

## **IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR CULTURAL POLICY MAKING PROCESS – SINGAPORE ‘CREATIVE INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY’**

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### **Introduction**

Even with accurate indicators, a good piece of cultural policy may need more than experienced policy makers to formulate. The fixed variables can be determined and forecasted at maximum confidence level. The final policy will be passed on from a hierarchy of politicians, professionals and managers. Implementation is an important process which must be coherent to the policy report and cultural strategies. However, the resulting impact on various stakeholders (public, institutions, artists, sponsors, and government) may differ from original expectations. There is no perfect structure of policy-making nor does the testimonial piece of existing cultural policy, only one which best suit the country’s people, cultural profile and market.

The essay will first discuss the considerable factors for good cultural policy making with respect to Singapore. Singapore has only in recent years diverted its attention from financial and business sectors to the arts and creative industries. The “Creative Industries Development Strategy” (CID) was a report by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) in 2002, to acknowledge the rise of the creative economy. Stimulated by lack lustre in the business, finance and property sectors, the government look towards potential industries to attract foreign investments and striving towards a gracious society. The first section will suggest policy-making factors with statistical support alongside a critical review of current policy measures. The second section will address the important components of policy making process. However, since this essay is of academic nature there will be some limitations to the practicality and experience of the stated process.

## **Considerable Factors for Good Cultural Policy-Making**

Through close study, the present state of Singapore's cultural policy mirrors the Cycle of Creativity (Landry, 2000) shown in Figure 1 (appendix). Singapore's "Creative Industries Development Strategy" (CID) recognises the existence of creative ideas and ideas-generating capacity and thereafter identifying and building up a group of private investors who are interested in supporting innovative entrepreneurs through the injection of equity and expertise. The government then proceeds with vast investments on infrastructure, cultural institutions and developing "Creative Towns". Since the CID has only been published in 2002, the various strategies are being implemented and the current situation is highly volatile and dynamic.

As a Commonwealth nation, Singapore is largely influenced by the British system with respect to the formation of Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) and the various arm's length bodies (refer to Table 1) such as the National Arts Council (NAC), National Library Board, National Heritage Board, Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore and Media Development Authority. The sub-committee of CID has also produced three strategies for the Arts, Media and Design industries respectively. The implications of these strategies will mean a restructuring of the governmental bodies and raise questions to the necessity as well as responsibilities of various arms' length bodies.

The CID encompasses three reports, namely Renaissance City 2.0, Media 21 and Design 21 for each respective sector. With the production of CID, the key challenge now is to deviate from principles to practice. Even if governments have adopted democratic-participatory and socio-cultural orientations for revised cultural policies, comprehensive approaches to enhance the positive values of the arts in community development, mutual understanding and cooperation are still limited (UNESCO, 1995).

To make a truly comprehensive cultural policy, three categories of actions are required: strategies, initiatives and assessment of the impact (Adams and Goldbard, 1995). The factors for good cultural policy making are as follows:

■ Identify Stakeholders' interests and promote Public Participation.

A good piece of cultural policy will address feedback from stakeholders and respond accordingly to stakeholders' needs.

- i. Arts Industry
  - Professional arts practitioners, free-lancers, academia
  - Arts managers and agents
  - Audience and visitors
- ii. Design Industry
  - Designers, Architects, planners, software designers
  - Buyers
- iii. Media Industry
  - Producers, Professionals
  - Broadcasters, singers, actors, writers, technicians
  - Viewers, Readers and Listeners

CID's vision is to develop 'a vibrant and sustainable creative cluster to propel the growth of Singapore's Creative Economy' with objectives of attaining 6% GDP contribution by year 2012, and establish a reputation for Singapore as a New Asia Creative Hub (CID, 2002). Cultural policies driven by nation-building objectives are being increasingly challenged by individuals and groups who may not necessarily contest this motivation, yet ask for their more immediate needs to be met first. Because of bureaucratic lags, the more participatory approaches that governments are ready to define are often out of phase with real needs by the time they are implemented. This is very like to be true in the domain of cultural life, where change is rapid but policy rigid. (UNESCO, 1995)

■ Reference, not Reproduction

Singapore is a very small country with high density of approximately 6000 persons per square kilometre. Its characteristics and country profile (refer to appendix) is significantly different from other countries, including its British mentor and other

leading cities. When the four main pillars of cultural policy dominate policy-making in UK, Singapore needs to discover for itself what its main pillars are, and innovate a cultural policy to best suit its demographics and trend. The political environment needs to be open and prepared to assume risks (Moller, 2004).

