

Imaginative Construction of a Global City as a Strategy for the Growth of Knowledge-based Economies: A Critical Evaluation of the Place-marketing in Singapore

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세계도시 이미지 형성과 지식기반경제 육성 전략: 싱가포르의 장소마케팅에 대한 비판적 고찰

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Abstract : This paper aims to examine the ways in which the Singaporean government has promoted the “global city” imaging strategy as a means for marketing Singapore. Since the 1990s, Singapore has pursued a place-marketing strategy that aims at imaging itself as a “creative”, “culturally vibrant” and “cosmopolitan” global city by utilizing various cultural, tourist and spatial policy measures. It argues that the Singaporean government has promoted this particular imaging strategy under a broader economic restructuring program, aiming at transforming the Singapore’s economy into a “knowledge-driven” one, under which the attraction of international knowledge workers is seen as crucial for the competitiveness and innovation. This paper also discusses the limitations of this strategy, focusing on growing tensions between the global and the local in the Singaporean society and the ways in which the authoritarian and top-down nature of governance have restricted the genuine development of the “culturally vibrant” environment in Singapore.

Key Words : global city, place marketing, creative class, knowledge-based economy, Singapore

요약 : 이 논문은 싱가포르 정부가 어떻게 싱가포르의 장소마케팅을 위한 수단으로 “세계도시” 이미지 전략을 사용하는가를 탐구하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 1990년대부터 싱가포르는 그 자신을 “창조적이고”, “문화적으로 활기차며”, “코스모폴리탄”한 세계도시라고 이미지화하기 위한 장소마케팅 전략을 추진해 왔고, 이를 위해 여러 다양한 문화, 관광, 공간 정책수단들을 사용하였다. 이 논문에서 필자는 싱가포르 정부의 이러한 이미지화 전략은 싱가포르 경제를 지식기반 경제로 전환하려는 경제재편 프로그램과 밀접히 관련되며, 이는 장소마케팅을 통해 국제적인 지식 노동자들을 끌어들이는 것이 경쟁력과 혁신을 이끌어내는데 핵심적이라는 믿음에 기인한다. 이와 더불어 이 논문은 이러한 이미지 전략의 한계에 대해서도 논하는데, 특히 싱가포르 사회에서 어떻게 글로벌과 로컬 간의 긴장이 증가하고 있는지, 그리고 어떻게 싱가포르의 권위적이고 하향식의 통치체제로 인해 진정한 의미의 “문화적으로 활기찬” 환경을 조성하는데 제약이 생기는지 살펴볼 것이다.

주요어 : 세계도시, 장소마케팅, 창조적 계급, 지식기반경제, 싱가포르

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We want to make Singapore a center for the arts partly for its own sake and partly because we need the arts to help make us a center for brain services. We want talent from all over the world to meet here, to work here and to live here. They must enjoy being here - the people, the food, the music, the cosmopolitan air. We cannot work the magic without the arts. This is why we will be spending quite a lot of money - about a billion dollars - over the next five to ten years building new cultural facilities and expanding existing ones.

(Yeo, 1993, 65)

1. Introduction

With increasing significance of economic globalization, growing numbers of cities and regions are competing against each other for capital, investment, skilled labor, and technology. Given this context, “place-marketing” has gained increasing attention from policy makers of cities and regions as a means of enhancing their competitiveness and attracting inward investment. As a result, increasing numbers of cities and regions have been involved in the activities to market the places by improving their images.

“Place-marketing” is a form of cultural economic policy. According to Frith (1991), there are three different types of cultural economic policy. The first one is the industrial cultural policy which focuses on the local production of cultural goods to be consumed nationally or exported, such as the mass media. The second one is the tourist cultural policy which focuses on the cultural goods that can only be consumed locally - the consumers are the imports, coming

in to experience each city’s unique ‘aura’. The third one is the cosmetic cultural policy, in which culture is a sort of “urban make-up, to be invested in because it helps a place seem attractive not just to tourists but to visitors who might decide to stay - investors looking to locate new industries, new sorts of white collar employees” (Frith, 1991, 140). The “place-marketing” is related to this cosmetic cultural policy.

In addition to globalization, today’s economy is experiencing another important change, that is, the transition to a “knowledge-based economy”. Knowledge is becoming more important in determining the standard of living since economic growth is increasingly driven by the accumulation of knowledge (World Bank, 1999). In this knowledge-driven economy, a firm’s intellectual capital - employees’ knowledge, brainpower, know-how, and processes, as well as their ability to continuously improve those processes - is a source of competitive advantage. Given this change, what should the policy makers in cities and regions focus on in their place-marketing strategy?

