Chapter 30

Value Conflicts, Identity Construction, and Urban Change

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In this chapter I argue that urban landscape changes are simultaneously the medium and outcome of the intersection of different sets of values. In other words, urban forms result from and contribute to the conflicts between different value systems, often represented by economic values privileging growth and redevelopment on one end of the spectrum, and more symbolic values giving prominence to, inter alia, the conservation of heritage and culture, on the other. Oftentimes, such value systems reflect the interests of different social, economic, and political groups, whose divergences take shape variously as contestation between state and civil society, for example, between urban planners and heritage groups, or tourism planners and local interest groups. Such value conflicts, it may be argued, shape the different identities that different groups (wish to) construct for their cities. At the risk of oversimplification, it may be said that pro-development groups are concerned with developing a city that is characterized by modernity while pro-heritage groups are more enamored by cities identified with history, culture, and other symbolic values. In this chapter I will illustrate these relationships between value conflicts, urban identities, and landscape changes using the example of Singapore. As a city-state, Singapore provides a unique case study for the analysis of how state policies at a national level impinge on the shaping of values, the construction of identities, and the development of urban form in a direct way, without mediation of local government. As a state with a strong central government bent on developing a "tropical city of excellence" (Urban Redevelopment Authority Annual Report 1991), and a multiracial and multireligious population that is becoming increasingly educated, the potential for conflict between different value systems is tremendous.

Singapore: A Developmental City-State

The city-state of Singapore has been described in many arenas as one of the world's economic miracles today. Indeed, Castells (1992: 56) argues that this achievement of economic success, with its concomitant high rates of economic

growth and urban change, qualifies Singapore as a developmental state because the government calls upon these indices of development to legitimize itself. Yet, when the island-state first attained internal self-government in 1959 and then full independence in 1965, the government inherited a host of problems, chief of which were unemployment, housing shortages, unsanitary conditions, and poor economic performance. From the throes of Third World poverty and underdevelopment, the country has made the quantum leap to the status of newly industrialized country within two decades.

Many of these achievements are reflected in the tremendous urban change that has taken place over the last three decades. Slums and squatter settlements have been cleared, the housing landscape is now characterized mainly by high-rise public Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats, unhygienic roadside hawkers have been rehoused in modern hawker centers, and sanitary conditions have been vastly improved. All these have been made possible via a systematic urban planning process under the auspices of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), with the cooperation of other state agencies such as the HDB. This urban planning process has, for a long time, been premised on the logic and rationality of economic planning, in which development goals have taken precedence over other symbolic values, be they historic, cultural, sacred, personal, social, or esthetic. It is only in recent years that there has been tangible evidence that parts of the urban fabric are being retained, a reflection perhaps of increasing appreciation of the cultural and historical values of these built forms. Indeed, in recent years, government leaders have called for the preservation of cultural forms and the values they embody as a way of "anchoring" Singaporeans in their "Asian identity" (URA Annual Report 1988/89: 21) which unfortunately had been systematically eroded with the large-scale demolition of parts of the city.

In what follows, I will explore the interconnections between symbolic values in the urban landscape on the one hand, and economic values, manifested in development imperatives, on the other. I argue that the urban conflicts that result are a reflection of a struggle over identity, involving the state, different groups of civil society, and the individual. The struggle involves finding a balance between developing a city that is plugged in to the global network, that is international in outlook, and carries a cosmopolitan identity, and a city that is simultaneously anchored in local heritage, retaining indigenous identities.

For heuristic reasons, I will polarize the possible interconnections between symbolic and economic values and their manifestations in the urban landscape. First, I will focus on the circumstances under which there are open contradictions between symbolic systems and economic values. I will do so by discussing the establishment, relocation, and demolition of religious buildings in Singapore, all of which follow pragmatic planning principles, and illustrate how they sometimes run counter to the sacred meanings and values that adherents invest in their religious buildings. Second, I will illustrate the situation when development openly harnesses history and culture, where they become part of the processes of production and consumption associated with capital accumulation. In other words, I will explore those situations where history and culture become commodified in heritage and culture industries, often anchored in tourism.

