryza/2734226038/>); middle- Tower 101 in Taipei (source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/myhourglass/263024750/>), right- Burj al Arab Hotel in Dubai (source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bhaktiamsterdam/2193352622/>).

global linkages, HK could become just another city in South China" (Postiglione & Tang, 1997), risking survival if ending up so (Wang & Wang, 1999). To reinvent itself as a city with a positive and unique identity, Hong Kong is seeking to become 'Asia's world city'; it created a new logo and engaged in media campaign on a new brand platform and visual identity.

The Commission on Strategic Development (CSD, 2000) realised that "Hong Kong needs to promote its unique position as one of the most cosmopolitan and vibrant cities in Asia to a range of international audiences. A successful external promotion program can have a significant positive impact on its ability to achieve a number of key economic, social, and

cultural objectives." In a country obsessed with brands, the government effort is not surprising. However, the campaign has led to debates on a world city's reaction to such things as the environment, democracy, language ability, internationalisation, etc.

Economy

The Hong Kongers are money-obsessed; Rabushka (1979) observed that "Hong Kong has no public, moral, intellectual, artistic, cultural or ethical purpose as a society. It is just one big bazaar". Ng and Hills (2000) furthered the view by labeling Hong Kong as "a city of workers, more than for citizens; security is built on monetary wealth rather than social relationships". The stock market index and the property value

are the topics of constant media and mass attention in Hong Kong, which leads the Asian economies in purchasing power. It also has the ninth largest trade dependent economies in the world (US\$ 415 billion or 25% of its GDP in 2000) (HKTD, 2002). Yet a 0.53 Gini coefficient means income disparity and growing poverty exist (SCMP, 2000).

Sophisticated services, stable society and reliable legal process give HK an edge as a commercial centre. Its banks do not have the problems that burden Asian countries, administrative process is transparent, the press was voted the "freest" in Asia by Paris-based Reporters without Borders (SCMP, 2002), and corruption is low. It is the world's tenth largest banking centre, and Asia's second largest stock market (GIS 2002). Hong Kong's economy has for long been in the top five 'freest' in the world (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2003). Its per capita GDP doubled between 1990 and 2000, with economy recovering from the 1997-98 Asian financial crises.

Hong Kong with the busiest container port in the world, and efficient passenger and freight transport competes with Singapore (Dorfman, nd; Cullinane, 2002, 2003). Large cartels dominate its international services, while the domestic sector is led by small and medium enterprises with not much international competition; though during the 1980s, manufacturing contributed highly to its economy (Sparrow 1988), it was weakened by high price and not so good quality (Maruya, 1998). Manufacturing, construction and utility supply accounted for 31.6% of GDP in 1980, compared to only 14.3% in 2000 (CSD, 2002). However, by 2000, the economy gradually drifted towards the service sector that represented 85.6% of GDP and 83.4% of the

workforce.

The fact that Hong Kong is surrounded by other economic heavyweights is affecting it. Cross-border migration to Pearl River Delta (PRD) Special Economic Zones due to the China's 'open door' policy is affecting manufacturing in Hong Kong, and shifting it from being factory to showroom (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2003). However, Hong Kong and the PRD are an inseparable entity from an economic viewpoint (HKSAR, 2001; Sung & Wong, 2000), as the latter was described as "an industrial region so huge as to transform global trading patterns and investment flows" (Anon, 2002). This was "the fastest-growing part of the fastest-growing province in the fastest-growing large economy in the world" (Enright & Scott, 2002) that in 1980-2000 grew at a rate of 16.9% annually, compared with 9.6% for China as a whole.

HK wages are 7 times higher than those in mainland (Guttmann & Frey, 2000). Government efforts to reduce wages of the civil servants met strong opposition. HK\$ pegged to the US\$ limits the scope of cost reduction. Cost and land constraints forced Hong Kong to relocate manufacturing activities to PRD, 40% (US\$ 50 billion) of that was invested in industries in neighbouring Guangdong involving outward processing arrangements. About 5 million Chinese employees are working for nearly 36,000 Guangdong companies with huge HK interest (HKSAR, 2002). Guangdong surpassed mainland China's phenomenal economic growth in the past decade. Its GDP increased at about 30% a year from 1991-95 and then at 10% rate for the rest of the decade.

