

Wellington 'Impossible Dreams' Rotary Forum

Achieving the Impossible Dream – what
would it take for Wellington, the city and
region to be the best in the world

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MCGUINNESS INSTITUTE

We are all historians
We are all futurists
We are all seeking out utopia
We want to know what next
BUT
What do our cities already tell us about us?
Who are we making the city for?
What are the issues we face?
What are the opportunities?

We are all historians

We are all futurists

We are all searching for utopia (that is why people have come and will come to NZ)

What I am thinking about: Our cities and landscapes tell us what we care about.

One ecosystem ... but why do we not use the whole ecosystem? We are trying to push the car with half the people locked inside.

Which comes first: technological transformation or sociological transformation?

Innovation is not just ideas but execution.

A: Who are we making the city for?

- People (past/present/future, local/national/international, young/working/old, Pākehā/Māori/Pasifika/Asian, male/female/other and/or homeless/poor/medium/rich)
- Institutions/companies/Govt/NGOs
- Flora and fauna (e.g. Zealandia bird life, Predator-free at Churton Park)

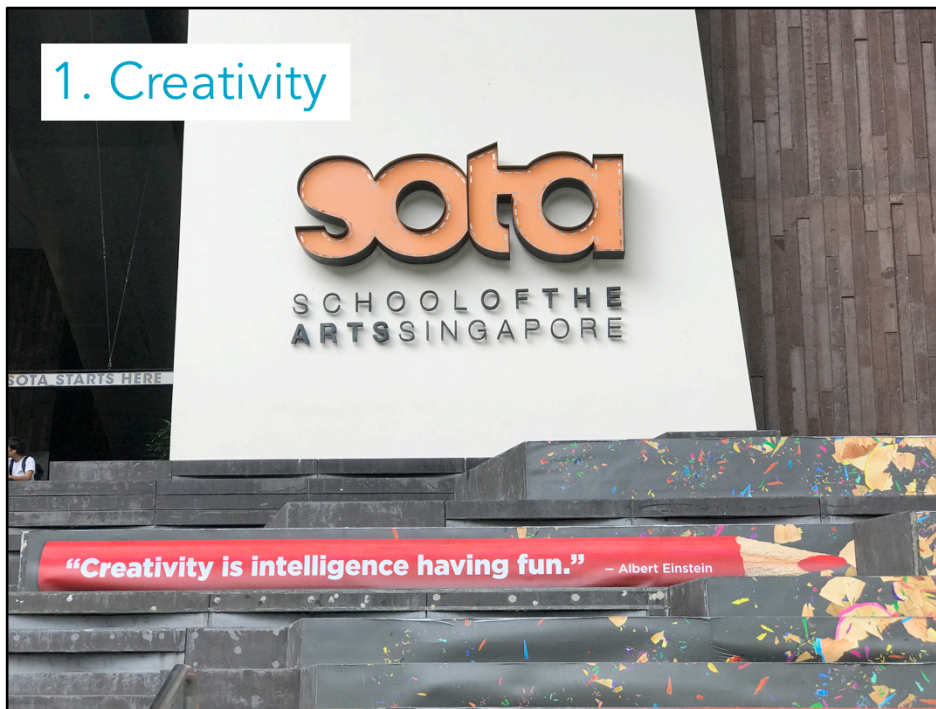
B: What are the issues?

- Dark side of cities: suicide/poverty/violence/drugs
- Lack of public backing/mandate and/or a lack of political will
- Energy, water, climate change, infrastructure, AI, work
- Bad habits

C: What are the opportunities?

- Good people getting out of their bubble/giving back
- Public backing – we get the cities we deserve
- Mayors rule the world
- Decentralise power and resources until it works
- Measure to learn, especially from your mistakes

1. Creativity



D: What characteristics are likely to deliver us the type of city we want?

Creativity: uniqueness, mystery, beauty, quirkiness.

- doing stuff: crafters, investors, volunteers, inventors, makers, fixers, doers, carers, traders, tweekers, hustlers.
- learning lessons/feedback loops/accepting failure.
- build using local materials, local history and for beauty.
- a balance between big and small streets – we crave organised complexity (e.g. creative Eva/Leed St).

Image: School of the Arts, 1 Zubir Said Drive, Singapore.

2. Connectivity



Connectivity: visible life/environment/inclusive

- No malls in Welly
- events, workshops
- local, national and global
- collaboration, software, hardware
- easy to make things happen
- rotary, ecology, closed system
- compact – our scale gives value – both in terms of the city, the surrounding cities and the wider region
- art of square, intimate, close enough, 30 metres square is perfect, see people's faces (e.g. visible life at midland park).