The Establishment, Relocation, and Demolition of Religious Buildings

One arena in which conflict arises between culture and capital is in the establishment, relocation, and demolition of religious buildings (see Kong 1992, 1993a and 1993b for further details). First, in the establishment of religious buildings, the state is guided by "rationality" and "pragmatic" planning. Specifically, the state sets aside parcels of land for tender by religious groups. These parcels of land are usually found in HDB new towns, allocated on the basis of the neighborhood principle, adapted from British and European town planning practices. The basic planning philosophy is maximum self-sufficiency in the satisfaction of basic community needs and so within each neighborhood there will be shopping facilities, community centers, recreation facilities, schools, medical care, and the like for residents. If there are more than three neighborhoods close together, then a town or district center will be built to provide higher-order goods and services, such as banks, theaters, cinemas, and department stores (Teh 1969: 175; Drakakis-Smith and Yeung 1977: 6). A strongly modernist stance is thus evident in town planning in which the successful formula is based on efficiency and functionalism (Ley 1989: 47–51). Urban planning, it would appear, is not primarily a matter of esthetics or meanings, but of economics, and the basic guiding principle is to increase the working efficiency of the city.

Given these underlying values, religious building sites are provided in new towns as another amenity which sections of the population require. Precise planning standards guiding the minimum provision of such sites are drawn up as they are for other amenities, as shown in Table 30.1. These guidelines take into consideration "demographic characteristics," "religious habits," as well as space requirements and architectural design for the different religious groups (Correspondence with Strategic Planning Branch, URA; and Systems and Research Department, HDB). These planning standards are reviewed periodically in the light of demographic and social changes. The precise sites are usually proposed by the HDB and submitted for consideration to the Master Plan Committee and approval of the Ministry of National Development.

While the state uses these openly economic principles and processes, for religious adherents the establishment of a place of worship should be guided by divine will and purpose. The following discussion, drawn from in-depth interviews with Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and Chinese religionists in 1989 and 1995 bears this out. As

Table 30.1 Planning standards for the provision of religious sites

Religious building	Approx. site area	Planning standard
Church	3,000 m^2 to 4,500 m^2	1 to 12,000 d.u.
Chinese temple	2,000 m^2 to 3,000 m^2	1 to 9,000 d.u.
Mosque	2,500 m^2	1 to 20,000 d.u.
Hindu temple	1,800 m^2 to 2,500 m^2	1 to 90,000 d.u.

d.u.: dwelling unit
Source: Systems and Research Department, Housing and Development Board, 1999

Cheng, a Methodist suggested, it is faith that underlies the setting up of churches and which "sweep[s] [people] to do as the Spirit leads them." The tension arises particularly when the two differing ideological systems embodied in pragmatic planning (championing economic values) and divine guidance (highlighting cultural meaning) pull in different directions. For example, in seeking to establish a building for worship, a group may feel that it is the divine will and that the community is ready for it and needs it. The rationality and pragmatism of planning principles, however, may suggest that such a group cannot be offered any site for use. In the case of the Mount Carmel group, for example, Wong (1986) chronicles the way in which the group felt divine guidance led them to set up a church building (today the Clementi Bible Centre), and how the "rational" and "pragmatic" planning procedures made it difficult for their efforts to be realized quickly. For instance, in the planning blueprints, there were "no designated religious sites available" where they requested one; when they tendered for a site in Pasir Panjang, they lost. Wong (1986) clearly illustrates the disappointments and frustrations that the group felt as a consequence of such conflict between their religious needs and the strictures of planning and developmental goals. Further evidence that economic imperatives are seen to be the overriding force in urban change is reflected in public conceptions that agencies and plans operating on principles of economic logic inevitably hold sway. Typical comments which illustrate such resigned acceptance include, for example, "HDB holds all the power. What right do we have?" Or, "If it is in the Master Plan, there is nothing we can do about it. We have to accept it."