About 64% of overseas buyers source products

made in mainland China via companies in Hong Kong; around 97% of their agents sit in Hong Kong to source products made in Guangdong. Hong Kong actualised 62.4% of US\$ 275 million foreign investment in Shenzhen in 1999 (Shiu & Yang, 2002). The population of Shenzhen has increased from 314,000 (1979) to over 7 million now. "Downtown Shenzhen looks like the cityscapes in 'Bladerunner'; its western suburbs look like Silicon Valley" (Anon, 2002). Its average annual GDP growth rate was 31% during 1979-99, or 15.7% per capita (Shiu & Yang, 2002). It has the highest average GDP per capita of all Chinese cities, 35,896 Yuan in 1999 (HKSAR, 2001).

"Property speculating is a favourite pastime of risk-loving Hong Kongers" (Phang, 2000). Construction and property development transforming the city's skyline were pushing growth in the 1980s till prices reached the peak in 1997 and then declined (GIS, 2002), leaving 200,000 households with negative equity (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2003). As the government, the largest landowner, leases out all land through auction, it has the capability to influence land values and the property price.

The fall in property prices and stock value, and 8% unemployment rate led to a loss of faith in the economy among Hong Kongers after the merger; "the spectacular economic collapse, Hong Kong is undermined by a confidence crisis; things seem to be falling apart on many fronts" (Wang & Wang, 1999). The economic giant, superior in all respects to the mainland, is looking to its 'mother country' to help extricate it from its malaise (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2003). "Perceptible trend towards acculturation between Hong Kong and China" was caused

partly by immigration from China (Hook, 2000). Even tourism, hitherto based on the world market, now aims to attract a greater number of mainlanders; of 13.7 million visitors in 2001, a third was from there (HKTDC, 2002).

Society and Environment

Hong Kong lacks in social cohesion, evident in little community space in the cityscape and people's reluctance to be involved in local politics. Many traditional towns and villages destroyed to make way for high-rises dislocated the residents. The social capital got weakened further by "economic restructuring-induced social polarisation", due to an influx of unskilled mainlanders who are considered a permanent underclass (Ng & Hills, 2000). Hong Kong's joining the mainland amidst financial crisis and endemic unemployment increased the pressure on the dole system. Moreover, in an economy striving to become knowledge-based, a 'digital divide' emerged among the workforce that further exacerbated the problems and inhibited the less educated, less skilled, elderly and disabled (Degolyer, 2001; Fung, 2001).

In 2003, the government cut welfare by 11.1% due to the deflation and an 'overwhelming' demand to limit the number of immigrant claimants (SCMP, 2003). Following a 10% cut for the funding triennium since 1998, tertiary institutions received a \$1.9 billion cut in funds for 2001-04 and more lately. Schools were required to reduce staff by 10% and the whole education system was reviewed to make that more cost effective. In a similar rationalisation, the health service was privatised. The government froze the property values to cap appreciation as home ownership was already high. In light of about HK\$70 billion budget deficit and low position in



Figure 2: Two Faces of Hong Kong's Lifestyles. Left- Indigenous water transportation and boat slums with sleek towers in the backdrop (source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/22505742@N00/187224347/>); right- Victoria promenade in the Cultural District looking towards the iconic structures across the Harbour (source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/roblsameehan/179812870/>).

opinion polls, it may retrench its housing policy to improve the negative equity of numerous homeowners (Taylor, 2002).

