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GLOCALISATION AND SINGAPOREAN FESTIVALS

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to elaborate upon theorisations of the global and their operationalisation within a tourism context by drawing upon empirical research carried out in Singapore. Specifically, Robertson's (1995) glocalisation thesis is drawn to bear upon specific Singaporean tourism policies, namely strategies for events and festivals. The objective of the paper is to offer a rich, deep study of Singapore's tourism and event policy in relation to the impact of globalising influences upon its cultural events, and to elaborate upon both the development of events and festivals within Singapore and the workings of the glocalisation process in this context. The literature accords little space to the relationship between events and festivals and tourism in Singapore and this paper seeks to offer some insights into this under-researched area. This is especially significant given the emphasis upon festivals at a policy level in Singapore and, furthermore, as a means of comprehending the workings of the glocalisation process. Interviews were carried out with six key policy makers in Singapore, and one Director of a private company who delivers events on behalf of the City.

We conclude that the prosecution and delivery of policies for tourism generally, and cultural events in particular, in Singapore represent key evidential elements of Robertson's (1995) glocalisation thesis and that these are most evident in the character and development of events. Moreover, it is contended that the relationship between tourism bodies and host communities corroborates claims made by critics of the cultural imperialism thesis and, again, supports Robertson's glocalisation thesis. As Robertson noted, and the findings in the paper demonstrate, globalising influences are not in opposition to the local manifestation of cultural identities in Singapore as there is space for both the local and the global within glocalisation. It is not a relationship whereby culturally imperialistic global forces subsume the local in a culturally homogeneous, unified way.

KEYWORDS

Events, Festivals, Globalisation, Glocalisation, Identity, Singapore

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, and its application to the social world, has generated multifarious discussions. These have ranged from theoretical offerings endeavouring to crystallise its fluidity of shape and form (Featherstone, 1995; Kellner, 2002; Ritzer, 2003; Robertson, 1992), to empirical research intended to postulate future directions, and furthermore, to offer an avenue to comprehend the contradictions and complexities of the globalisation debate (Chang, 1999; Chua, 1998; Kong, 1999; McNeill,

2000). Such is the ubiquity of the globalisation concept that it has entered the popular lexicon and, in addition, arguably challenged the dominance of the post-modern. Waters (2001, p.1) argues that the post-modern concept was dominant in the 1980s within the social sciences, but globalisation could well be '...the concept by which we understand the transition of human society into the third millennium'. Waters' (2001) proposition is ambitious in both its scope and theoretical implications as it situates

the concept of globalisation at the centre of social theory. Though Waters (2001) can be castigated for his inherent assumptions regarding the redundancy of other modes of social theory, there can be little doubt that theoretical incursions into the globalisation terrain are in the ascendant. Moreover, key definitions of globalisation demonstrate similarities, for example, Robertson (1992, p.8) states that it 'refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' and Giddens (1990, p.64) defines it as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. In this way then, there is an emphasis upon the changing relationships between local and global as documented by Robertson's (1995) thesis of the glocal. Various commentators have suggested that tourism is both a manifestation and embodiment of global processes due to its structural conditions and movement between people and nations.

Thus, this paper seeks to elaborate upon theorisations of the global and their operationalisation within a tourism context by drawing upon empirical research carried out in Singapore. Specifically, Robertson's (1995) glocalisation thesis is drawn to bear upon specific Singaporean tourism policies, namely strategies for events and festivals. The objective of the paper is to offer a rich, deep study of Singapore's tourism and event policy in relation to the impact of globalising influences upon its cultural events, and, to elaborate upon both the development of events and festivals within Singapore and the workings of the glocalisation process in this context. It is argued that the growth in the festivals and events sector in Singapore can be attributed to the nation's economic stability. This has afforded the sector a greater opportunity to enrich Singaporean cultural life and, furthermore, reflect the tensions inherent within the culture and economics debate as mobilised by the arts-tourism relationship. In this regard, cultural economic discourses are pre-eminent. Cultural economic ideologies are also illustrated in the glocalisation process, whereby the global is actively courted by the local, as evidenced by the direction of cultural and tourism policy, for economic gain through global tourism. Strategies which embody this phenomenon include the 'global city for the arts' and 'eventful city' campaigns which capitalised upon global events, thereby suggesting a 'localisation of globality' (Robertson, 1995). This is not to suggest that the

'local' is excluded in the quest for global tourism as, at another level, there are local events in Singapore orientated towards the community and 'hidden' from the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990), thereby attesting to Robertson's thesis of global-local relationships and the power relations therein.

The Globalisation/Glocalisation of Culture?

Characteristics of the globalisation process may appear readily identifiable but the impact upon the social world is not so easily delineated for it is a landscape littered with a maze of conflicting arguments. This debate is characterised by collision or cohesion, as well as (Giddens, 2002) being divided between globalisation sceptics and radicals. In essence, the ways in which globalisation plays within nations, economies, cultures and people is mired in a dichotomy of meaning, as encapsulated by Kellner (2002, p.286): 'for some, it is a cover concept for global capitalism and imperialism and is accordingly condemned as another form of the imposition of the logic of capital and the market on ever more regions of the world and spheres of life. For others, it is the continuation of modernization and a force of progress, increased wealth, freedom, democracy, and happiness'. This debate can be further elucidated in relation to, for example, the economy, the nation-state, and, culture.