This conflict between cultural and economic logic becomes more stark in situations involving relocation and/or demolition of religious buildings. I will elaborate on one of these situations, namely, when the sites of religious buildings are affected by public schemes. In 1973, a policy statement was made which asserted that "as people move out from old areas to be redeveloped, temples, mosques or churches will have to give way to urban renewal or new development, unless they are of historical and architectural value" (Press Statement, November 25, 1973). In other words, religious buildings will be treated like any other building which may come in the way of development. While there are religious buildings which have been preserved for architectural and historical reasons by the Preservation of Monuments Board (Kong and Yeoh 1994), there are none which are not historically and architecturally significant which have nevertheless been preserved because they are recognized as sacred space. Indeed, Dr. Tan Eng Liang (the then Senior Minister of State for National Development), further declared: "The resettlement policy is clear-cut, irrespective of religions, irrespective of owners and irrespective of organisations" (Parliamentary Debates, March 16, 1978, col. 978). In putting this policy into practice, the government acquired and cleared 23 mosques, 76 suraus (small mosques), 700 Chinese temples, 27 Hindu temples, and 19 churches for public development schemes between 1974 and 1987 (Press statement from Prime Minister's Office, October 3, 1987). Even though religious groups may be offered alternative sites, such sites are not offered on a one-to-one basis for "pragmatic," "economic" reasons: "It is not possible to have a temple for temple, a mosque for mosque, a church for church substitution. This is uneconomic, impractical and, in the limited land space of Singapore, impossible" (Press Statement, November 25, 1973). Instead, religious buildings affected by clearance (usually effected through the Land Acquisition Act)

are primarily allocated land on a joint basis. In other words, one site is made available to two or more existing buildings of the same religion. In one instance, as many as eight Chinese temples were affected by clearance and because each could not afford a new place, all eight groups came together to build one temple (in 21 Tampines Street) to rehouse them all (*The Straits Times*, July 8, 1986).

Apart from religious buildings which have no choice but to leave under the force of the Land Acquisition Act, in some instances, the lease may have run out for the religious site just as redevelopment is about to take place. In such instances, the lease will not be extended, and those affected may not be allocated land. They will then have to tender and pay market value for sites set aside by the HDB for religious use, or sites put up for sale to religious groups and associations by the URA. This has caused some smaller religious buildings to close down completely because they could not find suitable alternative sites or because they could not afford the cost of new sites (*The Straits Times*, June 15, 1979).

While the development imperatives have taken precedence, many religious adherents in fact conceive of their religious places as sacred places that should not be destroyed, irrespective of their architectural or historical merit. This religious (cultural) symbolic value is manifested in a variety of ways. It is evident, for example, in those adherents who believe that religious places are intrinsically sacred, that is, the place is in and of itself spiritual because of its association with some form of divine manifestation or with some sacred event of tremendous significance (Tuan 1974: 146). For instance, Chandran, a devout elderly Hindu interviewee, cited the example of how a person may be told by a god (perhaps through a dream) that a temple is to be built on a particular piece of land, or that the god wants to reside there. The land and the temple thus constructed are therefore sacred. This, in fact, is believed to be the case for the Kaliamman temple at Old Toh Tuck Road, which was originally located at Lorong Ah Soo. Its founder had apparently been told in a dream by the deity of the new site and as a result, the temple had been moved to the new location. In such an instance, any attempt to demolish or relocate the temple for development purposes would not only represent the triumph of economic values over symbolic ones, it would be a serious defiance of divine will.

The conflicts between symbolic and economic values, as evidenced in the examples above, suggest divergences in identity construction. The identity that the state seeks to develop for Singapore is one premised on development, modernization, and growth. On the other hand, the values that are central to religious individuals suggest the importance of self-identities rooted in more symbolic and spiritual dimensions. To realize these self-identities requires that certain urban forms, namely, religious buildings, exist, following particular symbolic principles of existence. These tensions are constantly negotiated through the urban landscape, as the state renegotiates its own position on the importance of symbolic values (as evidenced in the next section) and as religious individuals themselves also renegotiate the centrality of urban forms in their spiritual identities (see Kong 1993b).

