THE REGIONAL CULTURE OF NEW ASIA
Cultural governance and creative industries in Singapore

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Singapore, a leading country in the Asia-Pacific region, is currently attempting to transform its cultural industry into creative economy. Creative economies capitalise on how knowledge can be marketed by merging arts, technology and business. They ensure a nation's competitiveness within an integrated global economy. This paper critically examines Singapore's recent cultural policy developments in tourism, broadcasting and new media. It argues that new creative industries have produced new consumption patterns and identities that harness the place-branding of "New Asia" as a form of cultural capital and a strategy of regional dominance. Cybernetics is proposed as an approach to frame creative cultural governance and consumption in Singapore.

KEYWORDS   creative economy; cultural policy; cultural governance; Singapore; consumption; New Asia; cultural studies

Introduction

The current forces of global informational capitalism have re-aligned regions, nations, markets and identities. The impact upon governance and culture in the Asia-Pacific region, as a territory experiencing the most rapid rate of modernisation and development in the last two decades, is profound. From new Internet laws in Malaysia to the "market fever"-driven media reforms in China, dynamic cultural and media policy developments have been put into practice across Asia to negotiate new regional imperatives, emergent local identities and burgeoning international trade. Whether it is "truly Asian" in Malaysia, "new Asia" in Singapore, "always Asian" in India or "a tiger in paradise" in Mauritius, these policies engineer a newly constructed Asia as a strategy of branding. This strategy, characterised by a multicultural blend of old exoticism and new urbanism that fuses the embrace of technology with the heritage of tradition and mixes the East and the West, is used as a way of harnessing the region's unique distinctiveness and promoting its renewed vitality.

In Singapore, this form of "new Asia" (hereafter New Asia) place-branding was further enhanced through the release of a *Creative Economy Cultural Development Strategy* in September 2002 (Media Development Authority 2002). In the Asia-Pacific region, this strategy follows Australia's recent drive towards a knowledge economy and its recent cultural policy research that saw the shift from cultural to creative industries (Creative Nation 1994; Government of Queensland 2002; Government of Victoria 2003). Creative industries merge

arts, technology and business as a way of ensuring a nation's competitiveness within an integrated global economy. Singapore's creative economy strategy marks the country's shift from an information economy to one that exploits the knowledge of its citizens to create value and wealth. Its creative industries, contributing to 3.2% of its Gross Domestic Product, can be found in the areas of arts and culture, media and design (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 4). In 2001, the earnings from intellectual property generated US$30.5 billion in output and value added US$8.7 billion to the economy. This strategy focuses on building creative capabilities through education, niche branding through product differentiation and place competitiveness, and harnessing creative industries development through value-adding, content creation, interactivity, convergence and new ways of storage and distribution. Like other Asian nations, the most striking phenomenon about the emergence of Singapore as a (post)modern centre is its creative innovation. Singapore is unique in the region because it is the only country in Asia to harness the shift to creative economy as a sustained national cultural policy imperative (Chua 2004). Although Hong Kong and Korea have also implemented creative industries that saw the integration of arts, culture and economics, these developments, in the areas of multimedia, entertainment, animation and software content, are pursued at localised levels rather than as a national collaborative approach.

This paper uses Singapore as a case study to investigate the cultural politics of its recent creative economy developments. These developments in the arts and culture, tourism, information technology, broadcasting and new media are significant because they result in increased economic growth, creative wealth and social participation. Unlike other creative industry models in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, I argue that Singapore's model uses the concept of culture not only to create new industries and business services, but also to promote Asian values.

Recent responses to Singapore's creative economy strategy present broad-based policy surveys and are concerned with the government's paternalistic and patriarchal model of state management (Lee 2004; Leo & Lee 2004; Tan 2003). They question the "continuing state paternalism" of Singapore to ask if creativity can co-exist with the "prevalence of centralised control" (Leo & Lee 2004, p. 52). Anti-Western factors such as Confucian values and a rote-learning education system that were previously used to champion the success of Singapore are now singled out as stifling creativity (Chia & Lim 2003, p. 214). These reviews frame governance from an authoritarian top-down approach and perpetuate the myth of a highly regulated subject subservient to the demands of a draconian government and unable to think "outside the box".

The fuzziness around the word "creativity", whether it refers to a mode of economic production, a set of skills or a type of product, has prompted Petrina Leo and Terence Lee to formulate a project of critical creativity for Singapore. They suggest creativity requires

> the need for one to operate with a questioning disposition. … [It] ventures into the realms of conventions and status quos for the purpose of challenging them to discover alternatives. Upsetting the preferred status of power relations thus seems to be a prerequisite of creativity. (Leo & Lee 2004, p. 209)

Whilst this episteme possesses the potential for emerging cultural policy studies in Singapore to engage meaningfully with political critique, their narrow definition relies more on an oppositional practice (e.g., political dissension) rather than an understanding of how social life is increasingly being performed because culture is now so expedient that it only

functions as a resource for determining action (Yudice 2003). Tony Bennett (1998, p. 169) cautions against reducing resistance to a "conservative practice that is orientated to the defence or strategic adaptation of the subordinate culture in question in a hostile and threatening environment in which the continuing viability of that culture is placed in question". Locating creativity within the practices of performativity better fits the logic of how Singapore's economic development has always been driven by pragmatism. In the last ten years, this pragmatic economic development has seen the growth of cultural industries in the areas of theatre, popular media and the arts (Chua 2004). Underpinning this growth is the emergence not only of culture, but of an expedient culture that has the capacity to transform everything into a practical resource.