The place-marketing experience in Singapore for the last decade can give interesting and valuable insights to this question. The Singapore’s place-marketing strategy can be characterized as imaginative construction of a global city. Simply speaking, the Singaporean government has attempted to image Singapore as a “global city” by utilizing various cultural, tourist and spatial policy measures.¹⁾ Such place-marketing strategy has been promoted as a means of developing a “knowledge-based economy” in the island state. This paper will examine the ways in which the Singaporean government has promoted the “global city”

imaging strategy for the marketing of the city and critically explore the limitations of this strategy. Also, it will discuss the lessons we can learn from the Singapore's experience.

2. Imaging Singapore as a Global City

According to Short and Kim (1999, 98), the place-marketing has evolved through a series of stages, in which the most advanced form is related to the attempts of representing the global competitiveness, human and intellectual resources as well as quality of life. This form of place-marketing is often conducted by the cities in the higher positions of the global urban hierarchy, such as London, New York, Tokyo, and the like. In order to secure or upgrade their positions in the world urban hierarchy, these cities are competing against each other for global command functions, world spectacles and cultural activities.

Singapore has also joined this competition since the 1990s. In its efforts for marketing Singapore, the Singaporean government has attempted to image Singapore as a global city. But, in such imaging practices, the global cities have been represented not only in terms of their economic functions as the command centers of the global economy, but in terms of their unique socio-cultural characteristics. For example, various government agencies in Singapore have described their visions for the future of Singapore through the following slogans; "a world city for work, living and play" (Urban Redevelopment Authority), "Renaissance Singapore" (Ministry of Information, Communications and Arts), and "Global City for the Arts" (Singapore Tourism Board). In other words, the Singapore's place-

marketing strategy has focused on imaging Singapore as a "culturally vibrant", "cosmopolitan" and "creative" global city (Yeoh, 2004). This is nicely demonstrated in the government documents and the speeches of several high-level government officials as follows.

Singapore aims to be a Global City for the Arts: a cosmopolis plugged into the international network where the world's talents and ideas naturally converge and multiply (MITA, 2000, 10).

Singapore aims to be a cosmopolis in the next millennium, a city that is economically dynamic, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant... Our vision is to develop Singapore not only as a regional hub but also a global city hub where people will enjoy a high standard of living as well as a cultured and sophisticated lifestyle enriched through the arts (Aline Wong, former Senior Minister of State for Education; Wong, 1999).

In the 21st century, Singapore will be a great cosmopolitan city. A vibrant economy. Good jobs. Cultural liveliness. Artistic creativity. Social innovation. Good schools. World class universities. Technological advances. Intellectual discussion. Museums. Night-clubs and theatres. Good food. Fun places. Efficient public transportation. Safe streets. Happy people. This is not a hotchpotch of images concocted to tantalize you. It is a vision within our reach (Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong 1999, <http://www.mita.gov.sg/>).

3. Policies for Imaging a Global City

How have they imagined a global city in Singapore? This section discusses the concrete

policy measures that the Singaporean government has utilized for the pursuit of its place-marketing strategy. My discussion focuses on policy measures in three policy areas; 1) cultural policy, 2) tourism development policy, and 3) spatial policy.

1) Cultural policy: renaissance city Singapore

The most important element of the Singapore's place-marketing is the government's envisioning of Singapore as a 'Renaissance City' and 'Global City for the Arts'. The aim of this cultural policy is to develop the Singapore's local arts scene to match regional hubs like Melbourne and Hong Kong, with the eventual goal of achieving a status comparable to cultural capitals like London and New York (Chang and Lee, 2003, 130). In order to achieve this goal, the Singaporean

government has promoted the following strategies: 1) developing a strong arts and cultural base by strengthening arts education programs and exposing students to the arts; 2) developing flagship and major arts companies; 3) mounting concerted efforts to discover, groom and recognize artistic talents; 4) providing good infrastructure and facilities; and 5) developing an arts and cultural 'renaissance economy' by creating vibrant arts and cultural activities, strengthening arts marketing and cultural tourism, increasing incentives for arts sponsorship and promoting Singapore as an international arts events hub (MITA, 2000).

