<u>Master Thesis:</u>

"Theatre and Public Spaces in Singapore"

In-betweenness as Power in a Soft Authoritarian State

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Master Degree in Transcultural Studies at:

Heidelberg University
Faculty of Philosophy
Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context"
M. A. Transcultural Studies

First Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Christiane Brosius
Second Supervisor: Dr. Marie Sander

Submitted by:
Anne-Christin Werkshage
Student ID: 3080054
Bergheimer Straße 1B, 69115 Heidelberg
anne-christin.werkshage@gmx.de

Table of Contents

Abstract

The theatre is a contested realm in soft authoritarian Singapore. Applying the method of transculturality, this study follows Bourdieu's theory of the 'field of power' and analyses the complex relationship between the 'dominant dominators' – the government – and the 'dominated dominators' – the theatre practitioners – in Singapore. This thesis explores how particularly small-scale local theatre practitioners actively negotiate with the government the ambiguously defined boundaries in order to turn theatres into public spaces, in which members of society can reflect on and debate pressing social issues. Using their substantial cultural capital and autonomy, theatre practitioners have creatively developed various strategies to counter or circumvent governmental boundaries in a non-confrontational way. Alongside these concrete strategies, theatre practitioners have found means to open up the theatre as a public space for society by transcending state multiculturalism without violating governmental boundaries. In this sense, the theatre as an institution located in between the government and the society has created a discursive public space and thus an 'alternative' public sphere to that of the government in Singapore.

I. Table of Figures

II. List of Abbreviations

AHS: Arts Housing Scheme

CC: Community Club

CDB: Central Business District

CMIO: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others

CRC: Censorship Review Committee

DRC: Drama Review Committee

GCA: Global City for the Arts

ISA: Internal Security Act

ISP: Internet Service Provider

JFAC: Japan Foundation Asia Center

MITA: Ministry for Information and the Arts

NAC: National Arts Council

OB: Out-of-Bounds

PAP: People's Action Party

PELU: Public Entertainment License Unit

PETA: Philippines Educational Theatre Association

PPAS: Practice Performing Arts School

R(A): Restricted (Artistic)

RC: Residential Committees

TNS: The Necessary Stage

TTP: The Theatre Practice

1. Introduction

People need theater. They need it the way they need each other— the way they need to gather, to talk things over, to have stories in common, to share friends and enemies. They need to watch, together, something human. Without this…well, without this we would be a different sort of species (Woodruff 2008, 1).

Since the 1990s, the city-state of Singapore has tried to establish itself as a regional and global arts hub. In 1992, the soft authoritarian government under the leadership of the People's Action Party [PAP] declared its intention to turn Singapore into a "Global City for the Arts" [GCA] (Chong 2011, 35). The government's increasing attention towards the arts was the result of the economic recession in 1985. Having detected the arts' economic potential, the government heavily invested into the development of an art infrastructure in order to establish Singapore as "global cultural hub" (Chong 2011, 37). With this strategy the government aimed to make the city more appealing, soften its political image, attract global capital, tourists as well as foreign talents to the city-state, and keep skilled Singaporeans in the country.

Since the government's GCA vision includes the idea to establish Singapore as a "theatre hub of south-east Asia" (Yeoh 2005, 949), it has heavily invested into an infrastructure for performing arts and theatre. Probably, the greatest investment was the mega urban redevelopment project, The Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore's largest and most splendid performing arts venue. Established in 2002, this arts centre

> quickly became Singapore's most conspicuous demonstration that a cultural sector exists in Singapore and that the government's envisioning of Singapore as a 'cultural bridge to the world' is founded on geophysical reality (T. Lee 2010, 52).

The Esplanade is a symbol to demonstrate that Singapore is not a "cultural desert" (Kawasaki 2004, 22) anymore, meaning a society without artistic creativity, focused only on technological and entrepreneurial innovation as well as economic success. Yet, The Esplanade

has been criticised for being "a monument to symbolize the state's 'glory and power'" (Chong 2011, 41). Chong explains that

> [t]o critics, the Esplanade epitomized the sheer political will of the government, its undeniable monopoly over resources and its unrelenting quest for immediate applause as a cultural hub (Chong 2011, 41).

Such disputed infrastructural projects, however, have also contributed to make theatre "the most prominent and, not surprisingly, visible art form in the city-state" (Wee 2003, 86). The small city-state has more than 130 theatre companies and societies, consisting of

> traditional ethnic theatre such as Chinese opera and Malay bangsawan (which took root in Singapore in the 19th and 20th century respectively), as well as contemporary theatre, which emerged in 1950s and 60s with the establishment of mainly amateur groups (National Arts Council 2012).

The Theatre Practice [TTP], The Necessary Stage [TNS] and TheatreWorks, among the first professional contemporary small-scale theatre companies in Singapore, are still an integral component of today's theatre scene.

In general, theatre is an essential element of society. According to Fischer-Lichte, it offers the public a space for social encounters as well as discussions and negotiations (Fischer-Lichte 2009, 48). Therewith, theatre performances do not only entertain the audiences but also critically reflect and comment on social, cultural and political issues or on society at large. They present and tolerate multiple – even opposing – perspectives, ideas and imaginations and, in a unique way, enable members of the audience to experience themselves and others in physical co-presence (Fischer-Lichte 2010a; Fischer-Lichte 2009). As a space for social interactions and debates among co-present audience and actors, the theatre functions as an essential space for the public in society.

Yet, in Singapore the soft authoritarian government presents a challenge to the flourishing theatre scene, because it heavily intervenes and controls different sectors of

society, including the arts. Since the 1960s, the Singapore government has established censorship rules and Out-of-Bounds [OB] markers that define the topics that are not permissible to be discussed in public, for instance those that touch upon political, religious or sexual content (Chong 2010; T. Lee 2010). However, these rules and markers are vaguely defined by the authorities and thus can be interpreted to the government's advantages. From early on, the government penalised artists and art companies for non-compliance to its established censorship regulations (Peterson 2001). While theatre practitioners were detained under the Internal Security Act [ISA] for being critical towards politics or in favour of communism in the 1970s and 1980s, nowadays the government uses more subtle and indirect means of control (Chong 2010). Since Singapore aims to compete internationally as a GCA, the government refrains from exercising its power clearly visible to the public. Instead, the political authorities indirectly govern through mechanisms, such as funding cuts. Such practices hit the theatre scene hard because most theatre companies heavily rely on governmental support (Chong 2003, 10). Theatre practitioners, like other artists, have to deal with a powerful government that strongly envisions a specific purpose of the arts and intervenes into their work via arts infrastructure developments, arts policies and censorship regulations.

Despite these given boundaries, theatre practitioners need to experiment with multiple strategies to circumvent censorship rules and to free up space in order to engage with important social issues and to provide open and discursive spaces for the public. In fact, local small-scale Singaporean theatre companies use various strategies and ways to provide a public space in and for society despite them being positioned within the powerfully-controlled environment of the soft authoritarian PAP government. For this reason, theatre practitioners represent bottom-up developments in an environment that is mainly top-down built and controlled by the soft authoritarian PAP government.

1.1.   State of Research

For several decades, scholars from various disciplines like sociology, Southeast Asian studies, philosophy, political science, communication and media studies, architecture, and geography have explored the position and role of the government in order to find out how it affects society, the arts or public space (i.a. Bourdieu 1933; Brighenti 2010; Calhoun 1989; Chong 2003; Chong 2010; Chong 2011; Dean 1999; Foucault 1975; Harvey 2003; Hee and Ooi 2003; Hesmondhalgh 2006; T. Lee 2010, Ooi 2010; Pomeroy 2011; Wacquant 1993). The theories of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and philosopher Michel Foucault have been particularly influential in this context. Bourdieu's focus is directed to the "*structures* of power" (Wacquant 1993, 20) within the "(national) social space"[1] (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 214). He developed the idea of the "field of power" that is located within the social space and which consists of agents who possess resources in form of capital that enable them to take up a powerful position in social space (Bourdieu 1933; Hesmondhalgh 2006; Wacquant 1993). Foucault, by contrast, was more concerned with the strategies and technologies that governments use to govern society (Foucault 1991; Dean 1999). His concept of "governmentality" has been described by Bratich, Packer and McCarthy as "a distinctly modern form of power" that governs the population by use of technologies in a non-coercive manner in order to achieve the welfare of the people and the state at the same time (T. Lee 2010, 148). Both theories have been used by scholars from different disciplines for various analyses of the relationships between government, society, the arts or public space (i.a.

---

[1] The term 'national' here is used with reference to Bourdieu's theory of the power relations within social space and Hesmondhalgh's interpretation of it (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 214), which will be explained later in the thesis. Yet, the 'nation' and the 'national' are disputed concepts because the 'nation' is usually considered as natural condition, while it is, in fact, a social construct, an "imagined community" as Anderson suggests (Anderson 1991). Since the 'nation' is a social construct, its borders are also not natural but socially defined. They are thus powerful determiners of who does and does not officially belong to a respective 'national' community. This has various effects on the lives and identities of individuals in the nation space. In the context of transculturality, the idea of the 'nation' as a bounded, homogenous entity requires careful consideration in terms of the multiple entanglements between different geographical parts of the world.

Hesmondhalgh 2006; Chong 2003; Brighenti 2010; Hee and Ooi 2003; Pomeroy 2011; T. Lee 2005).

Applying Bourdieu's 'field of power' and Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' to the case of Singapore's soft authoritarian government offers an interesting and relevant perspective on the developments in the city-state. Bourdieu's theory presents a valuable tool to analyse the complex relationship and entanglement between the PAP government and other powerful agents like cultural producers that are part of the 'field of power'. When looking at the mechanisms of control with which the Singaporean authorities govern the country, many similarities to Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' become visible. On the one hand, the authorities try to maintain a maximum amount of control; on the other hand, they have to negotiate the degree and form of exercising control that make them not appear as authoritarian rulers. Exactly this balancing process reveals the many subtle possibilities for negotiations that exist within Singapore's seemingly strong governmental system. Theatre practitioners, in particular, try to make use of such possibilities. Therefore, the realm of arts and culture presents a particular "site of constant struggle and ongoing anxiety" (T. Lee 2010, 28). Theatre practitioners constantly negotiate with the authorities about ways to turn theatre into public spaces within Singapore's government-controlled social space.

How theatres function as public space in society has received less scholarly attention. Little research has been done on theatre as public spaces (Fischer-Lichte 2009; Balme 2012) and even less about theatres as public spaces in non-democratic societies (Takiguchi 2011). There is an academic void regarding the Singaporean regional context. Yet, analysing the possibility of theatres to function as public spaces is particularly interesting in the case of Singapore, because its urban realm cannot be considered a 'public space', which is defined by European scholars like Sennett or Habermas as an open and accessible space for inhabitants of the city to come together and democratically debate and reflect on common social issues

11

(Neal 2010; Sennett 1976; Habermas 1989). Thereby, the possibility for individuals to discuss common issues in public is a highly important aspect of public space, which Habermas refers to as the "public sphere" (Habermas 1989, 27). While this 'European' notion of 'public space' is not applicable to Singapore's socio-cultural context, Lehrer and Winkler's division of "public space" into "physical" (built environment), "symbolic" (collective practice, memory) and "social" (social practices, agency) public space is a promising tool for analysis (Lehrer and Winkler 2006, 144–145; Hee and Ooi 2003, 81). Following this division, Singapore's urban realm seems to be dominated by physical and symbolic public spaces that have been largely planned, created and surveilled by the soft authoritarian government. Additionally, the newly-developing spaces of consumption produce a mixture of physical, symbolic and social public space. Drummond describes these spaces as "pseudo-public" spaces in the sense that they are spaces used for social encounter but not for social agency (Drummond 2000, 2387). Therefore, the existence of a social public space that has been created through agency and social practices and in which the public can meet and debate about various common issues seems to be largely missing in Singapore. In this context, the following question has to be addressed: To what extent are theatres able to nurture the missing social aspect of public space by creating a space for inhabitants of the city to meet, participate, debate and negotiate important social issues?

Therefore, analysing the possible functioning of theatres as public space in Singapore will help to fill this academic void and contribute to research on theatres as public space that can be utilised for further analysis of theatre in a Singaporean context and beyond. It will contribute to debates about the importance of theatre as discursive public space in and for society, as well as the relationship between theatre and control, or bottom-up and top-down developments. Research in this area will provide valuable insights into theatres' role as public space and enable a better understanding of the many struggles, as well as possibilities, that

theatre practitioners in soft authoritarian Singapore discover in their quest to turn theatres into a discursive, social public space.

1.2. Methodology

To approach the research question of the thesis, the concept of transculturality offers a fruitful perspective. According to Juneja and Falser, the idea of "transculturality" is based on Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturation" of 1940, which basically refers to the "multiple dimensions and phases of a cultural relation" (Juneja and Falser 2013, 17).[2] In 1998, Mirzoeff more explicitly defines "transculture" as follows:

> (T)ransculture – the violent collision of an extant culture with a new or different culture that reshapes both into a hybrid transculture that is itself then subject to transculturation – highlights those places where the carefully defined borders of identity become confused and overlapping, a task that requires new histories, new ideas and new means of representation (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011, 3).

Transculturality thus offers a valuable tool for analysis by allowing one to view the world in its dynamic and multiple forms of interwovenness and therefore to reconsider the idea of the many socially-defined borders, including national and cultural borders. Transculturality can thus be applied fruitfully to the small city-state of Singapore that is part of an entangled world. Even before its independence, Singapore witnessed multi-directional flows and circulation of people, objects, images and ideas. This is related to its status as a former British colony, the global orientation required by its lack of land and resources, its desire to become a global city and its racially and culturally mixed society, formed through migration. Thus, Singapore itself reflects the multi-centred entanglements between 'Asia' and the 'West'.[3]

---

[2] "multiplen Dimensionen und Phasen einer Kulturbeziehung" (Juneja and Falser 2013, the author's translation).
[3] In the context of transculturality, terms like 'Asia' and the 'West' need to be considered with caution, since neither of these cultural regions is a homogeneous, enclosed entity. Therefore, it is important to recognize what Conrad and Randeria call the "connected histories" between 'Asia' and the 'West' as well as "the inner-European and inner-Asian flows" that Brosius and Wenzlhuemer point out (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011, 9).

As a method transculturality therefore enables an understanding of Singapore beyond "the Eurocentric hierarchy of one centre and its peripheries" (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011, 10) and the idea of 'original' and 'copy'. It accredits agency to what Maharaj calls "the other/ed" (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011, 11)[4] and allows the discovery of local specificities as well as complex entanglements among the local, national and global. In this context, it is important not to essentialise culture. Welsch argues that "[t]he concept of transculturality sketches a different picture of the relation between cultures. Not one of isolation and conflict, but one of entanglements, intermixing and commonness" (Welsch 1999, 204). This idea enables a transcendence of the troublesome "notion of culture as ethnically bound and contained within a territorial frame" (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011, 11) commonly used in academic circles. Yet, more complex than Welsch argues, Brosius and Wenzlhuemer state that transculturality points not only to the entangled relation between cultures, but rather to the multi-layered, multi-directional, uneven, as well as fragmented flows and movements, which go back to

> a deep and varied past of transcultural exchanges, relations, entanglements and networks that can only be understood if we look at images and media [as well as other objects, ideas, concepts or phenomena] in more detail, and from multiple perspectives (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011, 11).

When analysing these multi-layered and fragmented flows and movements, Juneja and Falser stress the need to overcome the idea of "de-territorialization" from globalisation researchers like Arjun Appadurai by also localising processes of "re-territorialization", the emergence of new spaces and new borders developed through various forms of border crossings (Juneja and Falser 2013, 25). The transcultural approach thus encourages a detailed analysis of even paradox phenomena, objects or concepts in their historical and dynamical dimensions from

---

[4] The concept of 'the other' often refers to the idea of a foreign individual, group, culture or nation that seems to be disconnected from one's own identity. Furthermore, 'the other' is often not considered an autonomous agent. In the context of transculturality, such assumptions need to be overcome. Agency must be accredited to 'the other' and the connections between 'the self' and 'the other' need to be revealed.

multiple perspectives that simultaneously "alternate between the local, national and global" (Juneja and Falser 2013, 22–23).[5]

Approaching the research question of this thesis from a transcultural perspective, a variety of academic literature from different disciplines and cultural contexts is used for analysis. The various academic fields highlight different aspects of the topic under study. Approaches from the fields of (political) philosophy, political sciences, sociology, and communication and media studies provide a theoretical framework on key terms of government(ality) and power. Academics from the areas of sociology, geography and theatre studies offer enriching material on the notion of public space from their respective disciplines. Southeast Asian studies, geography, philosophy, theatre studies, as well as social and political sciences analyse the relationship between government, power and the arts. Such sources provide an academic perspective from the outside.

Complementary to this, transculturality also implies an examination from within, of the multiple ways that various agents conceptualise and represent themselves and their multilayeredness. Therefore, research on theatres as public spaces in Singapore requires the examination of how, on the one hand, the government represents its relations to, and the boundaries for, the arts, for instance on governmental websites, and how, on the other hand, theatre companies and theatre practitioners represent themselves and their plays on their websites, in theatre reviews or artists' interviews. Websites from the Singapore government division for the arts and culture, the National Arts Council [NAC], have been consulted to find information about schemes, for instance grant schemes, to support as well as control the arts. The governmental website of the Singapore Police Force illuminates the use of and access to public space in the city-state. Singaporean theatre companies' websites reveal the variety of theatrical performances and activities, conducted in various locations in the city-

---

[5] "zwischen dem Lokalen, Nationalen und Globalen alterniert" (Juneja and Falser 2013, the author's translation).

state. Publications of theatre scholars and in particular theatre journals like *Theatre Journal, Theater* and *Critical Inquiry* contain detailed explanations and reviews of Singaporean theatre plays. The analysis is enriched by first-hand experiences gained from reading or listening to interviews with theatre practitioners in academic papers, journal articles, as well as online sources, such as YouTube. Although the number of sources that provide inside perspectives is still limited, materials from these sources contain vivid case studies that have been used to illustrate how theatre practitioners negotiate their space and search for ways to circumvent governmental boundaries. Using these various sources, in the context of transculturality, it is necessary to keep in mind the authors' cultural, ideological, and political affinities which influence the development of their ideas and concepts – and thus to question the universal applicability of concepts from one cultural context to another.

1.3.   Outline of the Thesis

This thesis begins with a theoretical approach to theatre as public space and the position and role of the government in the national social space. Afterwards, these ideas are applied to the case of Singapore. The dominant position of the soft authoritarian Singapore government, its ruling style and its relation to public space and the arts are discussed. Subsequently, governmental boundaries on Singaporean theatres are illustrated, including limited access to physical and virtual public space, governmental and self-censorship, as well as state funding. The role of quasi-state and non-state institutions is also being considered. This part is followed by an analysis of the strategies that Singaporean theatre practitioners and companies have creatively developed in order to negotiate governmental boundaries or to subvert governmental power in a non-violent way. Alongside these strategies, the subsequent section demonstrates how theatre practitioners have managed to transcend state multiculturalism without violating governmental boundaries. This paper concludes with a reflection on how

and to what extent theatre practitioners have succeeded in turning theatres into public spaces and thereby have provided the Singaporean society a discursive public space that otherwise does not exist in the urban realm of the city-state.

2. Theoretical Approaches

In order to analyse theatre's function as public space in Singapore, two concepts need to be discussed: The notion of theatre as public space, on the one hand, and the position and role of the government within the national social space, on the other.

2.1. Theatre as Public Space

Theatres are commonly regarded as public spaces in Europe and North America, though academic evidence which grounds this common perception is still sparse. Research about theatres as public space in other cultural contexts is even rarer. Despite the relative lack of literature about this topic, the way people approach theatre suggests that they regard and use theatres – even unconsciously – as public spaces.

According to theatre scholar Balme, the term "theatre" derived from the Greek word "theatron" and means a "place to look" (Balme 2008, 12).[6] In today's language use, Balme continues, the concept can refer to "(1) a building, (2) an activity ('to go to the theatre' or 'to act up'), (3) an institution and (4) an aesthetic realm, presupposing that theatre is viewed as an art form" (Balme 2008, 12).[7] Despite a variety of definitions, practices and historical changes, theatre's most unique feature is the physical co-presence of actor and audience (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 147; Read 1993, 10) or, according to Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, that "which happens between audience and actors" (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 8).[8]

Co-presence enables the theatre to create an aesthetic "experience of threshold" for the audience (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 3). During the performance, theatre tolerates opposites and

---

[6] "Ort zum Schauen" (Balme 2008, the author's translation).
[7] "(1) ein Gebäude, (2) eine Tätigkeit ('ins Theater gehen' oder 'Theater machen'), (3) eine Institution und (4) einen Bereich der Ästhetik, vorausgesetzt man betrachtet Theater überhaupt als Kunstform" (Balme 2008, the author's translation).
[8] "was zwischen Zuschauer und Schauspieler stattfindet" (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, the author's translation).

opens up a space that keeps the tensions and turns into a threshold that leads from one to the other (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 60–61). In this sense, "performances epitomize the state of in-betweenness" which has the possibility to create something new (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 1). This means that in the state of threshold the audience is transferred into a condition of instability of familiar perception of the self, the foreign and the world whereby giving directions and orientations are avoided. Depending on how the transformation process is experienced by each individual, the performance can or cannot have a lasting effect on the individual after the performance (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 63). It is precisely this aesthetic experience of threshold that functions as the central goal of a theatrical performance.