First, the globalisation of capitalism and the development of globalising economies is an area subject to fierce dispute due to concerns regarding the 'evenness' of development and the human costs for those in peripheral economies (Schirato & Webb, 2003). This is exemplified in the area of 'fair trade' whereby strenuous efforts have been made to resist the homogeneity of global economic influences to protect local economic interests. Secondly, globalising influences can arguably loosen the meanings attached to the nation-state and thereby contribute to a reconfiguration process between state, identity, sovereignty and territoriality (Berking, 2003; Keil, 1998). In so doing, it allows for and encourages, tolerance between and betwixt peoples. The alternative proposition however, is that globalisation can, in extreme situations, exacerbate xenophobia (Held & McGrew, 2000) by this very 'loosening' of boundaries, or less extreme but still destructive, the cultural history of the identity of certain groups. This can be elaborated upon by turning to Cohen's (1985) thesis of the construction of community. From an anthropological base, he argued that, as pressures increase upon communities to change their

form in accordance with those elsewhere, the more inclined are they to reassert their boundaries symbolically. Thus, globalising, homogenising influences can instil a sense of pressure upon communities that can become manifest in an inward and insular perspective. Third, the theoretical contradictions and complexities of the globalisation process are readily apparent in the realms of culture and it is to this avenue that we now turn given the frame of reference. Consistent themes within the globalisation and culture debate relate to global culture (Appadurai, 1990; Smith, 1990), cultural imperialism (Hannerz, 1992; Lieber & Weisberg, 2002), and hybridisation (Tomlinson, 1999).

Assertions of cultural imperialism persist in the arena of globalisation and culture. It could easily be argued that it has been accorded far greater space than it warrants due to its political credentials and emotive nature. Although the cultural imperialism thesis provides a limited analytical instrument to comprehend the nature of globalisation and culture, its very persistence and influence demands that it must first be brought to the fore and considered. Commentators have argued that cultures are subject to globalising processes of Westernised culture through multi-faceted communication channels and capitalism. In particular, the "American" primacy of culture, both classic and popular (Lieber & Weisberg, 2002), on a global basis illustrates the pervasiveness of Western culture. Further, such influences are reminiscent of cultural imperialism, whereby peripheral cultures are dominated by core Western cultural powers leading to a loss of cultural diversity in the onslaught of cultural homogenisation processes. Under such a conceptualisation, global culture is one of sameness and uniformity, whereby the heterogeneity of culture is subsumed in the face of Western globalisation. This has serious implications for the 'local' as it proposes that the 'local' and 'authentic' culture can be irretrievably lost (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p.155).

The aforesaid proffers a dystopian vision of cultural life and is open to critique on the basis of conceptualisations of global culture and cultural imperialism/homogenisation. First, Smith (1990) destabilises the very foundations of the global culture thesis by casting aspersions upon the proposition that culture is a singular entity and instead suggests that there are global cultures. In addition, Featherstone (1995) refutes the totalising and, moreover, monolithic interpretation of global culture

by arguing that there is increasing evidence of emergent 'third cultures'. Thus, global culture may exist in the sense of 'third cultures' which are 'sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions and lifestyles that have developed in ways which have become increasingly independent of nation-states' (Featherstone 1995, p.114), although this is hard to demonstrate empirically.

Secondly, the postulation that global culture is characterised by homogenisation is similarly problematical. The essence of the issue is core/periphery relations whereby the core cultural centre allegedly dominates the periphery. This argument rests on the basis that there is a 'fixed' core and, inevitably, is limited in an age characterised by globalised inter-relationships. Although the temptation may be to refer to the primacy of American cultural media to substantiate the core/periphery thesis, as Featherstone (1995) notes, there are also influences of Japanisation and Orientalisation on a global scale and, therefore, blanket assumptions that the core can be equated with Western/American culture are weakened. Furthermore, there is a power struggle involved here through the implicit postulation that the periphery is unable to resist the actions of a cultural centre. Such a supposition conceives of local communities as being powerless in the relationship and, by and large, such conceptions are disempowering for local actors. Appadurai (1990) suggests that this argument is inherently simplistic because, while cultural influences from a dominant political power may be drawn to bear upon a more peripheral culture, the issue is that global cultural influences can become indigenised within local communities. Tomlinson (1999) extends the notion of an indigenisation of global influences in the local context, by suggesting that globalisation promotes 'deterritorialisation' whereby 'complex connectivity weakens the ties of culture to place' (Tomlinson, 1999, p.29). In this regard, geographically bounded concepts of culture are loosened as globalisation contributes to the changing shape of culture, as exemplified by Rojek and Urry's (1997) development of Clifford's (1992) 'travelling nature of culture' concept. In addition, Tomlinson (1999) in common with other commentators (e.g. Featherstone, 1995), proposes that 'globalised culture is hybrid culture' (1995, p.141), although the point of departure within his thesis is the way in which hybrid culture forms from the idea of deterritorialisation. Thus, within such a framework

hybrid cultural forms can be authentic reflections of a globalised world.

Robertson (1990; 1992; 1995) offers a theorisation that attends to the issues within the global-local relationship and pays greater respect to the power of the local, primarily by consistently rejecting the local-global dichotomy. As noted earlier, a prominent theme within the globalisation debate is the overpowering of the local by the global. The benefit of employing Robertson's thesis is that it does not cast wholesale aspersions upon globalisation, but rather offers a more pragmatic and sensitive means by which to elaborate upon the global-local relationship. He argues that 'the distinction between the global and the local is becoming very complex and problematic – to such an extent that we should now speak in such terms as the global institutionalisation of the life-world and the localization of globality' (1990, p.17). Robertson's (1995) thesis on glocalisation is especially pertinent within the current frame of reference. Glocalisation, as a concept, initially originated from Japan but was popular in the 1980s in business marketing circles. In a business capacity, glocalisation is closely related to micro-marketing where it refers to 'the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets' (Robertson 1995, p.28). Glocalisation processes can be illustrated by multinational global organisation, for instance, Coca-Cola, adapting their marketing strategy in accordance with local social and cultural variations. Robertson extends the concept by proposing that 'glocalisation – involves the construction of increasingly differentiated consumers, the 'invention' of 'consumer traditions' (of which tourism, arguably the biggest 'industry' of the contemporary world, is undoubtedly the most clear-cut example' (Robertson 1995, p.29). In extending the relationship between tourism and the global, of crucial importance is that the 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm, 1983) for tourism purposes can become part of the local community, thereby embodying the glocalisation process. In this way then, the globalisation process through tourism acts as a means to influence and, moreover, is influenced by local conditions (Teo, 2002, p.467)