Urban activist William Lim's concept of "creative rebelliousness" as the character of the social and political agent is useful to describe a framework of critical creativity for Singapore. Creative rebelliousness is a disposition that "is nurtured in families, educational institutions, work places, the media, government policies, civil societies and the overall art and intellectual environment of the whole community" (Lim 2003, p. 54). It is characterised by "adaptive reuse" and created by deploying a contemporary vernacular as "a conscious commitment to uncover a particular tradition's unique responses to place and climate and thereafter exteriorize these formal and symbolic identities into creative new forms in order to reflect contemporary realities including cultures, values and lifestyles" (Lim 2003, pp. 120, 131). Weng Hin Ho further explains that creative rebelliousness is a new localism that investigates the effects of the past in the present. He states: "It is both elitist and participatory – a hybrid discourse that can be prescribed *top-down* (by authorities, architects, developers, etc.) or initiated from *bottom- up* by the people" (Ho 2003, p. 19; emphasis added).

This paper extends creative rebelliousness by using consumption as a site to problematise the regional hegemony of Singapore's creative economy. Consumption is significant in Singapore because unprecedented economic progress has resulted in the emergence of a capitalist postmodern consumer culture where "consumerism is a culture among Singaporeans" (Chua 2003, p. 4). This culture produces consumption patterns that demarcate class, age, gender, sexuality, race and nationality through its connection to individualism, materialism and life style distinction. These patterns also provide fertile ground for new practices, or what Michel de Certeau calls "acts of doing", that can further reconstitute identity and disrupt hegemony (De Certeau 1984; De Certeau *et al.* 1988). In the creative economy, new consumption practices, as both *top-down* strategies of policy developments and *bottom-up* tactics of policy implementation, function as sites to question the claims to citizenship. This way of thinking about citizenship reflects how it is practiced in an illiberal statist regime through consumership rather than through T. H. Marshall's tripartite division of civil rights, political rights and social rights (Marshall 1964; Yue 2003; Chua 2003). It follows Nick Stevenson's (2000) delineation of cultural citizenship as a cultural right to participate in social life. In the following, I begin by critically examining how the governance of creative industries in Singapore produces a new economy that is regionally hegemonic. I conclude by proposing cybernetics as an approach to the study of creative cultural governance and consumption in Singapore.

Recent Developments from Cultural Policy to Creative Economy: Clusters and Regional New Asia Politics

Singapore's *Creative Economy Cultural Development Strategy* (CECDS) is the first creative economy policy to be released as a national cultural policy in Asia. To develop such

an approach, Singapore's strategy is spearheaded by the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (MITA). Structured by the management field of the cluster as "a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities" (Porter 1998, p. 199), interlocking initiatives include Design Singapore (design industry), Media 21 (media industry) and Renaissance City 2.0 (arts and culture). Creative industries are nurtured through arts tourism, fusion entertainment and local content development. Memory institutions such as libraries, museums and archives, for example, are re-invented as fusion spaces that will integrate arts, design and new technology to function as regional research centres and promote local content (Media Development Authority 2002, pp. 16–17). This structure highlights how the use of clusters evinces creative economy's characteristics such as "(i)nteractivity, convergence, customisation, collaboration and networks" (Cunningham 2002, p. 59). It also shows how other media and cultural policies are integrated to envision Singapore as the "New Asia Creative Hub" (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 8).

Four other sets of cultural and media policies are closely linked to help shape Singapore as a leading nation and a central portal to the Asian region in the last five years. The first, "New Asia Singapore", is a cultural tourist campaign endorsed by the state-owned Singapore Tourism Board between 1996 and 2003. As its slogan suggests, its mission is to market Singapore as a centre that encapsulates the hallmarks of New Asia (Singapore Tourism Board 2000, 2001). This policy advocates a cultural mix of East/West, urban/exotic and global/local. Tradition and technology, for example, are promoted through the selling of world-class conference facilities and multiracial heritage architecture. In the planning for its creative economy, the Singapore Tourism Board's branding of New Asia is mobilised as a niche genre, a cultural export and a strategy of convergence (evident in value-adding through arts tourism – an area that reflects the collaboration between the arts and the service industry and registers an annual growth rate of 24.6%) (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 7).

The second policy ("Media Restructuring 2000") is a media restructure introduced in a move to "dot.com" the nation. Every household in Singapore is provided with an Internet address by the government. To date, one in four households in Singapore has access to the Internet, outstripping the United States and Japan. This policy has earned Singapore the status of the world's first digital economy. The governance of this digital economy is distinct because its other media restructuring guidelines, such as the convergence of traditional media (broadcasting and print with the Internet), the introduction of digital television, and local content preference and development, are put in place to allow "a Singapore identity to flourish" by adhering to its "nation-building role and fostering community values" (Lee 2000). Local content is harnessed in the creative economy strategy as "Singapore Content and Brand" (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 13).