According to Fischer-Lichte, there exist certain "medial conditions" (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 25)[9] during the performance due to the co-presence of actors and audience. While actors perform, audience members are never passive, but always active agents who react to what happens in the space. They laugh or clap, move on their chairs, whisper or comment on the show. These actions are recognised by other members of the audience or by the actors who might in turn react to them. Processes of negotiation and reflections about values, interests and other elements of society take place among those present. Therefore, theatre offers active agents the possibility – not force – to a (transient) community building (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, 147). Theatre performances are thus characterised by a relational situation of co-present and active agents in the same physical space.

Theatre is also closely related to, but at the same time departs from, everyday life. Theatre performances require the presence of human bodies in the same place. Performances are also inspired by and even deal with everyday aspects of life, identity and community. However, theatre also vitally departs and diverges from everyday life. It does not simply

---

[9] "mediale Bedingungen" (Fischer-Lichte 2010a, the author's translation).

reflect and represent reality, but opens up a space in which imaginations can freely unfold (Read 1993, 171).

Due to the theatre's relation to everyday life and a physically present audience, theatre "cannot occur in an empty space" (Read 1993, 158). Instead it takes place in a social space that is, according to Lefebvre, "manifestly organised by the dominant relations of production" (Read 1993, 158). Consequently, "[t]he aura of theatre as described by Walter Benjamin appears to depend upon this unique place and time of its occurrence for its effects" (Read 1993, 157). Therefore, any study of the theatre landscape, theatre performances or "the theatergoing public needs to engage with the political and social sphere(s) in which it is situated" (Balme 2010, 41). Such an analysis requires a consideration of the larger cultural, social and political context, including the mentality and activities of various agents ranging from political authorities to the larger "theatrical public sphere" (Balme 2010, 45).[10]

Theatre's close relation to everyday life and its unique feature of co-presence between actors and audiences in a physical space, enabling interaction and negotiations among those present, provides theatre with a great potential to function as public space in and for society. Following the literature on public space, this study analyses how theatre can function as public space (1) by being open and accessible to the public, (2) providing a space for interaction and encounters with others and (3) a public sphere for democratic discussion with other members of the public. Although these three aspects of public space are closely interwoven with one another, separating them at this point serves the necessary purpose of definition.

---

[10] According to Balme, it is important to study not only the audience, but also the larger "theatrical public sphere". Yet, the latter is still conceptually under-theorized (Balme 2010, 45).

First, public spaces are ideally defined as spaces "that are open and accessible to all members of the public in a society" (Neal 2010, 1). According to Neal, this means that people

> are free to come and go, free to use the space for its intended purpose, and are free to be either active participants or passive spectators. Use of public space is not conditional upon membership on a particular group like a political party or religious community, upon one's income or education, or upon demographic characteristics like age or sex (Neal 2010, 2).

Furthermore, public spaces "should not be limited by barriers of language, physical or mental ability, or geographic mobility" (Neal 2010, 2). As these definitions present an ideal vision of public space, reality often appears to be different. Some spaces function as public spaces even though they are in fact not. Examples are privately owned cafes, shopping malls or theatres. Conversely, public spaces fail to reach their ideal openness and accessibility by excluding some members of the public or by closing off public space for a certain purpose. Architecture such as walls can also reshape publicness, in that it requires "a specific grammar and practice of interaction" to access it (Brighenti 2010, 26). Despite these many possible limitations of public space, it can basically be said that "public space has low entry thresholds, which does not mean that they are completely absent but that they are relatively lower or practically less enforced" (Brighenti 2010, 29).

Can theatres, which are publically owned, privately owned or neither the one nor the other, function as public spaces? To do so, following the definitions above, they need to be open and accessible to all members of the public. In general, theatres fulfil these conditions. Yet, like any other public space, theatres' openness and accessibility are not always ideally fulfilled. For example, some members of the public might temporally or spatially be excluded through age-restrictions, dress code or ticket prices. As theatre takes place mainly inside buildings, behind walls, this can also restrict its openness and accessibility. To overcome these various limitations, theatres, for instance, offer free performances or stage plays

outdoors. In sum, theatres like other public spaces are principally open to all members of the public.

Second, public spaces are characterised by encounters and interactions among strangers, in which anonymous individuals with diverse values and cultures can learn to coexist peacefully and acquire a kind of behaviour that transforms them into "social being[s]" (Sennett 1976, 18). The capacity to live with and relate to strangers in public space without feeling intruded and without retreating into the private realm is therefore highly important for the existence of public life (Sennett 1976). Accordingly, Goffman regards public spaces as "entit[ies] of social control, which integrates each individual on the most basic level of his/her bodily presence into sociality" (Goffman 2009, 13).[11] Therefore, spaces like parks, cafes or theatres, in which individuals encounter each other face-to-face, feel each other's co-presence and interact with others are considered public.

As public space, theatres enable a diverse range of people from various classes to meet and interact. In nineteenth-century Germany, Fischer-Lichte argues, those who met at the theatre were "members of the royal household, the military, educated middle-class, artists and prostitutes" (Fischer-Lichte 2009, 49).[12] Nowadays, not only people from different social milieus but also individuals with different cultural backgrounds meet in the space of the theatre.[13]

Physical co-presence and face-to-face encounter – essential elements of theatre – turn the theatre into a social space of interaction. Reciprocal interaction and influence between

---

[11] "Instanz sozialer Kontrolle, die den Einzelnen auf der elementarsten Ebene seiner körperlichen Präsenz in die Sozialität einbindet" (Goffman 2009, the author's translation).
[12] "Angehörige des Hofes, des Militärs, des Bildungsbürgertums, Künstler und Prostituierte" (Fischer-Lichte 2009, the author's translation).
[13] Questions about the composition of the theatrical audiences in terms of their social class, ethnicity, or age are essential to consider. In different cultural contexts theatres have their own distinctive audience composition, which again might provide insight into the diverse perspectives on and roles of theatre in various cultural regions. Yet, an analysis of the audience goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

audience and actors is intensified when the space in which the audience is seated remains illuminated. As people encounter, are confronted and interact with each other, the performance turns into a space in which "new forms of social co-existence are tried and tested" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 16-17). Therefore, theatre is not only an artistic but a social process in which actors and audience take an active part. As a space of encounter and interaction, theatre fulfils the second aspect of public space.

Third, public spaces provide a space for communication as well as exchange and discussion of opinions with other members of the public in public. This aspect of public space that Habermas refers to as the 'public sphere' is where "private people come together as a public" (Habermas 1989, 27). It is a space of civil society, in which "common concerns" (Habermas 1989, 36) can be articulated and "public opinion can be formed" (Seidman 1989, 231). Therefore, all citizens must be able to assemble, unite, discuss and express their opinions freely among equals "without being subject to coercion" (Seidman 1989, 231). The civil society's centres for criticism, according to Habermas, were institutions such as coffee houses or salons in the town (Habermas 1989, 30), although discussions also took place in the "media such as journals, newspapers, or books" (Balme 2010, 43). The public sphere as a space of the civil society is located in between "aristocratic society and bourgeois intellectuals", between the private realm and public authority (Takiguchi 2011, 19). As such, it takes up an essential ideological position in democratic societies.

Similar to Habermas' public sphere is Hannah Arendt's concept of the "public realm" (Neal 2010, 4). She argues that the public realm not only functions as "a discursive sort of public space" in the sense of Habermas, but also as "a place for real political action [where i]ndividuals not only build consensus, but they also engage in collective political action to pursue mutual goals" (Neal 2010, 4). Arendt thus shares the idea with Habermas that public

space in the form of the public sphere or the public realm is a discursive space, in which political discussions can democratically take place among members of the public.

Habermas has been criticised for suggesting the existence of a singular bourgeois public sphere because, in reality, there always existed a plurality of competing "alternative publics" which created "parallel discursive arenas" to the dominant public sphere (Fraser 1990, 67).[14] It is thus important to view the public sphere not in its singularity but in its plurality, including publics that represent oppositional social movements to the dominant order. Despite the criticism of Habermas, his ideas still provide a valuable framework to debate theatre's possible functioning as a 'public sphere'. According to Balme,

> [w]hile the political thrust of Habermas' argument is too generally applied broadly to theatre (although in specific highly politicized contexts in which theatre and theatrical behavior come to the forefront it can be), its implied spatiality can be usefully expanded as a concept for thinking about theatre's role in civic and political life (Balme 2010, 42).

The plurality of the public sphere thus illuminates the possible functioning of theatre as a 'parallel discursive arena'.

The essential role of theatre for civic and political life was already visible in ancient times. The development of theatre as public space is closely connected to the idea of democracy as it offered the Greek polis a gathering space for performing, watching and discussing tragedy or comedy competitions, political talks, as well as state ceremonies (Wihstutz 2010, 8). According to Fischer-Lichte, the theatre can be regarded as a space for political discussion in the sense that its audience is never passive, but actively interacts with co-present members of the audience or the performers through various forms of behaviour and actions (Fischer-Lichte 2009, 47–48). Such co-presence can lead to tensions or power

---

[14] Habermas' concept of the public sphere has also been criticized for representing an ideal model that has not been lived up to in existing democracies. His public sphere was claimed to be elitist, masculine and exclusive to women, plebeian men and people of other ethnicities (Fraser 1990, 63). Therefore, there never existed a singular public sphere that included everyone.

struggles among members of the audience or between audience and actors, which can have consequences on the performance itself. As members of society reflect and negotiate about existing values, beliefs and behaviours in every performance anew, theatre becomes not just an aesthetic, but also a social and political process.

For theatre to function as a public sphere, it not only needs to create a discursive realm, but it also has to reach a large public that is willing to engage in the discussions. Based on Habermas' theory that "the creation and existence of a public sphere is predicated on the emergence of particular institutions", Balme argues that the institutionalization of theatres enables the creation of a theatrical public sphere (Balme 2012). While the term 'institution' is not appropriate for all forms of theatre, those theatres which have established themselves as "theatrical institutions sustain a public sphere of debate, interest and attendance, although the latter is not necessary for all participants" (Balme 2012). As theatre institutions depend on the participation of the public, they constantly search for ways to reach and nurture the public and to extend their theatrical public spheres. Balme points out two ways: First, theatre can reach out to a larger public by moving out of the specialised performance space into physical public space, a new trend that Balme refers to as a "performative intervention" (Balme 2012). Second, in today's mediated world "theatre is […] most potent when it links into other, mainly mass media" (Balme 2012), online and offline. Balme argues that in particular on the Internet, in weblogs or other interactive platforms, the public can virtually meet to debate, for instance, controversial productions (Balme 2012). Discussions, therefore, reach not only the physically present public, but – especially through new media – a larger public. By use of both, public space and the media, theatre institutions and practitioners try to offer a large number of people the possibility to experience and deal with theatre performances. To summarise, the theatre can function as a public sphere when opening up a space for social and political processes to a large public.

Related to Balme, Craig Calhoun also stresses the important role of institutions – in particular media institutions – for creating a public sphere in society (Calhoun 1989). In a democracy citizens need to be able to communicate and debate with one another in the common public realm and to have access to relevant information; thus "the settings in which people receive information" are highly relevant (Calhoun 1989, 69). With reference to Habermas' "distinction between a public which makes culture an object of critical debate and one which simply consumes it" (Calhoun 1989, 69), Calhoun highlights that society needs

> to create a range of institutions outside the direct control of the state which supports a lively critical culture about topics of political significance. Only such institutions can provide the necessary linkage between face-to-face gatherings like those of Tiananmen Square and the 'metatopical' spaces opened up by modern communications media, and only such institutions can make both effective vehicles of sustained democratic participation (Calhoun 1989, 70–71).

While Calhoun refers to media institutions, his analysis leads to the question whether theatres can also function as institutions largely independent of government control, in which society finds (1) an open and accessible public space, in which (2) interaction and encounter, as well as (3) democratic discussion can take place, and in which society is able to reflect on its own structures, both face-to-face at the theatre performances and through various media.

Rather than seeking to escape governmental control, the theatre as institution can be a nexus linking various overlapping spheres, the political system and society, or the public and the private realm. The theatre thus negotiates its position and role as a public space in between that offers the public an accessible space for encounter and debate. Yet, theatres' ability to function as an institution independent of direct governmental control and in between various spheres depends on the socio-cultural and political context of the time. This ability is particularly important, though more difficult to exercise, when the third characteristic of public space demonstrates an uncontrollable and thus challenging feature to the government in power.

2.2. The Position and Role of the Government in the National Social Space

According to Bourdieu, the "(national) social space" contains a "field of power"[15], which occupies a dominant position in the national social space (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 214). The field of power includes several fields, such as the "political field", the "field of economic power", the "religious field" and the "field of cultural production" (Hesmondhalgh 2006; Wacquant 1993). According to Thompson, Bourdieu's "field" refers to "a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or 'capital'" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 212), such as economic, cultural or social capital, as well as habitus. Habitus is defined by Bourdieu as a set of dispositions that function unconsciously and guide the practices of actors and their interactions with others, such as ways of talking, eating or walking (Chong 2003, 9; Bourdieu 1984, 468). The various fields, which possess different forms of capital and habitus, are not only interconnected but also, to various degrees, autonomous of each other.

In the national social space, the government is part of the political field and thus belongs to the powerful group of the "dominant dominators" (Wacquant 1993, 23). In the field of power, this group is accompanied by another group, the "dominated dominators" (Wacquant 1993, 23).[16] The "dominant dominators" are characterised by "high levels of economic capital, but lower levels of cultural capital" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 214). Cultural capital, according to Thompson, relates to acquired "knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 215), while economic capital refers to "property, assets, titles to property, [and] high income" (Wacquant 1993, 23). The latter form of capital "is also

---

[15] According to Wacquant, Bourdieu's use of the concept "field of power" aims at overcoming "all existing theories about the dominant, with Marxist theories of the ruling class no less with liberal functionalist theories of elites", which share the study of "*populations* of agents who occupy positions of power" rather than the "*structures* of power" (Wacquant 1993, 20).
[16] Strictly speaking, according to Bourdieu, even three groups exist: the "dominant dominators", the "dominated dominators", and those agents located in the middle of these two as they possess both, economic and cultural capital (Wacquant 1993, 23). Bourdieu describes this triad as transhistorical (Wacquant 1993, 24).

endowed with symbolic properties" as it "can be invested, for example, in the realm of culture, where it is converted into symbolic capital" (Wacquant 1993, 23) that is "'recognition', 'prestige' or 'honour'" (Chong 2003, 8). Members of the group of dominant dominators might belong to the political field, such as the government, or the economic field. On the other hand, there are the "dominated dominators", which compensate for their lack of economic capital through "cultural capital, which can be converted to other forms of capital, including economic and social capital […] at a later date" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 214). Social capital refers to "social networks and acquaintances" (Chong 2003, 8). Artists and other cultural producers belong to this group. It is, in particular, cultural producers who challenge the power of the dominant dominators. Their resistance to the dominant power arises from the artistic habitus that includes the artistic heterodoxy, which is defined by Bourdieu as a "set of beliefs and values that challenged the status quo and received wisdom – or common sense – within a particular field [, for instance by claiming freedom] from social norms" (Chong 2003, 9). As the dominated dominators struggle with the government over their position and autonomy within the field of power and the national social space, Bourdieu's theory of the field of power demonstrates the dominant position of the government as well as its complex interconnectedness and entanglement with various other fields. As this theory reveals the complexity and multi-layeredness of power relations, it can be reconciled well with the method of transculturality that aims to overcome the habit of thinking in dichotomies, and instead highlights the need to uncover rather than dissolve the complexities and entanglements, the many connections as well as boundaries.

The dominant dominators, in contrast to the dominated dominators, possess symbolic power within the social space and are thus able to exercise "symbolic violence" because "their interests are presented in disguise or as 'disinterested' (or legitimised as 'common sense')" within the social system they are located (Chong 2003, 9). Following Bourdieu and

Wacquant, Chong explains that the dominated dominators have the ability to enact symbolic violence when denying "legitimacy to certain interests and capitals [of the subjugated] by implicitly or explicitly appealing to the dominant symbolic system" (Chong 2003, 9). Symbolic violence, for instance expressed by an established censorship system, therefore reproduces and consolidates existing power relations in the field.

Among the dominated dominators within the political field are the governing authorities who occupy powerful positions and actively shape and intervene in the national social space. According to Michel Foucault, those in governing positions perform an "*art of government*" since "governing is an activity which requires craft, imagination, shrewd fashioning, the use of tacit skills and practical knowhow, the employment of intuition and so on" (Dean 1999, 18). Their powerful position in the political field gives them a great deal of capacity to shape and influence the national social space.

Foucault's notion of "governmentality" challenges the idea that the state is the central source and site of power (Foucault 1991). Instead, according to Burchell, Gordon and Miller, Foucault holds the view that "the state's ruling power [i]s 'one instrument among others'" (T. Lee 2010, 22-23). Subsequently, he aims to "distinguish the particular mentalities, arts and regimes of government and administration that have emerged since 'early modern' Europe" (Dean 1999, 2). In the context of governmentality, the term government broadly refers to "any calculated direction of human conduct" (Dean 1999, 2). According to Dean, the government thus aims to achieve a 'conduct of conduct':

> Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, and outcomes (Dean 1999, 11).

Primarily in "an indirect – or perhaps to an extent, deceptive – yet calculated manner", the government aims to "rationalize the irrational" (T. Lee 2010, 23). It tries to make the population behave and conduct themselves according to the determinations desired by the government.

Generally, individuals aim to achieve happiness freely and autonomously. In theory, the government seeks to enhance such 'technologies of the self' by empowering individuals to conduct themselves without external interference. This requires individuals to act upon and control their own bodies and souls (T. Lee 2010, 29). As governing others as well as oneself requires that the governed is "an actor" who possesses some amount of freedom, the government becomes a moral agent in the sense that it "shapes the field of action and thus […] attempts to shape freedom" (Dean 1999, 13). Accordingly the government's actions are directed towards the welfare, prosperity and happiness of the whole population, mainly achieved by means of economic prosperity. In order to realise this aim, the government cannot solely rely on the 'technologies of the self' but also employs 'technologies of power' that try to "determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination" (T. Lee 2010, 29). These 'ends' are presented by the government as moral codes for the common good. In other words, the government presents itself as a moral agent whose practices and policies "presume to know […] what constitutes good, virtuous, appropriate, responsible conduct of individuals and collectives" (Dean 1999, 12). This aim can be supported by influencing the population via the distribution of information brochures, the conduct of large-scale advertising campaigns and most indirectly via public statements from independent experts (Foucault 1991, 100; T. Lee 2010, 23-25). Ostensibly, by enhancing 'technologies of self', the government reduces the need for 'technologies of power', resulting in a maximum potential for self-government.

Bratich, Packer and McCarthy therefore describe governmentality as "a distinctly modern form of power which intervenes in citizens [sic] day-to-day lives in a non-coercive fashion in order to simultaneously nourish the life of the individual and the State" (T. Lee 2010, 148). As self-governing is never ideally fulfilled in real life, however, the government needs to introduce disciplinary mechanisms to control people's conduct in public. According to Burchell, governmentality is thus "a 'contact point' where technologies of power or domination 'interacts'[sic] with technologies of the self to bring individuals into subjection and subjectification" (T. Lee 2010, 29). Surveillance is a useful means of control without coercion.

The "panopticon", "a function of Foucault's governmentality" and "a form of government", represents a perfect model of conducting power and discipline based on surveillance.[17] It allows the authorities to "govern at a distance" in Miller and Rose's terms, where the primary governmental action is "to issue regular compliance reminders and to fine-tune legislations and codes from time to time to ensure currency and relevance" (T. Lee 2005, 83). The panopticon 'disindividualises' power and makes permanent surveillance without frequent exercise of control possible (Foucault 1976, 258). According to Foucault, "power has to be visible, yet unverifiable"[18] in the sense that people never know when or if they are being watched (Foucault 1976, 258). Consequently, Fraser stresses that in a "fully 'panopticized' society, hierarchial, asymmetrical domination of some persons by others would have become

---

[17] Foucault used Bentham's concept of the panopticon prison for his work *Überwachen und Strafen. Die Geburt des Gefängnisses* (Foucault 1976). Bentham's panopticon refers to a model of an architectural structure that enables total surveillance. It consists of a central tower, from which surveillance is exercised. This tower is surrounded by a ring-shaped building, which consist of many private cells with a windowed front towards the inside of the ring, towards the central tower. Consequently, the panopticon prison allows those in power to surveill those located inside the ring-shaped building, but not the other way around. Since those individuals within the cells do not know when or if they are being watched, the possibility makes them automatically conduct themselves (Foucault 1976, 256–259).

[18] "die Macht sichtbar, aber uneinsehbar sein muss" (Foucault 1976, the author's translation).

superfluous; all would surveil and police themselves" (Villa 1992, 715). In other words, in a panopticized society, individuals have internalised the moral code of the government and thus behave autonomously in accordance with governmental plans. Therefore, this form of government allows the authorities to achieve their desired aims through indirect mechanisms and technologies instead of permanent control or exercise of direct force.

The panopticon as 'a form of government', however, represents an ideal model for surveilling society and social space. Generally, reality, even in liberal societies, looks different. According to Lefebvre, public spaces are supposed to be spaces for all "urban *inhabitants*" to be physically accessed, produced, used and appropriated (Purcell 2002, 102-103). Yet, the government, like other agents, continuously tries to produce, control and surveil urban spaces, an act it regards, according to its own perception, as serving for the common good. In this sense, according to Dean, the government does not only rely on people's self-regulation, but embraces the population within an "apparatus of security" which includes the social welfare system, the mechanism to manage the national economy and the police forces (Dean 1999, 20). The government remodels sovereignty and discipline, two other forms of power, "within this concern for the population and its optimization (in terms of wealth, health, happiness, prosperity, efficiency), and the form of knowledge and technical means appropriate to it" (Dean 1999, 20). One mechanism to control the population and to maintain public order in the national social space is what Foucault describes as "the 'police of territory' or 'police of the city' (*Stadtpolizei*), which is the control over public space" (Brighenti 2010, 31). Brighenti describes the implementation of public order as

> an active practice of ordering public space, setting flows and boundaries, calculating possible events which are going to occur with a certain probability. More precisely, public order is not order per se, but rather entails managing the thresholds within which disorder is acceptable (Brighenti 2010, 32).