Robertson's use of the glocalisation concept is to reject the hypothesis that globalising influences are in opposition to local manifestations of cultural identities as he maintains that it is problematical to conceptualise the

global as if it invariably and inevitably excludes the local. His thesis reacts against other studies that have argued the collective sense of 'home' is subject to overwhelming attack and ultimately, annihilation by globalisation forces. Instead, Robertson suggests that globalisation involves the reconstruction of home and locality and the local is not in opposition to globalisation, but is an aspect of it. The glocalisation thesis emphasises that it is a process of the global creation of the local and, moreover, the localization of the global and, as noted by Ritzer (2003), bears certain parallels to Appadurai's (1990) concept of 'hybridity'. Within Robertson's schemata, the global and local are not variables at opposite ends of the spectrum but are fused together and form an interrelationship, that of glocalisation. It is suggested that the benefit of employing the concept of glocalisation, rather than globalisation, is that the former attends greater attention to both spatial and temporal issues (1995, p.40). This paper draws upon Robertson's theory of the glocal in respect of the development and character of Singaporean events and festivity for tourism purposes. It has been noted that tourism is a manifestation of the hyper-globaliser (Teo & Li, 2003), in that it epitomises the global in terms of its structural relations, the market conditions and the interactions between the global and the local. In an effort to elaborate upon tourism and the glocal, consideration must first be given to the research context and approach prior to an examination of the workings of the glocal within the events and festivity sector in Singapore.

The Research Context

Singapore is both a post-colonial city and nation-state and, as such, offers an intriguing avenue to consider the contradictions and complexities of the glocalisation debate within a rigorously controlled and regulated state. Politically, it is a democracy but to all intents and purposes it is a one party state governed by the People's Action Party (PAP) which is authoritarian in ethos. Such authoritarianism, in part, stems from the historical development of Singapore as a nation-state that gained independence in 1965. Prior to this, it was subject to Dutch and British colonialism, Japanese occupation, and was part of an independent Malaysia. Upon gaining independence, not only did Singapore have to contend with a legacy of colonialism, occupation and expulsion from Malaysia, but it was bequeathed simultaneously with grievous social and economic problems. Unemployment

and population growth were high while public health and housing conditions were challenging.

To counteract the aforesaid challenges, the government (PAP) embarked on an ambitious development programme. Since then, Singapore has become a highly developed industrialised nation characterised by a safe, clean environment, high quality transport and housing, low unemployment, enviable public health standards (Tamney, 1996), and a highly developed education system. The scale of development, however, has had social costs for the populace. In order to set in motion its developmental programme, it has been argued that the state used a hegemonic tool of 'national survival' discourse. For instance, individuals were encouraged to behave in specific ways and achieve certain goals if the country was to survive (Kong & Yeoh, 2003, p.31), so legitimating the authoritarian route the state took to attain social and economic progress.

Singapore has since achieved its economic and social goals but the political regime has maintained its authoritarian stance. Politically, the discourse of 'national survival' lacked sustainability following economic and social progress and, as a consequence, it may be proposed that this contributed to the development of a national ideology of shared values. During the 1960s and 1970s, the government was immensely critical of Western cultural products in the belief that they had a detrimental impact upon the values of Singaporean youth and, furthermore, that Western decadence could permeate Singaporean cultures and lifestyles (Kong & Yeoh, 2003, p.36-37). Various initiatives were taken to counteract the globalising influence of Western culture, but central to such moves was the promotion of 'Asian values'. Perhaps the most prominent manifestation of such an ideology is the White Paper on Shared Values (1991) which actively encouraged citizens to adhere to its principles: nation before community and society above self; family as the basic unit of society; community support and respect for the individual; consensus, not conflict; and, racial and religious harmony. The consequence of a national ideology such as this can be illustrated in two avenues: first, that in seeking to resist global influences, primarily in the shape of Western values, the state is attempting to 'protect' apparent Asian values and, in particular, the political status quo; second, by emphasising that individuals acquiesce to these values the state maintains a rigorous and regulatory mechanism upon the populace

across all facets of their lives. Indeed, this serves to illustrate the level of authoritarianism within the political regime and the lack of recognisable democracy. Tamney (1996, p.65) argues that 'the absence of an independent civil society, the Government's refusal to recognise human rights, and the climate of fear are far more accurate clues to the actual conditions. Because of this mix of democratic forms and authoritarian substance, Singapore is a neo-authoritarian country'. The control of mass media, the lack of political dissent for fear of repercussion, the erosion of human rights in favour of social order (Tamney, 1996) and policies of social engineering (Clammer, 1998; Sin, 2002; Tamney, 1996) indicate the level of regulation within Singaporean society, and, support the proposition that it is a neo-authoritarian nation.

