Chapter 4

Perspectives in Managing State Global Competitiveness: Singapore and the Götheborg IV Model

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ABSTRACT

Singapore ranks second after Switzerland in the Global Competitiveness Index 2015/6, placing it ahead of some advanced economies of the Nordic region. Singapore’s development model has been studied mostly from an economic perspective in specific socio-political contexts. Part of the Singapore governance strategy in managing its differential (heterochronic) developmental complexity at domestic and international levels is through its national discourses. These national discourses are multileveled and targeted at different spheres of influence. This chapter brings a complementary language in international business perspective with theoretical foundations in biological evolution theory applied to state governance. It uses a four-quadrant Götheborg IV model of visualization, illustrating how Singapore’s national discourses act in dialogic complementarity, bolstering state competitiveness. It shows how state development complexity is managed in Singapore’s current vision of a Smart Nation, with its ambition of becoming a global first in future living in the global circular economy.

INTRODUCTION: AN EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE TO STATE GOVERNANCE

New scientific discoveries and advancing technologies often influence the manner in which humans live and work. One only needs to look back to the early stages of the third industrial revolution powered by computer and automation compared to the current near ubiquitous wireless connections built in as infrastructure today in the fourth wave of industrial revolution (Industry 4.0) powered by cyber physical systems. Together with these scientific and technological advances comes the need for a broader understanding of how societal structures are organized and managed (state governance) in such a manner that creates and sustains an optimal eco-condition in the era of Industry 4.0. An entity that has been around much longer and is far more ubiquitous than the digital infrastructure of today is the human use of lan-
language. We use language not just in transaction activities but also to create and bolster social constructs and institutions. Language creates and bolsters most any type of socio-political governance. As such, one way to gain a broader understanding of state governance is to turn to perspectives gathered at the intersection of the fields of international business (IB) studies, applied biology and language studies. In the context of Asia, in particular Southeast-Asia, one of the most advanced and technology embracing economies is that of Singapore:

Almost half of our cabinet consists of engineers. Our Prime Minister is a mathematician. He studied computer science almost four decades ago in Cambridge, and he can still code. Please check out his code and you will see the functioning of an elegant mind that understands what this is all about. In other words, we get it. - Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Singapore’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister-in-Charge of The Smart Nation Initiative at the Internet-of-Things Asia Conference 2016, Singapore Expo, 30 March 2016.

Complementary to the predominantly engineering perspective referred to in Balakrishnan’s (2016) speech, this chapter illustrates how the concept of heterochronous development, defined in the broadest sense as differential rates of development within a single unit of analysis, borrowed in metaphor from the natural science of biology, can be applied to the context of the organization and management of state governance. In particular, this chapter focuses in illustration on the dynamics of organizational evolution in Singapore state governance in its management of three differently maturing national discourses, beginning from narrow to broad strategic focus that includes (I) Total Fertility Rate (TFR) / Baby Bonus Scheme, (II) Singapore Incorporated and (III) Smart Nation as examples, manage and address the various social stratifications and differential developments of the organization via state policies, in relation to its own projected economic goals. These three discourses are then placed in a four-quadrant knowledge mapping model, the Götheborg IV or G4 model at the end of the chapter as an example of how the differential rates of maturing national discourses can be visualised and subsequently managed. The model encompasses the dynamics of emergence and management under uncertainty, and can be used for prescriptive purposes.

The broadening of the perspective of organization theory from a purely economic standpoint based on transactions, began in the mid-1900s. A notably influential perspective came from Stinchrome’s (1965) early essay, “Social structure and organizations”. His essay foregrounded a more politically oriented organizational theory (and thus state governance) set in a context of broader societal processes as a vector towards new knowledge of organizations influenced by a broader spectrum of the “relation of society outside organizations to the internal life of organizations” (Stinchcombe, 1965, p. 142). The differential rates (heterochronia) of maturing socio-political concerns as reflected in national discourses require a management strategy that recognizes such evolutionary complexities.

RESEARCH FOCUS: MANAGEMENT OF HETEROCHRONIC DEVELOPMENT

In terms of methodological frameworks and perspectives, the discourses of Singapore when studied within the academic circles have often focused on processes in specific social (Narayanan & Kwen, 2016; Retna & Jones, 2013; Alsagoff, 2010), economic (Joshi,Tortajada, & Biswas, 2012; Kuruvilla, Erickson, & Hwang, 2002; Huff, 1995) and political (Chin, 2016; Soon & Samsudin, 2015; Teo, 2010)
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