Among these various attempts to make Singapore as a regional hub for the arts, however, the provision of arts infrastructure and facilities has been the government's main focus (Chang and Lee, 2003, 131). The government has injected funds to the tune of S\$1 billion to

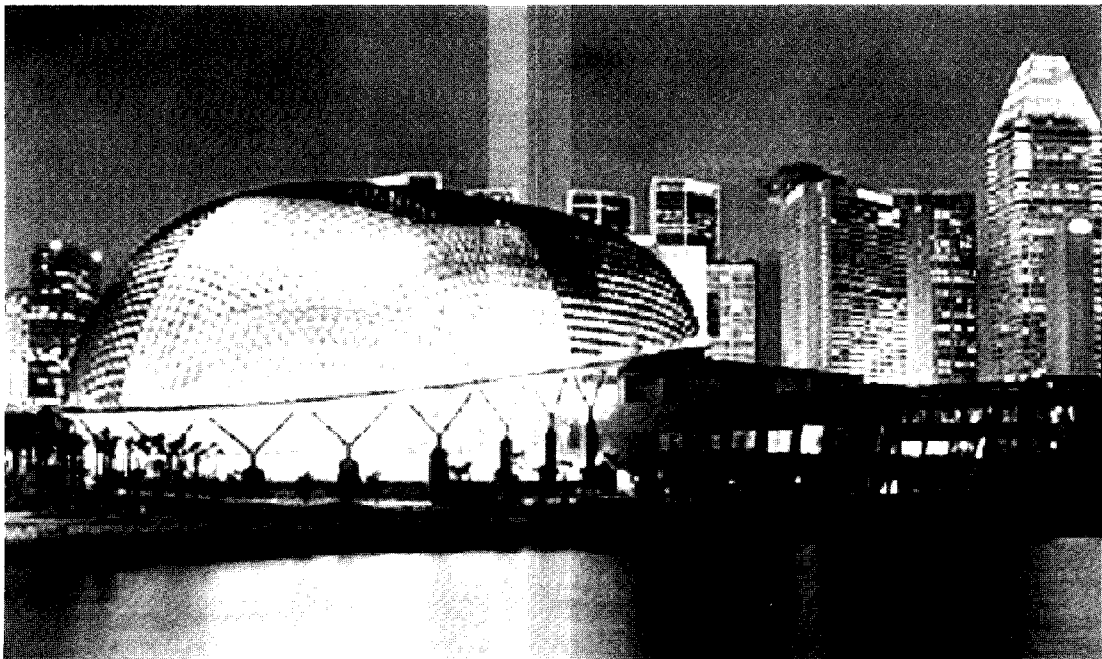


Figure 1. Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

develop new and upgrade old cultural facilities (Kong, 2000, 417). For example, the Museum Precinct was developed in the late 1980s in order to provide exhibition space. This gave rise to three separate museums: Singapore History Museum, Singapore Art Museum and Asian Civilizations Museum. In addition, the Arts Housing Scheme was introduced in 1985 in order to address the needs of the performing arts. This scheme converts unused warehouses, schools and bungalows into arts infrastructure, providing rehearsal and administrative space to arts groups at subsidized rents. By 1999, the scheme has benefited 56 arts groups, 26 artists and two arts institutions. To complement the museums and administrative spaces, a new performing space has recently opened. Costing over S\$400 million (US\$220 million), the Esplanade, a new Singapore Arts Center, is touted to be the finest arts center in Asia (see Figure 1). Completed in

October 2002, the Esplanade occupies a total land area of 60,000 square meters, boasting a 2000-seat Lyric Theatre, a 1,800-seat Concert Hall, three smaller studios and varied outdoor performance spaces.

2) Tourism development policy: Tourism 21

Singapore's tourism development policy also has been re-formulated in relation to the efforts to image Singapore as a global city. The STB (Singapore Tourism Board) has aggressively developed a strategy for tourism development in a blueprint called "Tourism 21", which aims at developing Singapore as a "Tourism Capital" or a "Tourism Hub" in Southeast Asia. This project is composed of three important strategic elements of tourism restructuring in Singapore.

The first one is the regionalization of tourism, in which efforts have been made to make