Further manifestations of the authoritarian regime can be identified in the management of multi-culturalism and ethnicity. Singapore has a multiracial population of 4.16 million and is vigorously promoted as such by the state. Officially, the population comprise Chinese (76.5%), Malays (13.8%), Indians (8.1%), and, Others (1.6%) (Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, 2004). These diversities however, do not represent homogeneities as there are many other different Chinese, Malay and Indian communities with their own languages and cultural traditions and there are also 'hybrid' communities, such as the Peranakans and Eurasians (Ooi, 2002a, p.4). The official four-race model promoted by government has been subject to criticism for failing to acknowledge the diversity of the populace, contributing to the marginalisation of the Malay people, and ensuring that the state has placed greater importance upon Chinese values and traditions (Clammer, 1998). Ackerman (1997) has argued that contradictory messages have emitted from the state's management of ethnicity whereby, at one level, PAP seeks to engender a meaningful way of inter-ethnic peace by proposing that 'we are all Singaporeans' but, at another level, their policies actually emphasise the differences between ethnic groups. For instance, individuals are requested to put the nation before any ethnic loyalty yet simultaneously, the education system ensures that individuals must learn/re-learn their 'mother tongue' (Ackerman, 1997).

On an economic basis, Singapore is the most economically developed country in Southeast Asia (Ooi,

2002a). Economic success can be attributed to government policies and the populace. To date, there has been a heavy emphasis upon the work ethic and, in 2002, the average weekly hours worked stands at 46.1% (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2003). This contributes to the development of the nation-state but also has an impact upon the leisure lives of the people. Leisure lifestyles have largely been sacrificed to economic growth but, as discussed below, there is increasing evidence of government policies being aimed at this area, through the medium of events and festivals. Despite the economic success the nation has achieved, in recent years it has suffered from a recession in the region. This has had a concomitant impact upon the key sectors of manufacturing, construction and services (Ho, 2003). During the late 1990s, the region was subject to a period of economic turbulence attributed to limitations in the financial sector, issues in the wider external environment and problems in controlling international liquidity conditions (Henderson, 1999). Henderson (1999) notes that the situation was further exacerbated by serious environmental pollution, which invariably had an impact upon the tourism sector due to a decline in visitor arrivals over the period. A global economic slowdown in 2001-02 (Ooi, 2002a) did little to alleviate the pressures. In 2003, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had major implications for Asian tourism. Drawing upon data from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2003), McKercher and Chon (2004) note the outbreak led to three million people in the tourism industry losing their jobs and, in addition, cost over \$20 billion in lost GDP for the most severely affected areas: China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam.

Visitor arrivals and expenditure over the period 1996-2003 illustrates not only the level of fluctuation within visitor arrivals (See Table 1), but the steady decline in visitor expenditure over this period. The decline (by 19.04%) in visitor arrivals in 2003 can be attributed to the SARS outbreak. A decrease in visitor expenditure clearly has serious implications for the stability of the industry and the Singaporean economy. Nevertheless, throughout this period the authorities have endeavoured to promote tourism strategies as a means of benefiting the Singaporean economy. The rationale being that the tourism industry is a vital component of Singapore's economy, as in 2001 it generated S\$9.4 billion in tourism receipts and accounted for 10% of the GDP (Ministry of Trade and Industry, undated).

Indeed, the work of the Singapore Tourism Working Group (TWG), facilitated under the auspices of the Economic Review Committee's Sub-Committee on Service Industries (Ministry of Trade and Industry, undated), has proposed key areas for tourism development. The purpose of the developmental aims is to double visitor arrivals to 15 million a year and tourism receipts to S\$20 billion a year by the year 2012. This is a relatively short timescale to enact the strategy and to achieve a measure of success, but ultimately what this demonstrates is the commitment of the authorities to the tourism sector, given its contribution to GDP. In essence, the TWG made a number of recommendations regarding the industry's strategic development as follows: to aggressively target and tap key and emerging markets; develop regional tourism; develop more breadth and depth in making Singapore a tourism capital; and, develop distinctive tourism products and experiences. In specific, the latter point is of particular interest given that one of the measures is to develop a 'vibrant events scene in Singapore'. Particular proposals within this measure include the development of an arts and events district, the creation of a location for a permanent cluster of art galleries, the development of conference facilities and the development of sporting infrastructure. In respect of developing the events sector, this has been a prominent theme within the Singapore Tourist Board's (STB) strategy to diversify the industry, as illustrated by their involvement in a number of events, albeit at different levels of intensity - for example, the Great Singapore Sales, Singapore Food Festival, light-ups in ethnic districts (Ooi, 2002a, 2002b), Singapore River Hong Bao festival, the Singapore Arts Festival and the Chingay Parade at Chinese New Year. Thus, the STB offers infrastructure to develop Singapore into a tourism city and to shape its cultural landscape for both locals and tourists alike. Indeed, the strategic advisors view culture as a way of adding the final element of "civilisation" to their nation and asserting their cultural forms in opposition to that of the British Empire.

Research Approach and Methods

The increased emphasis upon the development of festivals for tourism purposes at a strategic policy level warrants attention due to an existing research gap in the area, and theoretical implications regarding the globalisation thesis. Existing research on Singapore has focused primarily upon heritage tourism (Chang, 2000, 1999, 1997; Chang, Milne, Fallon & Pohlmann, 1996;

Table 1.0 Visitor Arrivals and Expenditure in Singapore

YEAR	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Visitor Arrivals	7,292,366	7,197,871	6,242,152	6,958,201	7,691,339	7,522,163	7,567,110	6,126,569
Total expenditure of visitors (SGD Million)	7,350.00	6,207.40	5,493.60	6,033.30	6,292.60	5,699.30	5,425.80	unavailable

Henderson, 2003, 2000; Teo & Huang, 1995; Teo & Li, 2003), culture and tourism, (Chang & Yeoh, 1999; Ooi, 2002a, 2002b), and cultural policy and the arts (Chang & Lee, 2003; Kong, 2000; Henderson, 2003, 2001). Although the aforesaid is pertinent to the subject matter there has, to date, been little space accorded to the relationship between festivals and tourism in Singapore and this paper seeks to offer some insights into this under-researched area. This is especially significant given the emphasis upon festivals at a policy level in Singapore and, furthermore, as a means of comprehending the workings of the glocalisation process. With regard to theorisations of the global, there is a need to be attuned to certain limitations within such constructs. Commentators have suggested that there are potential problems in employing theorisations of the impact of globalisation of world cities that are grounded in particular geographical milieus (Amin & Graham, 1997; McNeill 1999), for example, Los Angeles and New York. There are issues of comparability with Singapore given the political machinations that govern everyday social life and influence the globalisation process. McNeill (1999) called for further research in a number of geographical locations in an effort to circumvent epistemological issues of validity and, as such, this paper seeks to contribute to an understanding of the global within a society subject to rigorous control through the contextual base of tourism and festivals. This paper does not endeavour to make broad generalisations to the wider population but rather seeks to offer rich, deep insights through a case study of Singapore.