The police, or "the visible face of the government over a population" (Brighenti 2010, 33), is responsible for ensuring safety, controlling individuals' or groups' behaviour and regulating access to urban spaces. Therefore, the police "is not simply a professional group but above all a regime of interaction in public" – not "street level bureaucracy" but "street level governmentality" (Brighenti 2010, 33). It ensures people's compliance with governmental rules and regulations.

Alongside the government, other actors also have a claim on space and actively participate in its development and regulation. In recent years, the government has increasingly worked together with actors from the economic fields, such as private investors, who also possess a powerful role as dominant dominators. Together, those agents from the political and economic fields have produced and shaped a variety of urban public spaces, mostly into themed commercial spaces which require a certain behaviour (Zukin 2005, 281). Zukin confirms that "[p]eople with economic and political power have the greatest opportunities to shape public culture by controlling the building of the city's public spaces in stone and concrete" (Zukin 2005, 284). As these agents transform urban space according to their own interests – their own idea of the common good that, however, does not have to match the vision of the urban inhabitants – Zukin poses the following question: Who shapes and creates the culture and the city that people live in? (Zukin 2005, 281) The many public spaces created by the government and/or (cooperatively with) the private sector are "formed as an instrument for those in power" (Pomeroy 2011, 389) and consequently are connected to power, politics and ideologies. Yet, as "public space is inherently democratic" in Habermas' sense, Zukin stresses that "[t]he question of who can occupy public space, and so define an image of the city, is open-ended" (Zukin 2005, 284). With different urban actors developing different ideas and imaginations of space, public space remains a contested and negotiated realm.

To summarise, the government as dominant dominator occupies a powerful position within the field of power; yet in multiple ways it is entangled with and challenged by other agents. Overall, the actions of the government seek to be directed to the common good, yet its vision of the good does not necessarily match those of the people. However, the power relation between the government and the people becomes obscured when the dominant interests, the dominant symbolic system, establish themselves as legitimate structures in society (Chong 2003, 9). In accordance with their artistic habitus, cultural producers are uniquely positioned to notice, reflect on and challenge the status quo of established dominant structures.

3. The Singapore Government and its Approaches to Public Space and the Arts

The structures that theorists like Bourdieu and Foucault identify in liberal societies are also relevant to other kinds of societies. In Singapore, the PAP government is characterised as a soft authoritarian government that has held substantial control over politics, economy, society and the arts since independence in 1965. In its position as dominant dominator, it is a powerful agent in the field of power and heavily intervenes in the national social space. It solicits the question: How does the soft authoritarian government in particular relate to society, public space and the arts?

3.1. The Relation of Government and Theatre Practitioners in Singapore

Bourdieu's model of the field of power, which includes the dominant dominators and the dominated dominators, allows the analysis of the tension-filled relationship between the government and the theatre practitioners in Singapore.

In the city-state, the political field under the leadership of the one-party government, the PAP, is the most powerful dominant dominator. Its governing style can primarily be described as "soft authoritarianism", which is defined by Francis Fukuyama as consisting of two elements:

> First, it combines a market-oriented economic system with "a kind of paternalistic authoritarianism that persuades rather than coerces." The resulting regime is economically liberal but politically quasi-authoritarian. Second, soft authoritarianism is communitarian, "emphasiz[ing] conformity to group interests over individual rights." Here soft authoritarianism reveals the influence of Confucian values that champion order, a strong but moral state, and the needs of society as a whole over personal freedoms and limitations on government (Roy 1994, 231).

Additionally, the PAP governing style features elements of a "corporatist state" and an "interventionist state" (Chong 2005, 554). The PAP government functions like a corporation

in the sense that a relatively autonomous governmental elite, like a neutral party "'above' partisan politics", tries to harmoniously accommodate the various social interest groups, for instance the competing local ethnic groups, within the national community (Chong 2005, 554). Thereby, the PAP follows a governing strategy of "political pragmatism", which is characterised by "the emphasis on communitarian ideals, economic progress and strong political control" (Ooi 2010, 405). In a pragmatic and rational manner, the PAP government thus manages, controls and intervenes into various spheres, including society, economy and the arts.

The PAP's governing style blurs "the lines between an advanced liberal society and an authoritarian regime" (T. Lee 2010, 36). In this sense, the PAP combines technologies of governmentality, which shape the conduct of Singaporeans and cement the governmental worldview in society, with the more direct state apparatus to "exact political submission or acquiescence" (T. Lee 2010, 38). In this sense, Singapore's governmental style is reminiscent of Foucault's panopticon as 'a form of government'. According to Lee,

> the Singapore government's 'central control' mentality mirrors the idea of the supervisory 'central tower' in the Panopticon, a conspicuously privileged position from which to exercise power and surveillance on citizens who […] need […] constant watch [emphasis removed] (T. Lee 2005, 83).[19]

Therefore, Wee argues that "governmentality in Foucault's sense functions in conjunction with the more direct state apparatus" in Singapore (T. Lee 2010, 19). The PAP government generally 'governs at a distance', publicly positions citizens as autonomous individuals who are free to comply with or abide governmental rules or regulations and regards public welfare as important governmental activity. Yet, it largely retains its role as a dominant force, and if necessary, exercises draconian measures to make people comply with its rules.

---

[19] The term 'central tower' refers to Bentham's idea of the panopticon prison from which Foucault draws his ideas for the panopticon as a form of government. A detailed description can be found on page 31.

Despite the dominant role of the government, the latter is challenged by the field of cultural producers, the dominated dominators, who negotiate and struggle with the government over their position and power. More specifically, those who challenge are agents from the subdivision of cultural producers, the small-scale cultural local theatre producers. They are themselves a heterogeneous group including the well-established theatre companies, like TNS or TTP with about six to ten full-time executives, as well as the smaller companies, like Toy Factory with only about two to five full-time executives. Most of them are English-language theatre companies, but some are also bi-lingual. Yet, they all possess artistic habitus, cultural and social capital, as well as a not insignificant autonomy that is "valued because it provides the pre-conditions for the full creative process proper" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 215). As they actively negotiate and struggle for power and autonomy, their existence weakens the general argument that, according to Lee, Singaporeans "have learned to automatically, and in most situations, objectively subject themselves to the rationalities of governmentality in return for social order, cultural control and economic prosperity" (T. Lee 2010, 149). Lee continues to claim that Singaporeans "are arguably well aware of their place in a society" and "have become co-opted and indeed 'disciplined' to either vocalize their full cultural cum political support for the establishment or accept the status quo with minimal grouse" (T. Lee 2010, 148–149). Despite such general discipline and 'auto-regulation', in particular the small-scale cultural theatre producers actively engage in negotiations with the government as dominant dominator.

Alongside theatre practitioners' possession of cultural capital and autonomy, Singapore's small city-state offers them manifold possibilities to increase their social capital by building up social networks and by having access to various other resources. According to Hannerz, the city is a "network of networks" (Schiffauer 1997, 94) and a political, economic and cultural centre in which "diversity of access" but also "access to diversity" is possible

(Schiffauer 1997, 93–94). The city offers "diversity of access" through cultural spheres, such as work, home or leisure time, in which individuals participate and through which the various spheres become connected with one another (Schiffauer 1997, 93). In the city, individuals also have "access to diversity", for instance to different kinds of people (Schiffauer 1997, 94).[20] Therefore, Singapore's city space gives cultural producers the opportunity to find like-minded people, establish social networks and to serve as a connecting node among various other spheres. Furthermore, the city of Singapore as a political, economic and cultural centre, in which people and resources are reachable within geographical proximity, gives Singaporean theatre practitioners access to many forms of resources and therefore to increased capital, which allows them to actively challenge the political field that powerfully tries to control and utilise the arts for its own purposes.

In sum, the soft authoritarian government occupies a powerful role and strategically governs the society. Yet, it is entwined with and actively challenged by cultural producers within the field of power.

3.2.   Public Space in Singapore

The Singapore government has heavily planned, controlled and surveilled the 'public space' of the city-state since it came into power. Due to such heavy governmental intervention into and surveillance of urban space, the notion of a democratic 'public space' needs to be reconsidered in this setting. 'Public space' became defined in the 'European' context as a space that (1) is "open and accessible to all members of the public" (Neal 2010, 1), (2) in which strangers can meet and learn to coexist with one another (Sennett 1976) and (3) most importantly, in which individuals are able to discuss "common concerns" among each other

---

[20] According to Schiffauer, 'access to diversity' in the city also allows the creation of subcultures (Schiffauer 1997, 94).

freely and democratically without coercion (Habermas 1989). With these characteristics, the concept of public space is closely connected to "Western norms like civil society, democracy, participation, freedom of the city and comparable contents" (Hassenpflug 2009, 32).[21] It is separated from, or even opposed to, the private realm. As this 'European' concept of a democratic public space is related to specific preconditions, its universal application needs to be questioned. Several researchers (Hassenpflug 2009; Drummond 2000)[22] have already pointed out that it is necessary to find alternative ways to analyse and conceptualise the experience and use of urban space in other cultural contexts.

Singapore's urban space thus requires a context-specific conceptualisation. Lehrer and Winkler's concept of "public space", developed from Lefebvre's notion of the social production of space[23], is useful for an analysis of Singapore's urban setting, because they split the notion of "public space" into a threefold, yet overlapping, division of "the physical, social, and symbolic production of space" (Lehrer and Winkler 2006, 144). 'Physical' public space refers to the built and material environment and exists in the realm of urban design, planning and architecture. 'Symbolic' public space refers to collective practice and memory, which are both real and imagined. 'Social' public space is the most interesting of these three categories. It is created through social practices and agency and constantly redefined through use. It is also capable of transforming ownership and giving new meaning to space. Through social

---

[21] "westlichen Normen wie Zivilgesellschaft, Demokratie, Partizipation, Freiheit der Stadt und vergleichbaren Inhalten" (Hassenpflug 2009, the author's translation).

[22] Both, Hassenpflug and Drummond demonstrate that urban space has to be conceptualised differently in other cultural contexts. In his book *China's Urban Code*, Hassenpflug analyses China's urban context and focuses on the way Chinese people regard and use urban spaces. Even though China's urban spaces are, in fact, subject to public law and appear to the Western eye as public spaces, Hassenpflug illustrates that Chinese people do not regard the urban realm as a discursive public space in the 'European' sense (Hassenpflug 2009, 31). Similarly, Drummond's article 'Street Scenes: Practices of Public and Private Space in Urban Vietnam' depicts the way Vietnamese people make use of urban spaces. Both scholars make clear that the 'European' notion of public space with its clear separation between "public" and "private" cannot be found in China's or Vietnam's urban realm, in which the boundary between these two kinds of spaces are transgressed "outside-in" and/or "inside-out" (Drummond 2000, 2378). Therefore, their academic works stress the significance of searching for alternative perspectives on urban space in different cultural contexts.

[23] Lehrer and Winkler's concept of "public space" is drawn from Lefebvre's work *The production of space*, in which he argues that space is a social product that is shaped by individuals and collectives in a particular historical situation (Lefebvre 1991).

practices and agency a space is created in which the public can meet and debate about various

common issues (Lehrer and Winkler 2006, 144–145; Hee and Ooi 2003, 81).

When applying these categories to Singapore's urban realm, Hee and Ooi claim that

physical and symbolic public spaces dominate in Singapore, while social public space is for

the most part lacking (Hee and Ooi 2003, 81). For more than four decades now, the PAP

government has largely been planning and controlling Singapore's urban space.[24]

Interestingly, after independence from colonialism, the government's "transformation of

Singapore into a modern city-state through greater land-use rationalization has tended to a

more 'European' outlook on public space provision" (Hee and Ooi 2003, 87). Yet, the

'European' idea of public space was only selectively realised as the government focused

primarily on the development of physical and symbolic public spaces. The PAP authorities

efficiently and pragmatically organised and managed the urban space without the participation

of the general public and – until recently – also the private sector. The PAP government

started with the redevelopment of the central area, which was populated by overcrowded

ethnic settlements. Most people were relocated into newly-build suburban public housing

estates, many shop-houses were demolished and five foot ways, sheltered walkways in front

of the houses that were used for private and commercial activities during colonial times,

efficiently cleared.[25] Some of the green open spaces, like the Padang in the central area, which

---

[24] Even before the PAP came into power, Singapore's urban realm was planned and controlled by those in power, primarily by the British colonisers. Within the ethnic settlements, the British tried to introduced Western planning norms and "ideas about the spatial separation of public and private activities and the need to create distinct areas for distinct activities" (Drummond 2000, 2381). In this sense, they prescribed the five foot ways, sheltered walkways in front of the houses in the non-European settlements, as public space to be used by all "for pedestrian movement, with activities such as hawking, sleeping, begging, socializing and trading expressly forbidden" (Hee and Ooi 2003, 82). Yet, their vision of space differed greatly from those of the local population, who used the five foot ways "as a multi-functional space, 24-hour, semi-public environment" (Pomeroy 2011, 390) for social and commercial purposes arising from the necessity of overcrowded living space due to large immigration flows. Consequently, the British's ambition to establish a 'public' space that is separated from the 'private' realm in Singapore was only partly achieved (Hee and Ooi 2003; Pomeroy 2011).

[25] With the clearance of the five foot ways the separation between 'private' and 'public' spaces was largely encouraged by the PAP government. During colonial times in Singapore's non-European settlements, these spaces have been used for private and commercial activities. Such usage of urban space transgressed the boundaries between 'private' and 'public' space 'inside-out' – a phenomenon that can also be found in the

were formerly developed by the colonisers, remained symbolic spaces in the city and are still used as location for the annual National Day celebrations today (Hee and Ooi 2003, 83). The central area became envisioned as "the central business district [CBD] with international retail, hotels, business centres and pseudo-local tourist icons" (Pomeroy 2011, 392) to attract in particular business people, professionals and an international audience. Through centralised urban planning, which Castells defines as "political intervention" (Hee and Ooi 2003, 100), the government has created, what Lefebvre would term, "a product literally filled with ideologies" (Hee and Ooi 2003, 96) as politics and ideology are always related to the production of space. Since independence, the government has thus mainly created physical and symbolic public spaces.

Alongside these two kinds of public spaces, a new type of space, namely consumption spaces, has been established through the cooperation between the government and the private sector in Singapore (Pomeroy 2011, 392–394). According to Zukin, the increase of consumption spaces, emerging from the developing market economy, became a common feature in non-Western and Western countries (Zukin 2005). Such spaces can be described as a mixture between physical, symbolic and social public space and can best be defined as "pseudo-public" (Drummond 2000, 2387) spaces as they give people the opportunity to meet, gather, relax or play, yet for the purpose of enjoyment and not for possible democratic engagement. These new types of spaces cause a depoliticisation of public space in the West. On the contrary, in Singapore, where social public space with political or democratic potential hardly exists, these consumption spaces create spaces which contain the social component of public space to a larger degree than the physical and symbolic public spaces developed by the

analysis of Hassenpflug and Drummond on China's and Vietnam's urban spaces (Hassenpflug 2009; Drummond 2000). Interestingly, when the PAP government tried to hinder the transgression of boundaries 'inside-out', the boundaries became transgressed 'outside-in' as the government began to intervene into people's private realm For instance in the late 1960s and 1970s, when housing and work were still lacking, the PAP encouraged families to marry late and have less children with campaigns and slogans like "Take Your Time To Say 'Yes'" or "Girl or Boy: Two is enough" (T. Wong and Yeoh 2003, 7). Therefore, under the PAP leadership the boundaries become blurred, not 'inside-out' but rather 'outside-in'.

government. Exemplary is the Marina Bay area at the CBD in Singapore, "a 24/7, thriving and energetic place where people live, work and play" (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2008), and where they can enjoy the waterfront promenade, the performance centre or the adjacent Gardens by the Bay. Amidst the CDB and surrounded by hotels, restaurants and entertainment places, this space is particularly directed to enjoyment, entertainment and consumption. It is a space for social interaction, but not a social space for a participatory civil society. Thus, the intervention of government and private corporations into the urban space did not (aim to) achieve the implementation of social public spaces.

One further reason why social public spaces do not exist in Singapore is that the PAP government highly regulates spaces, for instance through the Public Order Act, and surveilles them in a panoptic manner, using CCTV cameras and security guards. Even the pseudo-public spaces are surveilled and "sterilized, homogeneously themed environment[s]", which follow the rules of inclusion and exclusion (Pomeroy 2011, 394). Implicit and explicit control over urban spaces, the heightened rules of exclusion and increased surveillance thus deny urban spaces the spontaneity, which the five foot ways offered people during colonial times, and "led to sterility and underutilization of space" (Pomeroy 2011, 394). Furthermore, state planning and control lead to concerns about the cost and benefits of the security of urban space and the "obsession for safety" (Brighenti 2010, 34) and about the rights of city dwellers to the urban spaces. State planning as well as regulation and surveillance, according to Lefebvre, largely hinders the right of all "urban *inhabitants*" to the city, which includes "the right to participation", to have a voice "in any decision that contributes to the production of urban space" and "the right to appropriation", to access, produce, occupy and use urban space (Purcell 2002, 102-103). Similarly, Harvey stresses that people should have "the right to the city" which includes "not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire" (Harvey 2003, 939). The production and regulation of space by the

government therefore could be seen to hinder the development of social public space, the space that inhabitants should be able to create and redefine through social practices.

Interestingly, in 2000, the government attempted to implement a place for the civil society, but failed to create a real social public place. Following the London model, the PAP established Singapore's Speakers Corner, the country's first free-speech area (T. Lee 2010, 98). Ironically, the usage of this space requires the registration of speeches with the police and compliance with Singaporean law, including the OB-markers. Therefore, the government's aim to encourage active citizenship was criticised as "political farce […] that makes a mockery of Singapore's constitutional right to free speech" (T. Lee 2010, 98). Encouraging active citizenship but keeping people in check at the same time highlights the government's "gestural politics" (T. Lee 2010, 98). Therefore, even those spaces which are officially declared as a realm for the civil society are controlled and bounded spaces for gathering and debating. These government-affiliated places, in which people feel controlled or watched, are thus not the kinds of places in which free expression and discussion can take place.

Despite Singapore's controlled and surveilled urban realm, some places still have the potential to develop into social public spaces for the civil society. The older suburban town centres in Singapore, similar to the developing neighbourhood and community spaces in newly built suburban town centres in China that Hassenpflug analysed (Hassenpflug 2009, 38)[26], seem to offer spaces in which elements of civil society can possibly develop. Kok Heng

---

[26] Hassenpflug's analysis of China's urban space demonstrates that in contrast to 'European' 'public spaces', China's urban space is not determined by the relationship between individual and society, but between family and community. In the Chinese context, Tönnies' differentiation between "community", connections among family, friends, neighbours, and "society", connections among strangers, are not clearly visible (Hassenpflug 2009, 26). Yet, this differentiation represents an essential precondition for the emergence of a civil society and a public sphere. Interestingly, Hassenpflug recognises some indications of a strengthening of society and individual in newly built suburban town centres, where the developing neighbourhood- and community parks signalise a clear differentiation to the closed neighbourhood courtyards (Hassenpflug 2009, 38). These architecturally open designed spaces with green areas, pavilions and several places to dwell and gather offer people the possibility to come together, relax, meet and talk. Hassenpflug therefore defines them as "proto-public" spaces (Hassenpflug 2009, 38).

Leun, artistic director from the local Singaporean theatre company Drama Box, who is constantly searching for discursive places to conduct community theatre, argues that spaces in older housing estates are "the best space[s] for discussions", because people feel comfortable and use these locations for informal gatherings (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 91). The older suburban town centres demonstrate the existence of some – although very few – kind of social public spaces in Singapore's controlled and surveilled urban space. Following Hassenpflug, these environments can thus be defined as "proto-public" spaces (Hassenpflug 2009, 38).[27]

As Singapore offers more physical, symbolical and pseudo-public spaces rather than social public spaces, the central question is: To what extent can other spaces, like theatres, create a public space for society which is not purely physical and symbolical, but most importantly social? In other words, can theatres become a space in which inhabitants of the city can meet, experience, participate, debate, negotiate or deal with important issues, such as community, belonging and identity?

3.3. Governmental Strategies to the Arts

Since Singapore's independence from British colonial rule in 1963 and its separation from Malaysia in 1965, the PAP government has based the survival of its young multi-ethnic nation primarily on economic and industrial growth and strategically used the arts as an ideological tool to support the nation-building process. Chong argues that the use of the arts became particularly efficient by connecting "the arts" with "culture" (Chong 2011, 17). In this sense, "high art", such as conventional artistic disciplines like theatre, music, fine arts or literature, was particularly exploited to serve the purpose of creating a "civilized", "enlightened" and "cultured" society (Chong 2011, 20).

---

[27] Hassenpflug's original term in German is "proto-öffentlich", which can be translated as "proto-public" (Hassenpflug 2009, the author's translation).