### Transparency

Policy communities are networks of specialists in a given policy area, drawn from inside and outside of government, spanning a range of partisan and ideological perspectives (Wyszomirski, 1995). The Economic Review Committee (ERC) is a special task force assembled to restructure Singapore, and one of its seven sub-committees (Sub-Committee for Services Industry) listed Creative Industries as one of the three promising service areas to promote, the other two areas are education and healthcare. Thus, MICA's role is to spearhead the CID report towards ERC's vision of a "diversified, entrepreneurial and globalised economy for Singapore". This tedious and political process may increase administrative time lags, and current policies may eventually become passé. With Creative Industries being "one of the three" service areas, MICA's role as a 'sub-sub-committee' may be unclear as to whether MICA has enough empowerment to influence and spearhead the creative industries. Thus, there are doubts regarding the appropriate personnel involved in the ERC, Sub-Committee for Services Industry, and CID Strategy Group.

Being the trade centre and financial hub of South-East Asia, Singapore's cultural scene is naturally moving at equal pacing as the other industries. This means that the creative industries are reacting at phenomenal speed to the new CID strategy, the opening of China market, new free trade and bilateral agreements with China, India and USA, in addition to the recovery from the long- overdue Asia Economic Crisis.

The initial factor contributing to good cultural policy making is pre-policy preparations such as market research and SWOT Analysis of country's profile and characteristics of the Creative Industries. With statistics and market knowledge on hand, the important factors will then be high level of public participation followed by transparency in policy making to ensure that the committee members are suitable

representations of various stakeholders in the creative industries. Thereafter, the policy should be tuned to the country's unique requirements and characteristics, bearing in mind that even the most perfect policy making models are indicators and not ideal for every country.

## **Components of Policy-Making**

### Technology, Intellectual Property and Infrastructure

"Responsible policy-makers have been caught between the unreasonable and the nonnegotiable, and between the unthinking and the unthinkable. The resultant policy dilemmas have imposed rising political costs on most participants." (Wyszomirski, 1995). In recent years, the fixed system of organisation has led human resources (MITA and related institutions) to develop a comfort zone. With the Economic Review Committee, intellectual capital plays an important role to support the new creative ideas such as developing fusion space for the people and having a new Museum Of Modern Art. The role of governing bodies has changed to a supplementary role rather than a controlling one. NAC, NLB and NHB have become platforms for cultural exchange within the country as well as internationally. Open-mindedness and receptivity of key contact personnel is essential to put CID strategies into reality. Internet and email will provide technological channels for creative ideas to be heard, as well as immediate responses to any public feedback. The Esplanade has pulled crowds of Singaporeans into an Arts Centre when previously; people were intimidated by the elitist impression of concert halls and theatres.

Technology, Intellectual Property, and world-class Infrastructure are essential tools which helps ignite the first spark and guide Singapore into the world of Creative Industries. With proper management and high quality marketing, these tools are ideal platforms for increasing Singaporeans artistic opportunities and experiences.

### Public Participation

After the necessary channels are formulated, the next step will be to look at all the stakeholders in the creative industries and use the channels for public participation. Instead of the reigning supply-led approach which it is also top-down and easily overlooks minority needs, the ministry can identify public interests through focus groups and feedback. Although arts communities vary greatly in their degree of specialization

and cohesion, the arts community is fragmented, incomplete and uncoordinated (Wyszomirski, 1995). By having rational hosts of focus groups, symposiums, seminars and other educational tools, public participation can be guided with clear objectives in mind. There can be a wide range of public participation, which range from simple feedback forms and online surveys to targeting a specific faction using symposiums and focus groups.

Implementing a demand-led policy is more easily said than done, however. Elements in a new participation strategy (in Sweden) include increasing the interplay between cultural policies and other social and educational sectors. Strengthening the process will help put people, and not institutions and products, at centre stage. Such a policy would have to be permanently in phase with evolving lifestyles, interests and creative potentials. This is illustrated in Zimbabwe where crafts, dress, design, food traditional medicine, environmental practices and religion are all important components in the country's new cultural policy. (UNESCO, 1995)

The cultural policy and strategic aims should also be part of the overall consideration of other policies. Governmental bodies and Government Linked Companies (GLC) can organise concurrent policy making processes for every industry to create overall coherent policies. One major aspect of cultural policy is the effect of cultural tourism. Therefore, NAC can work with STB (Singapore Tourism Board) to bring attractive packages for tourists and makeover certain tourists' districts such as Sentosa, Orchard Road and Little India into a cultural belt.