A case study approach was employed as it 'allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (Yin, 1994, p.3). Yin (1994) argues that the benefit of employing a case study

approach is the contextual situation of the studied phenomena is integrated into the mode of inquiry, thereby permitting the relationship between context and phenomena to be delineated. Case studies employ a readily recognisable and unique approach, that of the idiographic, wherein the focus is upon outlining the unique characteristics of the case (Bryman, 2001). Essentially, this approach permits the generalisation of theoretical propositions. A case study approach was employed to address two research aims: first, to review the development of festivals with specific reference to the tourism industry; and, second, to examine the workings of the glocalisation process within the context of festivity and tourism.

Elite semi-structured interviews with representatives from the respective arenas of Singaporean tourism, cultural policy and entrepreneurship were conducted in 2004 to address the aforementioned research aims. Interviews were conducted with individuals from both statutory and non-statutory boards: National Arts Council (2), National Heritage Board (1), Singapore Tourism Board (1), Singapore Sports Council (1) and the International Festival and Events Association (1). These representatives played a central role in both the management of events and formulation of policy for Singaporean tourism and events.

All of those interviewed held strategic decision making roles and could influence current and future policy for the development and sustainability of events based policies. All interviewees were asked questions around key themes. These included:

- The perception of events and festivities in the tourism product of Singapore now and in the future
- Strategies to promote Singapore as the event capital of Asia

- The tourism market
- The distinction between multi-racial issues and multi-cultural issues in promoting festivity
- The meaning of Singaporean identity
- Placing Singapore on a global map and the importance or role of local culture in that positioning
- The role of sports and arts events in making Singapore into a global player for the events sector
- The marketing of Singapore as the bridge between the East and the West for international events
- The role of local events in forming Singaporean cultural identity and the promotion of this globally.

Conducting research in Singapore entailed a set of unique political and ethical issues. Consideration of ethical issues is embedded within the research design and process, but this took on an added dimension due to the political situation of the geographical milieu. Criticism of the state is subject to certain controls, for example, there have been instances when members of the Singaporean academic community who have been involved in the expression of political opposition have been subject to certain penalties (Tamney, 1996). The level of control is such that there is little opportunity to engage in alternative political activities given the potential repercussions: 'no group or organisation can criticise important policies without running the risk of being charged with engaging in politics, which would result in the banning of the group and, depending on the nature of the dissent, might lead to the arrest of its leaders' (Tamney, 1996, p.61). Although there is evidence to suggest that there is some 'relaxation' in the state's authoritarian rule, given recent government figures pronouncements and increasingly critical academic work of the regime by Singaporeans, the political situation has potential implications for the willingness of respondents to articulate issues within the policy-making environment. Thus, Punch's (1994, p.92) assertion 'that settings and respondents should not be identifiable in print and that they should not suffer harm or embarrassment as a consequence of research' takes on an added resonance herein. To reduce the potential for such possibilities confidentiality at all stages in the research process and product was stressed to respondents.

The Singaporean Festivals and Events Sector

As Singapore stepped into the twenty-first century, the development of its events sector embodied the conflicts and tensions inherent in a relationship comprising culture

and economics. In terms of the cultural aspect of event development, by and large, it reflects the development of the nation itself. In its youth as nation, with an inheritance of social and economic problems, the onus on central government invariably meant that development of the infrastructure of the nation, for example, health, education, transport and the economy, took precedence over other policy interventions. Realms of arts and culture were largely neglected during this transitional period. Now that Singapore has acquired a level of economic success deriving from its rapid industrialisation, greater attention has now been accorded to cultural media, as noted by cultural policy-maker A: 'The history behind this is that the arts basically is a thing that started developing in Singapore only in the last fifteen to twenty years. It was only when the basic necessities of life in Singapore had been established - housing [and] education [that]... the government thought there is more to life than just the material side of things. So the arts...started to appear on the government agenda'. Recent pronouncements from the senior government minister, Lee Kuan Yew, suggest an ambitious drive to develop arts and culture provision: 'Friends tell me that young Singaporeans believe Singapore's best years are behind us. Because we made it from Third World to First in one generation, they believe that there will be no further dramatic transformations in their lifetime...They are pessimists and wrong. Singapore is like an aircraft flying at 30,000ft. We have another 6,000ft to rise...the height top US and EU airlines are flying...We have not reached First World standards in the finer things in life, music, culture and the arts, the graces of a civilised society. The generation now in their 30s to 50s can take Singapore there in the next 15 to 20 years. The best is yet to be' ('We're not there yet, the best is yet to be', 2004). Certainly, since the 1990s there has been a concerted attempt to enliven the Singaporean cultural scene as illustrated by expansion in the arts sector, the formation of cultural bodies, for example, the Arts Council (Henderson, 2001), and the implementation of strategic initiatives to develop Singapore into a world city (Henderson, 2003a, 2003b).