Furthermore, the arts were used as ideological tool against 'harmful' influences from the 'West'. In the 1960s, the government implemented a strict censorship, when it launched its campaign against Western 'yellow culture', including democracy, individualism and hedonism (Chong 2010, 239; Chong 2011, 25). According to Yao, censorship was seen as a useful way for the "postcolonial regime to redraw the contour of power and, in the process, to fashion a new Asian identity at the dawn of a new world" (Chong 2010, 239). In the 1970s, when the PAP feared that "the country's high economic growth and English-language proficiency" would "deculturalize" the Singaporean population, it pushed for Asian values (Chong 2011, 25). Asian values were understood in a practical manner by the government "as 'honesty, industry, respect for the family, cleanliness and thrift' which support the economic and political agenda of the government" (Lo 2004, 26). The governmental push for Asian values and the implementation of the censorship system therefore aimed at selectively repelling harmful Western values like democracy or individualism, while retaining useful elements from the West, such as the English language with which Singaporeans could bridge language differences within and outside of the country.

Following the new focus on Asian values and cultures, the arts have been used as an ideological tool to connect the multicultural population to their respective traditional ethnic cultures. Thereby, culture was regarded by the government "as a set of ideal-type of ethnic or civilizational values with which different ethnic groups supposedly shared a natural affinity" (Chong 2011, 25). According to the government's vision, Singapore consists of a multicultural society that is categorised into four races: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others [CMIO].[28] Peterson argues that "multiculturalism" is a "buzz-word for politicians invoke [sic] as they paint a picture of an [sic] harmonious modern state in which individuals from a range of ethnicities and different cultural backgrounds contribute to a coherent, unified nation"

---

[28] In 2013, the Singapore Census showed a distribution of 74:13:9:3 among the Chinese-Malay-Indian-Other population (Singapore Department of Statistics 2013, 3).

(Peterson 2003, 80). A multi-ethnic CMIO society whose members harmoniously live together is precisely what the Singapore government aimed to achieve. Therefore, the government wanted the arts to represent the CMIO formula through the styles and costumes of each particular ethnic culture in order to connect the population even more closely to their respective racial community. Consequently, such an "enforced and superficial amalgam of the four official cultures" (Lo 2004, 22–23) living harmoniously together became visible in "multiracial performances" on National Day Parades or performances of "Instant Asia" which market Singapore's ethnic cultures to tourists since the 1970s (Chong 2011, 27-28). In sum, in the early years after independence, the government pursued a "*cultural* policy" that subordinated the arts to overarching interests, rather than an "*arts* policy" that supports the art for art's sake (Chong 2011, 17).

The 1980s represented a turning point in the relation between the government and the arts in Singapore. With economic recession in 1985, the arts received recognition beyond its ideological role to support the nation-building process as well as tourism and became valued for its economic growth potential by the government. At the end of the decade, Singapore had created its first coherent "*arts* policy" (Chong 2011, 17), the "Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts", which recommended the development of an art infrastructure, including an arts centre and further art institutions – later realised in the establishment of The Esplanade and the NAC – to make Singapore a "culturally vibrant society by the turn of the century" (Chong 2011, 34-35).

In 1992, Singapore's arts policy turned global, when the government conceptualised a vision for the city-state to become a GCA "to match regional hubs like Melbourne and Hong Kong [in the short-term], with the eventual goal of achieving a status comparable to cultural capitals like London and New York" (Chang and Lee 2003, 130). Such aspirations seem to follow a global trend to make culture the "business of cities" and "a motor of economic

growth" (Zukin 2005, 285), which becomes the basis of the "symbolic economy" (Zukin 2005, 283). The power of culture "to create an image, to frame a vision, of the city" is particularly important as manufacturing industries have increasingly disappeared in many cities and publics have become more diverse and mobile (Zukin 2005, 283). The establishment of a creative city, mainly "rel[ying] on a vision of cultural consumption" (Zukin 2005, 284), thereby aims to attract mobile businesses, members of the "creative class" (Florida 2002)[29] and tourists, while it seeks to retain mobile local talents in the city at the same time.

Considering such aspirations to global city status in a transcultural context, Aihwa Ong's argument provides a valuable perspective. According to her, the striving for global city status among cities of the global South, such as Singapore, should not simply be evaluated in terms of economic globalisation, nor in terms of overcoming its postcolonial legacy, but rather as evolving in a "world in formation", characterised by multi-directional flows and circulation of ideas, images, objects and people (Ong 2011, 11). Each city thus becomes "a site of experimentation" in which urban conditions, political possibilities, aesthetic styles, material infrastructure or even the notion of the urban itself can be reimagined and remade in a creative, aspirational and speculative way (Ong 2011, 10-12). Following Ong, Singapore thus creates its own "art of being global" (Ong 2011, 12).

In a complex yet powerful manner, the government's vision for Singapore to become an arts hub affected not only the arts, but a variety of other realms, such as society, economy and politics. Following the GCA vision of 1992, the government began to invest heavily into an art infrastructure, established the NAC to support the integration and growth of the arts,

---

[29] Florida's "creative class" is composed of people working in various fields "from technology to entertainment, journalism to finance, high-end manufacturing to the arts", who – even though they do not consider themselves as a "class" – "share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit" (Florida 2002). Florida's theory of the "creative class" has been criticised by scholars, such as Andy Pratt, for its focus on consumption rather than production (Pratt 2009).

fostered the art trading sector and aimed to bring world famous artists and plays onto the Singaporean stages (T. T.-B. Lee 2004, 291). For the first time the arts received financial support from the government-affiliated NAC, even though the market was still the final judge for the arts (Chong 2011, 37). Consequently, with governmental investment and appreciation of the arts since the mid-1980s and increasingly in the 1990s, a local professional and experimental – in particular English-language – theatre scene, including theatre companies like The Necessary Stage, The Theatre Practice and TheatreWorks, has been developing in Singapore.

Moreover, in the context of Singapore's global aspirations and the arts' economic value, the PAP recognised "the need to appropriate landscapes and buildings to facilitate their development" (Kong 2007, 392). The development of the museum district, but even more the construction of The Esplanade, Singapore's largest performance space located directly in the downtown area, gives evidence to major landscape appropriations (see Figure 1).[30]

Figure 1: The Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay at Marina Bay in Singapore (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2014)

Envisioned to be the "finest arts center in Asia" (Chang and Lee 2003, 132), The Esplanade represents an example of how urban megaprojects or flagship projects are "often […]

---

[30] Opened in 2002, The Esplanade is Singapore's S$400-million-dollar national performing centre, located at the Marina Bay area next to the CBD in downtown. In Singapore's small geographical city-state, it "occupies a total land area of 600 000 square meters, boasting a 2000-seat Lyric Theatre, a 1800-seat Concert Hall, three smaller studios and varied outdoor performance spaces" (Chang and Lee 2003, 132–133).

associated with 'culture-led' regeneration efforts" in the belief that cultural policy can signalise change for the city, create an attractive image of the place and boost the city's competitiveness (Kong 2007, 387).[31] Overall, in the 1990s, governmental efforts to realise the GCA vision were primarily concentrated on creating the necessary hardware, i.e. the development of institutions and a physical arts infrastructure.

In the new millennium, the arts mainly served economic and ideological purposes. In 2000, as reaction to criticism from the local arts scene on the immense investment into hardware, the "Renaissance City Report"[32] aimed at nurturing the arts scene itself, the software, "as it sought to perpetuate the GCA project and to create a cosmopolitan Singapore" (Chong 2011, 43). Therefore, the arts had two aims, namely to develop "'a cultural centre in the globalized world' and, at the same time, provide a 'cultural ballast in our nation-building efforts'" by strengthening the Singaporeans' sense of national identity (Chong 2011, 45). Following up on the idea of the "Renaissance City Report", when Singapore experienced its worst economic year as an independent nation in 2002, the government followed Britain's idea of the "creative industries"[33] and established three "creative clusters"[34] (Arts and Culture, Media and Design) in order to make Singapore a creative global city.

Overall, the Singapore government's 'art of being global' is characterised by political pragmatism that approaches the arts and the creative economy in a calculative manner. The

---

[31] Compare the "Bilbao effect" to see the powerful effect of iconic architecture on the space, the economy and the image of the city in the context of cities competing to be placed "on the map" (McNeill 2009).

[32] In Singapore's context, Bharucha argues that "Renaissance" is used in a nationalistic way related to the discourse on Asian values and identity. The PAP highlighted Renaissance categories, such as "the spirit of creativity, innovation and multidisciplinary learning and of socioeconomic, intellectual and cultural vibrancy", without reference to its origin in the European Renaissance (Bharucha 2004, 6). According to Chong, caught in the dilemma not to be fully committed to globalisation and thus to stem the brain drain, the government envisioned the ideal "Renaissance" citizen to be an individual with creative spirit who is "cosmopolitan in mind but Singaporean at heart" and thus prepared for the challenges ahead (Chong 2011, 44).

[33] The idea of "creative industries" developed in Britain and had its inception in the first Creative Industries Task Force in 1997 and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's publication of the "Creative Industries Mapping Document" in 1998 (British Council 2014).

[34] According to Flew, the "creative cluster" is "essentially a concentration of interconnected industries which rely on innovation and creativity for growth and development" (T. T.-B. Lee 2004, 119).

authorities promote "diversity and chaos" and use the rhetoric of liberalism and democracy to present Singapore as a vibrant, creative city and an attractive place for global talents and tourists (Ooi 2010, 412). Yet, the government has framed "democracy as an economic function" and has used it for its own purposes while ignoring the concept's central political dimension (Ooi 2010, 414). Such framing allows the authorities to limit certain content from entering the public realm. Furthermore, the authorities "determine which creative activities are preferred […], based largely on their economic and political values" (Ooi 2010, 414). Thereby, they prefer art that is unchallenging and easily consumable by cosmopolitan Singaporeans as well as an international, mainly Western, audience. An easily consumable art form favoured by the PAP is "grobal" art[35], the opposite of glocal art as it is "characterised by a globalization of nothing [that] elides the particulars of culture, politics, and place" (Peterson 2009, 114). As not all artists produce art as an object for consumption, however, the government has created a strategy to control them without damaging Singapore's image as a creative city. It has moved away from detaining artists for unwelcome criticism and shifted the exercise of power away from the public and media into what Goffman calls the "'back regions' of theatre" (Chong 2010, 235). Political pragmatism is thus regarded by the government as a suitable tool to realise the GCA vision.

---

[35] The notion of 'grobal' has been developed by sociologist Georg Ritzer. According to Peterson, with this concept "Ritzer seeks a deeper and more complex understanding of the forces of globalization by proposing a fourth way beyond the local, the global and the glocal with a category he refers to as the 'grobal'" (Peterson 2009, 113–114).

4. Governmental Boundaries for Theatres in Singapore

Since Singapore's soft authoritarian government has aimed to control the arts, theatre practitioners have been confronted with various governmental boundaries that challenge their possible functioning as public spaces for encounter, negotiation and debate. Theatre, Singapore's most prominent art form, is affected by various governmental strategies and techniques of control. Such boundaries include the government's regulation of access to physical and virtual public spaces, its censorship mechanisms, its funding policies and its use of quasi-state and non-state institutions to support artistic compliance with governmental rules.

4.1. Access to Physical and Virtual Public Space

The Singapore government controls and regulates access to the physical space of the city-state through top-down planning, structuring and surveillance of urban space. Furthermore, it structures people's access to and usage of the virtual space of the Internet. Both mechanisms of control have consequences for the way the Singaporean theatre scene functions.

4.1.1. Physical Space

The governmental planning and surveillance of physical space affects theatre practitioners and theatre companies in two ways: in respect to the geographical location of theatre companies and performance spaces, as well as in the way theatre practitioners are allowed to access and use physical spaces for performances.

First, the government and government-affiliated institutions largely determine where theatre companies and performance venues are geographically located in the city-state. This

intervention into the development of the geographical arts landscape is achieved by appointing properties for performance venues like The Esplanade as well as by implementing the Arts Housing Scheme [AHS] in 1985, whose task it is to choose and convert existing spaces, and even to build completely new ones that can be given to theatre companies and other arts groups at reasonable prices (National Arts Council 2013a). In 2013, AHS housed over 90 artists and arts organisations in 38 venues. Providing housing to such a large amount of local artists, the AHS scheme has allowed the authorities to largely structure the locations of arts spaces and thereby its visibility and accessibility.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate how the government's heavy investment into the development of an arts infrastructure has changed the geographical landscape of Singapore since 1985. The year of economic recession, which marked the turning point in the relation between the government and the arts, was taken as basis for comparison. Figure 2 shows the relatively small theatre landscape in 1985. There existed three theatre companies with and three without permanent location as well as four performance venues. In comparison, Figure 3 displays Singapore's theatre scene of today, consisting of about 35 theatre companies, including local theatre companies like TNS (1987) or Drama Box (1990), and 13 performance venues, such as The Esplanade or the Drama Centre. Both illustrations exclude theatre clubs and societies. Nowadays those theatre clubs and societies, together with the professional theatre companies, seen in Figure 3, add up to more than 130 theatre companies and societies in Singapore (National Arts Council 2012).
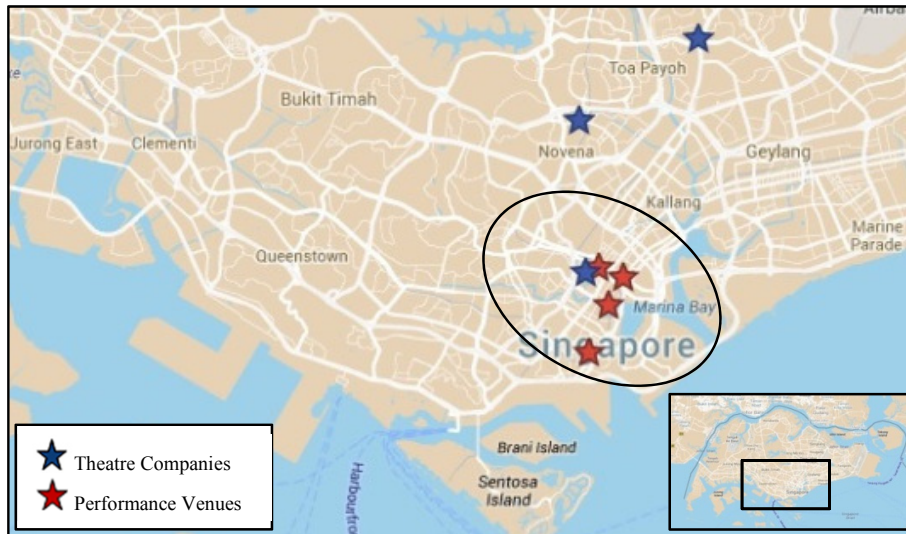
Figure 2: Singapore Theatre Landscape 1985 – excluding theatre clubs and societies as well as theatre companies without permanent location (own depiction by use of Google Maps Engine)
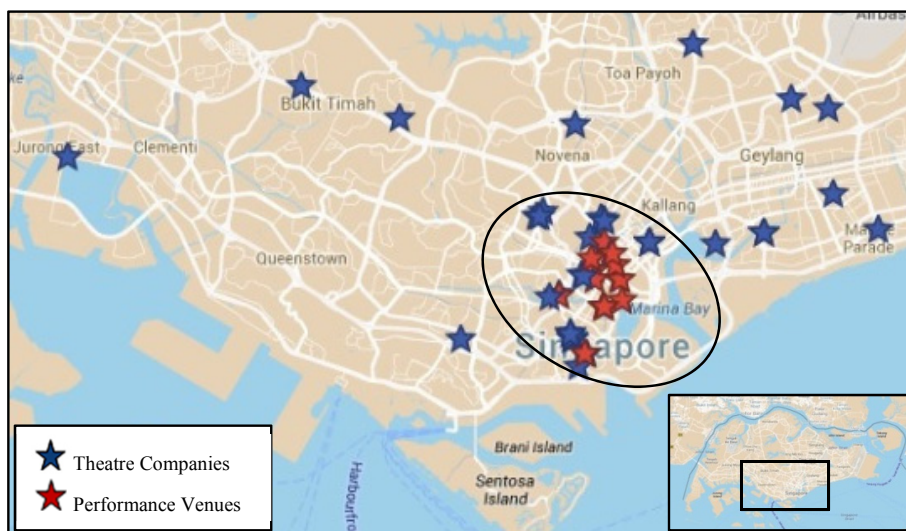
Figure 3: Singapore Theatre Landscape 2014 – excluding theatre clubs and societies (own depiction by use of Google Maps Engine)

As seen in Figure 3, most theatre companies and venues are located in the central area of Singapore (circled on the map), where The Esplanade is located, too. Many of the theatre companies are part of the city's arts belts that the AHS has started to develop across the central region in order to showcase the vibrancy of the arts in Singapore. Examples are the Waterloo Street Arts Belt, Chinatown Arts Belt, Little India Arts Belt or Arts by the River. In

this sense, Tan argues that "[p]hysical spaces for the arts in Singapore exist as 'clusters' – the Ethnic Zones, Civic Cultural District, Arts and Heritage Precinct and Arts Districts" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 63). Since the government possesses substantial power to determine the location of theatre companies, it has been able to cluster the majority of theatre companies within the central area in order to showcase Singapore as a creative and vibrant arts hub. By locating the arts in the centre of the city-state, the government accredits much importance to the arts. Such significance given to the arts is certainly related to the government's GCA vision.

Second, not only is the location of theatre spaces to a large extent planned top-down, the physical spaces outside the walls of the theatre buildings are partially restricted for usage as performance space. The government's fear of unrest and disturbance, as well as its desire to control the behaviour of people in public, makes spontaneous actions almost impossible. When holding performances outdoors, the organisers have to follow certain laws and regulations before, during and after the event. While all outdoor performances need to be registered with the Neighbourhood Police in advance, many of them also have to be granted an Arts Entertainment Licence or a Public Entertainment License (Singapore Police Force 2014). Streets or parks therefore cannot be used spontaneously for performances. Furthermore, the existence of the police as "the visible face of the government over a population" (Brighenti 2010, 33) allows the authorities to make sure that people conduct themselves appropriately in public. The relatively high level of regulation of urban space in Singapore deprives its inhabitants to a large extent of their right to the city or, as Lefebvre would specify it, "the right to appropriation […] to physically access, occupy, [produce,] and use urban space" (Purcell 2002, 103). With a combination of laws, regulations and the police, the government thus controls and regulates people's access to and use of urban spaces, which also affects the working of theatre practitioners in such spaces.

In sum, theatre practitioners' usage of physical space is restricted by governmental power to structure the arts landscape and therewith the visibility and accessibility of arts institutions as well as its power to control the activities, for instance theatre performances, that take place in physical public space.

4.1.2. Virtual Space

Governmental control of the virtual space of the Internet also affects theatre practitioners, who aim to use the Internet in order to make the content of the theatre realm accessible for a larger audience.

As the Internet is part of the everyday life of many Singaporeans, this sphere is strategically surveilled and regulated. According to Lee, Singapore is "the first fully connected country in the world" with about 46% of adults, at least 18 years of age, and 71% or more of Singaporean students actively using the Internet in 2002 (T. Lee 2005, 76). Due to this high amount of Internet users, the authorities seek to control the Internet as a communication medium and source of information. However, governmental regulations should not threaten the Internet's economic potential, which is highly valued to retain Singapore's position as a hub. Therefore, the government aims for "a 'light-touch regulatory approach' to the Internet" by requiring each individual user to self-regulate his or her actions online (T. Lee 2005, 79). Such an approach, which closely resembles Foucault's idea of the panopticon, is particularly practicable as people control themselves automatically without external influence. Such an efficient system of control makes direct policing and surveillance by the authorities largely unnecessary.

Even though control functions automatically, Rodan states that the government is prepared to apply legal actions when self-censorship fails (Rodan 1998, 85). The government

made clear that it "makes no legal distinction between the Internet and other media", so that Singaporean law applies equally to offline and online media (Rodan 1998, 81). Next to legal regulations, structural characteristics and concrete exercises of monitoring aid the government to hold the upper hand over the Internet. Structurally, Singapore's "three main dial-up and broadband Internet Service Providers [ISPs] are directly government-owned or government-linked" (T. Lee 2005, 84–85), which enables surveillance of content and usage. Furthermore, violent or pornographic contents are symbolically banned and Internet users who provide political or religious contents need to register with the authorities. Scandals about secret scanning as well as sanctions against Internet users who published 'sensitive' content on websites or blogs demonstrate the government's capability to monitor the Internet and penalise offences conducted online. Such government activities reinforce "the 'atomizing' function of auto-regulation" among Internet users (T. Lee 2005, 85). Such overall control and surveillance of the Internet by the government, of course, also concerns theatre practitioners, theatre critics and the theatrical public that publish content on websites, blogs and in social media.

4.2.   Governmental and Self-Censorship

The censorship system is, according to Birch, "the primary tool of cultural policy and governmentality in the city-state" (T. Lee 2010, 27). While the government justifies censorship as a moral regulation in keeping with the interests of "the 'moral majority' of Singaporeans" (T. Lee 2005, 80), Bennett argues "that culture is progressively invoked as an apparatus of rule and political legitimacy, and less as a moral code" (T. Lee 2010, 28). The existence of the censorship system enables the government to shield itself from convert and overt criticism by the theatre community. As the people in strategic positions, the PAP authorities, accept the dominant symbolic system while denying (in legitimate ways) the

interest of the minorities, the dominated, censorship becomes "a form of symbolic violence" (Chong 2003, 9). Therefore, since its establishment in the 1960s, the censorship system has heavily affected theatre practitioners in their aim to create a discursive public space for the Singaporean society.

With the establishment of the censorship system, the government has introduced so-called OB-markers[36] that prohibit theatre practitioners from addressing and discussing topics considered 'sensitive'. The censorship guidelines consist of three principles:

> [P]ublications, films, videos, and other materials should not 'erode the moral fabric of society'; 'subvert the nation's security and stability'; or 'create misgivings, misunderstanding and disharmony among the various racial and religious groups, resulting in unrest and civil disorder' (Chong 2010, 239).