The third policy is the Renaissance City report that was first launched in 1989 and upgraded to "Renaissance City 2.0" in 2002 (MITA 2002). The Renaissance City agenda, much like Australia's 1994 Creative Nation cultural policy imperative, was to create Singapore as a global arts city by encouraging collaboration between the government, the private sector, the arts community and the individual citizen. Its main aims were the fostering of a national identity, increasing social cohesion, and expanding the arts and entertainment sectors. Since 1989, the cultural industries have expanded exponentially in the areas of arts activities and attendance, new museums, new performing venues, urban renewal developments and the emergence of community-based arts. Renaissance City 2.0 enhances this "by positioning

Singapore as a key city in the Asian renaissance of the 21st century and a cultural centre in the globalised world" (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 4). A creative economy has emerged through the development of arts and cultural entrepreneurship, software development and the promotion of Renaissance Singaporean subject (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 5).

These policies – the branding of "New Asia Singapore", local digital content creation and the promotion of the Renaissance Singaporean subject – are synergised to synchronise with Singapore 21, a national policy launched in 2000 to promote an ideal Singapore society in the twenty-first century (Singapore 21 2001). It consists of five key ideas: "every Singaporean matters, strong families, opportunities for all, the Singapore heartbeat and active citizens". The preservation of family values and active participation as citizens underpin and drive the national creative economy agenda where population and education are also constitutive of an emerging knowledge economy.

Together with Singapore 21, these policies mobilise New Asia as a strategy of branding and a form of cultural capital. New Asia cultural capital extends Bourdieu's notion of how cultural capital can create wealth and stratify class (Yue 2003). In Singapore, New Asia cultural capital is a "critical strategic national resource" created by the convergence of knowledge, business and technology to shape "the content, the tools and the environment with and in which people create people create new value and form new industries" (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 3). Central to this is a "connected nation … which has the ability to connect to others, both at home and to the past, present and future" (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 4). Through branding emotional, social and geographical ties, New Asia cultural capital follows an emerging industry model based on "place" competitiveness. This model not only emphasises "culture as a service industry and creativity as an application" (O'Regan 2002, p. 19), but also merges cultural industries with business services and Asian values. Unlike other emerging creative economies in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, the use of New Asia is significant because it incorporates the ideology of Asian values and the cultural capital of New Asia as an economic strategy of regional dominance.

The ideology of Asian values arose in Asia in the late 1980s as a consequence of post-colonialism and globalisation. C. J. W.-L. Wee (1996, 1999) suggests that the independence from colonialism forced nation-states to look to their own values for inspiration. Greg Sheridan (1999, p. 3) argues that they are "an attempt to renew societies, to reconnect them with their past, to overcome the legacy of colonialism and the old assumption of white supremacy, to find a way of life that is both modern and yet true to the traditions of Asian societies". Central to this are values that relate to cultural good, civic life, regional community and modernisation. Beng-huat Chua (1999) states that hard work, education, pragmatism, self-discipline, family orientation and communalism are emphasised to inspire local rejuvenation and capitalist development. These values are ideological because they are mobilised in state discourses as a challenge to Western imperialism. In their anti-Western rhetoric, they also promote self-Orientalism and essentialism. Despite charges of Occidentalism and neo-Orientalism, the ideology of Asian values has been cultivated in Asia to ease the societies' transition into (post)modernity and globality. Across Asia and the Asian diaspora, these values have interpellated and produced new transnational Asian subjects who have used Asian values to create new identities that interweave the past into the present with postmodern variations of pan-Asianness. In their studies of postmodern Chineseness, Ien Ang (2001), Agnes Meerwald (2001) and Andrea Louie (2004) suggest tensions arose among overseas Chinese "between historically rooted assumptions about Chineseness as a racial

category and changing ways of being culturally, racially, and politically Chinese" (Louie 2004, p. 1). Aihwa Ong (1999) appropriates David Harvey's flexible accumulation to show how these values have merged with capitalism in the transnational Chinese global economy.

Asian values are incorporated into Singapore's creative economy strategy through the creative cluster that produces the New Asia brand as hegemonic cultural capital. In their study of Singapore as regional hub in information and communication technology, Siow Yue Chia and Jamus Jerome Lim (2003) use cluster theory to illustrate Singapore's locational advantages through geography, economics and institutions, such as being a strategic entre-pot in the dynamic East Asian region, world-class infrastructure, skilled talent, the use of English, tax incentives and political stability. Global companies that have set up regional centres in Singapore include satellite content providers such as HBO, ESPN, MTV and Discovery Channel; Internet companies such as Lycos, Monster.com, E!Online Asia, MTV-Asia; e-commerce (HP, Compaq, Apple, IBM, Federal Express); global outsourcing centres, in 1999, Citibank's Global IT and Data Centres, and more recently, in September 2004, George Lucas's first offshore venture, Lucasfilm Animation Singapore, a digital animation studio producing films, television shows and games.