Hong Kong has an appalling environmental record. Nearly 80% of its water is bought from mainland and has to be sterilised. The sewage discharged into the harbour goes through preliminary screening only. Garbage disposal is also unsatisfactory; public places are often strewn with rubbish, enhanced by the cleaners. Pollutants exceeding WHO standards killed about 2000 people a year, and caused HK\$ 4 billion a year in medical costs and loss of productivity (GIS, 2002). But it is only seen as an adverse impact on tourism or investment, ignoring its threat on life quality. The eminence of economic rationale to confront serious pollution threats and deteriorating environmental quality is evident in the way government sees the link of environmental protection with economic prosperity (Chan & Loh, 2002). The outcomes of Environmental Impact Assessment are hardly complied with due to inadequate resources,

limited enforcement and lack of co-operation from authorities; thus the "environmental governance stops at the rhetoric" (Lo & Yip, 1999).

Culture

Hong Kong's Chief Administrative Officer explicitly aspired for a long-term development plan to make it a 'world class' city in his 1999 Policy Address. Bringing the Vision to Life –Hong Kong's Development Needs and Goals (2000), a report produced by the CSD, shaped the vision further and set strategies to realise that; the city had to strengthen its position in China within the PRD on way to become 'Asia's World City' (CSD, 2000). Other strategies aimed to enhance the city's competitiveness, improve the quality of life, and establish and reinforce its identity and image. Though the link with the mainland is crucial for reaching the world status, some feared that cities like Shanghai or Beijing could subdue HK as part of PRD (Forrest et al., 2004), making it another provincial city (Skeldon, 1997). The delta contains 50 million urbanites in few mega-cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen

with global aspirations, and Dongguan, Foshan and Zuhai.

Hong Kong has hitherto been known as an economic centre; yet following the Address that emphasised on exploiting the potential of art, studies advocated creative industries to facilitate the building of a world city, trigger economic development, enhance quality of living, and thus promote tourism and attract investment, as a “cohesive agent in building community identity”, “allow[ing] local citizens as well as visitors a deeper understanding of the Hong Kong spirit” (HKADC, 2000).

Hong Kong’s colonial past meant it grew as a well-placed international cosmopolite (Kong, 2007), excelling in financial services, infrastructure, IT and tourism (Tsang, 2005), garnering a reputation where deals are made (Fung, 1999). It also worked towards higher value-added outputs by innovating and increasing the knowledge content of its economy to sustain development (Tung, 2005). It still needs to do more to attract world-renowned tertiary institutions, improve environmental quality, enhance entertainment facilities and revise immigration laws, to attract and retain best talents in Hong Kong (Dorfman, nd).

Hong Kong’s urban development strategies recognise this; the WKCD was part of an aggressive socio-economic policy aiming to stimulate its lack-lustre economy, and assure HK’s position as a global city (Kong et al, 2006). The global ambition was articulated as: a “cultural oasis to enrich lives”, a landmark development to “enhance Hong Kong’s position as a world city of culture; enrich cultural life by attracting internationally acclaimed performances and exhibitions; nurture local arts talent and create more opportunities for groups; enhance international cultural exchange;

put Hong Kong on the world culture map; provide state-of-the-art performance venues and museums; offer more choices to patrons; encourage creativity; enhance the harbour front; attract overseas visitors; and create jobs” (http://www.hplb.gov.hk/wkcd/eng/public_consultation/intro.htm).

However, the International Association of Art Critics debated WKCD’s role as a cultural hub (SCMP 2004); a prominent civic group ‘Project Hong Kong’ called for developing talent rather than hardware. Concern was also raised regarding the citizens having no say in its planning (AFP 2004). The ‘Citizen Envisioning a Harbour’ accused that community needs were not considered. Artists and professionals showed concern at the lack of consultation, fearing that it might benefit developers who care less about culture (SCMP, 2004). The need for a new cultural district in the harbour area already crowded with 90% of all entertainment, arts, cultural, financial and commercial facilities was questioned too (SCMP, 2004); clustering activities in a small place made no sense (Kong, 2005).