The OB-markers are purposely defined in an ambiguous way to leave room for interpretation on the side of the government. The ambiguity is justified by George Yeo, former head of the Ministry for Information and the Arts [MITA], in *The Straits Times* in 1999 as follows:

> There are many things you do think about before they happen and there are new things which the human mind is capable of inventing which you have got to respond to from time to time … This explains why OB markers cannot all be defined in advance (Chong 2010, 241).

Consequently, the authorities hold the final definatory power to decide whether boundaries have been crossed. This room for interpretation puts the government in an advantageous position to control the content that enters the public realm.

In the early years after its establishment, censorship was conducted by Public Entertainment License Unit [PELU] officers, a section of the Singapore Police Force, in a standardised manner (Chong 2005, 239). Chong explains that

> [m]any of these police officers were not trained in the arts and had little or no experience when it came to contextualising words or scenes which were perceived as

---

[36] Although the concept of 'OB-markers' has only evolved in the beginning of the 1990s, the topics considered 'sensitive' already existed in the 1960s.

offensive or vulgar. Hence, instead of demonstrating empathy for narrative or plot, PELU officers would respond in a straightforward and didactic manner when confronted with offensive material. Offensive words or scenes in the script would be highlighted by PELU officers and returned to the playwright or director for amendment (Chong 2005, 239).

These standardised censoring methods changed into a more professional system in the 1990s, when the government began to envision Singapore as a GCA.

Following the general idea that in the context of becoming a global city "there needs to be a 'realigning of local regulations and mindsets in line with international best practices'" (Chong 2003, 1), the government implemented a number of concrete changes as recommended by the Censorship Review Committee [CRC] Report of 1992. Changes included a retraction from the use of the ISA, modifications of the public licensing responsibilities and the introduction of the Restricted (Artistic) [R(A)] rating system, which allows sexual or homosexual contents to be staged for audiences above the age of 21. Furthermore, the standardised vetting system exercised by PELU changed when the government set up the Drama Review Committee [DRC], an expert panel consisting of artists, writers and theatre practitioners who are more suitable to evaluate artistic works than PELU officers. The establishment of the DRC allowed the government and the NAC to retract their "hand in this act of symbolic violence" (Chong 2011, 39) and to refrain from making unpopular censorship decisions. Overall, the implemented changes of the censorship system largely aimed at a "transition from formal to informal modes of regulation" (Chong 2003, 8). In time of governmental global aspirations, such changes made the censorship system appear more liberal and the PAP authorities themselves involved less directly into the censoring process. Yet, the government only shifted its censoring role from the "front regions" to the "back regions" of theatre (Chong 2010, 239).

In this context of indirect modes of regulation, the government also encourages artists to exercise self-censorship so they can conduct and manage themselves as autonomous

individuals without external imposition (T. Lee 2010, 28; Chong 2010, 241). Such an empowerment, however, did not lead to more freedom with regard to the theatre practitioners, but rather encouraged an even stricter self-censorship. In Singapore, Chong argues that the exercise of self-regulation by theatre practitioners needs to be seen "under the current local political climate [as] *the capacity to remain out of trouble*, to regulate one's self *away* from the consequences of breaching taboo issues, without clear indications as to where this breaching begins" (Chong 2003, 17). As artists try to stay 'out of trouble', self-censorship becomes an effective technique for the government to control individuals indirectly, without exercising direct force on them. By passing the responsibility of censoring on to the artists and art companies, the authorities exert symbolic violence, "a gentle, disguised form of violence when overt violence is either impossible or inconvenient" (Chong 2010, 242).

Self-censorship was, for instance, encouraged through one of the key recommendations of the CRC of 1992, which allowed theatre companies "with proven track records" to be exempted from "submitting their scripts for vetting" (Chong 2010, 240-241). Yet, CRC explicitly points out that theatre practitioners need to censor their scripts themselves and to announce when their plays contain language or themes that are not suitable to a certain age group, for instance (Chong 2010, 241). Theatre practitioners' failure to do so can lead to the repeal of their exception status. With such implicit threats in mind and an awareness for the NAC's definatory power over the OB-markers, many theatre practitioners feared that their own interpretation of the OB-markers may not match that of the NAC and therefore they still submitted their scripts for vetting. Local theatre director Jeff Chen describes theatre companies' responses to the exemption status as follows:

> The major companies replied, 'No thanks. We don't want it. Wait our heads get chopped off [sic] and we don't know how [it happened]", you know? It's like anytime you can just close down the entire company based on something [the NAC or state disapproves of]. So, really, in practice we'll still do it [submit scripts for vetting] to cover our own ass' (Chong 2003, 16).

Stacey Tan from the NAC admits:

> Yeah, in fact it's true that although some groups are exempted, they prefer to do that [continue submitting their scripts] because I think they also want a certain kind of *endorsement*. So they feel a bit better when it is read by someone who might be able give them either so-called 'defence' or 'feedback' if something happens (Chong 2003, 17).

From two different perspectives, these citations demonstrate that the ambiguity of the OB-markers lead theatre practitioners to willingly give up their freedom to self-censor by transferring the censoring back to the NAC. Such a reaction in turn supports and even legitimises the governmental censorship system, which not only restricts people's freedom but also controls the content that enters the public realm.

4.3. State Funding

The government also controls the theatre scene through funding, as "[t]he state, in the form of NAC, is the largest source of economic capital for theatre companies in Singapore" (Chong 2003, 10). The government primarily supports the theatre scene through grants with which artists and art organisations, including theatres, can cover their everyday operating costs.

NAC offers three kinds of grants: Project Grants, the Seed Grant and the Major Grant (National Arts Council 2013b). The Project Grant is the smallest grant scheme that supports artists and companies on a project and ad hoc basis (National Arts Council 2013b). The Seed Grant "supports promising new or emerging not-for-profit arts" in their "commitment to establish themselves as a professional, not-for-profit arts organisation" for up to three years (National Arts Council 2013c). The Major Grant is the most exclusive grant. It "supports the professional and artistic development of registered arts organisations, to be the hallmarks of artistic excellence in Singapore" for three or more years (National Arts Council 2013d). The two larger grant schemes "are designed to identify and nurture local theatre companies for the

international stage and as national 'flagship' companies for the global city" (Chong 2005, 560). As the government nurtures successful 'flagship companies' through the Major Grant and potential 'flagships' in their developing phase through the Seed Grant, it intervenes into the emerging theatre scene by selectively supporting particular theatre companies.

As a matter of course, the NAC is the deciding agent to select grant recipients and thereby determines which theatre organisations will be included or excluded. The selection process is, however, not transparent to the public, but lies firmly with the members of the NAC who nominate candidates and decide about the grant amount for each chosen candidate. Citing from an interview with one of the Arts Resource Panel members, responsible for nominating theatre companies, Chong shows the contradictions in the selection process. According to Chong, the allocation procedure for grants

> is transparent from application to nomination until the [decisions over the] amount of money [each theatre company receives]. The top people [of the NAC] can decide to give a theatre group more money or less, based on day, politics or ideology of the group, but we would never know (Chong 2005, 561).

Although the NAC seems to demonstrate its willingness to receive advice from "theatre practitioners, academics, and critics" (Chong 2005, 561) of the Arts Resource Panel, it does not want to lose grip over the outcome of the process.

Not only does the NAC decide who receives what kind of funding, it is also the major financial source for many theatre companies. According to Chong, there exists "with the exception of rare corporate-theatre group collaborations, very few alternative non-state funding sources" (Chong 2010, 240). Therefore, NAC can exercise pressure on theatre practitioners to follow the NAC principles and guidelines that are part of the funding agreement. Especially smaller, less-established theatre companies feel the dependency on the NAC and the asymmetrical power relationship between themselves and the NAC. Kevin Poh

from the small English-language theatre The Small Theatre explains that his company follows the NAC guidelines in order to receive further funding:

> Sometimes NAC raises questions over some of our scenes. We do our best to accommodate [NAC] because, I mean, we're not a radical theatre company out to create trouble... besides, they are also funding us (Chong 2003, 10).

The citation thus demonstrates that economic capital seems to bear "considerable weight in the negotiations over disputed scenes or content of plays" (Chong 2003, 10). As major source of funding, NAC holds much power in their relationship with the theatre companies.

In cases of non-compliance with guidelines, the NAC has the power to cut funding. Generally, the government refrains from cutting funds; however, sometimes it does. *The Business Times* reports about one relatively recent incident of funding cuts in the case of W!LD RICE, an established theatre company in Singapore:

> Theatre company Wild Rice, for instance, was allowed to stage political plays such as Wong's The Campaign to Confer the Public Star on JBJ in 2007. But it subsequently saw its government funding cut first by $20,000 in 2010 and then by $60,000 in 2011 because its works are deemed "incompatible with the core values promoted by the Government and society or disparage the Government", said the National Art Council ("Can Singapore Accept Political Art?" 2013).

Therefore, the NAC is able to withdraw funding whenever they are convinced that boundaries have been crossed, although their reasons for withdrawing might often seem ambiguous. Such rare cases of funding cuts demonstrate the NAC's authority and capability to react in cases of non-compliance to governmental rules.

The dominant role of the NAC as the key financial player in Singapore's theatre scene gives them great power in negotiation processes. Furthermore, economic capital allows the government to exercise control over theatre companies in an indirect way – as opposed to the direct forms of control, such as the detention of artists, used in former times. Even though most theatre practitioners are 'disciplined' to follow the rules of the government and

government-affiliated institutions, some theatre practitioners actively negotiate the boundaries of what is and is not allowed. The general dearth of funding for theatre, in combination with the implicit threat of funding cuts as demonstrated in some rare cases, provides the government with a powerful tool to exercise pressure on theatre practitioners to change their scripts according to the NAC's recommendations in order to receive further funding. The relationship between NAC and the theatre scene is thus embedded in an asymmetrical, yet discursive, entangled and contested field of power.

4.4.   Control by Quasi-State and Non-State Institutions

In order to exercise control "without coming across as hegemonic or overly authoritarian in the public eye" (Chong 2003, 12), the government utilises non-state and quasi-state institutions to control theatre companies. The government gives "tacit permission" to certain non-state institutions like religious institutions[37], which are yet generally aligned with dominant interests, "to check local theatre within the public sphere" (Chong 2003, 17). Furthermore watchful quasi-state institutions like the press "take it upon themselves to highlight or accentuate issues in an ideologically partisan manner" (Chong 2003, 12). Theatre practitioners are therewith indirectly controlled in accordance with governmental interests.

As a non-state institution, the powerful position of religious institutions is often used by the government to censor theatre plays that violate the OB-markers by staging religiously sensitive topics. The powerful role of religious institutions in Singapore is related to the city-state's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. According to Chong, using the mixed composition of society as a "potential source of strife and discord", supported by references to

---

[37] Religious institutions in Singapore include among others the Islamic Religious Council in Singapore (MUIS), the South Indian Jamiathul Ulama (SIJU), and the Tamil Muslim Jama'ath (TMJ).

the "race riots of 1964"[38], the government is able to easily "'stag[e] crisis' in the public

sphere" and thus exercise, what Birch calls, a "strategy of control" (Chong 2010, 242).

Through these strategies, religion in Singapore becomes as "doxa" in the sense that, following

Bourdieu, "the political sensitivity of religion is unquestioned and accepted as natural in

Singapore, a way in which the state has engaged in 'the naturalization of its own

arbitrariness'" (Chong 2010, 242). The "naturalization of religion" – which self-evidently

exists as "political taboo" in society – gives religious institutions much "political capital" and

guarantees social stability (Chong 2010, 242). Religious institutions thus occupy an

influential position in Singapore's field of power as they possess relatively high amounts of

cultural and symbolic capital. Such a position enables them to have a say in debates within the

public realm.

This essential role of religious institutions in Singapore's society is exploited by the

government. Chong explicates that

> [t]he positions of local religious institutions and their concomitant sensitivities in
> this symbolic system endows them with cultural and symbolic capital which are, in
> turn, utilised by the state to regulate unobtrusively by disguising specific interests as
> 'public' ones (Chong 2003, 19).

As religious institutions occupy a powerful position in society, "whenever they claim

sensitivities are breached", the government can easily justify the privileging of "religious

sensitivity over artistic expression" (Chong 2003, 19). By use of religious institutions, the

government can thus control and intervene into the public realm.

The government also utilises the press, a quasi-state institution, as a mechanism to

indirectly control theatre practitioners. The government-affiliated press is likely to present

controversial theatre practices or plays in a negative way and therefore able to damage the

---

[38] According to Chong, the "race riots of 1964" refer to a violent collision between local Malays and Chinese
that "erupted during a Malay-led procession celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad" on July 21, 1964,
and which caused the death of 23 people (Chong 2010, 242).

image of theatre practitioners related to such practices. This can be seen in the case of Alvin Tan and Haresh Sharma from TNS. The two theatre practitioners participated in a workshop by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal on forum theatre, "a radical technique of political theater" (K. P. Tan 2013, 189). In 1994, *The Straits Times'* article 'Two Pioneers of Forum Theatre Trained at Marxist Workshops' in New York managed to cause a public reaction. According to Chong, the article indicated that Tan and Sherma "harboured Marxist agendas", because they participated in Boal's workshop (Chong 2003, 12). In the article, Boal was described as "a Marxist ideologue" and Tan and Sherma as "Marxist sympathizers" (Peterson 2001, 46). The emphasis of the newspaper on the relation between the theatre practitioners and Marxism was effective as, not long ago, the Singapore government and the public believed to experience a Marxist conspiracy related to another theatre group, The Third Stage. Given that the arrests of people associated with the Third Stage "were still fresh in the minds of the public, mild paranoia was stirred" (Chong 2003, 12). The newspaper thus managed to damage the image of both theatre practitioners as well as TNS and to cause concerns among the public, in particular among schools in which TNS undertook theatre education. Subsequently, the government used these common public concerns to de facto ban Boal's forum theatre technique in Singapore. This example shows how the government-affiliated institution NAC and the government-controlled press exercise powerful control over Singapore's theatre scene.

Non-governmental and quasi-governmental bodies, like religious institutions or the press, allow the government to indirectly regulate theatre practitioners and control the public realm. Such control mechanisms are a useful tool for the government, especially as it envisions Singapore as global arts hub. The PAP government pragmatically and strategically controls theatre companies in Singapore by planning, surveilling and restricting access to physical and virtual public spaces, censoring plays or encouraging self-censorship, regulating

their funding as well as utilising quasi-state and non-state institutions to control them. All these various forms of control represent boundaries to theatres' aim to create an accessible democratic public space.

5. Singaporean Theatre Practitioners' Creative Negotiations of Governmental Boundaries

Local, small-scale theatre producers use various strategies to turn theatres into a public space for democratic debates about pressing social issues. Thereby, they negotiate the governmental boundaries that are related to physical space, censorship, funding, as well as the regulatory influences of quasi-state and non-state institutions. Cultural and social capital as well as artistic habitus and autonomy enable theatre practitioners to actively engage in the field of power and to resist the restrictions as well as the symbolic violence exercised by the government.

Resistance exists despite "general political compliance or the comparative lack of interest-competition in the public sphere" in Singapore (Chong 2003, 21). It exists not only as a challenge to hegemonic power, but also as an effect of it (Lo 2004, 188-189). Local Singaporean theatre practitioners actively negotiate their position and function with the government. Furthermore, they search for loopholes inside the censured and controlled realm of culture and the arts. Sometimes they even consciously cross the government-prescribed boundaries in order to make a strong statement or give a thought-provoking impulse. However, resistance "is almost always non-confrontational, many times covert and subversive" (Chong 2003, 27). Consequently, Lo argues that theatre in Singapore

> has become one of the more important arenas for political commentary. Audiences have become sensitized to the workings of irony, satire and allusion that characterize many of the works under discussion, and artists are becoming increasingly adroit in their negotiations with the authorities (Lo 2004, 4).

Theatre practitioners have tried out different theatre practices and developed various concrete strategies to circumvent or counter governmental boundaries, whereby they seem to take up a position between the government and the society. Often, different strategies are intentionally or unintentionally combined and as a result, its impacts are intensified.

5.1. Experimental, Socially-Committed Theatre

Already since the end of the 1960s, socially-committed Singaporean theatre practitioners have drawn on non-conventional, experimental practices to turn theatres into spaces in which individuals and groups can reflect on social and cultural issues which are not discussed in the public sphere or in society at large. However, the introduction of such new forms of performance clearly represented a challenge to the PAP government. The continuous attempts of local theatre practitioners and the governmental reactions to it illustrate the contested nature of the cultural realm.

In the 1970s and 1980s, two socially-committed local theatre companies aimed to open up the theatre as a space in which pressing social issues could be discussed. At the turbulent time of independence, when Singapore's landscape developed from a colonial town to a metropolis, the Practice Performing Arts School [PPAS] picked up the "radical economic and social changes like the evacuation of people, of farmers from their land for new development" (Peterson 2001, 34–35), as an artistic focus for their theatre plays. The Chinese-language theatre company PPAS, led by Kuo Pao Kun and his wife Goh Lay Kuan, created the 'Go into Life Campaign', which enabled performing artists to spend time on farms, in factories or rice fields in Singapore and Malaysia in order to witness the daily life of the ordinary people. Their experiences were developed into theatre plays like *The Stormy Season* or *The Fishing Village*. Therefore, such plays have tried to turn life into art and to make theatre a social discourse.

In the mid-1980s, similar to PPAS, the theatre company the Third Stage also regarded theatre "as a tool for social change and development" (Philippine Educational Theater Association 2013). Influenced by "the socially conscious Filipino theatre group PETA [Philippines Educational Theatre Association]", the Third Stage created plays about social and political issues that exist in Singapore (Peterson 2001, 41). *Oh Singapore* (1985) satirised

5.1. Experimental, Socially-Committed Theatre

"the widespread regulation of all aspects of civil life for which Singapore is so famous" (Peterson 2001, 41). *Esperanza* (1986) dealt with the exploitation of cheap imported Filipino domestic workers in the city-state and explored the difficult and tension-filled life of the Filipino maid Esperanza in a Singaporean middle class family, whose lady of the house constantly controls and humiliates her (Peterson 2001, 41; Takiguchi 2012b). Performances from both the Third Stage and PPAS were directly related to the social and political environment of Singapore, and not to a fictional place elsewhere in Asia.

All of these plays were generally well received and attended by audiences from Singapore and even Malaysia (Peterson 2001, 35,41).[39] Yet, such direct engagement with local issues brought the theatre practitioners into trouble with the authorities. Both socially-committed theatre companies were accused of a "so-called Marxist conspiracy, which was allegedly plotting to overthrow Lee Kuan Yew's government and replace it with a communist state" (Peterson 2001, 39). Subsequently, theatre practitioners from the Third Stage and PPAS, including Kuo Pao Kun, were detained by the government. Even though detention prevented theatre practitioners from staging social plays while imprisoned, for the time the theatre companies were active their performances opened up a space for the public to engage with pressing local issues.

Several years after such harsh courses of action against theatre practitioners, when the government finally recognised the arts' economic potential and started to foster them, Alvin Tan and Haresh Sherma from TNS aimed to introduce a new socially-committed theatre practice to Singapore. In 1993, they attended Augusto Boal's forum theatre workshops in New York in order to learn about his theatre technique. Basically, "[f]orum theater is a radical

---

[39] The audience and its composition in terms of social class or cultural background are hardly discussed in academic literature. Research about the audiences that attended the plays by the Third Stage and PPAS in the 1970s and 1980s or the TNS's performances in the 1990s would add a great deal to the understanding of theatres as public spaces in Singapore.

technique of political theater" that aims to empower the marginalised and oppressed to actively change reality for the better (K. P. Tan 2013, 189). Forum theatre plays deal with the oppression of the local community in a short, naturalistic scene with a tragic outcome (antimodel). This antimodel is repeatedly staged while the audience is required to actively engage in the performance in order to make the play end in a non-oppressive way (K. P. Tan 2013, 192). Forum theatre thus teaches the audience that there is neither a single solution to the problem nor a universally true "knowledge" or "political correctness" (K. P. Tan 2013, 194). In this sense, it functions as a "rehearsal for life" (K. P. Tan 2013, 194) that allows participants to identify their oppression and search for possible solutions within the protected realm of theatre.

As forum theatre can be applied to various forms of oppression, from oppressed working classes to internalised repressions of the bourgeois classes in capitalist societies (K. P. Tan 2013, 189, 191), Tan and Sherma aimed to apply this form to the Singaporean setting. They consciously decided to "tackle social-cultural issues, and not political issues" in order "not to jeopardize the introduction of forum theater to Singapore" (K. P. Tan 2013, 203). In this sense, the plays they created "feature[d] racial discrimination and male chauvinism as their respective oppressions" (K. P. Tan 2013, 196). *Mixed Blessings* (1993), for instance, dealt with an interracial relationship between a Chinese woman and an Indian man who were both unable to change the mind-sets of their parents – the antagonists – who objected to the relationship; subsequently, the couple broke up. The play was a short, uncomplicated antimodel scene featuring strong oppression in order to stimulate maximum responses from the audiences. According to Alvin Tan, the aim of forum theatre was to open up a "space where siblings could interact and engage each other creatively to problem-solve without the presence of the father" (K. P. Tan 2013, 200).[40] Forum theatre was thus supposed to empower

---

[40] The term 'father' here is a reference to the Singapore government.

the Singaporean audience and make them more autonomous and self-reliant to deal with racism and patriarchy. Consequently, it was also a technique that would slowly change the socio-political system from within. Singaporean theatre practitioners' engagement with socio-cultural issues demonstrated their awareness of the inadequacy of the governmental CMIO formula and the complexity of Singapore's transcultural society, even though neither they nor the government were yet conscious of such a proposal for a transcultural model of society. Nevertheless, their theatrical approaches laid the groundwork for a more concrete challenge to state multiculturalism.