Whilst Chia and Lim's economic management and media communications approach suggests how the cluster can serve and indeed be hegemonic in the hinterlands, this study fails to account for how New Asia is harnessed as a form of cultural capital. Charles Landry's (2000, p. 133) concept of "soft infrastructure" as "the system of associative structures and social networks, connections and human interactions, that underpins and encourages the flow of ideas between individuals and institutions" reminds us that clusters are never solely about institutions and economics. Both hard and soft infrastructures are always engaging in interactions; they combine to form the creative milieu of a city or a region. The incorporation of Asian values into this cluster to create the New Asia cultural capital attests to how soft infrastructure is also integral to the creative wealth of an economy.

In this section, I have critically examined how Singapore's recent cultural and media policies have produced a creative economy characterised by the merging of arts with business and Asian values. Underpinning this are New Asian cultural capital and the New Asia brand. I have shown how these mobilise the cluster as hard and soft infrastructure. As hard infrastructure, they capitalise on its advantages offered by its port geography and a newly developed economy. As soft infrastructure, they use Asian values to construct cultural proximity and collective identity. In the following, I will show how Singapore's creative economy is less national and more regional, and problematise its regional dominance as a form of marginal imperialism (cultural colonisation by ex-colonies). Marginal imperialism is evident in the changing "gateway" functions of its cultural institutions.

Regional New Asia Dominance: Changing Gateway Functions of Institutions

Cultural institutions function as "the governmental framing of culture" (Cunningham 1992, p. 22). The objectives of cultural and media institutions include traditional "gatekeep-ing" roles such as the preservation of heritage and tradition, the recognition of new and forgotten traditions, the maintenance of national identity (within and without), the modern-isation of the nation, the inculcation of cultural pride and the creation of wealth. In Singapore's creative economy, cultural institutions take on a new role through their cluster and convergence strategies that create the nation as a "hub" or a "centre" for the Asian

region. This new role is evident in the changing regional "gateway" objectives of Singapore 21, Channel News Asia, Singapore Broadcasting Authority and Singapore Tourism Board. The "gateway" metaphor is significant because it is an interface and a site of intersection for resources, capital and people.

I first examine the national policy of Singapore 21 as a cultural resource. My purpose here is to establish how the "gateway" metaphor is mobilised through the discourse of citizenship. I use queer consumption as an example to show how citizenship is negotiated through the Asian values of communitarianism and (transnational gay) capitalism. I show how the citizen has been transformed into a consumer. Citizenship-as-consumption shows how the "gateway" metaphor is an interface for a new pan-Asian cosmopolitan identity. Whether queer or straight, the good consumer is a good citizen as long as he or she embraces the cultural capital of New Asia. I next examine the cultural agency of the Singapore Tourism Board and its New Asia campaigns. I critically examine the "gateway" metaphor through the place-differentiation of its slogans and advertisements. I show how pan-Asian cosmpolitanism produces a problematic middle-class consumption practice that is regionally hegemonic. This hegemony re-spatialises New Asia through a new network of global cities that exhibit the success of developmental capitalism. I consolidate this by examining the media institution Channel New Asia as a regional news channel to critically show how a pan-Asian cosmopolitan masculinity is constructed through the life style consumption of English-language news. Through these examples, I argue that Singapore's cultural and media institutions not only evince the characteristics of the new creative economy, the creative economy also produces cultural governance as a site for further examining subjectification (as subjects of knowledge and objects of regulation).

As cultural resource, Singapore 21 shows how the "gateway" metaphor functions through its deployment of cultural citizenship. Like the intermediary role of "gateway", cultural citizenship is a concept that bridges the divide between individuals and community, individual rights and common good, and individualism and communalism. Singapore 21 constructs cultural citizenship through consumership and produces the citizen as an informed consumer rather than through political and social representation (Yue 2003). An example of this is evident in the representation of homosexuality in Singapore in May 2000 when a local gay and lesbian activist support group People Like Us applied for a permit to hold Singapore's first gay and lesbian public forum entitled "Gays and Lesbians within Singapore 21" (People Like Us 2000). It was rejected by the government's Public Entertainment Licensing Unit (Lim 2000). The forum was intended to function as a Habermasian public sphere where people could discuss where gays and lesbians stand in relation to Singapore 21. In a response to a letter by People Like Us activist Mr Siew Kum Hong, which asked "How could the forum have imposed on others?", Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister of State for Trade & Industry and Communications & Information Technology, said:

> There is no need to highlight that they are homosexuals in discussing their role in Singapore 21. After all, being Singaporean is good enough reason for everyone to play his or her part. If the intention of the forum is to push for general acceptance of homosexuality in Singapore, then my view is that what people do in private about their sexual orientation is up to them. But please do not try to promote general acceptance of homosexual behaviour in public, because we are still a conservative society, for very good reasons. So, instead of creating a platform specifically targeting people with a homosexual orientation, they can always join the many platforms available to Singaporeans at large. By embracing the