However, the frame of reference for WKCD was not the national identity, as would be in the mainland. The city’s global inter-connections were consistently negotiating with its insistently local identity (Fung, 2001) that underscores a political culture where the city’s cultural-global strategy divorced ‘nation’ and ‘national’. This was compatible to ‘unpatriotic’ antinationalistic orientation of the ‘exceptionally outward’ Hong Kongers who were “citizens of the world, first; then of the SAR; and finally of the PRC” (Degolyer, 2001).

Singapore

Taylor et al (2002) identified Singapore, a young nation of mainly second and third generation migrants, as the most important world city in SE Asia, a “linchpin of the new global capitalism” (Chua 1993), and “efficient transport system and telecommunications network, modern and efficient air and sea terminals, efficient business districts and good public housing, strengthening its global competitiveness” (Baum 1999). Its strategic geo-political location and good harbour facilities have enabled Singapore to remain one of the busiest shipping hubs of the world, backed by required services (Dorfman, nd). Its “international presence as a major commercial and financial centre as well as a significant location for the regional headquarters (RHQs) of major MNCs (Lim & Choo, 1995), or increasingly “global reach of both the economy and society”, evidenced in the “numbers of foreign-controlled companies, the amount of foreign capital invested and the extent of international cargo and passenger flows” (Baum, 1999), made it a top city.

Economy

Singapore transformed into an intelligent society through the classical path of developing primary to secondary to tertiary sector activities. Based on value addition and export oriented growth, it shifted from industries to soft factories in the 1970s, moved into high technology the next decade, and then to knowledge intensive companies to face globalisation and regional challenges. Infrastructure driven by high value added production, business and IT services attracted the RHQs continuously over three decades (Ho 2000). Singapore built a modern city centre, industrial estates, business parks and infrastructure to facilitate the MNCs. In the

1980s, the government launched a series of pro-IT plans to enhance its status to that of a world city, and liberalised telecommunication market to gain extra edge that made it a secure and preferred destination (Sim et al, 2003).

Singapore experienced 10%+ growth since the late 1980s; the economy recovered from the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, as focus group studies recommended the best approach to weather future slumps and sustain the socio-economic development. In 1997, the Committee on Singapore’s Competitiveness set its drive towards a globally competitive knowledge based economy. These underscore the importance of a resilient development, political stability, and thwart the threat by China’s rise as a global power.

The Prime Minister’s 2001 New Year’s Speech outlined the vision and strategy for Singapore. Following it, the Economic Review Committee (ERC) was set to address the emerging issues that could affect Singapore’s development. Assisted by the Economic Development Board and the Trade Development Board for direct marketing, over 5000 international companies operate in Singapore, about half of them also regionally (Sim et al, 2003). With the manufacturing and service sectors, Singapore’s economy has transformed in terms of the types of business including higher value-adding activities. This reveals a built-in process revolving around development vision, institutions and competitive business environment in a global city’s institutional milieu.

Environment and Society

The city-state of Singapore has created a high quality urban environment, managing many of the problems of rapid globalisation driven

development (Marcotullio, 2001). Yeoh and Chang (2001) profiled Singapore as a meeting-place of trans-national groups of high-skilled managerial elites, low-waged immigrant labour, creative talents in the arts, and tourists, attributed to a policy of attracting the world (both money and people) to Singapore. Dubbed as 'garden city' and the 'cleanest city', Singapore has progressed tremendously in terms of urban and social amenities and street furniture. It provides housing to every citizen. Its transport facilities, intelligent traffic management, and efficient multi-modal transportation system are exceptional.

Singapore's cohesive political structure for decades ensured a transparent and path detailed vision; transparency and efficiency put it at the top (MOTI, 2001). It also has a high tolerance towards multiculturalism (Kratke, 2001). With over 4.5 million (25% foreigners) multi-racial population, the institutions have cautiously created a multicultural social framework. Yet, the foreign talent is seen as a must for driving different businesses (Sim et al, 2003), who generate over a third to its GDP (MOTI, 2001); the foreign-controlled companies account for 42% of GDP (SDS, 2001). Thus Singapore's socio-spatial structure reflects its high racial tolerance and the development initiatives to transform its local environment to attract the MNCs. Singaporeans do not want any religious polarisation that could breed an unhealthy environment, and want to maintain the moderate and secure environment (Sim et al, 2003). As part of its long-term human resource development strategies, Singapore built two world level universities, besides sending the Singaporeans to abroad.