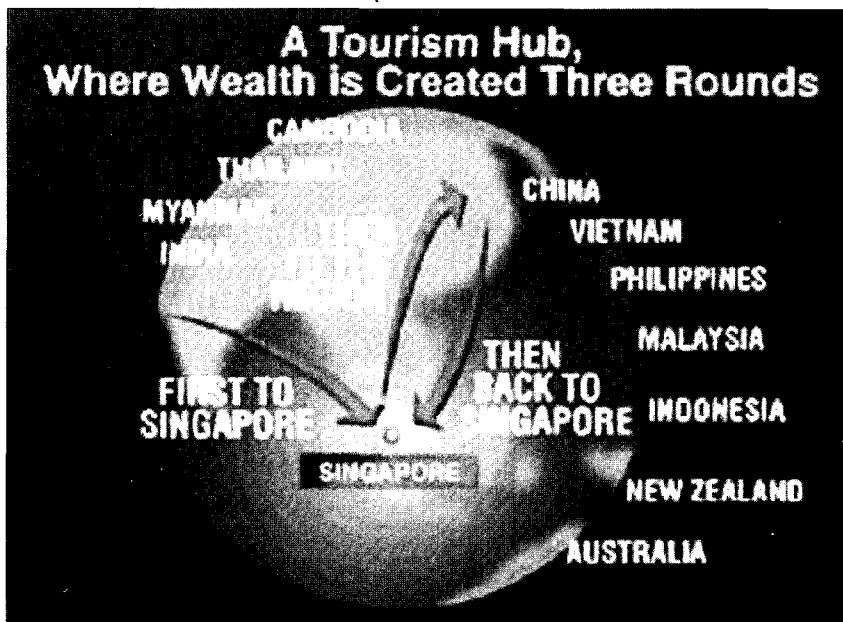


Figure 2. Regionalization of tourism

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (1996)

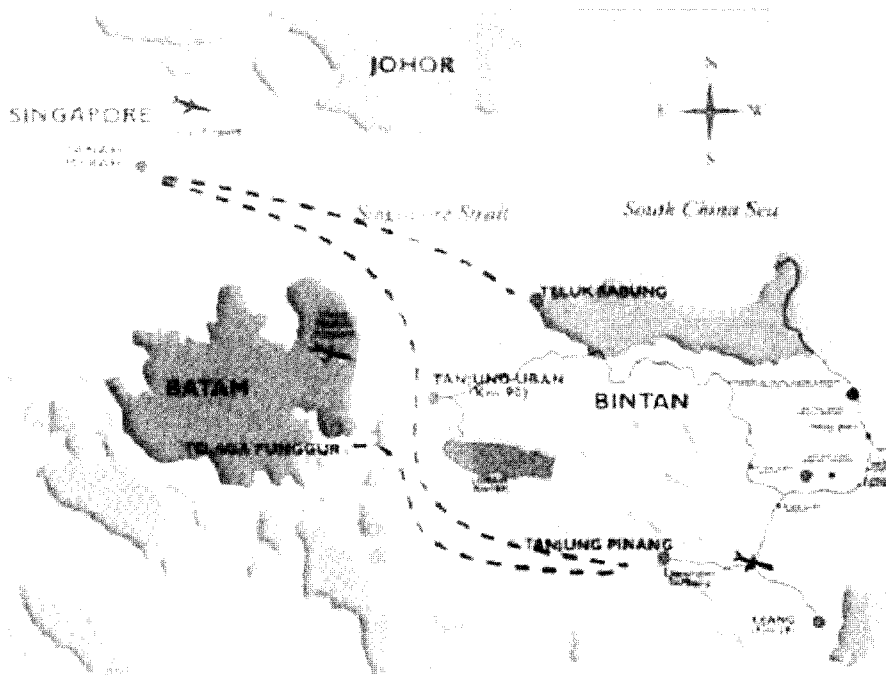


Figure 3. The location of Riau Islands

Singapore a tourists' base to explore the Southeast Asian region and a headquarters for regional tourism businesses (see Figure 2). While the regionalization strategy is deeply associated with the bigger economic restructuring project, aiming at making Singapore as a regional business hub in Southeast Asia, it is also an effort to overcome the spatial constraints of Singapore, a city-state with scarce land resources, for the sustainable growth of tourism industry (Chang, 2001). Thus, inherent in this strategy is a conscious effort to blend Singapore's city-sophistication with the neighboring countries' natural charms (STB, 1996). An example of this regionalization project is the development of tourist resorts in Indonesia's Riau Islands (including the islands of Bintan and Batam), which has been led by the Singaporean investors (see Figure 3).

The second element is related to the efforts to

make Singapore a place where memorable experiences are created and cherished - like Paris, New York, and London -, which would help tourists and visitors to stay longer and re-visit to the city-state. For this, the reformulation of the Singapore product and the development of the 'softer' aspects of tourism have been emphasized. More specifically, various efforts have been made to develop more and better sports, cultural and arts events (STB, 1996). In particular, the STB identifies 13 different areas of "themed attractions", including "culture and heritage", and "arts and entertainment". In terms of culture and heritage, it has sought to revitalize various "thematic districts", including Chinatown, Singapore River, Little India and Kampung Glam, emphasizing the culture and history of these areas, developing interpretive centers and walking guides which cover historical and cultural walking trails through the districts. It has also