The Built Environment: Heritage and Conservation

Earlier, I indicated that parts of the urban fabric have been conserved in recent years. I also suggested that some of these include religious buildings which have been

preserved for their historical and architectural value. Taken at face value, it may well appear that such conservation of the historic urban landscape is a distinctly "cultural" process, illustrating how cultural values have been given weight vis-à-vis the earlier dominance of economic imperatives. Yet, in what follows, I will show how culture and history are taken into the process of capital accumulation (see Kong and Yeoh 1994 for a more detailed discussion).

Despite the earlier priority given to demolition and redevelopment, conservation was given initial attention on the planning agenda in 1976 when the URA initiated studies involving the conservation and rehabilitation of whole areas. Chinatown was the most prominent among the large areas then under study (URA Annual Report 1976/77), and the guiding principle then was basically to retain the distinctive identity and character of the whole area. However, the study remained at the exploratory stage and little more was done for a long while. In 1984, the Emerald Hill area was converted into a landscaped pedestrian mall and the Peranakan Corner at the junction of Emerald Hill and Orchard Road was completed. These became the first tangible results of the URA's conservation of distinctive areas (URA Annual Report 1983/84: 22–3). This was quickly followed by detailed studies of Chinatown, Singapore River, Little India, and Kampong Glam in 1985 (URA Annual Report 1984/85: 3), which were presented to the public as the URA's Conservation Master Plan in 1986. The plan included the conservation of the city's historic district, named the Civic and Cultural District (MND Annual Report 1987: 35; Huang, Teo and Heng 1995). The area was given further attention in the form of a Master Plan released to the public in March 1988, with aims to develop the area into a major historical, cultural, and retail center, as well as a venue for national ceremonies and functions (URA Annual Report 1987/88: 2). In the same year, conservation manuals and guidelines for Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India were also published, designed to help the public understand the historical character, planning, and architectural intentions in each district and assist them in conserving their properties. Ultimate recognition and acknowledgment were accorded to all these efforts in 1989 when the URA was made the national conservation authority. Their tasks were laid out in the Amended Planning Act of 1990, and included identifying buildings and areas of historical interest for conservation; preparing a conservation master plan; and guiding the implementation of conservation by the public and private sectors (Sections 10(6)(c), 13, 14 and 15, Planning Act, 1990). Since then, 20 areas have been officially designated "conservation areas."

What does the shift from the early preoccupation with redevelopment to the recent concern to conserve reveal of the place of cultural and historical values vis-à-vis economic ones? First, as intimated earlier, it signals a recognition of the value of Singapore's architectural and historical heritage (URA Annual Report 1986/87). Second, this change was precipitated by developments in the tourist industry. In the early 1980s there was a sharp fall in the rate of tourist arrivals. This led to the formation of a Tourism Task Force which was to identify the main problems and suggest solutions. One of their conclusions was that Singapore had "removed aspects of [its] Oriental mystique and charm . . . best symbolized in old buildings, traditional activities and bustling roadside activities" in its effort to construct a "modern metropolis" (Wong et al. 1984: 6). To woo tourists back to Singapore, it was recommended that Chinatown and other historical sites be conserved. That their

recommendations were taken up reveals clearly the mutually constitutive relationship between capital and culture. Today, parts of Chinatown have already been conserved in accordance with stringent guidelines pertaining to the facade design, internal structure, signage, materials used, and any other forms of alteration or addition with a view to retaining historical continuity and the architectural distinctiveness of the place (URA Annual Report 1988: 52). Following these guidelines, property owners and developers have refurbished the visual and structural quality of shophouse units including their wall openings, five-foot ways, columns, pilasters, window shutters, balconies, and ornamentation. Yet, the fact that these are not purely "cultural" actions but economic ones as well is revealed in two ways: the ways in which shophouses are developed and marketed to businesses; and the ways in which the area as a whole is "imaged" and "sold" as a tourist spot.