Culture

As a city-state, the global orientation implicates the ways Singaporeans understand 'nation' and how the government is building its identity since independence through various projects and social and spatial strategies on housing, education, language, race, religion and community development for a good society (Hill & Lian, 1995; Kong & Yeoh, 2003). Thus the intertwined urban, national and global ambitions meant cultural policy and infrastructure have continued to build an identity striving for the global status (Kong, 2007). In Singapore, cultural monuments are national monuments, also monuments to a global city. Both government-led efforts and civic and artistic community activity seek local identity to define Singapore in the global arena.

Singapore aims to become a 'Renaissance city' and a 'global city for the arts'. Despite shunning 'yellow culture' of the 'decadent West' in the past, it now aims to harness economic potential of arts and culture (Kong, 2000; Kong et al, 2006), for 'personal enrichment' and to "broaden minds, deepen senses, improve the life quality, strengthen social bond, and contribute to tourist and entertainment sectors" (Council, 1989). The National Arts Council and the National Heritage Board were established in the mid 1990s, and Singapore burst into creative economy, producing the Renaissance City Report, and Investing in Singapore's Cultural Capital by the Ministry of Information and the Arts and Creative Industries Development Strategy by the ERC to define the path. Studies were undertaken to develop the economic potential of the arts and culture, media, and design, by developing and enhancing cultural edifices.



Figure 3: Faces of Singapore. Left- Icons of Singapore- the 'Merlion' in the foreground, CBD in the background; middle- Street sculpture in the harbour area depicting the trading roots and coexistence of multiculturalism; right- Indigenous conserved Chinatown with downtown in the background, heritage conservation and eating out as lively outdoor culture (source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mja008/3255058979/>).

The Singapore government recognised the economic value of 'creativity' in arts, culture and heritage, and the role of architecture to develop them. The local artists were aware that building the hardware without compatible software cannot help to develop arts (Kong 2000). A global city should showcase international art works, as well as local works expressing local flavours and identities where Singapore failed. Its label as 'an arts emporium', with more retail spaces for international expositions, stymies the blossoming of local styles and the maturing of national identities (Kong, 2000). The Esplanade inhibited the development of the small performing spaces in favour of the large facilities as the huge investment needs to "go for sure-fire successes". Thus few local groups will be able to afford to use the spaces when "profit-making theatre" will be favoured above "exploratory, indigenous forms".

As a negative result, those creative artists willing to explore new forms may feel the pressure to

abandon more of those projects and produce more audience-determined plays to justify their work. Unable to match the foreign artists in crowd and money, the local artists are seeking a distinct Singapore idiom (Kong, 2007). With interest and the identification of arts and culture in the 'creative economy', existing spaces converted to cultural use add to iconic urban spaces that embraces the city's global ambition.

The Esplanade endeavoured to become a distinct icon for the Singaporeans. Criticisms during its planning subsided to tacit approval as the sunshades were added, and it was fondly identified as the 'Merlion'. But reactions to the demolition of an uninteresting National Library building show how big cultural edifice only cannot catch national imagination and attain global aspirations (Kong, 2007). Cultural infrastructures representing iconic symbols to support such ambitions are not enough or necessary without developing local arts. The

promise of new state-of-the-art premises could not overcome passion for the old Library; it points to the search for cultural roots amidst rapid globalisation in a "time of continuing and heightening nation-state building processes" (Glick et al, 1995). The search amounted to a 'reassertion' and 'celebration' of the nation (Pieterse, 1994).