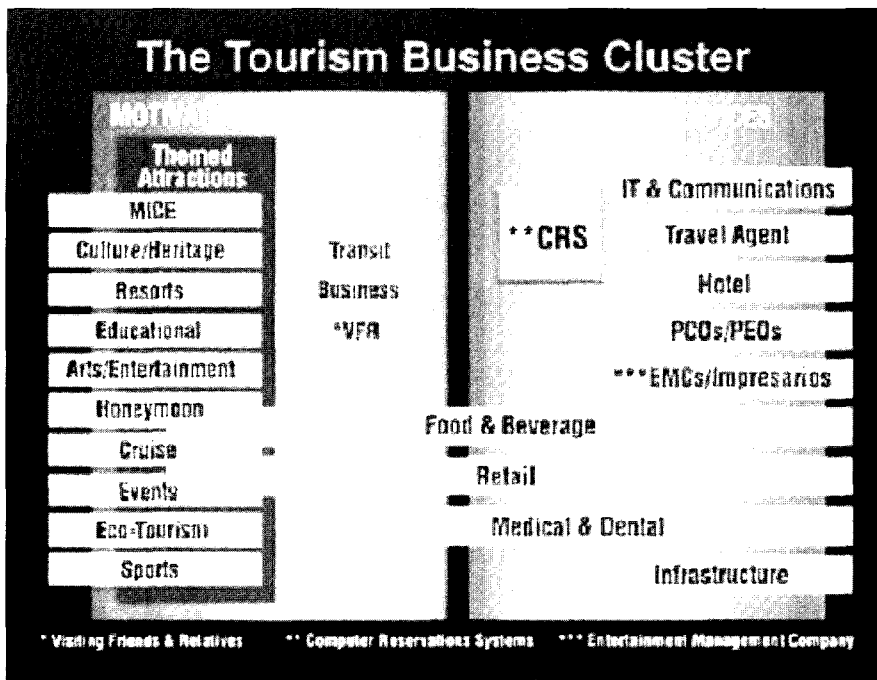


Figure 4. The Development of the tourism business cluster in Singapore

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (1996)

organized, co-organized or sponsored a series of cultural events such as the Singapore River Hong Bao 98, and Chingay Parade (Kong, 2000, 417).

The third element is developing tourism as an industry. Tourism is related to very diverse industrial sectors, including hotels, travel agencies, attractions, restaurants, shops, airlines, resorts, conventions and so on. Given this unique nature of tourism industry, the Singaporean government has adopted a cluster development approach in order to develop tourism as an industry. It has attempted to create new products and services by identifying gaps in the tourism cluster and forging horizontal integration across sectors and businesses to create synergy (see Figure 4). In addition, various other policy measures have been used in order to develop the tourism industry: they include; 1) attracting world-class players to invest in

Singapore, 2) enhancing the existing operating environment by putting in place an attractive tax and incentive structure in order to encourage companies to invest and upgrade, 3) building superior information networks, through promotion of greater usage of information technology (IT) in the tourism industry, 4) developing a competent tourism workforce by nurturing a pool of creative, capable and internationally-oriented managers and 5) expanding the market base by creating a strong Singapore branding and creating an impactful presence in cyberspace (STB, 1996).

3) Spatial policy: Marina Center Development Project

Spatial policies have also played an important role in promoting the global city image of



Figure 5. Marina Center Development

Singapore. In particular, the Singapore government has promoted urban mega projects as a means of ensuring the most effective international image. Here, the urban mega projects refer to the large-scale (re)development projects composed of a mix of commercial, residential, retail, industrial, leisure, and infrastructure uses (Olds, 1995). The most important mega urban project in Singapore is Marina Center Development Project (see Figure 5).

Marina Center Development project is a key element of the downtown redevelopment projects, which aims at developing the downtown of Singapore as an international investment hub, as well as a whole new showcase of hotels, offices, shops and nightlife (URA, 1991). The development of Marina Center can be traced back to the early 1970s when 106 hectares of land was reclaimed from the sea to form an extension of the Southern bay. Since

then, Marian Bay has been transformed into a landscape of consumption with the location of new luxurious hotels, such as the Ritz-Carlton, as well as the proliferation of retail malls at Suntec City, Millennia Walk, City Link Mall and Marina Center (Pow, 2002).

This mega project is deeply associated with the Singapore's urban imaging strategy in the sense that Marian Center has been transformed into a showcase of highly visible urban spectacle and display in order to symbolize "urban boosterism" in Singapore. In particular, "heroic" engineering feats and innovations emphasizing the sheer size and monumental scale of the development have been used to assert the distinctive iconography and symbolic advantage of the city which is encoded in architectural superlatives such as the "World Largest Fountain" at Suntec City; Asia Pacific's Longest Convention Center at Suntec City; and Southeast Asia's longest underground

shopping mall at City Link (Pow, 2002, 167). In other words, Marina Center epitomizes Singapore's rising ambition to be "command and control points" in the new global economy.