Shophouses are sold on the market as "heritage" properties of particular interest to retailers wishing to "capture the shopping and gourmet traffic right in the traditional retail heart of Singapore" (*The Straits Times*, September 23, 1991). The URA has guided the process by encouraging certain types of building use and discouraging others. Approved trades include those usually identified as symbolic of Chinese tradition such as herbal tea shops, religious paraphernalia shops, Chinese medical halls, clog makers, mahjong makers, calligraphers, and fortune tellers. On the other hand, certain pollutive or incompatible trades are proscribed, such as engineering workshops, tire and battery shops, Western fast-food restaurants, supermarkets, and laundrettes (URA Annual Report 1988: 72–3). Within these broad parameters, however, URA's underlying philosophy is that the types of trades should be determined by market forces. This is because owners of conserved buildings must be economically viable in order to continue to restore and maintain them (*The Straits Times*, October 23, 1991). Thus, while meticulous attention is paid to preserving buildings and other structures, lifestyles and trades are left to the vagaries of free competition (*The Straits Times*, October 23, 1991). Yet, as many retailers rightly fear, such a system inevitably squeezes out the small, traditional businesses which cannot afford the postconservation rent hikes. It is in fact only the new upmarket services such as pubs (for example, Elvis in Tanjong Pagar), restaurants (for example, Blue Ginger in Neil Road) and businesses (such as Carrie Models in South Bridge Road) that can afford to operate in "new" Chinatown. In other words, the ostensibly "cultural" process of conservation is intimately embedded in processes of capital accumulation in which principles of profitability are prioritized.

As another example of how history and culture in Chinatown become embedded in processes of capital accumulation, I will focus on how conserved Chinatown caters to the tourist gaze. It is sold as the cradle of Singapore's early civilization and is identified in the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board literature with the pioneering spirit and enterprise of early Chinese immigrants to Singapore. It is showcased as a distinctively Chinese cultural area, what with the newly conserved shophouses, carefully adhering to preexisting architectural styles, "[brimming] over with life, capturing the essence of the old Chinese lifestyle in its temples and shophouses and nurturing a handful of traditional trades [such as] herbalists, temple idol carvers, calligraphers and effigy makers . . . in the face of progress" (Singapore Tourist Promotion Baord 1991: 28–9). Against a backcloth of shophouses and temples, large-scale festival activities, fairs, wayangs (operas), puppetry, and trishaw rides can be

"staged" to provide both locals and tourists with "a different kind of experience" (URA Annual Report 1985: 15). No matter if these no longer provide the genuine pulse of everyday life and no matter if they are performances rather than quotidian experiences. They form a crucial part of a promotional image which upholds a heritage industry.

Yet, for many Singaporean Chinese who live and work in Chinatown, the cultural life of the place does not simply derive from the architectural form but in genuine longstanding trades and small businesses, and the concomitant familiar retailer–client relationships that do not exist any more with the new gentrified shops managed by new people. They are not convinced that conservation is for the locals. While they see the conserved shophouses as "nice and charming," they add that "they are not for us anymore," that "locals do not carry out purchases there but go simply to look," and that "the wares there are sold at tourist prices." While the spanking cleanliness and bright hues of the conserved rows of shophouses are generally seen as attractive, some feel that they "somehow don't look right," that they are "inauthentic," and that with the emphasis on the picturesque, they are suitably tailored to appeal to the "tourist's way of seeing" (Relph 1976: 85). That conserved Chinatown is a landscape made for tourist consumption is particularly evident when dusk approaches and tourists are bussed off: Chinatown residents assert that the place takes on the "silence of a ghost town without a soul in sight" compared to before when it "can be said to be a place with no night." Thus, Singaporeans interpret the Chinatown landscape as another promotional effort for the tourists, far removed from the practicalities of their own daily lives. Hence, the conserved Chinatown landscape ignores "the inner workings of culture" (Wagner and Mikesell 1962: 5). In being taken up in the process of capital accumulation, culture and history are harnessed in particular ways suitable to the imperatives of economic growth and development.