The Tale of Two Cities

The integration of national economies into the international through trade, capital flows, migration, and IT (Bhagwati, 2004) is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces (Croucher, 2004). "It consists of an enormous variety of micro processes that begin to denationalise what had been constructed as national – whether policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains" (Sassen, 2006). Protective industrial policies of several countries slowed down the globalisation process after the WWI. As the growth of population and civilisation accelerated dramatically in the past 50 years, world powers used globalisation to breakdown trade barriers, laying down the framework of institutions like the IMF or GATT. The process speeded up after the demise of cold war as technological advances made travel and international business using high-speed communications easier.

The cities foster creative productions and boast impressive cultural infrastructure and vibrant cultural life. Cultural globalisation (growth of cross-cultural contacts, advent of new forms of consciousness and identities diffusing culture, desire to increase living standard and

enjoy foreign products and ideas, adopt new technology and practices, participate in a 'world culture'), driven by IT and the worldwide marketing of things western, was a form of domination by American culture at the expense of traditional diversity. The internet broke down cultural boundaries by enabling instant communication among people anywhere. It allows interaction and communication between people of various lifestyles and cultures. McDonalds is a global enterprise. Meditation, a sacred practice in Asian culture, now is a chic way to keep body shape. Chinese tattoos, hit with the young, are result of globalisation.

Thus activists protest against globalisation to defend local uniqueness, individuality, and identity, considering 'imported' culture a danger, since it may supplant the local culture, causing reduction in diversity or assimilation. They also argue that resource-starved people cannot compete on level ground. These include churches, national liberation factions, peasant unions, intellectuals, conservationists, artists, and anarchists; some are reformist, while others are more revolutionary or reactionary, believing globalisation destroys national industry and jobs, identify corporate interests to mediate globalisation against the poor and working classes, loading environment in an inequitable way.

The KOF devised a multivariate approach to measure economic, social, and political phenomenon of globalisation. Macro factors like overall planning, infrastructure, info-structure, affordability of space, innovation, investment and quality of life, all complementary to each other, can help to better understand the potentials and the drawbacks of a global city. The

Asian cities whose economy was not noticeable until the 1970s made remarkable stride in global rankings. Economic development there brought improved infrastructure providing people with beyond basic welfare. Production system grew from primary to secondary, and then in some of these to tertiary. Driven by self-actualisation, they indulged into identity construction and global aspiration. Sim et al (2003) saw the arts, leisure and cultural lifestyle and city vibrancy to be lacking in Singapore. But the Foreign Policy Magazine published Index shows Singapore as the only Asian country among the top six global countries. It is also among the top 15 most globalising countries of the world, ahead of France, Germany, Australia, UK, and even USA.

The planners do best to use cultural icons to fulfil economic imperatives, serve national identity and pride, and shore up global city ambitions. Only grand infrastructure is inadequate for any city, national or global ambition. A range of place meanings, often discontinuous and fragmented, suggests that the cultural capital desired by state and city agencies may have little meaning to the population. Yet architectural symbols, urban flagships and mega-projects, with their underlying political and economic imperatives, help to create cultural assets in cities aspiring to become global city. Their roles in marketing the cities they are in, as well as the confluences and contradictions between global aspirations, national imperatives, and local daily lives, were apparent in this paper.

Both Hong Kong and Singapore command the region as highly connected gateways and international financial centres (Taylor et al, 2002). Preferred locations for the RHQs (Yeung et al, 2001), they were strategically located

on the global transport and communication network with high quality producer services, skilled labour, and rich socio-cultural amenities. But *laissez-faire* in Hong Kong and interventionist economic strategies in Singapore were adopted to attain them (Lam, 2000). They have become global complexes not only of economic power, but also of socio-cultural influences in the world (McDowell, 1997; Thrift, 1994).