Image: National Gallery, 3 St Andrews Road, Singapore.

3. Certainty



Certainty: infers planning, trust, honesty, reliability, regulations, policing, infrastructure works to time, quality, quantity, purpose

- Build soft and hard infrastructure
- Order and variety
- Order: something happening again e.g. Paris – but not too much order – we want order **and** variety, we crave organised complexity
- Sir Paul Callaghan – creating a place where talent wants to live (e.g. ordered Paris, Rome and New York).

Image: The National Gallery at 3 St Andrews Road, Singapore.

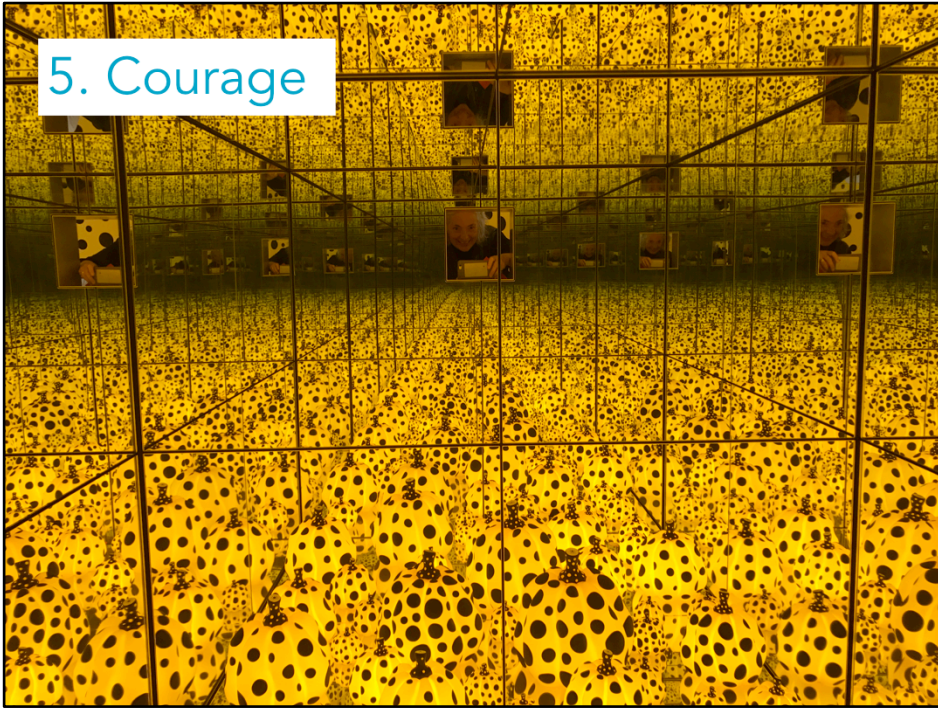
4. Choice



Choice: infers who, what, when, identity, acceptance, diversity, work, play, public resources and access, off-grid, people get around, responsive post-gender society (e.g. letting people be in Cuba St).

Image: Underground in Singapore, promoting what a Smart Singapore might look and feel like.

5. Courage



Courage: art, ambition, bold, purpose, calculated risk, prepared to take some pain for the gain, sail is the purpose – wind is the emotion standing up (e.g. Justin Lester's wet house).

Image: National Gallery, 3 St Andrews Road, Singapore.

5 Characteristics of a Great City; How do we measure up?



The next set of slides looks at Singapore and, more specifically, at what we can learn.

What might get in the way?

Given the above, lets take a closer look at what we can learn from Singapore and what we may not be doing well.



(a) Not looking after our family connections

80% of Singapore live in social housing (the only notable difference between social housing and non-social housing was that the latter was usually fenced).

150% tax on cars in Copenhagen

Toyota Corolla in Singapore \$140,000 USD – lease for ten years to deal with the costs to the city.

Image: Social housing, 73 Tampines Street, Singapore.