Another example of how culture and history are to be harnessed for economic ends is the case of the conservation of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) in Victoria Street, which housed a convent, a Gothic chapel, and two Catholic schools. In 1981, a special area conservation working group was appointed under the auspices of the Urban Redevelopment Authority, comprising representatives from the URA and the then Singapore Tourism Promotion Board (STPB, now Singapore Tourism Board or STB). The final report put together by this working group was completed late that same year, in which several dozen sites were put up for consideration as conservation areas. The central quadrangle of CHIJ was one of them.

As a concrete step towards conservation, the STPB invited architectural firms to study the potential ways in which the buildings could be restored. The study was aimed at helping the board evaluate and shortlist a panel of architects able to undertake individual restoration projects. From late February 1987 onwards, 48 architectural firms were involved in the study, with the hope that about $260 million worth of restoration work would be bid for. An indication of what the STPB was hoping for was couched in the suggestions put forward by Mrs. Pamelia Lee, then STPB's Divisional Director for Product Development, to the Singapore Institute of Architects. These included the following: that any proposal would respect the architecture and former use of the premises; that the buildings could provide quality entertainment such as music and dance performances for audiences of "refined

taste"; that the upper floors of the buildings could be leased to the performing arts for daytime operations; and that the ground floor and open spaces could be operated commercially for high-quality dining and entertainment, theme parties, and the like (*The Straits Times*, April 13, 1987). Up to this point, conservation of the CHIJ buildings were still understood to be the business of the state and its agencies (whether URA and/or STPB), with the understanding that there would be every effort to preserve the ambience of the chapel and its buildings against the commercialization of other like projects.

In March 1990, it was announced that the CHIJ site was to be tendered out, opening it to the vagaries of the commercial market. As many former students and other members of the public argued, private developers would not be able to maintain the character and mood of the place if they were too preoccupied with making it a commercial success. The URA on the other hand expressed the view that the government cannot finance all conservation projects; the private sector must be involved to ensure that conservation projects are economically feasible undertakings. The guiding principles in Singapore's conservation, as expounded by the then Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Planner of the URA, Mr. Liu Thai Ker, were that the private sector should be involved, particularly if no public sector use had been identified; that preservation must avoid wastage or duplication of efforts; and that buildings of architectural and historical significance should either be preserved or conserved. The decision to sell the site and hand over its conservation to commercial enterprises raised the ire of many. Public opinion focused on the view that by not undertaking the conservation exercise itself, the URA was in effect serving the complex on a platter to the forces of commercialization and all its concomitant ills of profit making. In response to such criticisms, the URA revealed that safeguards had been introduced to ensure that conservation objectives were met. For example, the project's plot ratio would be kept to under 0.8 as opposed to 9 or 10 in the surrounding commercial developments, that is, there would be no high-rise construction. The chapel was to be used only for cultural, religious or other uses that are "sensitive to the history of the building," for example, for classical concerts. For the rest of the complex, cultural, arts, and recreational activities were possible, including restaurants and shops, with trades, if they enhanced the image of the Civic District. The local consortium led by construction group Low Keng Huat (LKH), including jeweler Je Taime and restaurateur Lei Garden, won the bid on the basis of their "planning and design concept, proposed uses and trades," "the expertise of the developers and their consultants in developments of a similar nature" (*The Straits Times*, March 22, 1990).

Between their initial winning of the bid in February 1991 and 1994, the LKH consortium, first known as Cloisters Investment Pte Ltd, and subsequently Chijmes Investments Pte Ltd, has altered its marketing strategy – a reflection of its concern with economic viability and the changing retail scene in Singapore. The plans that were initially submitted included cultural and religious activities for the chapel, while the rest of the complex was given over to dining, retail, and exhibition activities. Their plans were to create an upmarket, exclusive image of the complex. It was envisaged that the chapel could be rented out for weddings or other celebrations or used as a center for cultural activities. Because of the superior acoustics, it could be used for music, dance, and drama performances. A courtyard of about

10 meters deep would be built in the basement, serving as a focal point for cultural activities such as musical performances. It would be surrounded by two levels of retail shops and a food court. The retail space would house upmarket boutiques, gift shops, and a jewelry centre. Indeed, a suggestion was made that the complex could be a one-stop place for a wedding celebration: after the ceremony in the chapel and reception in the courtyard, dinner could take place in the restaurant.