> spirit of *active citizenry* with the broader interest of the community at heart, we can work together to help many more people live a better life in Singapore 21. (Lim 2000, emphasis added)

This response incorporates sexuality into a national cultural policy through "active citizenry". Homosexuality is erased and subsumed under the mantle of being a Singapore citizen. Here, the right to citizenship recalls a Foucauldian form of modern governmentality premised on the conduct of self and of others (Foucault 1991). To conduct oneself within the agenda of Singapore 21 is to manage oneself in a behaviour that is communitarian. Chua (1997) writes that the new Asianisation of Singapore is driven by such an ideology whereby the state neutralises its ethnic absolutist multicultural politics through the promulgation of shared Asian values. Singapore 21 harnesses these codes to create a new Asian utopia by using creative economy as a tool to organise the city-state and its population through the police of governance. Minister Lim's response displaces sexual rights onto a moral code that is at odds with the utopic hopes of the city-state and foregrounds the self-disciplining technology of governmentality that confers cultural citizenship through the acquisition of shared communitarian values. This form of citizenship denies full civic participation to gays and lesbians in Singapore; it also reduces the multicultural recognition of the public sphere through the monoculturalist ideology of "being Singaporean"; and it rejects the autonomy of the emergent gay and lesbian movement as a collective space of self-representation. "Active citizenry" articulates a form of citizenship that is not about the right to cultural democracy or access and equity through the redistribution of resources, rather it is patterned out of an active process of consumption (Bianchini & Bloomfield 1996; Stevenson 2000).

This acquisition of citizenship as consumership is evident in how gay and lesbian consumption has meant that Singapore in the last five years has outstripped Sydney as the queer capital in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite the illegality of homosexuality and the censorship of gay Internet content by the Singapore Broadcasting Authority, a queer culture has emerged through AIDS organisations, gay and lesbian activism and especially queer lifestyle consumption. Since 2000, Singapore has staged annual gay and lesbian dance parties bigger than Australia's Mardi Gras parades. With more male saunas and lesbian nightclubs than Sydney, active queer consumption problematises the "gateway" function by exposing the politics between the regulation and the globalisation of Internet information. Different to the gay and lesbian movement-led emancipation of Taiwan or the sex tourism of gay Bangkok, queer Singapore is patterned out of a capitalist consumption practice endorsed and harnessed by the new creative economy where gay entrepreneurship, gay foreign talent and gay indexes are actively wooed to make a creative city. In such a culture, cultural citizenship is promoted through the consumption of shared values: first, through the active citizenship of communitarianism; and second, through communitarianism embodied as New Asian capitalist materialism. A knowledge economy and informed citizens-as-consumers are produced despite the constraints of information regulation and censorship (Yue 2003).

These shared values within Singapore align with a regionalising cultural tourist discourse engineered by the Singapore Tourism Board. Its marketing slogan "Singapore: New Asia. So easy to enjoy" highlights a nation that is "at the crossroads of the East and the West"; "a modern miracle [that] … can't wait to enter the 21st century" with "a single national identity, so much so that you are likely to hear someone regard himself as a Singaporean first before a Chinese, Malay, Indian or Eurasian" (Singapore Tourism Board 2000, p. 15). Here, consumption is driven by a top-down policy push where citizenship expresses civic identity

based not on a shared identification with, but out of a consumption of, place. The place of "being Singaporean", discursively produced by New Asia as a space of regionality, strategically organises such a practice.

As cultural agency and resource, the Singapore Tourism Board promotes the "gateway" function through place differentiation in its pan-Asian cosmopolitan "Singapore New Asia" campaign. Between 2000 and 2003, this campaign promoted multicultural eating, global shopping and regional tourism. One advertisement in Australia's *The Age* mainstream newspaper begins with the caption: "Can the pleasures of a tropical paradise begin in a modern metropolis?" The image features the blue-hued tranquillity of a boutique beach resort in Indonesia, anchored by a smaller linguistic sign that denotes "Banyan Tree Bintan – Only 45 minutes from Singapore". Its geographical status as a regional hub and its cultural location as a regional centre are clearly connoted. In CECDS, this touristic East-meets-West discourse of New Asia is harnessed to market a niche genre to "tap into growing markets in the region such as China, Malaysia and Indonesia" by promoting the development of "life style and entertainment products that are uniquely Singaporean for the global market" (Media Development Authority 2002, p. 7). This gateway function exposes Singapore's hegemonic class politics in the region. Like the advertisement above that juxtaposes the primitivism of its neighbours by promoting the ease and luxury of regional travel using Singapore as a base destination, New Asia as a niche genre shows what Ghassan Hage (2003, p. 112) terms "developmental racism" where the newness of a pan-Asian image is consumed through a middle-class aesthetics at the expense of other subaltern Asians in the region.