(b) Not asking enough questions
and taking the time to listen

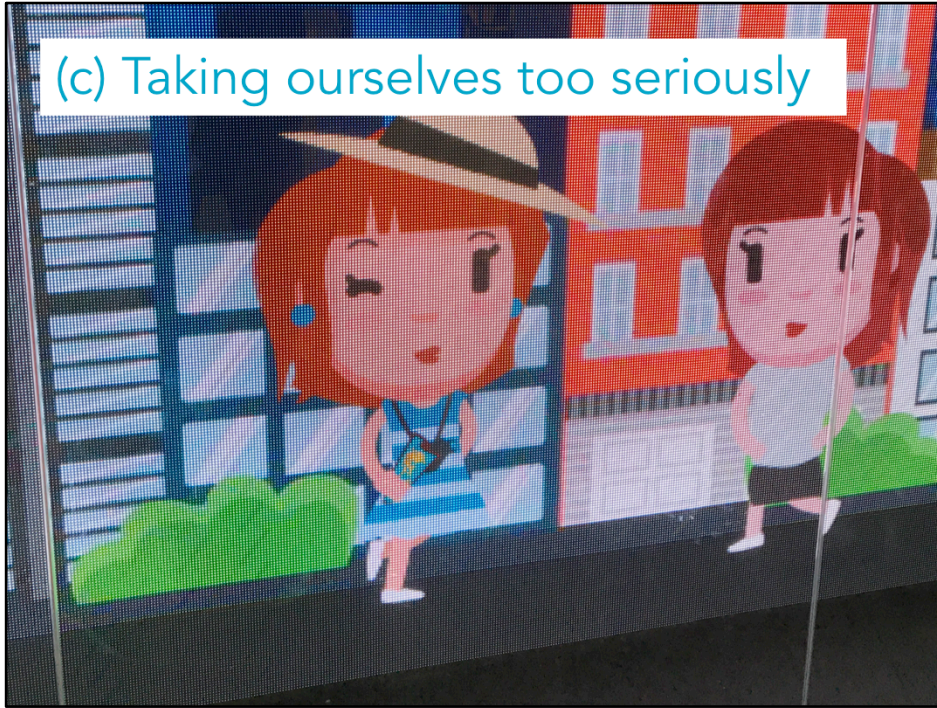


(b) Not asking enough questions and taking the time to listen

This was a way of developing foresight in young people.

Image: National Gallery at 3 St Andrews Road, Singapore.

(c) Taking ourselves too seriously

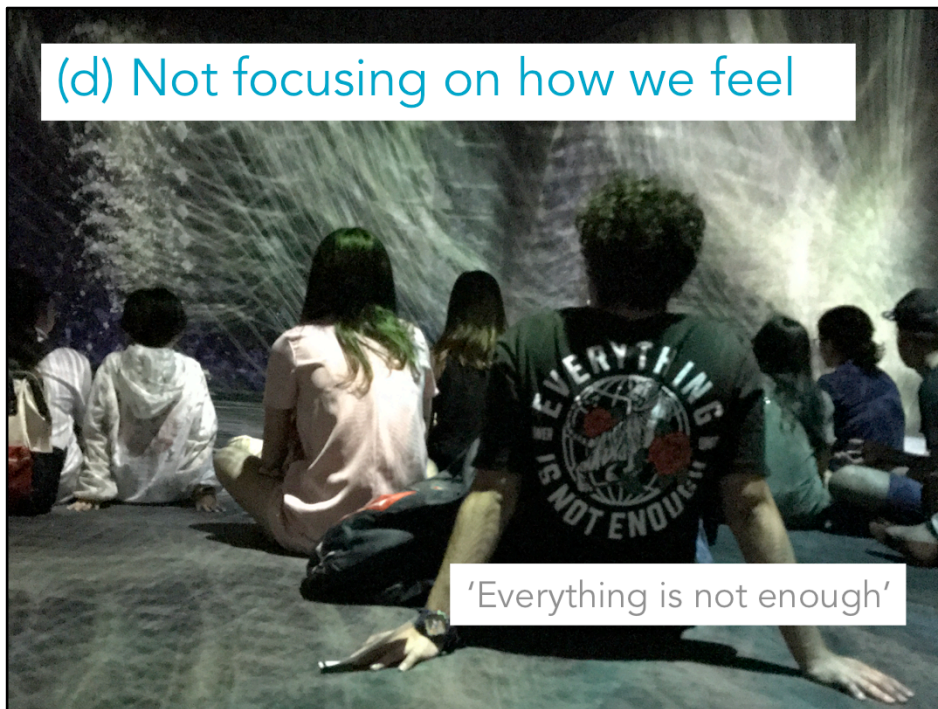


(c) Taking ourselves too seriously and collecting data

I was taken by this way of collecting data about those using the subway. As you walked along it asked questions about you and the result was your own avatar.

Image: Subway underground in Singapore.

(d) Not focusing on how we feel



'Everything is not enough'

(d) Not focusing on how we feel

Digital show on the walls of the Art Science Museum (in video).
I was taken by the text on the t-shirt.

Image: Art Science Museum.

(e) Not being clear about what we are trying to achieve

'Our vision is for Singapore to be a Smart Nation. A nation where people live meaningful and fulfilled lives, enabled seamlessly by technology, offering exciting opportunities for all.'