Forum theatre was well perceived by the audiences. Positive written feedback to the plays demonstrated that many participants "were struck by the effectiveness of the form and enthusiastically made suggestions for future themes" (K. P. Tan 2013, 199). Such descriptions illustrate the power of forum theatre to create, in Fischer-Lichte's words, an aesthetic "experience of threshold" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 3) that can have a lasting effect on audience members. Even though forum theatre plays did not directly approach political issues, the government saw this theatre practice as a threat to the system for several reasons: Forum theatre does not follow a predefined script which makes its process and outcome unpredictable and uncontrollable, it demonstrates to the audience that multiple outcomes are possible and it rehearses with the audience for an empowering life primarily in respect to the social issue that the play discusses but also beyond (Peterson 2001, 47). Recognising forum theatre's potential to empower people, the government consequently imposed "a de facto ban on forum theatre as a genre" (K. P. Tan 2013, 200) by, on the one hand, not funding forum theatre plays, and one the other hand, requiring "a S$10,000 deposit that was refundable only if there were no trouble" (K. P. Tan 2013, 200). At this point in time, the government could easily justify the implementation of the ban as an act for the common good, in particular because the government-affiliated newspaper has fuelled concerns about TNS's Marxist

intentions among the public. Yet, the government did not want to appear authoritarian and allowed Tan and Sherma to further work as theatre practitioners in Singapore. In the GCA context, Tan and Sherma's attendance of Boal's workshop was framed as an educational trip to improve their theatrical skills and thereby to contribute to Singapore's arts scene (Peterson 2001, 48). The government thus makes clear that it fosters the arts, but pulls theatre practitioners back when they push the boundaries too far. Therefore, with the ban of forum theatre the government made explicit that the way the two theatre practitioners used forum theatre in Singapore had overstepped the mark.

In a nutshell, since the city-state's independence, socially committed theatre practitioners have tackled social issues in a direct manner to turn theatres into discursive public spaces. In response, the government has intervened and prevented such direct approaches. Yet, theatre practitioners as dominated dominators continue to creatively search for other, more subtle, ways to be able to discuss social issues within the public space of theatre.

5.2. Strategic Usage of Physical and Virtual Public Space

Theatre practitioners aim to open up the theatre as a public space to a large audience. Although their focus lies on the use of physical space, the growth of the Internet has encouraged some to explore the possibilities of virtual public space. In particular, the Internet seems to offer access to a much broader public.

5.2.1. Performative Intervention into Physical Space

Theatre practitioners see a pressing need to reach a large public. Therefore, they move out of the theatre buildings into physical public space, which Balme refers to as a "new trend towards performative intervention" (Balme 2012). To venture into various physical public spaces across Singapore is an important strategy by local theatre practitioners to make art more accessible to the large public. This has two reasons: First of all, there are only a few theatre companies in the heartlands[41] of Singapore, because the government has located most of the theatre companies and performance venues, clustered into different arts districts, in the central area of the city-state. Second, the theatre institutions within the arts districts are not well-known among the Singaporean public. Tan's survey demonstrates that the majority of the questionnaire respondents do not know about the arts districts

> even though some are aware that there are arts companies in Little India and Chinatown. Only 29% of the respondents have heard of arts performances at the Arts and Heritage Precinct; 21% have heard of performances at the Chinatown Arts District; only 13% have heard of performances in the Little India District; and a dismal 8% have heard of the Rochor Arts District (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 67).

Therefore, it seems that the implementation of arts districts in the central area within the context of the governmental GCA vision "add[s] a 'creative value' to the areas", but fails "to add 'vibrancy' to these districts" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 68). Consequently, theatre practitioners aim to reach people not only in the central cultural district, but also in the heartlands. This is accomplished by a "shift of arts performances away from formal performance venues – the conventional sites of stage and theatre – into unconventional venues of the streets and the parks" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 81). Consequently, arts spaces in Singapore expanded to new geographical areas and performance spaces.

---

[41] Heartland refers to the most populous areas. In Singapore, these are the suburban housing estates located outside of the CBD.

To bring the public in contact with the arts has also become a governmental target in recent years because Singapore as an arts hub needs inhabitants who are interested in the arts and contribute to the maintenance and development of the arts infrastructure as a paying audience. Under the NAC Outreach scheme programmes, performances were staged in parks, public transportation or shopping centres in order to bring the arts closer to the general public (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 69). The programme, as well as the locations in which these performances take place, had been determined by the government. Most performances were easily consumable and assigned the audience the status of passive observer, rather than active participant. Such art forms suit Singapore's pragmatic approach to the GCA vision well.

In contrast to the government, local theatre practitioners' aim to venture into non-conventional spaces does not simply intend to entertain the public. Rather, their target is to make clear that life and art are closely connected. On the one hand, they want to show that art is part of life and that it can appear anywhere and can be enjoyed by everyone. On the other hand, and even more importantly, they aim to demonstrate that life can be incorporated into art. Theatre practitioners try to achieve the latter goal by making the audience actively participate in the plays (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 79). By this means, theatre performances should become discursive spaces for the audiences – a goal that opposes the governmental vision of passive and consuming spectators.

Yet, to conduct discursive plays in Singapore is not easy. Due to the fact that Singapore's urban realm largely offers governmentally structured physical and symbolic public spaces, theatre practitioners have to search actively for appropriate spaces in which they can create a discursive, social space. Furthermore, performances cannot take place spontaneously in outdoor spaces. Theatre practitioners need to register and receive a license for their performances. The strategies of artistic director Kok Heng Leun from the local

theatre company Drama Box, who conducts forum theatre plays[42], demonstrate a way to realise theatre practitioners' ambitions to connect art and life and thus turn the theatre into an aesthetic space for debates about real-life issues.

By use of forum theatre plays, Kok encourages members of the audience to participate in the performance. According to Tan, he

> presents plays with a focus on current affairs and which are relevant to the community, and invites the audience onstage to present their interpretation of the issue. In doing this, Kok intends to have 'real neighbourhood people' using their real life experiences to act out the solution to the problem imposed during the play (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 79).

To conduct participatory plays, Kok prefers outdoor spaces to conventional theatre venues, because "there are no limitations and restrictions to audience participation" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 79).

Kok – similar to other theatre practitioners – is cautious about the spaces he chooses for his participatory performances in the government-planned and -controlled urban space of Singapore. Kok explains that in government-planned spaces,

> to have a real conversation is really difficult [because] there is a bigger structure under the structure…the structure is not right; the space is not right for this kind of open space [performance] (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 118).

Hereby the artistic director refers "to the potential underlying political affiliations that these places have, because they have been planned [, financed] and built by government-affiliated organisations" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 94). These spaces have become, in Lefebvre's words, "a product literally filled with ideologies" (Hee and Ooi 2003, 96) and therefore "an instrument for those in power" (Pomeroy 2011, 389). Examples are Community Clubs [CCs] and Residential Committees [RCs] in the suburban towns, which are, in the words of Kok, political rather than community spaces (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 118). Furthermore, government-

---

[42] Since 2003, forum theatre plays have officially been allowed to be performed in Singapore.

built open-air amphitheatres with their "physically rigid characteristic[s]", such as built stages or walls, also seem inappropriate (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 94). Since in all these spaces people feel they are being watched and controlled, which hinders audience and actors to fully express their opinions, such places have not been regarded as suitable to engage in productive discussions.

Kok regards "open spaces and public squares in older housing estates and suburban town centres, such as Toa Payoh, Bedok and Ang Mo Kio, [which] are frequently used as informal spaces by Singaporeans" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 91) as particularly suitable environments for conducting forum theatre plays. Contrary to the newer residential estates, which are dominated by commercialised and privatised space, the older town centres still provide places, in which people spend their leisure time and in which they meet, interact and talk to each other (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 91). The older estates can therefore be referred to as 'proto-public' spaces. According to Kok, they are "spaces where you actually allow discussion to happen" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 91). Among the old town centres, Kok prefers "neighbourhoods with families, low income groups, and the elderly – people who would be able to spare the time to watch and participate in the plays" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 94). Before choosing a performance location, Kok carefully observes the accessibility and use of potential performance spaces in order to find out "'where people walk' and whether 'people sit down…and discuss things' at these places" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 93–94). Such analyses help the artist to find an appropriate space that attracts a mixed audience group –including random passers-by – and allows a close relationship and an unimpeded debate between actor and spectator within Singapore's politicised urban environment.

In 2001, Drama Box aimed to perform its first forum theatre play *Have You Eaten?* in the town centre of one of the oldest public housing estates. The play's topic retrenchment was tailored to the location space and thus "resonated well with residents who were affected by an

economy that had to deal with the global impact of the events of September 11, 2001" (K. P. Tan 2013, 214). At a time, when forum theatre was still officially banned, the theatre company managed to receive a license from the government, yet no funding. The play was staged outdoors and for free, but each run still cost about S$30,000 (K. P. Tan 2013, 214). Without funding by the government, but through effective optimisation of resources and by use of social capital in form of support from volunteers and the possibility of free advertisement on the radio, the theatre group was able to realise the performances. Therewith, Drama Box offered local residents a possibility and a space to come together and debate amongst each other about an important issue in their lives.

By performing forum theatre plays in non-conventional outdoor spaces, Kok and his theatre company are able to change the meaning of these spaces regarding two aspects. On the one hand, the physical public space transforms into a performance space when being used for performances and, on the other hand, into a discursive social public space. This transformation is intensified since the theatre group has been returning to the same place several times a week to conduct forum theatre plays. People thus know that in "this place, there's going to be a play, there's going to be a discursive kind of environment, a place of dialogue" (S. K. L. Tan 2004, 94–95). Their active participation in the plays consequently changes their own perspective on and meaning of this particular space. Using this kind of bottom-up approach, theatre practitioners like Kok manage to create a discursive environment in an overall governmentally developed and controlled urban space.[43] Physical, performative and discursive spaces thus overlap.

---

[43] Creating places of public discourse is often difficult in countries with a relatively strong government. However, examples from other countries also show how people are able to change the meaning of urban spaces. For instance, Calhoun argues that during the Beijing Spring of 1989 in China, students' actions challenged the meaning of the Tiananmen Square, the powerful symbol of the government. For a certain period, the meaning of the place was transformed; Tiananmen Square became a "genuine place of public discourse", in which students "met in small groups of friends for discussion, large audiences for speeches and even more or less representative council for debating their collective strategy and carrying out self-government" (Calhoun 1989, 57).

5.2.2. Virtual Space as Extension of Theatrical Space

Similar to the physical public space, the virtual space of the Internet is also used to reach out to the public. Following Balme's argument that in today's mediated world, theatre becomes most efficient when linked to mass media like the Internet (Balme 2012), the virtual space extends the physical space by making the discussions and critical debates of the theatre space available for a larger public. Particularly in Singapore's controlled media landscape, in which the mainstream media closely resemble the voice of the government, the Internet offers people the possibility to represent and access a plurality of views and opinions – even though the virtual realm is controlled and surveilled by the government and especially political and religious content providers are under close scrutiny by the authorities.

In Singapore, the Internet is used by theatre practitioners, companies, critics and members of the public mainly as a medium to inform and arouse interest among a large audience. Theatre practitioners and companies represent themselves on their official website (i.a. dramabox.org, necessary.org). They inform the public about plays, workshops and projects via their website, newsletter subscriptions or their profile on social media pages like Facebook. Furthermore, weblogs by theatre critics or members of the theatrical public (i.a. The Flying Inkpot: Theatre and Dance, Buttons in the Bread) present information on theatre companies and venues, but, more importantly, theatre reviews on performances or theatre projects. Through these various formats, theatrical content is supposed to be brought to a large audience.

The Internet is also used by theatre practitioners to generate public support. For example, in April 2013, several leading members of the local arts community published a petition for "A Manifesto for the Arts", containing six statements among them "Art can be challenged but not censored" and "Art is political", on one of the world's leading petition platforms, change.org, in order for people to sign and distribute it (ArtsEngage 2013). On

June 6, the petition reached its goal of having one thousand subscribers. This case shows that theatre practitioners can reach a relatively large number of users who actively support the arts online.

Yet, despite the relatively high Internet access and usage among Singaporeans, in regard to theatre the virtual realm has rarely been used as an interactive and discursive platform. Theatre-specific weblogs and social media, particularly suitable for interaction and discussions, feature only little activity. While quite a number of online entries are 'liked', only a few people comment on the provided content. The possible reasons for the relatively low public interaction online might be a mixture of the generally small size of the theatrical public sphere, the anonymity among Internet users, which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage, the surveillance of the Internet, the auto-regulation of individual users, as well as the general public perception of the Internet as a means for personal communication and information searches, but not as useful medium "for political engagement and civic participation" (T. Lee 2005, 77).

Due to this low interaction online, theatre practitioners primarily use the Internet to inform the public, review performances and spark interest in plays, while seeking to concentrate on the exploitation of the more fruitful physical public space for creating a discursive public space. Nevertheless, the virtual space has the capacity to reinforce what theatre practitioners try to realise in physical space, namely to create an open, accessible and discursive environment for the public. Each of these two spaces has its particular target groups, which partly overlap. However, it seems that the potential of the Internet has not yet been fully exploited in Singapore. As the Internet remains a "site for political struggle and contestation" (T. Lee 2005, 78), its future remains unclear.

5.3. Cultural, Social and Symbolic Capital

In order to turn theatres into discursive public spaces, small-scale local theatre companies use their large amount of cultural capital as well as their artistic habitus and their not insignificant autonomy to negotiate the given boundaries and to resist the symbolic violence of the government (Chong 2003, 8). The possession of cultural capital enables theatres practitioners to find strategies with which they can exercise subtle forms of resistance. Chong argues that cultural capital gives theatre practitioners and playwrights the knowledge "to recognise and understand the mechanics of the censorship system" and on the basis of this knowledge to find strategies to circumvent censorship (Chong 2003, 22). With such knowledge, Singaporean theatre practitioners have been able to find loopholes in the former more rigid censorship procedure under PELU as well as today's more sophisticated censorship system under the DRC.

Before the government introduced the DRC, theatre scripts were evaluated and censored by PELU officers, who were untrained and unfamiliar with "the complexity of art" (Chong 2003, 21). The "officers followed a methodical and unsophisticated system of censorship" (Chong 2003, 21–22). According to Yeo, their approach followed "a list of 'dos' and 'don'ts' (mostly 'don'ts'): don't use the word 'fuck', […] don't simulate the sex act, don't criticise the government […], without taking into account the context of the work" (Chong 2003, 22). Having been able to understand the structures of the censorship system, playwrights found strategies to encode subversive messages in a way that distracted the censors from the essential messages in the scripts. Haresh Sharma from TNS explains that

> if you want to say something *really* subversive, you just put a lot of 'fuck','fuck', 'fuck' [the word] – here and there - and they'll just cancel, cancel, cancel. They'll go into a cancelling frenzy. Meanwhile you can write a really [politically] critical script around those 'fucks' [the word, not the PELU officers] and they would be too distracted to notice (Chong 2003, 22).

Following Bourdieu,

> such a mode of resistance hinges on the 'practice of distinction' by the bourgeoisie who possess the cultural competence to access literary codes. Such cultural competence is rewarded and reinforced when plays return from PELU superficially moderated but with their subtext undetected (Chong 2003, 22–23).

Cultural competence thus allows theatre practitioners to create and stage plays with subversive messages.

In 1992, the introduction of the DRC changed the censorship system to the disadvantage as well as the advantage of theatre practitioners. With the introduction of the DRC as an expert panel, the NAC professionalised the censorship process. As the DRC members possess cultural capital and are therefore "equipped with cultural competence to access subtext" (Chong 2003, 23), the new censorship system has nullified the former strategies of playwrights and has even enabled the government to place the burden of censoring away from the government and on the arts community itself. Yet, despite the burden of art practitioners to censor other artist's works, Chong explains that social networking – social capital – among the small Singaporean art scene, measured by the amount of people working in the field of theatre, also offers theatre practitioners advantages. He argues that since "many DRC panellists are familiar with, even acquaintances of, the playwrights and theatre companies they evaluate", these social networks enable "informal dialogue which may lead to compromise and resolutions" (Chong 2003, 23). With the changes in the censorship system, theatre practitioners thus had to change their modes and strategies to circumvent governmental boundaries.

Furthermore, even though the changes in the censorship system in 1992, following Singapore's development of the GCA vision, feature the introduction of the R(A) rating, which "offers greater leeway for more provocative plays to be staged", for instance in the sense that "[s]cripts with sexually explicit content or adult language, are becoming

increasingly common" (Chong 2003, 23), the OB-markers remain in place and sensitive issues are still censored. As the existence of censorship and the OB-markers hinder theatres to become a discursive public space in which even sensitive issues can be debated, theatre practitioners continue to draw on their substantial cultural capital and autonomy to circumvent governmental boundaries. They creatively find strategies to counter censorship, in particular when notification about offensive scenes that need to be taken out reaches the theatre company short in advance – a few hours or days before the performance is publicly shown. With this common strategy, censors hope that under time pressure theatres simply cut out the censored scenes instead of "conceiving alternative solutions to objected scenes" (Chong 2003, 25–26). The following example illustrates a possible strategy of theatre practitioners to approach such a situation.

In 1999, the two theatre practitioners Alfian Sa'at and Chong Tze Chien from TNS countered PELU's short in advance censorship notification by use of semiotic techniques that are not explicitly forbidden by the NAC. Even though the scripts were sent in for vetting three month in advance, a few days before the premiere of the play *sex.violence.blood.gore.*, PELU expressed serious concerns about several scenes "on the grounds of sexual explicitness (masturbation), religious and ethnic sensitivities" (Chong 2003, 25). Consequently, the theatre practitioners were faced with a decision to "cancel the play and refund the tickets (a potential mode of protest) or 'go on with a certain integrity'" (Chong 2003, 26). TNS agreed on staging the play with some unusual modifications. Alvin Tan illustrates the theatre group's solution:

> When we got to the first censored scene, the [hall] lights went on and the general manager gave an announcement and read the letter [from PELU regarding the censored scenes to the audience]. What was rehearsed was still staged but in *fast-forward* with *no text* – so just physical actions on stage. We photocopied the censored text and distributed it to the audience so they knew what was happening. You [PELU] censored the performance but not the text! …The second part where it was censored, again, they [actors] all stopped. The lights didn't come on this time and the play went in fast-forward but they [audience] could refer to the [censored] text (Chong 2003, 26).

While "complying only with explicit and specific objections while disregarding the unsaid or taken-for-granted expectations of such objections" (Chong 2003, 25), the theatre practitioners used its cultural competence and cultural capital as well as its not insignificant autonomy to come up with its own solution, rather than to modify the scene according to the NAC's wishes. It "disrupted its own performance to call the audience's attention to censorship" in a calm and matter-of-fact manner, in order not to "incite audience-anger towards PELU or NAC" (Chong 2003, 26). With this strategy, TNS aimed at revealing to the public how censorship is exercised by PELU. In this sense, the theatre company was able to exercise resistance against the symbolic violence within the given boundaries and to demonstrate to the public the dominant power structures.

While not every theatre company reveals its solution to NAC censorship as obvious to the audience as TNS's did in his play *sex.violence.blood.gore*, theatre practitioners need a performance-sensitive audience. Especially when censorship is criticised more indirectly, for instance by replacing the censored with an irrelevant scene, the audience needs to be "aware of the situation [in order to] appreciate the 'indirect criticism' levelled at NAC"; otherwise, indirect criticism and "resistance goes unregistered" as the audience believes the scene to be part of the original script (Chong 2003, 25). Interestingly, Chong argues that audience members who recognise and support the resistance of theatre companies increase the latter's social and symbolic capital. The "privileged knowledge" about such indirect forms of criticism on stage might

> act as a social bond between the resistors and those who support them, strengthening identification and unity within the theatre circle – generating social capital and 'respect' (symbolic capital) - to distinguish more clearly the line between theatre practitioners and the state (Chong 2003, 25).

A sensitive and supporting audience is thus essential for local theatres. The institutionalisation of theatre companies thereby helps them to develop and sustain a theatrical public sphere of

interest, debate and in the best case attendance (Balme 2012). Consequently, high amounts of social and symbolic capital empower theatres and enable them to build up more social, symbolic or even economic capital, which gives them additional power to resist the symbolic violence of the government.

By drawing on their cultural capital and autonomy, theatre practitioners have constantly found ways to approach the censorship system that hinders theatres from becoming a discursive public space. For them, discussions about social issues, even if they touch upon sensitive topics or might offend conservative members of the public, must take place. Especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious city-state like Singapore, the 'supportive', 'protective' space of the theatre lends itself to such discourse. Theatre practitioners' first step towards actively approaching the issue of censorship is the revelation of the censorship procedure that is generally hidden from the public eye. This strategy should encourage discussion among the public about censorship as a form of symbolic violence and the kind of content that is censored; thereby it should turn the theatre into a space in which people can discuss social and socio-political issues.

5.4.   Non-Governmental Funding

Small-scale local theatre companies in Singapore possess little economic capital and thus depend on financial support. Since many local theatre companies rely on governmental funding and therewith are required to follow the rules and regulations of the NAC, they have increasingly turned towards funding from non-governmental institutions, which offer theatre companies more negotiation power with the NAC to realise their socially-committed plays. According to Chong, finding external sources of funding is "the most effective means of

countering the threat of state-withdrawal of economic capital", a common governmental strategy in recent years (Chong 2003, 11).