The Singapore Tourism Board's "Uniquely Singapore" campaign, launched in May 2004, further accentuates the regional class politics. This campaign harnesses the local as its creative cultural resource by creating local content that builds on the East-West hybridity of New Asia Singapore. It uses four commercials to capture the New Asian cluster through themes such as "poured", "spikey", "tropical" and "wild" (Singapore Tourism Board 2004). Featuring the slogan "What Will Bring You Home?" they begin in another city (Taiwan, Bangalore, Buenos Aires, Shanghai) and are followed by a montage of local Singapore icons and touristic practices. Hybridity is evident in the choice of icons that range from old colonial monuments to new state-of-the-art esplanade theatres and practices from traditional sight-seeing to new life style and eco-tourism. For example, the "poured" commercial begins in a teahouse in Taiwan with a geisha serving tea to two Chinese businessmen. A zoom into the practice of tea-pouring is juxtaposed with a cut to the flow of massage oils at a spa complex, the decanting of Indian tea *tarik* at a hawker centre, the rush of cocktails at a bar and the tropical gush of a waterfall. In "spikey", the prickle of sewing needles at a ballroom dancing studio in Buenos Aires is juxtaposed with the coned roof of a new theatre, durian thorns, a neo-punk haircut and the peaks of a temple roof. In these ads, the New Asian cluster is evident through the complementarity of a theme that incorporates the divergent practices of a value-added tourism. These practices not only create the uniqueness of Singapore's through hybrid local content; they re-territorialise the region through class.

The politics of class is evident in how value-adding and clustering have shifted culture from tradition, everyday practice and commodity to service. Central to culture-as-service is how the signifier of "home" has anchored the gateway of New Asia Singapore to link a new spatiality regionalised by newly emerging global cities such as Taiwan, Bangalore, Buenos Aires and Shanghai (Sassen 2002). This re-territoriality replaces geography with networked developmental capitalism. Such a strategy of branding harnesses New Asia cultural capital to promote a pan-Asian postmodern and cosmopolitan middle-class consumption practice

comprising "thrilling spectacles and artistic inspiration, high sea adventures and romantic escapades, quality luxury labels and mind-boggling variety, [and] legendary efficiency and high-tech convenience" (Singapore Tourism Board 2004). Culture-as-service is also marketed in the Singapore Tourism Board's website links to "Singapore Education" and "Singapore Medicine". These knowledges are abstracted as capital in the form of culture-as-resource and service provision. Together with Singapore 21's consumption practices of shared values, Singapore's tourism practices have constituted a middle-class politics of consumption that is hegemonic across the geographical Asian region and the new networked region of developmental capitalism.

This regional hegemony is also evident in Channel News Asia. Launched in 1999, Channel News Asia (CNA) is Asia's first Asia-managed and owned, global English-language regional news service located in Singapore. An AC Nielsen Media Index Report in 2000 shows that CNA captured 42% of the Asian news audience market compared to 8.5% for CNN and 7.5% for the BBC. Distributed via the Apstar 11R and Palapa C2, it reaches East Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Australiasia. The gateway interface is evident through narrowcasting as a technology that transmits to niche, rather than generalised, markets (Yue & Hawkins 2000). Its programming in English also shows how a New Asian class is produced through an audience constructed by the programming of English-language news as a commodity culture. Singapore's hegemony is supported through the use of programming belts rather than segments connoting the girdling of an area or locality. In the news belt segment, where generic hourly news programmes present updates, the focus is on Singapore, the world and the region. Other regional Asian cities are only featured under the "knowing Asia" and "gateway Asia" belts. The hegemony of Singapore is emphasised in the central role it plays as the disseminator in Asia for global and Asian information. The newness of news not only promotes Asian values through Asian news as a challenge to Western-produced news; it supports the creative economy imperative where news has become a site of capital and consumption. The viewer profile with a target audience of predominantly male professional/managers, businessmen and executives (PMEDs) supports this. The shift from news as information to news as life style consumption, evident in the advertisements promoting luxury commodities and cosmopolitanism, produces a new Asian regional masculinity created by the place-branding of New Asia. The red delta-shaped A in the logo anchors this premise where its abstraction captures the phallic boldness and auspiciousness of change within Asia and signifies an emerging Asia.

Clearly, the changing gateway functions of Singapore's creative media and cultural institutions promote hegemony across the region of Asia and across a new networked region of developmental capitalism. This hegemony creates a new middle class by promoting cultural citizenship through the consumption of shared Asian values. It reflects the force of the New Asia cluster as an emerging creative region. Regionality, as a way of re-grouping nations, population, geographies and boundaries, has become a crucial way of understanding the reorganisation of the world as a result of globalisation and re-territorialisation (Dirlik 1992; Wilson & Dissanayake 1996; Chen 1998). This paper's focus on New Asian regionalism updates Leo Ching's mass popular Asianism (Ching 2000) by focusing on how cluster theory produces New Asia as a cultural capital represented by new models of consumption and new modes of cultural governance. Despite Singapore's top-down policy push, new identities and subjectivities are also created that ride with and are also at odds with the demands of state imperatives. In such an economy, I conclude by proposing cybernetics as a new approach to the study of cultural governance and consumption in Singapore.