In addition to these symbolic spaces of "urban boosterism" and consumption, Marina Center Development project includes an arts space, that is, Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay. As mentioned earlier, the Esplanade, a new Singapore Arts Center, was constructed as a part of the Singaporean government's cultural policy to make Singapore as a regional hub of arts by improving cultural infrastructure. Modeled on the Opera House in Sydney, it was designed to comprise world-class performing arts facilities to cater to the needs of the "240 million people in the region" rather than the 3 million in Singapore (Kong, 2000, 417). Indeed, with the completion of this gigantic arts space, along with other commercial and consumption spaces, Marina Bay has become a symbolic space that helps the imaging of Singapore as a "creative" and "culturally vibrant" global city.

4. Imaging a Global City as a Strategy for the Growth of Knowledge-based Economies

Why has the Singaporean government pursued this particular place-marketing strategy? To answer this question, we need to understand how global cities are generally perceived. Global cities are defined as basing points in the spatial organization and articulation of production and markets, highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy, and global nodes of the trans-border flows of capital, information and knowledge (Friedmann, 1986;

Sassen, 1991). Also, based on the widely accepted images of the representative global cities, such as New York, London, and Tokyo, - regardless of whether these images correctly represent the reality of life in these cities or not - the global cities have been generally believed to have the following socio-cultural characteristics; highly creative and innovative, cosmopolitan, filled with cultural and ethnic diversities, and culturally, artistically and intellectually dynamic and vibrant (Short and Kim, 1999; Amin and Thrift, 1992). Indeed, many urban policies have been strongly influenced by these images of global cities. If a city is imagined to be an "innovative", "creative", and "cosmopolitan" global city, such particular imagination would be very helpful for the city to attract capital and investment because it can give firms and investors the expectations of higher profits or returns from the investment made in the city. This could be an important rationale behind the Singapore's "global city" marketing strategy.

In the Singapore's place-marketing strategy, however, capital is not the sole target of attraction. Another important target is the international knowledge workers, or the so-called "foreign talents". This is related to the economic restructuring project, pursued by the Singaporean government since the mid-1980s, which aims at developing a more high-value added and "knowledge-based" economy in Singapore.

Since the 1960s, Singapore had experienced rapid economic growth on the basis of abundant cheap labor forces and export-led industrialization. From the 1980s, however, the Singaporean economy began to face problems in maintaining its high growth rate. In particular, it had become increasingly less competitive in low-

valued, labor-intensive manufacturing sectors, mainly because wage rates had increased surpassed productivity gains. Investors began to look elsewhere for more cost-effective locations. As a result, Singapore experienced economic recession in 1985. Since then, the Singaporean government has promoted economic restructuring, which focuses on situating the city-state in a beneficial position in the global space of flows (Yeung and Olds, 1998). More specifically, the Singaporean government has tried to establish Singapore as a “global city” and a regional command center by making it a “total business hub” for the Asia-Pacific and offering a business location on par with other leading global cities. Also, the attraction of high tech, knowledge-intensive industries is to be intensified, along with investment to enhance labor skills and innovation capacity (Kong, 2000, 412).

Under this direction for economic restructuring, some attention began to be paid to the arts as a potential growth area. It was deemed part of the “service sector”. Specifically, “cultural and entertainment services” were given attention as one of 17 service categories that could be further developed. Several recommendations were made as to the role of the cultural and entertainment services, defined to include the performing arts, film production, museums and art galleries, and entertainment centers and theme parks. These recommendations were made in recognition of the fact that such services were economic activities in their own right; that they enhanced Singapore as a tourism destination; improved the quality of life and helped people to be more productive; and contributed to a vibrant cultural and entertainment scene which would make Singapore more interesting for foreign

professionals and skilled workers, and could help attract them to work and develop their careers in Singapore (Kong, 2000b, 413).

Since the 1990s, these restructuring efforts have become even more intensified with the increasing emphasis on the “knowledge-based” and “creative” economy, where intellectual capital is defined as the ability to absorb, process and synthesize knowledge through constant value innovation; creativity is also seen as gravitating to the center of economic life by affecting competitiveness and determining how Singapore will migrate to higher value-added activities and compete in new value creation (Committee to Upgrade LaSelle and NAFA, 1998). Given this, increasing emphasis has been given to attracting and retaining “creative” knowledge workers and “foreign talents” in Singapore because human resources are seen as capital and providing leverage on competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy.