Internal problems and regional competitions, e.g. from China, shape Singapore's global aspiration and development strategies. With institutional structure creating an entrepreneurial ambience- a launching pad to enter the Chinese market (Sim et al, 2003), Hong Kong has been a competitor too. Singapore's global city aspiration having economic imperatives is matched by rallying the citizens around icons with a common global, national and local identity. Hong Kong's outward global aspirations with such imperatives are not tagged with China. It is aware that to remain useful, it must stay ahead of China, rather than become 'just another Chinese city' (SCMP, 1999). Their cultural-global strategies relate differently to the nation -congruent (Singapore), and conflicting (Hong Kong) (Kong, 2007).

In Singapore, the ambitions and identity of city and nation are intertwined in its global aim; cultural icons capture the national imagination, and cultivate a sense of identity and global city-ness. However, it needs to develop local idioms, rather than giving in to internationalisation. The interlocking perspective of personality, identity and ambition result from being a city-state relied on global interconnections for economic survival (Kong, 2007). HK's approach to cultural icons free of national agenda has economic

focus and the global ambition. Its civil society has championed social goals, participation, and cultural identity, underscoring the multivalent meanings of cultural icons (Kong, 2007).

Singapore had to suit its strategies to rapid development in the region, currency devaluations, and regional and global economic changes. Its strong institutional framework is able to meet increased competition from China, India or ASEAN neighbours. Due to the institutional participation in business facilitation and efficient servicing, there is business security in Singapore, substantiated by a pragmatic and efficient legal sector. It earns high points in the majority of the attributes of a good business community, e.g. overall planning, infrastructure and info-structure, quality of developments, investment capabilities and the quality of life. Kong (2007) branded it as 'a safe and secure city', 'a favourable place to do business in', and 'a city where things work'.

Skyscrapers, urban flagships and mega-projects have been used to boost the development and global prominence of both the cities, to "become important symbols instantiating global status" (Cartier, 1999). However, the respective cities' motivations for cultural development differ; various degrees of importance is given to local and national ambitions, and differing intersections of local, national and global, reflecting their different geopolitical situations. The political cultures of both affected the ways public respond. In Singapore, the one-party government could ignore public opinion; in more democratic Hong Kong, the public could ask the government to stop projects.

Hong Kong has been looking for a distinct

identity since merger with China raised a few spectres. It is challenged with unemployment, deflation, budget deficit, and depressed stock market and real-estate; practice of democracy and participation without enraging the PRC; dealing of environmental concerns and improve the sustainability of new developments; tackling increasing population with higher expectations; improving education to produce a more creative, intelligent workforce; and enhancing life quality (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2003). External economic phenomena degraded its economy, created social confusion, and questioned the government's competence.

These precipitated into HK's increasing economic, social and cultural linkages with the mainland that has surged ahead in economic growth and socio-cultural changes. Given the relative cross-border positions, land and labour prices in Hong Kong declined due to the purchasing power parity, and it failed to restore the high land and property values. Thus the scope for making fortunes from property investment is no more there, and salaries are stabilising (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2003). The stark contrast has called for greater integration than contest to make HK prosperous, confident and self-assured.

Unlike Hong Kong, Singapore is both a city and a nation. To realise its vision as an intelligent economy, it not only needs to transform from a capital-intensive, investment-driven growth model to one that entails innovation, value creation and business spread, but also needs to maintain political stability, cordiality with neighbours, and synergistic working agreements. Such a transition already taking place in Singapore, will see changes in the

institutions and the business environment. The evolution into a new economy in the light of greater competition will pose new challenges for Singapore in its bid to remain global.

The government's reluctance to undertake the remedies needed to increase integration with the PRD as a strategy to respond to market forces and meet objectives lacks strategic thinking. This could enhance Hong Kong's intermediary role in trade between the mainland and the West, and make production facilities there easy to control by the HK investors. It could also help solve its housing, pollution and skills shortage problems. The HK entrepreneurs will continue investment in the PRD bringing greater efficiency. There is a recent trend towards the joint marketing of South China as the most suitable destination for business, overseas investment, joint venturing or simply trading. Whether Hong Kong then becomes 'just another mega-city in China' depends upon the relative economic success achieved by the emergent entity.

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