With the public feedback, the government and related institutions now require funding for strategic implementations.

#### Private and Public Support

Governments are faced with an unavoidable tension between commercial interests and the desires for programming that is responsive to the claims different. If the economic development continues, and it probably will, culture and arts becomes a more and more important component of Gross National Product. Unavoidably, it will gradually be subjected to economic laws and business decisions. Moller said in the recent conference at International Society for the Performing Arts, "If internationalism prevails despite the

challenges and difficulties it faces, culture and arts become frontrunners of what may be a richer world, not necessarily in economic terms but in artistic and cultural expressions”.

Singapore is already experiencing the integration of businesses and the arts. MICA's Minister Dr. Lee also commented that museums (can) collectively invite businesses to participate in the discussions to build up a strategic partnership between museums and corporate citizens (March, 2004). Indeed, businesses do have a stake in helping to promote cultural cooperation, not just between public and private sectors but also between Asia and Europe. This fusion will help sustain sponsorships and act as a catalyst for more mutually beneficial creative partnerships.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

With financial security and stability for the arts, monitoring and evaluation tools can now be applied to analyze the outcome of the cultural policy. Monitoring and evaluation can take place every three to five yearly to improve the policy in reaction to societal changes and behaviours. However, this stage of monitoring and evaluation can be injected after each process to ensure the practicality and feasibility of public feedback as well as manoeuvre overall public interests. At the same time, performance indicators should be updated and refreshed to reflect current impacts for further fine-tuning for the cultural policy.

#### **Issues in Concern**

##### Resistance of Business sponsorships

The Arts should draw public attention away from lack of funds to the positive added value of the industries, such as businesses opportunities, tangible and intangible profits for the society. MNCs and GLCs should initiate a series of bilateral and unilateral projects, such as offering scholarships to the new Art, Design and Media University. Presently, only Exxon Mobil and Lee Foundation are actively and regularly involved in promoting the arts and cultural scenes from all levels of participation. MITA should focus on the multiplier effect of 1.66 in the creative industries (as opposed to 1.4 in petrochemical) and better branding for major economic players (such as financial institutions) to be regular patrons for the arts.

##### National Identity and Education

The history and culture of community will determine the values and societal norms upheld by the community. Globalisation will weaken this set of values and societal norms and gradually homogenization and standardization of products will eventually make all cities look and feel alike. "Intensely global, intensely local: our capacity to be connected and mobile is counter pointed by our physical rootedness" (Landry, 2000). Therefore, education should go hand in hand with preservation of national identity and societal values. Creativity can be brought into classrooms and bring individualistic distinctive creativity onto global standards.

#### Political Instability

Any slight changes to the Cabinet or restructuring of organisations will bring about implementation complications to any policies. A new prime minister may mean structural changes within the government.

On a more international basis, the continuous talks about bilateral partnerships between the East and West may promote competition instead of learning. "Culture and arts become ensnared by inward looking nationalism setting Asia and the West against each other not in friendly competition but ugly confrontation." (Moller, 2004)

#### **Conclusion**

The subject matter has high complexities and the relevant issues cannot be covered in this essay. Instrumentalities of Cultural Policy such as grants and awards, employment and job creation, copyright laws and regulations have been briefly mentioned but are equally important factors of policy making.