The economic dimension to the events sector has not been foregone in the pursuit of cultural enrichment. Not that this is an especially new turn of events for, although the 1990s were characterised by an increasing emphasis upon the arts and cultural scene, it was also a period when cultural economic policy was the dominant discourse (Kong, 2000). Kong suggests that economic needs were pre-eminent throughout in that while there

was less regulation of global Western influences, there were economic reasons for undertaking such a strategy (Kong, 2000, p.423). At the present time, the Singapore tourism product is one upon which the economy is heavily reliant and a downturn in tourism expenditure has a concomitant impact upon other sectors of the economy. There are certain challenges however, within the Singaporean product relating to its attractions base which has implications for the development of the events sector. The issue for the Singapore tourism industry is that the destruction of heritage sites for redevelopment purposes in the 1950s and 1960s, irrespective of the remedial conservation plans, has had a detrimental impact upon the potential tourism product as the possible heritage attractions base has been weakened. Coupled with this factor, the current attractions base comprising, for example, museums, gardens, wildlife attractions, etc., does not offer particularly advantageous economic dividends. In an examination of the STB's visitor surveys of attractions, Ooi (2002a) argued that while some attractions are supported primarily by tourists, there are others where locals play such an important economic role that they support the attraction. This situation is problematical as attractions almost exclusively supported by tourists face potentially excessive financial burdens with any downturn in visitor arrivals, while attractions dominated by locals demand continued repeat visits, as noted by Respondent B: 'You see the idea of developing hardware for tourism such as the zoo and the night safari it has become, you visit it once, you wouldn't go back, you know. So, you need a constant change of tourism for tourists to maintain [it], and then for the local community it is the same. I mean how many times can you visit the zoo in a month, you know? So, that is why the attractions in Singapore find it difficult to maintain [themselves]'.

Hence, given the weaknesses in the existing attractions base and the role which tourism plays in the economy, it is not entirely unexpected that alternative avenues have been explored. Tourism policy-makers have sought to develop the existing events base as a means to circumvent the aforementioned problems and to differentiate the tourism product in the region, as illustrated by policy-maker C: 'Well, because Singapore lack natural resources like beautiful scenery, you know. We are just a very small island, only two miles across, sixteen from north to south and we are competing in a region of very beautiful natural scenery as well as very interesting indigenous people with their own cultures and heritage. We would use events as a main hook, as a main magnet.

We have to differentiate ourselves, we are small, we are very urban, and, we don't even have a single mountain'. Economic incentives have long been a feature of the events industry, yet what is unusual about the Singapore case is that certain elements, for example, the sports industry, have ambitious economic targets to fulfil in relation to sporting events, as illustrated by policy-maker D: 'In the sports industry, they did a study and they understood that the sports industry, based on certain key sectors, was contributing S\$680m to the GDP of Singapore and they have a target...to double the GDP to S\$1.4bn in ten years. So, in order to get this GDP target there were two schools of thought, one was participation leading consumption, the other was major events leading consumption...So, they took the latter approach and said that we want to do a portfolio of major international events that can increase...economic impact'. The study cited by the respondent, Report of the Committee on Sporting Singapore (2001), highlighted that a number of international events had been hosted but a greater number could be hosted. Given that a key target of the report was to double the size of the sports industry from S\$680m to S\$1.4bn by 2010, the timescales involved denote an ambitious mindset, and, moreover, offer little room for manoeuvre in enacting such a proposal.

The development of the sector demonstrates the tensions encased within the culture-economics debate in the milieu of events, and serve as a reminder that economic priorities are of primary importance in comparison to their cultural counterparts. There can be little dispute that great inroads have been achieved in the Singaporean arts and cultural scene in a remarkably short space of time, contributing to cultural posterity and the quality of life for residents but, in essence, the creation and development of events within the cultural and sporting territories reflects dominant economic ideologies, through the lens of the tourism industry. In Kong's (2000) analysis of 1990s cultural policy she argued that there was a 'hegemony of the economic in Singapore' (Kong 2000, p.423), and over a decade later, there is little to suggest that cultural policy has veered from such a course of action.

Glocalisation and the Events Sector

A prominent theme within theorisations of the relationship between globalisation and culture relates to issues of uniformity and standardisation of form, as noted earlier. Although Singapore is subject to globalising processes by

tourism forces, cultural events do not bespeak of a homogenisation of product whereby the individuality of form becomes lost as a consequence of external demand factors. Nor do they bespeak of a nation that is so subjugated by cultural imperialism forces that its cultural events reflect the primacy of Western cultures. Rather it seems likely that the Singaporean situation augments Appadurai's (1990) argument pertaining to the simplicity of homogenisation propositions. The global is not a hegemonic force in Singapore which subsumes the local but is in fact actively and assiduously courted by the local. In this regard, the creation and development of events for the global tourism industry supports Robertson's (1995) proposition of the 'invention of consumer traditions' that is omnipresent within glocalisation. Such an 'invention of tradition' can be most readily seen in the creation of events by the statutory boards in a bid to attract global tourists as opposed to just tourists from Asia. This is not to suggest that the local is wholly in thrall to the global as strategic decision-making also incorporates the needs of local communities and reflects their ethos. The workings of the glocalisation process can be delineated in both the NAC's 'global city for the arts' and the IFEA's 'eventful city' strategies.