Indeed, the Singaporean government has made diverse efforts to attract foreign talents.²⁾ For example, it has provided several incentives to foreign professionals and skilled workers, including fast-track employment pass applications, easing restrictions on measures such as allowing foreign husbands to qualify as dependents and offering subsidized state housing to them. Other strategies include the launch of the Contact Singapore program which involves establishing Singapore centers in major cities around the world as contact points to encourage an inflow of foreign talent into Singapore (Yeoh and Chang, 2001).

In addition, the Singaporean government has attempted to make the whole living and cultural environment in Singapore more attractive to international knowledge workers. In this sense, it

has engaged in a high-profile public discourse about developing a “world class city”. A key component of this vision is the Revised Concept Plan, a planning blueprint put together mainly by the Urban Redevelopment Authority, intended to help Singapore “make a quantum leap” in the quality of its environment so that there would be a developed city for (a) business, (b) living and (c) leisure, and (d) one with world class transportation, and (e) endowed with nature. While planning for Singaporeans, the blueprint also took cognizance of the need to retain a quality foreign workforce, and the need to give increasing consideration to the preferences of professional and skilled workers, be it in housing, leisure or other facilities (Kong, 2000b, 414). In addition, the Singaporean government has increasingly recognized the potential role of the arts in attracting knowledge workers and professionals. Given this recognition, it has been aggressive in promoting various cultural economic policies, through which it has attempted to “absorb the best of Eastern and Western arts and culture for the smooth development of tourism and economic development” so that both tourists and international investors could enjoy “a certain degree of cultural life” in Singapore.

In other words, with the transition toward the “knowledge-based economy”, the Singaporean government has recognized the increasing significance of attracting and retaining a quality foreign workforce. Given this, it has given increasing consideration to the preferences of these professional and skilled workers and made efforts to create a city throbbing with arts and cultural activities so that it may be attractive to investors and “foreign talent” (Kong and Yeoh, 2003, 197). Also, the state has intensified its

place-marketing activities to image Singapore as a “cosmopolitan” and “creative” global city through various cultural, tourism-related, and spatial policy measures (Kong, 2000b, 417).

5. A Critical Evaluation of the Singapore’s Place-marketing Practices

Singapore’s strategy to image itself as a global city has been quite successful in attracting inward investment and foreign talents. Singapore has been increasingly represented as a global city, an important node in the global economy and a business hub in Asia. It is indirectly evidenced by the recent city rankings in the Anholt City Brands Index. As shown in Table 1, Singapore was ranked in 2006 as the 35th, the second highest in the Asian cities, following Tokyo, in the index. It would be reasonably assumed that such widely accepted images have been very helpful for Singapore to develop knowledge-based economies by facilitating the attraction of high-tech activities, creative industries and knowledge workers to the city-state. However, it should also be noted that the place-marketing strategy, pursued by the Singaporean government, has caused some socio-political problems due to its inherent limitations.

First, it has resulted in the increasing tension between the global and the local in Singapore. In particular, its emphasis on the need to welcome more foreign skilled workers into the country to fuel the engine of growth has generated considerable debate as to whether migrants will “make the pie bigger or take away the icing”. According to a newspaper survey (The Strait Times, 6 June 1998), while most (76 per cent)

Table 1. Overall rankings of cities in the Anholt City Brands Index (2006)

1 Sydney	16 Vancouver	31 Philadelphia	46 Budapest
2 London	17 Berlin	32 Oslo	47 Shanghai
3 Paris	18 Brussels	33 Lisbon	48 Moscow
4 Rome	19 Milan	34 Prague	49 Johannesburg
5 New York	20 Copenhagen	35 Singapore	50 Mexico City
6 Washington, DC	21 Munich	36 Helsinki	51 Warsaw
7 San Francisco	22 Tokyo	37 Hong Kong	52 Havana
8 Melbourne	23 Boston	38 Dallas	53 Jerusalem
9 Barcelona	24 Las Vegas	39 New Orleans	54 Bangkok
10 Geneva	25 Seattle	40 St Petersburg	55 Cairo
11 Amsterdam	26 Stockholm	41 Rio de Janeiro	56 Dubrovnik
12 Madrid	27 Chicago	42 Buenos Aires	57 Mumbai
13 Montreal	28 Atlanta	43 Beijing	58 Manila
14 Toronto	29 Dublin	44 Seoul	59 Lagos
15 Los Angeles	30 Edinburgh	45 Reykjavik	60 Nairobi

Source: The Anholt City Brands Index (2006)

Singaporeans supported “the Government’s drive to bring in talent from abroad, a minority (23 per cent) were against the policy for fear of economic, social, and political problems. It has been argued that the onslaught of alien values will fray the country’s social fabric; competition for space and amenities will heighten; and that policies intended to attract such talent will result in preferential treatment of non-citizens. Furthermore, if foreigners admitted are mainly skilled workers able to command high salaries, there will be no room for the local population, especially “those stuck permanently at the bottom” of the socioeconomic ladder (Yeoh and Chang, 2001). In other words, the Singaporean government’s efforts to image Singapore as a global city, which is attractive to international knowledge workers, has made many local Singaporeans uncomfortable, thereby causing tensions between the global and local.