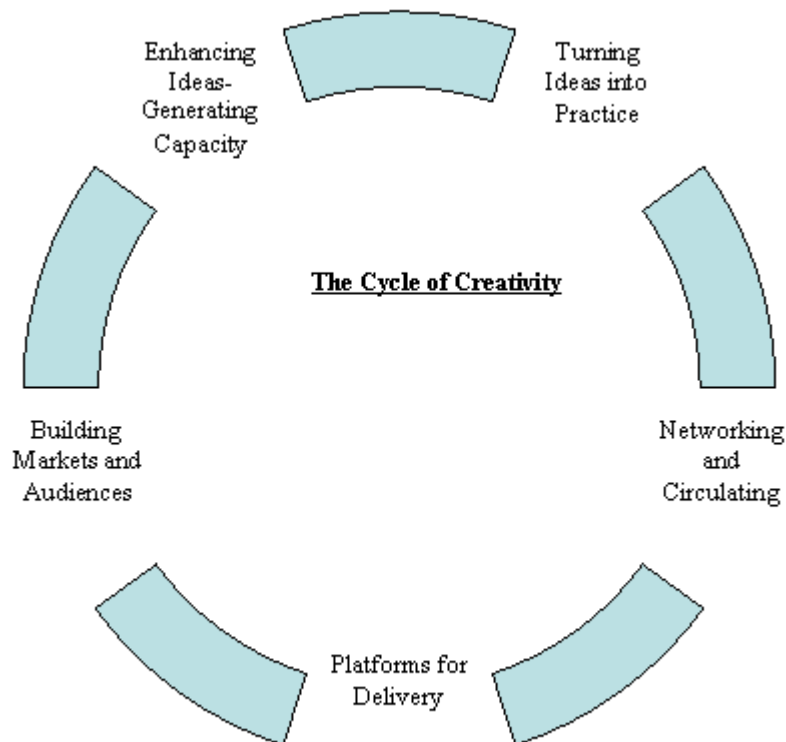
This essay provided a simplistic approach to cultural policy making with respect to Singapore. The limitation to this practical guide is that the country in concern is small and governance may be relatively more efficient. In addition, Singapore has been governed by the same ruling party since its independence for the past forty years. Therefore, implementations of the CID and relevant documents are well-organised since the operational system has been in place for almost forty years. However, this is also the critical resistance that the country is facing at the moment. Generally speaking, people do not welcome changes. Despite the pool of highly talented employees, there exists a lack of acceptance for new and creative ideas and the reluctance to be receptive. This is



ironic since MICA is strongly encouraging the development of creative industries yet it is still working within its own rigidity. Perhaps this provides the framework of efficiency, and only a small elite group offers creative constructivism.

## Appendix

*Figure 1: The Cycle of Creativity (Landry, 2000)*



*Table 1: Current Cultural Governance*

	<b>Current Cultural Strategy</b>	<b>Legal Acts</b>
<b>Ministry of Information and The Arts (MITA)</b>	<b>Creative Industries Development (CID) Strategy</b>	
	Design 21	
National Arts Council (NAC)	Renaissance City 2.0	1. National Arts Council Act Cap. 193a 2. Victoria Theatre Act Cap. 342
National Heritage Board (NHB)	-	1. National Heritage Board Act Cap.196a 2. Preservation of Monuments Act Cap. 239
National Library Board (NLB)	-	1. National Library Board Act Cap.197
Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore	Connected Singapore	1. Info-Communications Development Authority of Singapore Act Cap.137a

(IDA)		2. <a href="#">Telecommunications Act Cap.323</a> 3. <a href="#">Electronic Transactions Act Cap.88</a>
Media Development Authority (MDA)	Media 21	1. Media Development Authority of Singapore Act 2002 Cap.172 2. Broadcasting Act Cap.28 3. Newspaper and Printing Presses Act Cap.206 4. Films Act Cap.107 5. Undesirable Publications Act, and Cap.338 6. Public Entertainment and Meetings Act Cap. 257

*Table 2: Singapore Population (source: Singapore Board of Statistics)*

Population (Mid Year Estimates) & Area	2003
<b>Total Population</b> <sub>1</sub> ('000)	4,185.2
Annual Growth (%)	0.3
<b>Singapore Residents</b> <sub>1</sub> ('000)	3,437.3
<b>Annual Growth (%)</b>	1.7
<b>Below 15 yrs</b> ('000)	714.1
<b>15 - 64 yrs</b> ('000)	2,459.6
<b>65 yrs &amp; over</b> ('000)	263.5

*Table 3: Creative Industries Employment (2000) (source: Singapore Board of Statistics)*

Creative Industries Sector	Employment
<b>Media</b>	<b>11,048</b>
▪ Printing & Publishing	4829
▪ Broadcast Media Services	5460
▪ Film & Video Services	759
<b>Design</b>	<b>26,542</b>
▪ Architecture	7206
▪ Advertising	5555
▪ Graphic, Interior, Fashion, Industrial design	4968
▪ Software Development & Design	14368
<b>Arts &amp; Culture</b>	<b>4,735</b>
▪ Photography	725
▪ Arts & Antiques Trade	1859
▪ Performing Arts	1570
▪ Museums & heritage activities	581
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42,325</b>

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