The courting of the global and the 'localisation of globality' (Robertson 1995, p.17) is illustrated in the NAC's vision to make Singapore 'global city for the arts'. The precursor to this lies in MITA's Renaissance City Report (1999) whereby a central aim was to 'establish Singapore as a global arts city...[and] to position Singapore as a key city in the Asian renaissance of the 21st century and a cultural centre in the globalised world' (ibid, p.4). Recommended strategies included the proposal to develop an arts and cultural 'renaissance' economy by promoting Singapore as an international hub for arts events; creating arts and cultural activities, increasing arts sponsorship incentives and strengthening arts marketing and cultural tourism. The implementation of the global arts city strategy lies primarily within the remit of the NAC, and it is within the scope of its work that a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and relationship between events and the global arts city can be deciphered: '...so creating these events, they will help to put us on the world map, but of course fundamentally [we are] creating events to develop audiences, to develop artists, to develop business relationship, to try to bridge the corporate world and the arts world, international linkage, international cultural exchange... So, all that has become part and parcel of that vision [in] building a global arts city'

(Policy Maker A). In undertaking this strategy, benchmarking against other cities is an integral part of the process. Within the aforementioned MITA strategy (1999), Singapore sought to reach a level of cultural development comparable to cities such as Hong Kong, Glasgow and Melbourne (5-10 years) and, in the longer term, to attain equivalence to London and New York. Benchmarking against other cultural cities is not without its problems, as noted by policy-maker E: 'We want to have standards and standards is all about benchmarking against other people...If we benchmark with London I think [in] the next 50 years we will never reach [that]...I think you have to be realistic and [in the] meantime...you want to be the champions in this region...I really want to see the whole region flourish with [the] arts'.

The direction of arts and cultural policy, as indicated by MITA and NAC's respective strategies, underscores not only the importance of the arts-tourism relationship and events within the policy-making arena but also recognises that cultural development opportunities are undertaken for the purpose of economic gain. Irrespective of the policy-making emphasis upon developing Singaporean arts and culture, the reality is that strategies are intrinsically and extrinsically intertwined with the economy. The bid to create a cultural 'renaissance' is not for culture's sake but rather to engender a cultural economy that can be facilitated through dualistic global processes. On one level, discourses of the global are employed to position Singapore on the international cultural stage through the mechanisms of the global arts city and benchmarking against other arts cities for competitive purposes. At another level, these discourses are used to potentially attract global tourism. By proclaiming Singapore a 'global city for the arts' and by developing its events base, its tourism potential is strengthened concomitantly. Cultural events are deployed as a positioning statement to activate international tourist trips: 'The thing is that what they [critics] do not see is the marketing value of this event [Chingay] being broadcast in Portugal, for example, and the eyeballs that see Singapore as a happening [place] and aspirations...are imprinted – one day I would like to go to Singapore. They don't see those kind of values, so this is what events can do for the nation or the country...So we need to be able to use events as a platform, as a pull to market Singapore on an international platform' (Policy Maker B). The ulterior motive within these policy formulations is to strengthen the existing tourism base through events, particularly given problems in the ever-declining tourist expenditure

rates. Certainly, this is not a particularly new phenomenon, either within the Singaporean context or further afield. Chang and Lee (2003) argue that the emphasis upon the economy in developing the arts has long been a feature of Singaporean cultural landscape.

An additional strategy to view the workings of the glocal lies within the development of the IFEA, in collaboration with the STB, to make Singapore an 'eventful city'. The initiative aimed to foster activities and events in the city and make Singapore a regional arts hub for events and business (ERC Services Subcommittee Workgroup on Creative Industries, 2002). This suggests that Singaporean strategies for events operate on a dualistic basis, whereby the global arts city is orientated towards international positioning and the eventful city is focused upon regional positioning. Nevertheless, the 'eventful city' strategy is not wholly divorced from the global influences in terms of its branding potential through global media, as illustrated by policy-maker C: '...branding brings in immediate returns in terms of media attention, global media attention, so we are very conscious of the branding potential of ourselves as an eventful city'. The implementation of the strategy has been problematic due to the sheer volume of events created: 'So, you see 3,000 events [a year] was really killing [us], now we are going to pare down our support for these. In the past, the strategy was to have as many events as could be possible so that a visitor coming here, even though he didn't know exactly what event was going on, would be sure that there would be something going on...to interest him...It would be so eclectic, a whole palate, from sports to arts to shopping festivals and sales and food festivals, we have a gourmet summit you know, it is endless you see. But now we are going to be more strategic and discriminating in picking up the ones that will attract different markets' (Policy Maker C).

From a consumption perspective, there is the potential for event fatigue but this also epitomises Robertson's elaboration upon the invention of consumer traditions through tourism. The creation of such a vast number of events, with consideration attached to the tourist market, is not indicative of an organic growth of events based within communities. That this is the case invariably brings one to the issue of cultural commodification of events through global tourism. Commentators have argued that cultural commodification impacts upon the creation of festivals, in terms of elements that are included and

excluded (Dávila, 1997), contributes to cultural conflicts between tourists and hosts (May, 1996) and changes the meanings of such events adversely (Greenwood, 1977). Accordingly, the creation and commodification of Singaporean events for global tourism purposes offers some credence to the homogenisation of culture thesis put forward by critics of globalisation but it is problematic to interpret cultural commodification and globalisation processes in such a linear fashion. Counterpoints to cultural commodification accounts have been offered in the form of writers suggesting that the aforementioned propositions are but academic nostalgia (Green, 2002; Meethan, 2001) for an imagined past. Further, in a critique of constructions of commodification, Boissevain (1992) argued that globalising tourism forces could be subverted by host communities undertaking the commodification of festivals for their own ends and, in so doing, challenging the conventional power relations between global and local. Thus, the commodification and globalisation processes through and for tourism purposes, relates to a 'localisation of globality' (Robertson, 1995) in the Singaporean context whereby the global is employed for the purposes of the local. How this differs in Singapore is that Singapore tourism and culture strategists have planned and implemented this as their policy approach to the generation of an events based cultural economy.