Second, the cultural policies to help imaging

Singapore as a “culturally vibrant” global city and a regional center for the arts, ironically, have restricted the real development of arts and culture in Singapore. Under the place-marketing framework, the need to develop culture and arts has been interpreted merely in terms of the economic functionality. Thus, the Singaporean government has mainly focused on the provision of the cultural and artistic “hardware” (infrastructure and facilities) without concomitant attention to the “software” (creative development), which has resulted in the limited development of local/indigenous arts and culture. According to many practitioners in Singapore, economic returns should not be the fundamental reason for supporting arts and cultural activities; they should be the by-products. However, the Singaporean government has maintained its economic stance on the development of culture and arts (Kong, 2000b, 419). As a result, the development of creative

cultural environment has been limited in Singapore. Thus, while Singapore has been successful imaging itself as a global business hub, it has not been so successful in imaging itself as a “creative” and “culturally vibrant” global city.

Third, the limited development of the “creative cultural” environment in Singapore is more fundamentally related to the technocratic and authoritarian nature of governance. With the combination of limited democracy, top-down management and authoritarian policy, Singapore’s culture appears hierarchical, disciplined and repressed (Haley and Low, 1998). Under this circumstance, the development of the “creative” social atmosphere, which requires more horizontal and democratic social relations and bottom-up initiatives, would be very difficult. Thus, it is likely that the Singaporean government’s policies to facilitate the development of a “creative” society would be only effective in improving the image of the city even if they are successful, without a real contribution to the growth of “creative” mentality, culture and activities in Singapore.

6. Conclusion

Since the 1990s, Singapore has pursued a place-marketing strategy that aims at imaging itself as a “creative”, “culturally vibrant” and “cosmopolitan” global city. In order to promote these images, the Singaporean government has utilized various cultural, tourist and spatial policy measures, including: 1) the promotion of Singapore as a “global city for arts” through improving cultural and arts infrastructure and facilities (e.g. museums, art centers, etc.), promoting cultural and arts activities, hosting arts

events, and so on; 2) the development of Singapore as a “Tourism Capital” in Southeast Asia through promoting the regionalization of tourism activities and developing the cluster of tourism businesses; and 3) the construction of the symbolic spaces of commerce, consumption, and arts that helps imaging Singapore as a global city. The Singaporean government has promoted this particular imaging strategy under a broader economic restructuring program, which aims to transform the Singapore’s economy into a “knowledge-driven” one. In particular, it intends to make Singapore more attractive to international knowledge workers, which is getting increasingly important for the competitiveness and innovation in the knowledge-based economy, by establishing an image of a “creative”, “culturally vibrant” and “cosmopolitan” global city.

Even though this place-marketing strategy has been relatively successful in improving the image of Singapore, it has limitations in promoting the genuine development of the “creative” environment, which is necessary for the sustainable growth of the knowledge-based economy. In particular, the over-emphasis on the attraction of “foreign talents” has resulted in the rise of concerns that the development of the “local” and “indigenous” talents would be discouraged, thereby causing growing tensions between the global and the local in Singapore. Also, the Singaporean government’s economic and pragmatic approach to culture and arts, which focuses on the provision of infrastructure and facilities for cultural and arts activities, and the authoritarian and top-down nature of governance have restricted the genuine development of the “culturally vibrant” environment in Singapore.

Notes

- 1) The Singapore's "global-city imaging" strategy is in fact a national image-making strategy. Even so, I would still see it as a kind of place-marketing strategy because a place can be defined at various geographical scales, so the national image-making strategy can be legitimately seen as a form of place-marketing strategy.
- 2) One may raise a question: why does the Singaporean government want to attract "foreign" talent, instead of paying more attention to "local" talent? This can be answered in relation to the "small-size" discourse, which has been shared by the Singaporean policy-makers and the general public in the city state. It has been widely believed that Singapore is endowed with very little resources due to its small size, so it has to import valuable resources - including man power - from foreign countries.

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