In particular, since the government has paid much attention towards the arts in the GCA context, there is a good case to believe that its interest in arts might contribute – probably contrary to its intentions – to an increasing growth of non-governmental sponsors. Even though alternative funding is not common in Singapore yet, there are a few theatre companies which have successfully tied up with corporate sponsors. Such alternative sources of funding "may not alter significantly the positions of theatre companies in the theatre field but successful corporate tie-ups may help diminish the threat of economic capital withdrawal by the state" (Chong 2003, 12) and offer a means to counter the power asymmetry between theatre companies and the NAC.

The opportunities to receive grants from non-governmental sponsors are larger for well-established theatre companies than for smaller ones, because the former have more cultural, social and symbolic capital. Their members possess cultural capital in the form of knowledge and skills, social capital as they are known among the Singaporean theatre scene, the NAC and society, as well as symbolic capital in the form of their strong artistic reputations and recognition. On the contrary, smaller theatre companies "may not have the necessary cultural and social capital to seek alternatives when state grants are used as a tool to pressure them into meeting the play and content requirements of state agencies" (Chong 2010, 240). Artistic director Benny Lim from The Fun Stage explains that

> [s]maller companies like us can't get regular corporate sponsorship because we are not a big name, and [because] we are new. No one has heard of us, unlike TNS […] or TheatreWorks… [hence] we rely on NAC's project grants quite a lot (Chong 2003, 10).

Therefore, possessing a high amount of capitals and being a well-established institution in Singapore increases a theatre company's chance to find non-governmental sponsorship.

In 2011, W!LD RICE, one of Singapore's leading professional theatre companies was able to receive corporate funding from MAN Investments after the NAC withdrew their funding shortly before the festival was supposed to start. In a speech at the National University of Singapore, artistic director Ivan Heng explained the situation when NAC withdrew their funding for the festival:

> The National Arts Council decided not to fund the MAN Singapore Theatre Festival four month before the festival went on, but we decided to continue here because I could not not let this festival go on … because like in any repressive regime, left or right, they try and suppress artists […] from speaking the truth (Heng 2011, min 30:08-30:31).

Since Heng regards the Singapore Arts Festival as essential to the local people to tell their own stories about being Singaporean, he decided to continue with the festival. Heng explains how he overcame the funding cuts from the NAC:

> A week later, we came home and I didn't know what happened, it was, you know, just amazing because we got a phone call from MAN Investments and they said we are looking to sponsor a project and I said waoo, ok, and I didn't even know it was MAN Investments I just thought, you know, we pitched blind to a bank, to an unknown investment firm X – it was called the X Singapore Festival – and we explained [MAN Investment] the […] power of the festival and its literary roots, [and] that this [festival] will going to be the literature of Singapore and is the literature of Singapore (Heng 2011, min 41:04-41:35).

MAN Investments' sponsorship allowed W!LD RICE to realise its festival even as the NAC expressed its discontent and cut the funding. Thereby, W!LD RICE's reputation as leading Singaporean theatre company might certainly have helped them to receive sponsorship. With alternative funding, the theatre company was thus able to make the festival a space for society to watch and discuss local stories of Singapore. The success of the festival was enormous. According to Heng, "this festival finally enough became the most popular festival ever. Ninety percent of its tickets were sold out. Twenty four out of 32 performances were sold out – packed to the rafters" (Heng 2011, min 30:33-30:44). Such popularity of the festival among the public shows that theatre in Singapore can function as public space to debate social issues

that are essential to society, even if the stories and issues presented have actually not been approved by the government. In Singapore, non-governmental sponsorship can thus contribute to the theatre's development into a public space.

As the government's GCA vision has opened up greater opportunities for theatre companies to be able to receive alternative funding, the NAC often finds itself in a dilemma. On the one hand, it aims to support the arts; on the other hand, it seeks to control the content that enters the public realm. However, it knows that a withdrawal of economic capital does not necessarily hinder theatre practitioners in staging their plays, because at least well-established theatre companies might be able to be granted non-state funding. The case of TNS' theatre piece *ABUSE SUXX!!!* from 2001, for instance, brought the NAC into a difficult situation. Dealing with stories about various forms of abuse, the play received an R(A) rating. Still, the NAC was concerned about scenes which showed "a young girl's sexual encounter with an older man [or] homosexual content" (Chong 2003, 15). Due to the fact that TNS was a 'flagship' company and able to receive funding from non-governmental sponsors, NAC did not cut funding as this would have been highly controversial, yet registered its objections by withdrawing its "official endorsement" (Chong 2003, 15). The NAC continued to fund the play, but decided to remove its logo from all publicity materials. Therewith, the NAC "withdraws symbolic capital in recognition of the political culture, thus registering with theatre companies their reservations", while simultaneously, it demonstrates its dedication to theatre and its objective to promote the arts by supporting TNS financially (Chong 2003, 15). Chong considers this action as "a trade-off between symbolic and economic capital" (Chong 2003, 15). Since TNS enjoys a relatively high reputation among the public and would be able to receive non-governmental funding, the trade-off between symbolic and economic capital has shown the NAC's difficulty to completely control the theatre companies and, at the same

time, has demonstrated the power of theatre companies to realise their goals despite governmental boundaries.

To summarise, the possibility of non-governmental funding offers at least well-established theatre companies in Singapore, such as TNS or W!LD RICE, more possibilities and power in the negotiation process with the NAC and makes them less vulnerable to the withdrawal of funding. When theatre companies receive – or at least would be able to receive – non-governmental funding, it becomes difficult for the NAC to indirectly exercise control via the threat of funding cuts. Alternative funding therefore gives theatre companies more freedom to realise performances that are relevant to society, yet which would be objected to by the NAC, such as W!LD RICE's festival featuring local stories. By making it difficult for the NAC to strictly control the content that enters the public realm, it provides theatre practitioners with an important opportunity to turn theatres into discursive spaces.

The myriad ways Singaporean theatre practitioners have actively negotiated governmental boundaries have begun to create a democratic public space. They have utilised different experimental theatre practices, exploited physical and virtual space, and strategically used resources and capitals to circumvent or counter governmental boundaries and thus opened up a space in which the public can meet, exchange and discuss pressing social issues. Ironically, Singaporean soft authoritarianism itself has stimulated and allowed this development.

6. Transcending State Multiculturalism in Singapore

One social issue that theatre practitioners have effectively utilised to achieve their goals is multiculturalism. With the CMIO formula[44] that categorises individuals into four races and assigns each individual the single language that is socially identified with his or her respective racial group (e.g. Mandarin for the Chinese race)[45], the authorities exercise what Baumann terms a "dominant discourse" by

> imagin[ing] differences of 'culture' to be homologous with differences of 'ethnic' identity and often 'community', defined on quasi-biological lines. In doing so, this discursive praxis reduces both culture and 'ethnic' difference to reified essences (Baumann 1997, 209).

Theatre practitioners have repeatedly aimed at transcending the firmly established governmental vision by making theatre a public space in which the official idea of multiculturalism can be burst open and the plurality of cultures, races, communities and languages, which are all essential parts of people's identity, can be brought forth in order to explore a uniquely Singaporean identity.

Following Homi Bhabha's idea of a fluid and processual "nation-space", in which "history [...] is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image" (Bhabha 1990, 3), Lo argues that the nation-space provides theatres as collective imaginings, "ways of critiquing [and challenging] hegemonic narratives of nationalism, and articulating and assessing alternative ways of scripting the nation" (Lo 2004, 30). In this sense, Singaporean theatre practitioners aim to offer a space in which official multiculturalism, which "keeps the different racial communities peacefully apart rather than to draw them dynamically together" (Kuo 1998, 53), can be transcended and alternative forms of identity

---

[44] The CMIO formula is a remnant of British colonialism. It is a social construct and is based on "the myth of racial and cultural purity" (Lo 2004, 27).
[45] These languages can also be termed "intracommunal link languages" as they embrace the various dialect groups under one official language (Lo 2004, 24).

can be imagined. In effect, local theatre practitioners aim to counter this "dominant discourse" with Baumann's idea of the plurality of "demotic discourses" that "[question and dissolve] this equation between 'culture', ethnos, and 'community'" and renders 'community' and 'culture' "into terms of active negotiation and debate" (Baumann 1997, 209). Since the 1980s, Singaporean theatre practitioners have been searching inside as well as outside of the country for ways to transcend official multiculturalism.

In the 1980s, theatre practitioners from the increasingly emerging local – in particular English-language – theatre companies[46] started to explore the plurality of languages and races within Singapore itself in search for a Singaporean tongue and a Singaporean cultural identity. Up to this point in time, theatre reflected the linguistic division along the racial governmental lines and the purity of language. The dramaturgic techniques Singaporean theatre practitioners employed to achieve their aim to open up a space for society to develop a Singaporean identity, of course, touched upon a multiplicity of barriers and therewith overlapped with strategies that can be assigned to postcolonial theatre practices.[47]

Stella Kon's play *Emily of Emerald Hill* (1985) approached the issue of a unique Singaporean cultural identity which could tie together the ethnically-mixed society beyond the CMIO multiculturalism. The play emerged as *the* Singaporean play and its protagonist Emily personifies Singapore ethnically and linguistically. Emily belongs to the Peranakan

---

[46] According to Wong, English-language theatre was dominated by colonial and expatriate groups from Britain since the early nineteenth-century. Plays were performed by English actors and attended by English audiences (K. H. Wong 2014a). Yet, in the 1980s, with increasing English proficiency among the Singaporean population, a number of local English-language theatre emerged. Some of them staged Western plays, others actively engaged in bringing local scripts on stage (K. H. Wong 2014b).

[47] According to Pavis, "postcolonial theatre" is a subform of "syncretic theatre" (Regus 2009, 42). Like Pavis, Balme regards syncretic theatre as a theatre form that is created by indigenous theatre practitioners as a result of the interaction between 'Western'/'European' theatre traditions and indigenous forms of representation (Balme 1995, 1). To analyse the strategies that Singaporean theatre practitioners develop to overcome former colonial influences and dominance would go beyond the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, an analysis of Singaporean theatre in respect to postcolonial theatre techniques might need a deeper exploration of Balme's notion of 'postcolonial theatre'. Since Singapore's 'indigenous' society itself is not culturally homogeneous but multiplex and complex in its composition, there exist not one but many indigenous forms of theatrical representations that would need to be taken in consideration when analysing postcolonial theatre in the case of Singapore.

culture, an ethnic mix between Chinese and Malay, which is often identified as the "indigenous 'Singaporean' culture in a society that is ethnically stratified" (Lo 2004, 111). Kon's choice of a protagonist from a racially-mixed culture challenges the officially-defined boundaries of the four ethnic categories and shows the cultural and racial variety within Singapore. Linguistically, too, Emily skilfully switches between Standard English and local Singaporean English (Singlish). The play therewith

> subverts the authority of Standard 'Oxbridge' English and celebrates the range of diversity of the Singaporean English spectrum, which incorporates the linguistic characteristics of the many ethnic communities in Singapore (Lo 2004, 111).

Such a strategy of subversion of Standard English could also be used in postcolonial theatre, but is not limited to the involvement with colonialism. By presenting a variety of linguistic, ethnic and cultural belongings, *Emily* critiques the dominant discourse about multiculturalism and presents alternative ways of imagining the nation.

In 1988, Kuo Pao Kun, the pioneer of multilingual theatre in Singapore, not only represented the linguistic diversity of Singapore on stage, but strategically used multilingualism to challenge other governmental boundaries. In his play *Mama Looking for Her Cat* (1988), Kuo represented all four official languages as well as Chinese dialects and, according to Ren, critically reflected on the linguistic gaps between generations caused by governmental language policies (Ren 2006, 96-98). Therewith, he opened up a space in which questions of identity and belonging could be explored. The theatre as a space for socio-political discussions could thus take over the "function of a laboratory in the sense of Brecht as an 'experimental stage to preview' a better society" (Balme 1995, 131).[48]

While in the 1980s theatre practitioners looked within the country for a Singaporean identity, since the mid-1990s they have increasingly turned "towards identity issues beyond

---

[48] "eine Laboratoriums-funktion im Brechtschen Sinn als 'experimentelle Vorschau-Bühne' für eine bessere Gesellschaft" (Balme 1995, the author's translation).

the boundaries of the nation" (Lo 2004, 175) when aiming to transcend multiculturalism. Kuo was one such theatre practitioner. He was born in China in 1939 and enjoyed a Chinese education. At the age of ten, he emigrated to Singapore. In 1976, he was imprisoned without trial for four years for his socially-committed theatre practices which were part of the 'Go into Life Campaign'. After his release from detention, "Kuo moved away from a single-minded belief in theatre as a means to reform society to a more complex understanding of art's relation to society, one not tied to specific ideological goals" (Wee 2004, 775). He experimented with various theatre forms and became known as one of Singapore's most famous artists.

Kuo's play *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1995) deals with the protagonist's search for deeper meaning and identity amidst "the inescapability of servitude to the state and to global markets" (Wee 2004, 773). According to Wee, the protagonist's fragmented life "[a]s a minority Chinese (ethnically, religiously and culturally) and as a eunuch rising to the pinnacle of power and achievement" in many ways resembles that of Singaporeans (Wee 2004, 784). Through the protagonist, Kuo aims to show that the search for a deeper meaning must go on – even outside of one's home. Therewith, he encourages the Singaporean audience to regain an empowered subjectivity that they have largely lost to capitalism. Such an empowered subjectivity would enable them to overcome the violence that Singapore's politico-economic realm practices on the realm of culture and to arrive at an "Open Culture" (Wee 2004, 788).

According to Kuo, "*Open Culture* contemplates a transcendence of the universal from race and tradition-bound communities to embrace a diverse global community" (Kuo 1998, 60). Singaporeans are particularly suited to embrace that Open Culture because "[h]istory has proved that there is no way they could reconnect back to their former parent cultures per se. However, having lost their own – cut loose and therefore set free – they have thus become

natural heirs to all cultures of the world" (Kuo 1998, 61). Therefore, Singaporeans should free themselves from the government-administered multiculturalism and reach out, via an earnest engagement with their own as well as other cultures, "to pioneer a uniquely new cultural richness" (Kuo 1998, 61). Kuo regards theatre that 'Transcends'[49] as an essential element for the creation of a new culture because it will go beyond the barriers of "race, culture and language" (Wee 2004, 778). According to him, it is primarily in the "vast *Play Space*" of culture "that the deeper human issues and problems are identified, analysed, debated, explored, experimented with, and resolved" (Kuo 1998, 60).

With the aim of creating a new culture that is able to transcend the many cultural fragments of Singapore, Kuo turned to allegorical theatre. According to him, allegorical theatre is able to "transcend […] not only state censorship […] but also has the capacity to transcend specific reality because it uses symbols and signs, usually from classical sources, that enjoy some measure of universal understanding" (Wee 2004, 779). Following this idea, in *Descendants*, Kuo offers "[m]ultiple cultural attachments and identities […] as a goal to aspire to rather than a problem resolved" (Wee 2004, 788). The play thus transcends not only the Singaporean reality of multiculturalism by demonstrating that identity can be imagined in multiple ways, but also transcends governmental boundaries by use of allegorical theatre. The play illustrates Kuo's "fractured but empowering humanism" (Wee 2004, 793).

Kuo is not the only theatre practitioner who seeks to transcend. Ong Keng Sen also aimed to reconsider the diversity of Singapore's identity in a larger context through his intercultural theatre production *Lear* (1997), which he was able to realise by immense

---

[49] According to Wee, the theatre that "Transcend" is part of Kuo's idea of "the Theatres that Remember, that Recreate, that Activate and that Transcend" (Wee 2004, 778). Thereby, the theatre that 'Remembers' refers to former theatre forms such as folk theatre. Yet, it is wounded and difficult to rediscover because the English education system has largely erased the culturally and literally diverse landscape of Singapore. The theatre that 'Recreates' is a highly rebellious and creative theatre form. It mixes elements from 'Asia' and the 'West', past and present, as well as different languages. The theatre that 'Activates' has been embodied by "the progressive theater that existed from the 1930s to the 1970s, now gone because of substantial depoliticisation" (Wee 2004, 778).

financial support from the semi-governmental Japan Foundation Asia Center [JFAC]. Ong chose Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Lear* as a source of inspiration for his play because it was neutral and universal to the twenty-five participating Asian actors from as many as six Asian countries (Bharucha 2001, 113). His ambition was to enable a number of Asian practitioners from various artistic disciplines "to enter other Asian peoples' cultures to have a vision for a larger Asian culture" (Wee 2004, 789). Therefore, *Lear* aimed to represent different performance styles and different languages at the same time on stage without neutralising any of them. Fischer-Lichte calls such a theatre technique "interweaving cultures in performance" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 1).[50] According to her, *Lear* explores the state of in-betweenness and creates a threshold experience for the actors and the audiences.[51] Due to the "multiple states of in-betweenness", such performances open up a space for various cultures to explore a new Asian identity that goes "beyond the scope of any single participating culture" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 17). More precisely, such performances "are able to constitute new realities – realities of the future, where the state of being in-between [sic] describes the 'normal' state of the citizens of this world" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 17). In this sense, Ong's intercultural performance should offer Singapore's diverse society a space to imagine a new

---

[50] Fischer-Lichte considers "interweaving" as more appropriate than the term "intercultural", because intercultural theatre or intercultural performances bear the legacy of its Western origin. The term is problematic because, on the one hand, it usually presupposes as a mixture of Western and non-Western cultural elements; on the other hand, it requires the "feasibility of clearly recognizing the cultural origins of each element and distinguishing between what is 'ours' and what is 'theirs'" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 14). Contrary to the concept "intercultural", the term "interweaving" bears no historical baggage (Fischer-Lichte 2010b; Fischer-Lichte and Bharucha 2011). Yet, Rustom Bharucha has a different view on the terms "intercultural"/"interweaving" than Fischer-Lichte. While he also regards the historical burden of the concept "intercultural theatre" as problematic, he distinguishes the latter term from the important concept of "interculturalism" and questions Fischer-Lichte's need for the invention of a new category, namely the "interweaving performance cultures", that supplant "interculturalism" and its problems (Fischer-Lichte and Bharucha 2011). For Bharucha, "intercultural practitioners have great […] flexibility in exploring – and subverting – different modes of citizenship across different national contexts, through subjectivities that are less mediated by the agencies of the state" (Peterson 2003, 80). "Interculturalism" remains Bharucha's preferred term.

[51] More explicitly, Fischer-Lichte explains the threshold experience for the actors and the audiences as follows: The performers on stage shall undergo a "process of losing their identities" that should create a new identity "which was neither one nor the other but both at the same time" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 12). At the same time, the audiences should experience and reflect on "a particular kind of liminal experience, embracing fascination as well as alienation, enchantment as well as reflection" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 12), which should relocate them "into a state of in-betweenness […] that is, an effect similar to that of globalization" (Fischer-Lichte 2010b, 13).

Asian identity beyond the CMIO formula. According to Ong, New Asia is represented in the play by the Old Daughter (performed by a Beijing opera actor), who at the end of the performance frees herself from the baggage of the past by killing and thus transcending the Old Man, her father (performed by a Japanese Noh actor) (Wee 2004, 791). With reference to Singapore's occupation by the Japanese during the Second World War, Ong's play particularly seeks to free Singaporeans from this specific historical colonial burden.

Despite Ong's ambitions to transcend state multiculturalism, critics like Bharucha and Wee argue that *Lear* does not succeed in transcending. Instead, Ong's play reproduces "a Chinese-Japanese-Indonesian-Thai (CJIT) multiculturalism, which echoes Singapore's official CMIO multiculturalism, along with the national modernist use of cultural memory" (Wee 2004, 792). Additionally, the use of English subtitles, the lingua franca of multicultural Singapore, ironically overpowered Ong's ambition to feature the variety of languages that corresponded to the respective performance traditions in his intercultural performance piece (Bharucha 2001, 112). Furthermore, Bharucha and Wee criticise that *Lear's* ending, in which New Asia (Old Daughter) emerges through 'killing' its past, in other words its postcolonial legacy (Old Man), is not a successful strategy to transcend, because the way to the future always needs to be connected to the past. Ong's approach to transcending thus makes the two critics question the possibility that Singapore will ever free itself "from the cultural, historical, and political baggage of the past" (Bharucha 2001, 119–120) and to "gain a new cosmopolitan identity" (Wee 2004, 792), which does not simply consume the others, but develops a real engagement and a "critical openness to the cultures of the world" (Bharucha 2001, 124).

Bharucha and Wee, Singaporean himself, seem to follow a transcultural approach when they illustrate that Ong's inability to transcend multiculturalism is related to the complex entanglements between his identity and the system. Ong belongs to a younger

generation of cosmopolitan Singaporean artists who, unlike Kuo, have internalised the dominant discourse of multiculturalism and the influences of capitalism. Ong was born in 1963 and grew up as a comfortably English-speaking Asian in a cosmopolitan Singapore. Therefore, the critics argue that he is unable to recognise "the rational, capitalist West in Singapore that has reinscribed his Chinese roots" (Wee 2004, 794). Ong's play demonstrates his struggle to work against the disparities of the global economy, to recognise cultures – including those within Singapore – in their states of fragmentation and vulnerability, and to explore cultural connections, which reach in a complex way to a varied past of transcultural entanglements. Still, the multiplicity of interpretations of his play made it powerful in the sense that it was not seen as a threat to the government. *Lear* might thus successfully transcend the concrete governmental boundaries of cultural control.