Framing Creative Cultural Governance and Consumption: Approaching Cybernetics

Singapore is significant as a case study because its status as an intelligent city and the world's first digital economy provides valuable insight into how policy management has successfully negotiated the current forces of informational and knowledge capitalism. As I have shown in my introduction, recent scholarship in Singapore cultural policy studies has failed to take into account how governmentality, as a practice of self-management, is also a framework for understanding how the subject negotiates his or her everyday practices of freedom (Foucault 2000). This paper has shown how these considered practices of freedom are evident in the new consumption practices of the creative economy that have resulted in new sexualities and genders.

I will conclude by extending this relationship between government and population using the analogy between cybernetics and cultural consumption as a new terrain for approaching the study of policy management and informational capitalism in Singapore. Cultural consumption broadens the study of Singapore by relating policy to the practices encountered in everyday life. More significantly, cultural consumption is relevant to a creative economy centred on culture as a service industry. At its basic level, the consumption of policy reveals the absorption or incorporation of policy initiatives. The shift to a consumer-driven policy agenda also forms a base for understanding the new claims to citizenship. From a cultural policy studies perspective, consumption expands the understanding of everyday culture by examining how the uses of culture govern daily practices such as using the Internet, shopping, eating, audience reception and media spectatorship. The critical study of Singapore's creative economy complements the emerging studies on the global creative economy.

A knowledge economy is central to a creative economy where informed citizens function as the resources that are used to create value and wealth. In such an economy, the management of information is crucial to the success or failure of policy implementations. Beng-huat Chua (1997) states that the Gramscian ideology of hegemonic consensus is the key marker to the economic, social and political achievements of Singapore. Hegemonic consensus describes a society where there is a high degree of social stability despite the oppressive condition of the capitalist state. Although Chua was examining the success of the multicultural public housing policy in Singapore in the 1970s and 1980s, his description of consensus is still relevant to contemporary Singapore. Cybernetics updates Chua's analysis in two ways: first, it examines the creative economy as the latest phase in Singapore's economic development; and second, its feedback device, which I will introduce shortly, allows for the appropriation and self-cultivation of knowledge and information as sites of new hybridities and subjectivities.

In a global informational environment fuelled by the embrace of new media and digital technology, Singapore's condition of consensus resonates with popular science fiction writer William Gibson's vision of cyberspace as a form of "consensual hallucination" (Gibson 1986, p. 56). Cyberspace describes a new social and technological environment where data, wealth, human relationships and power are interconnected by people using technology. This representation suits Singapore's current digital and creative economy, and befits a nation using technology and information to mediate people, resources and capital. Although David Hakken (2003) has recently examined the management of knowledge in cyberspace, his approach is anthropological and does not consider the impact of creative

economies. For cultural policy studies, conjoining with cybernetics can provide a critical platform to study the representation, organisation and management of knowledge. For Sinagpore, this approach is a more pertinent way to explore the consensual techniques of cultural governance because the feedback device of cybernetics can measure how the practices of cultural consumption have also constituted subjectification as a process of how the self-fashioning and creative subject can also appropriate knowledge to negotiate the freedom of his or her relationship to others (Foucault 2000).

"Cybernetics" refers to the study of the systems for controlling the representation of information. The "cyber" of cybernetics is derived from the Greek words, "*kubernétés*", meaning "steersman", or "*kubernan*", meaning "control" or "navigate". The control and the representation of information are crucial to Singapore as a digital economy driven by global informational capitalism. In such an economy featuring the rise of new media, the value of information has shifted from its original status as data or facts, to that of image, exchange and capital (Roszak 1994; Wark 1997; Yoshimoto 1996). Indeed, as Virilio (1995) expounds, information is speed, and speed is capital. By emphasising cybernetics as a system for the organisation of information based on the structure and the representation of information, the trajectory proposed here departs from the technologically deterministic ways that have been deployed in the theorisation of the cyborg. It follows Norbet Weiner's original thinking of cybernetics as a technoscience that explains both organic and machinic processes as parts of information systems (Jerison *et al*. 1994; Haraway 1997; Gray 1995). In this theory, the fundamental feature of cybernetics is its capacity for feedback or recursion. "Feedback" is the return of part of an output (receiver) to an input (sender). A linear or digital system organises information hierarchically from sender to receiver; a nonlinear or analog system self-organises information chaotically from receiver to sender (Eglash 1998; Haraway 1997). The feedback device of cybernetics exposes Singapore's cultural governance as both a linear and a nonlinear system of organising or handling information.