The emphasis upon global/regional positioning for touristic purposes is not to suggest the local is wholly foregone in this process. Rather, it is argued that, in the Singaporean case, there is a separate form of events orientated towards the local communities. A number of local ethnic events reflect and represent heterogeneous cultural, social and religious identities, for example, the Thaipusam Festival and Chinese community festivals. The former is a one day festival which involves a thanksgiving procession undertaken by Hindu devotees. For its participants there is an element of body mutilation as various body parts (e.g. tongue, cheek) are pierced with metal skewers. The latter are primarily held as fund-raising festivities within Chinese communities. These events are largely protected from global influences thereby bringing to the fore the intricacies of power relations between the global and local. Robertson (1995) reacted against studies that argued the collective sense of 'home' was destroyed by a permeation of global forces, by instead suggesting that globalisation involved the construction of home and locality and the local was an

integral aspect of glocalisation. The nature and character of the local events sector in Singapore attests to the power and strength of his thesis in that there is little indication of the sense of home being destroyed by global influences as such events are outwith the scope of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990) and have managed to avoid cultural imperialism.

Boissevain (1992) argued that a recognition of the social costs of modernising processes brought about a revival of European public rituals to reinvigorate communities and a sense of belonging, and, furthermore, that increasingly sophisticated strategies were enacted by residents within tourist destinations to protect their backstage region of social space from global tourism (Boissevain, 1996). Such strategies include covert resistance, hiding, fencing, ritual, organised protest and aggression (Boissevain, 1996). The aforementioned suggests there are similar strategies taking place in Singapore whereby local events are 'fenced off' or 'hidden' from the tourist gaze, thereby enabling the local community to celebrate and reaffirm their collective sense of identity. Although there is some evidence of touristic mediation this is not comparable to those events aimed at the global market (e.g. Chingay festival). In some respects, the lack of explicit tourism intervention reflects a desire that there be a balance between tourist and local needs within event mediation in order to guarantee longevity, as illustrated by policy-maker D: 'When you look at all these major events I think the first priority is to understand that events must be local first before you go outside. If you have a 50,000 seater and you can only fill it with 5,000 people even though it has got massive international appeal you are really losing out because international appeal takes time to build. The number of people to come takes time so events must always be local first. They must appeal to the domestic audience before you actually move ahead'. Thus, while there is a consideration of local demands within such scenarios they relate to market driven motivations. Nevertheless, there is also a sensitivity to the relationship between global and local in the tourism exchange, as indicated by policy-maker C: '...An ethnic festival grows organically and it is actually quite closed doors until people like you penetrate it at some point...They are not going to cater for tourists. It is very intrinsic to their own values, their own value system. So, until they are ready to look with us at the tourism market we are not going to upset them and say 'look we are dependant on tourists'. We don't need that sort of thing. We are affluent enough

to let them grow on their own'. In relation to the Thaipusam festival, it was acknowledged that tourism commodification could have a detrimental impact upon the authenticity of cultural rituals: 'Of course, we could give more money to them...The money would be channelled to marketing it but they are actually quite beautiful as they are. We don't want them to bloat and grow suddenly and unnaturally just to suit foreigners to gawk at' (Policy Maker C). The aforesaid suggests two issues pertaining to tourism development and the glocalisation thesis. First, it denotes sensitivity to the needs of local communities in celebrating cultural and religious identities on the part of tourism developers. Communities are accorded space to develop cultural rituals at their own pace thereby offering a counterpoint to much of the commentary relating to the commodification of culture.

CONCLUSION

There is a substantial body of literature pointing to the exploitation of local cultures and ritual by tourism bodies wherein the host community is left powerless in the onslaught of tourism development and global tourism (Greenwood, 1977; Crick, 1989).

That there have been globalising influences upon tourism and arts / cultural events development in Singapore is undeniable. Despite early resistance to, and rejection of, 'western' cultural values and products in the early days of the republic, the economic imperative of tourism revenue generation combined with the relatively low base of viewable and visitable cultural products within Singapore has led to a policy framework and developmental agenda that has used retail and hospitality products alongside a multi-cultural environment where 'harmony' was asserted and expected by an authoritarian state. In pursuing increasingly challenging and distant market niches for tourism consumers whilst demanding harmony and compliance at home, the state has lived a series of contradictions that correspond well to the debates around the essence of the global and the local, the process that these concepts embody and the outcomes implicit in their pursuit.

A significant and under-researched element of the policy agenda implied by the above has been the appropriation of some cultural events for spectacularization in tourism markets, the invention of new 'traditional' events and the continuation of 'hidden' local events predominantly intended for local consumption only. But such academic

separations of the global and local or the authentic and inauthentic are, of course, simplistic. Thus, it may be suggested that the power relations between global tourism, local communities and their mediation by tourism bodies is infinitely more complex than that proposed by the critics of tourism development. The power relations taking place cannot be interpreted in a simplistic, linear way whereby the strength of the global overpowers the local. This, therefore, brings us once again to the terrain of glocalisation. Our argument is that the prosecution and delivery of policies for tourism generally, and cultural events in particular, in Singapore represent key evidential elements of Robertson's glocalisation thesis and that these are most evident in the character and development of events. Moreover, it is contended that the relationship between tourism bodies and host communities corroborates claims made by critics of the cultural imperialism thesis and, again, support Robertson's glocalisation thesis. As Robertson noted, and the findings above demonstrate, globalising influences are not in opposition to the local manifestation of cultural identities in Singapore as there is space for both the local and the global within glocalisation. It is not a relationship whereby culturally imperialistic global forces subsume the local in a culturally homogeneous, unified way. It remains to be researched whether the specific political, economic and cultural circumstances of Singapore make it a singular example of the workings of the glocalisation process, as regards cultural events, or whether other spatial and temporal contexts demonstrate similar characteristics.

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