– PM Lee Hsien Loong, Smart Nation Launch, Nov 2014



(e) Not being clear about what we are trying to achieve

The current Prime Minister's vision for Singapore and a unifying campaign in a department store.

Image: 25 North Bridge Rd, Singapore.



(f) Not saying "NO" for short-term gain but long-term pain

Gambling – Singapore has two large casinos and whether or not they have delivered on what was promised is being questioned.

See www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/are-the-chips-down-for-singapore-s-two-casinos-8005866.

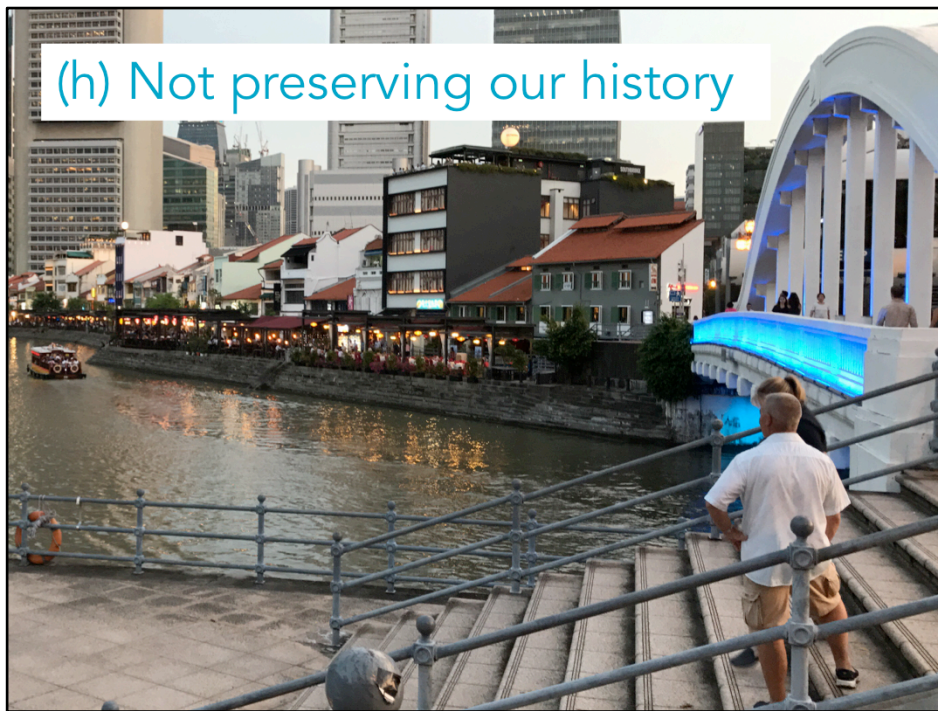
Image: Photo taken looking down on the casino from above. Marina department store, 1 Bayfront Avenue, Singapore.



(g) Not being inclusive

There is public access along the waterfront in Singapore. This picture is through a five star hotel.

Image: Boulevard walk, Singapore.



(h) Not preserving our history

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Singapore river – a mix of old and new.

Image: Singapore River, Singapore.

(i) Not being innovative



(i) Not being innovative

Gardens by the Bay is a nature park spanning 101 hectares of reclaimed land in central Singapore, adjacent to the Marina Reservoir.

'Gardens by the Bay is a huge, colourful, futuristic park in the bay area of Singapore. The famous Supertree structures offer an impressive skywalk over the gardens...'

Supertree Grove: 'There is no doubting the dominance of the steel-framed "tree" plantation, towering over Gardens by the Bay with 12 of the large metal structures in the central grove and half a dozen others placed in other parts of the garden. Over 200 difference species of plants and flowers cover the exterior of these tall upright gardens and twice a night they are a centrepiece of the gardens' light and music show (at 19:45 and 20:45), casting a glow over the park, and making you feel like you are in a modern fairytale. For those who like a view, take the trip 25 metres up to the remarkable walkway that connects three of the trees together. For that extra special dining experience, the 50 metre tree at the centre offers food and a view at Supertree by Indochine, with a 360 degree view from the lounge and a tree-top roofless bar'.

Read more at www.singapore-guide.com/attractions/gardens-by-the-bay.htm.

Image: Gardens by the Bay, Singapore.



(j) Not dreaming

This sculpture sits along the public walkway to the marina.

Image: Boulevard walk, Singapore.



(k) Not being aware

Nadine at the Art Science Museum, Singapore.

'The presence of the famous born-in-Singapore robot is one of the highlights in HUMAN+: The Future of our Species, a thought-provoking show that runs from May 20 to Oct 15'.