In the processual nation-space of Singapore, theatre practitioners' "demotic discourses" have not only countered the "dominant discourse" of multiculturalism, but more importantly have complemented it. Their demotic discourses have created an 'alternative', uniquely Singaporean, public sphere. Within the realm of theatre, language, ethnicity, culture and thereby the larger question of a Singaporean identity beyond the CMIO formula was actively explored by looking inside and outside of the country. In search of a Singaporean identity that is embedded within a larger cultural context, Kuo's allegorical theatre has successfully shown that state multiculturalism can be transcended. He thus opened up the theatre as a discursive public space in which Singaporeans were able to explore a variety of identities and cultural attachments. Kuo's theatre that transcends also inspired other theatre practitioners. Yet, while Kuo was able to take an outside stance, Ong was unable to recognise the way in which the government has inscribed its vision onto his mind. However, Ong's act of trying to transcend multiculturalism illuminates the edges of the space that theatre practitioners are trying to open up. His play makes the boundaries, in which Singaporeans are

caught, visible to the Singaporean public, at least to some Singaporean members of the audience like Wee. Even more, it shows the necessity of theatre to become a space in which the entanglement between individuals and the system can be torn apart and laid open in order to transcend the Singapore locality which practices violence on the individual bodies in order to finally arrive at Kuo's 'Open Culture'. Transcending thus represents a powerful strategy for theatre practitioners, yet the danger of what is being transcended is inherent in it.

7. Conclusion

Since Singapore's independence, theatre practitioners have been trying to find ways to turn theatres into a discursive public space despite the powerful position of the soft authoritarian government in the national social space. Their aim is even more important as Singapore's city space provides more physical, symbolic and pseudo-public spaces than social public spaces in which people are allowed to embrace agency and debate issues of social and cultural importance. As dominated dominators, possessing not insignificant cultural capital and autonomy, small-scale local theatre producers have constantly challenged and negotiated the boundaries set by the government, the dominant dominator. Even though the soft authoritarian government exercises substantial control over its citizens, the physical space and cultural expression, the boundaries it sets are necessarily ambiguous. It is this ambiguity that allows theatre practitioners to actively experiment and test these boundaries.

The government has often clamped down on theatre practitioners' efforts to turn the theatre into a public space in a relatively short time. While in the 1970s and 1980s theatre practitioners were detained for socially-committed theatre practices which criticised governmental policies, this changed when the authorities started to envision Singapore as a GCA. Consequently, the government found itself in a struggle as it wished, on the one hand, to foster the arts in order to develop a creative city; on the other hand, it still wanted to control the kind of art presented to the public. The government prefers art that is easily consumable rather than controversial and challenging. Therefore it tries to control local theatre companies which do not refrain from discussing common social issues, including sensitive issues like religion, by use of indirect mechanisms. Funding cuts is one useful way that makes it difficult for theatre practitioners to realise certain performances such as forum theatre, as they largely depend on governmental financial support. Such indirect control mechanisms take place

behind the scenes and thus enable the government to sustain Singapore's image as an attractive, creative city for global businesses, talents and tourists.

Interestingly, in the GCA context, the government has even tried to co-opt theatre forms that were originally conceptualised as challenges to the government. In 2003, the government officially revived forum theatre about a decade after its ban. According to Tan, in order to develop Singapore into a creative and vibrant environment, "[q]ualities that were once subversive are being domesticated, absorbed, and integrated [to] provide support for an authoritarian capitalist system" (K. P. Tan 2013, 211). In this sense, forum theatre's

> emancipatory categories of critical reflexivity, alternative imagination, free play, creative solutions, and enthusiastic participation — once feared by an authoritarian government unwilling to let its citizens think for themselves and act without its script — have become desired as factors of production in the higher stages of capitalist development (K. P. Tan 2013, 211).

In 2003, forum theatre thus became a desired theatre technique and has since been performed in venues like The Esplanade. Yet, the once radical theatre form turned into an apolitical product for consumption when co-opted by the government as part of the creative economy. While this co-optation gives theatre practitioners "more room for ideological negotiations", at the same time it also reduces the "emancipatory power of their art" (K. P. Tan 2013, 211).

Even despite governmental attempts to make art an object of consumption or at least control it via censorship or other forms of regulations so that it does not present a threat, local theatre practitioners have continued to find ways to turn theatres into a public space. Mainly in non-confrontational ways, they have developed strategies to circumvent the boundaries set by the government. Physical and virtual public spaces have been utilised to make theatre accessible to a large number of people. In Singapore's controlled physical and symbolic public space, theatre practitioners like Kok Heng Leun from Drama Box are continually searching for particular spaces in which the public feels comfortable engaging in democratic

debates, therefore turning the meaning of these places into social public spaces – at least temporarily. Furthermore, cultural, social and symbolic capital has been used to circumvent and counter the censoring of scenes or, at least, reveal to the audience the usually hidden mechanisms of censorship. Well-established theatre companies have also increasingly sought for non-governmental funding in order to decrease their financial dependency on the NAC and to have more freedom to stage controversial plays. Through these strategies, which have mostly been combined in order to intensify their impact, the theatre is becoming a discursive space in which people can meet and negotiate issues that are important to them.

Alongside finding concrete strategies to allow the staging of plays that discuss and criticise social matters or governmental policies, theatre practitioners also began to realise other ways to negotiate social matters. Since the 1980s, theatre practitioners have been creating plays that seek to transcend state multiculturalism. The dominant discourse of the government that essentialises culture and categorises the population along the lines of the CMIO formula was challenged by the demotic discourse in which theatre practitioners engaged. In various plays, theatre practitioners aimed to transcend the CMIO multiculturalism by exploring on stage the multiplicity of languages and (mixed) races in Singapore, but also by looking through practices of allegorical and intercultural theatre outside of the country for cultural attachments and identities. In this way, their plays initiated a search for a Singaporean identity inside and outside of Singapore. All these plays aim to show alternative ways of imagining nationhood and identity in a city-state that envisions people from different racial backgrounds living together in harmony rather than engaging with one another to develop a unique Singaporean identity.

With these plays that transcend state multiculturalism, theatre practitioners have found a powerful tool to engage in social discourses without provoking the government. For the government, it is difficult to censor and control plays that do not touch upon governmental

boundaries. It is, in particular, the multiplicity of statements and interpretations of allegorical and intercultural performances that makes these theatre forms powerful enough to survive even despite governmental control. Even though it is not always easy for theatre practitioners who grew up within the system to transcend the CMIO multiculturalism, their plays keep the discussion on multiculturalism alive by illuminating the boundaries and emphasising the entanglements of individuals with governmental policies, consequences of which can be seen in the theatre performance. Transcending rather than directly addressing social and socio-political issues thus seems to represent a powerful tool for theatre practitioners to open up the space of the theatre for social encounters and debates in Singapore's national social space, despite the fact that it is largely controlled by the soft authoritarian government.

This analysis of theatre as public space in Singapore demonstrates the way the soft authoritarian government regulates the arts, but even more it demonstrates how theatre practitioners challenge governmental boundaries and negotiate the function of theatre with the government. The Singaporean theatre scene is thus an active agent in Singapore's field of power. Yet, more research is needed on the various strategies and theatre forms that Singaporean theatre practitioners use and develop to circumvent governmental control. Furthermore, since the theatre functions as a public space, research must also explore the intended and the real audience composition of theatre performances as well as the larger theatrical public sphere in Singapore. In addition, further investigations into possibilities for theatre practitioners and the theatrical public sphere to use the governmentally-controlled space of the Internet are indispensable to this field of research. Particularly the way that new social media, discussion forums or theatre blogs can expand the public space of theatres and provide a platform for social debates to a large audience is highly interesting is this context. The way other art forms or (art) institutions are challenging governmental control and searching for a way to establish a public space for the Singaporean society would surely

enrich our understanding of soft authoritarianism in general. The large question of how theatres function as public spaces and the various questions related to it must also be asked and explored in other cultural contexts.

In Singapore, theatres are becoming an essential institution in society. Even though the theatre cannot function as an institution "outside the direct control of the state" (Calhoun 1989, 70), which Calhoun sees as important for every society to have, the method of transculturality still makes it possible to view theatres as located not outside, but in between and in many ways entangled with governmental control and the society. More explicitly, they seem to be placed between their inner tensions – in the sense that performances are always creating instability – and outer tensions – generated through governmental control. Within this state of in-betweenness, theatres have created an "alternative public" (Fraser 1990, 67) sphere to the dominant discourse of governmental multiculturalism by opening up a realm in which Singapore's racially and culturally mixed society can negotiate and reflect on social issues and society at large. Similar to the way the Singapore government searches for its own "art of being global" (Ong 2011, 12), theatre practitioners creatively and dynamically craft their own 'art of being global'.

III. Bibliography

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. London: Verso.

ArtsEngage. 2013. "A Manifestor for the Arts." *Change.org*. http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/a-manifesto-for-the-arts-3.

Balme, Christopher B. 1995. *Theater im postkolonialen Zeitalter: Studien zum Theatersynkretismus im englischsprachigen Raum*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

———. 2008. *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*. 4th ed. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

———. 2010. "Playbills and the Theatrical Public Sphere." In *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, edited by Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

———. 2012. "Public Sphere and Contemporary Performance." *Critical Stages: The IATC Webjournal*, no. 7. http://archive.criticalstages.org/criticalstages7/entry/Public-Sphere-and-Contemporary-Performance?category=2#sthash.OMx9V3ns.dpbs.

Baumann, Gerd. 1997. "Dominant and Demotic Discourses of Culture: Their Relevance to Multi-Ethnic Alliances." In *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, edited by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, 209–25. London: Zed Books.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1990. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." In *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha, 1–7. London: Routledge.

Bharucha, Rustom. 2001. "Consumed in Singapore: The Intercultural Spectacle of Lear." *Theater* 31 (1): 107–27.

———. 2004. "Foreign Asia/Foreign Shakespeare: Dissenting Notes on New Asian Interculturality, Postcoloniality, and Recolonization." *Theatre Journal* 56 (1): 1–28.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1933. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Edited by Randal Johnson. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———. 1984. "Conclusion: Classes and Classifications." In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 468–86. London: Routledge.

Brighenti, Andrea Mubi. 2010. "The Publicness of Public Space. On the Public Domain." *Quaderno* 49: 7–47.

British Council. 2014. "Policy Environment: The UK Policy Environment." *British Council*. Accessed March 11. http://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/Policy_Development/policy-environment/.

Brosius, Christiane, and Roland Wenzlhuemer. 2011. "Introduction - Transcultural Turbulences: Towards a Multi-Sited Reading of Image Flows." In *Transcultural Turbulences: Towards a Multi-Sited Reading of Image Flows*, edited by Christiane Brosius and Roland Wenzlhuemer, 3–24. Heidelberg: Springer Verlag.

Burchell, Graham, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. 1991. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmental Nationality with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Calhoun, Craig. 1989. "Tiananmen, Television and the Public Sphere: Internationalization of Culture and the Beijing Spring of 1989." *Public Culture* 2 (1): 54–71.

"Can Singapore Accept Political Art?" 2013. Electronic Document. *The Business Times Lifestyle*. April 26. http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/lifestyle/arts/can-singapore-accept-political-art-20130426.

Chang, T.C., and W.K. Lee. 2003. "Renaissance City Singapore: A Study of Arts Spaces." *Area* 35 (2): 128–41.

Chong, Terence. 2003. "Mediating the Liberalization of Singapore Theatre: Towards a Bourdieusian Analysis". Asia Research Centre.

———. 2005. "Singapore's Cultural Policy and Its Consequences." *Critical Asian Studies* 37 (4): 553–68.

———. 2010. "'Back Regions' and 'Dark Secrets' in Singapore: The Politics of Censorship and Liberalisation." *Space and Polity* 14 (3): 235–50.

———. 2011. "The Arts in Singapore: Site of Ideologies, Fantasies, and Orthodoxies." In *The Theatre and the State in Singapore: Orthodoxy and Resistance*, 16–47. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Dean, Mitchell. 1999. "Basic Concepts and Themes." In *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, 9–39. London: Sage Publications.

Drummond, Lisa B. W. 2000. "Street Scenes: Practices of Public and Private Space in Urban Vietnam." *Urban Studies* 37 (12): 2377–91.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. 2009. "Theater als öffentlicher Raum." In *Der gesellschaftliche Wandel um 1800 und das Berliner Nationaltheater*, edited by Klaus Gerlach, 47–60. Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag.

———. 2010a. *Theaterwissenschaft: Eine Einführung in die Grundlagen des Faches*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag.

———. 2010b. "Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between." *Textures - Online Platform for Interweaving Performance Cultures*.

http://www.textures-platform.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/interweaving-cultures-in-performance.pdf.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika, and Rustom Bharucha. 2011. "Dialogue: Erika Fischer-Lichte and Rustom Bharucha." *Textures - Online Platform for Interweaving Performance Cultures*. http://www.textures-platform.com/?p=1667.

Florida, Richard. 2002. "The Rise of the Creative Class: Why Cities Without Gays and Rock Bands Are Losing the Economic Development Race." *Washington Monthly*. http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0205.florida.html.

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Überwachen und Strafen. Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

———. 1991. "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmental Nationality with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 87–104. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Fraser, Nancy. 1990. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text* 25/26: 56–80.

Goffman, Erving. 2009. *Interaktion im öffentlichen Raum*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Massechusetts: The MIT Press.

Harvey, David. 2003. "The Right to the City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27 (4): 939–41.

Hassenpflug, Dieter. 2009. "Transformationen des leeren Stadtraumes." In *Der urbane Code Chinas*, 25–46. Bauwelt Fundamente 142. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Hee, Limin, and Giok Ling Ooi. 2003. "The Politics of Public Space Planning in Singapore." *Planning Perspectives* 18: 79–103.

Heng, Ivan. 2011. "2011 U@live - November Featuring Ivan Heng"Youtube. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Up2t2gAu5ZM.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2006. "Bourdieu, the Media and Cultural Production." *Media, Culture and Society* 28 (2): 211–31.

Juneja, Monica, and Michael Falser. 2013. "Kulturerbe - Denkmalpflege: transkulturell. Eine Einleitung." In *Kulturerbe und Denkmalpflege transkulturell: Grenzgänge zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, edited by Monica Juneja and Michael Falser, 17–34. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Kawasaki, Kenichi. 2004. "Cultural Hegemony of Singapore among ASEAN Countries: Globalization and Cultural Policy." *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 13: 22–35.

Kong, Lily. 2007. "Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status." *Political Geography* 26: 383–404.

Kuo, Pao Kun. 1998. "Contemplating an Open Culture: Transcending Multiculturalism." In *Singapore: Re-Ingineering Success*, edited by Mahizhnan Arun and Tsao Yuan Lee, 50–61. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Lee, Terence. 2005. "Internet Control and Auto-Regulation in Singapore." *Surveillance and Society* 3 (1): 74–95.

———. 2010. *The Media, Cultural Control and Government in Singapore*. Media, Culture and Social Change in Asia 20. Oxon: Routledge.

Lee, Terence Theng-Boon. 2004. "Politics, Governmentality and Cultural Regulation in Singapore". Phd Thesis, Adelaide: University of Adelaide.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Lehrer, Ute, and Andrea Winkler. 2006. "Public or Private? The Pope Squat and Housing Struggles in Toronto." *Social Justice* 33 (2): 142–57.

Lo, Jacqueline. 2004. *Staging Nation: English Language Theatre in Malaysia and Singapore*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

McNeill, Donald. 2009. "The 'Bilbao Effect.'" In *The Global Architect: Firms, Fame and Urban Form*, 81–97. New York: Routledge.

National Arts Council. 2012. "Art Forms Overview." *National Arts Council Singapore*. https://www.nac.gov.sg/art-forms/theatre/overview.

———. 2013a. "Arts Housing Scheme." *National Arts Council Singapore*. https://www.nac.gov.sg/arts-spaces/arts-housing-scheme.

———. 2013b. "Grants & Schemes Overview." *National Arts Council Singapore*. https://www.nac.gov.sg/grants-schemes.

———. 2013c. "Grant & Schemes Seed Grant." *National Arts Council Singapore*. https://nac.gov.sg/grants-schemes/grants/organisation-development/seed-grant.

———. 2013d. "Grants & Schemes Major Grant." *National Arts Council Singapore*. https://nac.gov.sg/grants-schemes/grants/organisation-development/major-grant.

Neal, Zachary P. 2010. "Locating Public Space." In *Common Ground? Readings and Reflections on Public Space*, edited by Anthony M. Orum and Zachary P. Neal, 1–10. New York: Routledge.

Ong, Aihwa. 2011. "Introduction: Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global." In *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy, 1st ed., 1–26. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ooi, Can-Seng. 2010. "Political Pragmatism and the Creative Economy: Singapore as a City for the Arts." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16 (4): 403–17.

Peterson, William. 2001. *Theatre and the Politics of Culture in Contemporary Singapore*. Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press.

———. 2003. "Consuming the Asian Other in Singapore: Interculturalism in TheatreWorks' Desdemona." *Theatre Research International* 0 (1): 79–95.

———. 2009. "Singapore Arts Festival at Thirty: Going Global, Glocal, Grobal." *Asian Theatre Journal* 26 (1): 111–34.

Philippine Educational Theater Association. 2013. "About PETA." Accessed October 31. http://petatheater.com/about-peta/.

Pomeroy, Jason. 2011. "Defining Singapore Public Space: From Sanitization to Corporatization." *Journal of Urban Design* 16 (3): 381–96.

Pratt, Andy C. 2009. "Urban Regeneration: From the Arts 'Feel Good' Factor to the Cultural Economy: A Case Study of Hoxton, London." *Urban Studies* 46 (5-6): 1041–61.

Purcell, Mark. 2002. "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant." *GeoJournal* 58: 99–108.

Read, Alan. 1993. *Theatre and the Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*. London: Routledge.

Regus, Christine. 2009. "Begriffsbestimmung." In *Interkulturelles Theater zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts: Ästhetik, Politik, Kolonialismus*, 33–44. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Ren, Quah Sy. 2006. "Performing Multilingualism in Singapore." In *Between Tongues: Translation And/of/in Performances in Asia*, edited by Jennifer Lindsay, 88–104. Singapore: NUS Press.

Rodan, Garry. 1998. "The Internet and Political Control in Singapore." *Political Science Quarterly* 113 (1): 63–89.

Roy, Denny. 1994. "Singapore, China, and the 'Soft Authoritarian' Challenge." *Asian Survey* 34 (3): 231–42.

Schiffauer, Werner. 1997. "Zur Logik von kulturellen Strömungen in Großstädten." In *Fremde in der Stadt: Zehn Essays über Kultur und Differenz*, 92–127. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag.

Seidman, Steven, ed. 1989. *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Sennett, Richard. 1976. "The Public Domain." In *The Fall of Public Man*, 3–28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Singapore Department of Statistics. 2013. *Population Trends 2013*. Singapore: Ministry of Trade & Industry. http://www.singstat.gov.sg/Publications/publications_and_papers/population_and_population_structure/population2013.pdf.

Singapore Police Force. 2014. "Public Entertainment: Exempted Activities." *Public Entertainment*. Accessed January 31. http://www.spf.gov.sg/licence/PE/PE_ExemptedActivities.html.

Takiguchi, Ken. 2011. "Theatre as Public Sphere. The History of Theatre Exchange Between Japan and Southeast Asia."

———. 2012. "Plays from Third Stage: Esperanza". Class Handout: Cultural Policy, The Arts and Society. Singapore: National University of Singapore.

Tan, Kenneth Paul. 2013. "Forum Theatre in Singapore: Resistance, Containment, and Commodification in an Advanced Industrial Society." *Positions: East Asian Cultures Critique* 21 (1): 189–221.

Tan, Serene Keng Ling. 2004. "Towards a Global City: Emerging Arts Spaces in Singapore". Master of Social Sciences, Singapore: National University of Singapore.

Urban Redevelopment Authority. 2008. "Vision: Marina Bay - Garden City by the Bay." *Marina Bay Singapore*. http://www.marina-bay.sg/vision.html.

———. 2014. "Master Plan: City Centre - Marina Bay." *Urban Redevelopment Authority*. http://www.ura.gov.sg/uol/master-plan/View-Master-Plan/master-plan-2008/Growth-Area/City-Centre/Marina-Bay.aspx.

Villa, Dana R. 1992. "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere." *American Political Science Review* 86 (3): 712–21.

Wacquant, Loïc J.D. 1993. "From Ruling Class to Field of Power: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu on La Noblesse D'état." *Theory, Culture & Society* 10: 19–44.

Wee, C.J.W.-L. 2003. "Creating High Culture in the Globalized 'Cultural Desert' of Singapore." *TDR* 47 (4): 84–97.

———. 2004. "Staging the Asian Modern: Cultural Fragments, the Singaporean Eunuch, and the Asian Lear." *Critical Inquiry* 30 (4): 771–99.

Welsch, Wolfgang. 1999. "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today." In *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, edited by Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, 194–213. London: Sage Publications.

Wihstutz, Benjamin. 2010. "Einleitung." In *Politik Des Raumes: Theater Und Topologie*, edited by Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz, 7–13. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Wong, Kwang Han. 2014a. "English Drama in Singapore - the Colonial Inheritance". Aporia Society. Accessed April 1. http://aporiasociety.org/englishdrama.html.

———. 2014b. "Singapore English Drama in the Eighties - a Search for Identity?" Aporia Society. Accessed April 1. http://aporiasociety.org/eightiesdrama.html.

Wong, Theresa, and Brenda S.A. Yeoh. 2003. "Fertility and the Family: An Overview of Pro-Natalist Population Policies in Singapore". Asian Meta Centre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis.

Woodruff, Paul. 2008. *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Yeoh, Brenda S.A. 2005. "The Global Cultural City? Spatial Imagineering and Politics in the (Multi)cultural Marketplaces of South-East Asia." *Urban Studies* 42 (5/6): 945–58.

Zukin, Sharon. 2005. "'Whose Culture? Whose City?' From The Culture of Cities (1995)." In *The Urban Sociology Reader*, edited by Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, 281–89. Oxon: Routledge.