In early 1994, it was announced that the original concept of a retail complex with a food court would shift towards the establishment of an arts and lifestyle-based complex. The theme of fine food would still continue in the underground complex, together with an upscale flea market for art and antiques. The chapel would have its functions expanded from services and weddings (and Japanese going abroad for their weddings are also targeted) to include even company annual general meetings with state-of-the-art facilities (with rentals at about $5,000 a day). A permanent attraction would be negotiated in the form of a UK-based play, "Earth Child," for children aged between 8 and 12 (an acknowledgment of the fact that the site was always important as a school). The defining theme of the complex, it was said, would be a mix of the sense of the old as well as a sense of the upmarket. Hence, it would be possible to have a McDonald's if it looked old, while modern art would be totally acceptable if it was housed in a fine gallery. There were also plans for a brewery pub. Clearly, with unease about the continuing size and buying power of the market, Chijmes had chosen to broaden its clientele base from an exclusive upmarket one to a diversified base which would perhaps include the mass hamburger-eating public.

From the time of the decision to conserve the complex of buildings to Chijmes's mid-1990s marketing strategy ("Give the future of your business a glorious past"), all the changes reflect the constitutive relationship between historical and cultural values and economic principles. History and culture can be harnessed for economic goals, and history and culture have survived and been given a new lease of life precisely because of economic goals.

Once again, the urban form reflects and contributes to divergences in values and identities among different groups of Singaporeans. The state, as represented by its urban planners and tourism promoters, privilege economic values and give space to historical and cultural values only when they are handmaiden to developmental goals. Indeed, attempts are made to appropriate historical and cultural sites for economic ends. The identity to be constructed for Singapore is still one of an international city, but concomitantly, one with an "Asian" heritage as well. Capital, as represented by developers, retailers, and service providers, is driven by profit motives, and any identity to be evolved, whether international and modernist, or historical and heritage-based, is secondary to how well each may contribute to its ultimate goals. For individuals – especially former residents (including students) and former retailers of conserved districts and buildings – the "spirit" and identity of place, rooted in history and community life, are eroded with commercialization.

Conclusion

The identities that different groups seek to construct for their cities suggest divergences in value systems that simultaneously result in and are shaped by particular

urban forms. Using the debates and operations surrounding urban (re)development, I have illustrated how a small city-state of no more than 640 square kilometres embodies multiple differences in values and identities. In attempting to achieve this aim, I have polarized the possible interconnections between different value systems by focusing on situations where there are conflicting symbolic systems and economic values; and situations where development openly harnesses history and culture, where they become part of the processes of production and consumption associated with capital accumulation, that is, when they become commodified.

What I have also sought to illustrate is how a global city such as Singapore is inherently a city of division and difference, pulling particularly in two directions: between modernity and internationalism, built on economic processes and economic rationality, on the one hand, and heritage, culture, and tradition, premised on symbolic value systems, on the other. And yet, the divergences are not simply clear-cut and separate. In fact, through conservation and adaptive reuse, history and heritage have been appropriated to play a constitutive role in urban transformation, and contribute to the sustenance of economic development. Not all histories and cultures are elevated, however. While histories and cultures of value (in economic terms) find their way onto the conservation agenda, others become ignored or marginalized. In other words, histories and cultures which are less challenging to development objectives are privileged while those which cannot be so readily appropriated into development goals are sidelined. This refraction of the past attests to a range of differently empowered ideologies that are constantly engaging one another in an apparently global city like Singapore, plugged as it is into global economies.

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