See www.channelnewsasia.com/news/lifestyle/singapore-robot-nadine-public-debut-art-science-museum-8857788.

Image: Nadine at the Art Science Museum, Singapore.



(I) Not making enough public spaces

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Community Lab at the United World College of South East Asia, Singapore. This is a place that is used by students during the day and the community in the weekends. See www.uwcsea.edu.sg.

Image: At the United World College of South East Asia, Singapore.

(m) Not thinking long-term



(m) Not thinking long-term

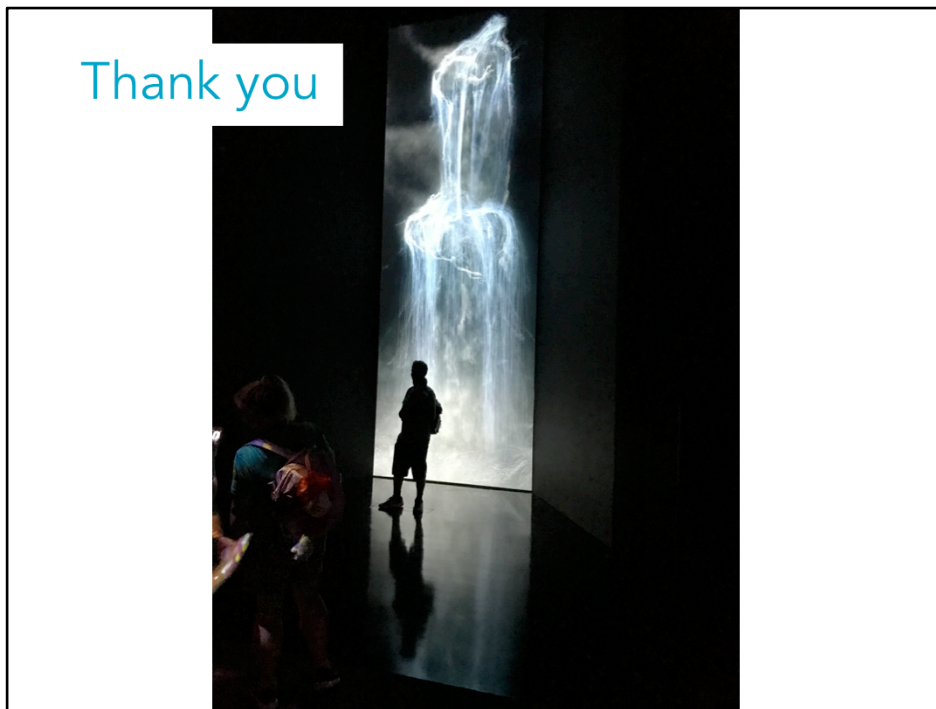
This is the dam Lee Kuan Yew envisaged and was built before he died.

Foresight brought water projects to fruition "He (Mr Lee) was just like (someone) looking at a baby grow — a baby born out of a vision that he had made 20 years ago and (he) saw that come to fruition," recalled Mr Yap Kheng Guan, former director in charge of the Marina Barrage project, of Mr Lee's Sunday visits that occurred between 2008 and 2009.

In 1987, after the big clean-up of the then polluted Singapore River, Mr Lee famously challenged the Government to build a dam across the Marina Channel to create a freshwater lake'.

Read more at: www.todayonline.com/rememberinglky/foresight-brought-water-projects-fruition.

Image: Lee Kuan Yew's dam, Singapore.



F: Brain dump

Talent development system: get universities/training centres central and build capability/spin off around them.

Cuba/Lambton tram or circular train track.

Victoria and Massey Universities shouldn't compete against each other but should work together. Institutions should be open and build relationships with local businesses and communities.

Quality, original, tactile craft.

Open up rivers, plant more trees and create some nice grassed avenues, Kumutoto stream terrace that runs from Kelburn to the waterfront in a tunnel underneath Woodward St.

Treaty settlement museum.

Home of citizenship and national capital – ensure every child under 12 years visits the capital city and make the parliamentary precinct a NZ shared space – e.g. Canberra PACER rebate – to qualify for [PACER](#), your school's travel itinerary must include visits and participation in programs at:

Parliament House,

the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House,

and/or

the National Electoral Education Centre and

the Australian War Memorial.

Make Marlborough Sounds a national park.

Auckland is heading towards becoming NZ's primate city (largest population by a long way, financial capital) – only Wellington as the political centre is stopping every other city being secondary. This is not good because it indicates development issues and imbalances.

What do we do about our primate city? We need four pumping cities, spreading talent around New Zealand.

Local government, stepping up the regions and empowering them.

Image: Digital waterfall on the wall of the Art Science Museum (in video).