As a device for measuring the success (or lack thereof) of information handling, cybernetic feedback is similar to Tom O'Regan's explication of policy implementation. He advocates that cultural policy should be approached as "a technique of information handling" (O'Regan 1992, p. 416). His suggestion of a tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches stems from his Foucauldian approach to cultural policy studies. Similarly, Tony Bennett (1998) has written seminally about the Foucauldian governance of culture as a site for social management. His proposal that cultural policy be thought of as a form of rationality or technology is also relevant to rethinking how policy functions as a technology that is associated with institutions and practices, management, economics and citizenship.[1]

The feedback device of cybernetics is a measure of the success (or failure) of providing and distributing information through information systems and networks. Here, the creativity of creative economy foregrounds O'Regan's (2002, p. 16) suggestion that information/knowledge systems and networks can function as a useful site for connecting the community to industry developments and business agendas. This focus returns to how the governance of policy can allow for a more pragmatic approach to consider the uses of culture, where culture is now conceived as "a set of dynamic, interrelated resources capable of rearrangement and rearticulation into formidable networks" (O'Regan 2002, p. 17). Such an approach emphasises the creative economy's use of clusters. Because clusters consist of networks formed through a convergence of traditional and high-tech industries (e.g., the convergence of resources, end-products and services) in order to enhance competitiveness,

clusters produce a distinct way of organising data and the economy, and hence, a new way of conceptualising culture.

Cybernetic feedback relates to cultural consumption as the axis where cultural meanings, pleasures and identities are produced because it is a measure of the success of policy implementation. Using cybernetic feedback as a device that measures the success (or lack thereof) of the input (sender/top/government) by its ability to alter the characteristics of an input, this approach suggests that practices of cultural consumption can transform the value of information and self-cultivate other official types of New Asian identity. This way of thinking about cybernetics departs from the mathematical study of cybernetics as the construction techniques of information, information processing and information processing systems. Although Singapore's authoritarian technique of cultural governance manages information as a one-way linear flow, from top-down or from sender-receiver, these policies produce a New Asian culture that is not only embraced by its constituents, but in the process is also re-appropriated through consumption practices to reflect emergent identities that may be at odds with official representations, but nonetheless display the hallmarks of the unique cultural mix of New Asia (Yue 2003).

This is distinct because the value of information is transformed through the cultural consumption of New Asia (e.g. the consumption of shared values). Once information as data reaches its constituents through successful policy programmes, information is exchanged and re-organised through shared Asian values as cultural capital. As a linear system of communicating information from sender-receiver, cybernetic feedback is a measure of the state's top-down technique of governance. As a non-linear system for the organisation of information, cybernetic feedback also measures the consumption practices of the constitutent.[2] The feedback device of cybernetics allows for a new type of communication, producing national identities that are multiple and fragmented (Poster 1990).

Chua (1997) accounts for the success of Singapore through the policy implementations of multiracialism. Similarly, Ien Ang and Jon Stratton (1995, p. 189) describe how multi-racialism and multilingualism have produced the category of New Asian as "the ideal of the proposed new synthetic Singapore identity". None of these studies, or other studies on Asian values, has focused on cultural policy and creative economy. This approach extends these perspectives through a study of recent policy developments, offering a sustained analysis of how these policies have impacted upon everyday life and changing identities in Singapore. It widens Chua, and Stratton and Ang's focus on the state and the Singapore government by drawing attention to the lived practices of the New Asian. These lived practices, evident in the aforementioned policy areas of tourism, broadcasting and new media, show how policies are incorporated at the level of everyday consumption.[3] New consumption patterns can be mapped through methodologies such as ethnography, audience reception studies, media sociology and mass consumption studies. These methods produce results that reflect the cybernetic device of feedback.

The results from these methods can be further rendered qualitatively using media reception theory, postcolonial historiography, anthropology of material culture and cultural citizenship studies. The focus on citizenship-as-consumership will extend existing studies on cultural citizenship that concentrate on issues surrounding access, equity and representation (Marshall 1964). This emphasis will also extend existing political economy analyses to include examinations of class and gender, thus building on Chua's (2000, 2003) more recent sociological analysis on the emergence of the *nouveau riche* in Singapore. Because these practices are also axes by which contestations of class and gender occur, theories surrounding gender

and sexuality can also be rendered to read differences and performativities in identities. This approach, neither exhaustive nor exclusive, contributes to the field of cultural policy studies by adding to the emerging body of cultural studies projects emanating from Asia (Chen 1998); redressing the state-based, political economy and sociological analyses about Singapore; and addressing the uses of culture by engendering popular cultural forms through understanding how New Asian practices ride with the imperatives promoted by New Asian policies.

NOTES

1.   Although Kwok and Low (2002) have also emphasised this in their exemplary analysis of cultural policy and the new Asian Renaissance in Singapore, their analysis touches on Foucault's rationality tangentially and does not elaborate how governmentality is a form of subjectification and a practice of ethics.
2.   This approach differs from Margaret Morse's (1998) suggestion that feedback produces interactivity by constituting a feeling of liveness, and Sherry Turkle's (1995) emphasis on how feedback engages the user as a second self.
3.   Although Wee's (1996, 1999) recent writings on popular Singapore singer Dick Lee deals with the consumption of popular culture, his analysis examines Lee from the realm of production and stages Singapore from a top-down statist framework of modernisation and development. Similarly, although the edition of *Reading Culture: Textual Practices in Singapore* uses popular media practices to understand the impact of the state on public culture, this framework attends to consumption only as a strategy of reading (see Chew & Kramer-Dahl 1999).

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