Abstract

Title: Creating a Field of Global Cultural Production: Bourdieu and Singapore as Global City of the Arts

Can we use the work of Pierre Bourdieu outside a European policy framework? Do the central concepts of his sociology of culture extend to cultural phenomena emerging within the global economy? This paper will take Bourdieu beyond the French national confines of his methodology, and explore its uses in analysing a current global phenomenon – the emergence of ‘global cities of the arts’ or the now global aspiration among major cities to be a ‘Capital of Culture’.

Since the release of *The Renaissance City Report* in 2000, the Singaporean Government has been determined to integrate culture into their policy frameworks, transcending a purely socio-economic conception of this city-state. Singapore has thus aggressively embarked on a series of initiatives to boost the civic arts and the country’s cultural production. Most significantly, Singapore has invested large amounts of money in:
- Commissioning and constructing arts and cultural venues
- Creating and funding both local and international art festivals
- Promoting and supporting the local arts scene

In part inspired by examples like Glasgow, Singapore’s investment in the arts provokes questions concerning the relation between the global ‘perception’ of a city and socio-cultural realities of cultural development as they figure in the struggle to achieve status and visible cultural capital on the global cultural landscape. By drawing upon Bourdieu’s formulation of the Field of Cultural Production and his conception of ‘capital’, this paper creates a framework of analysis where it would be possible to examine how cities compete with each other to become the next Capital of Culture. By demonstrating how the world can be conceived as a ‘field of global cultural production’, I will draw a parallel between the field of cultural production and its individuals with a field of global cultural production and the cities of the world.

I will first extend Bourdieu’s conception of ‘capital’ and redefine it in relation to cities. By using Singapore as a case study, I will apply these expanded definitions onto the measures undertaken by Singapore in recent years as it seeks to become a Global City of the Arts. This application would create a framework that would allow me to situate Singapore’s standing as a Global City of the Arts in relation to other cities in the world. This analysis will offer a way into understanding why certain cities in the world are perceived to be more successful than other cities in being viewed as a Capital of Culture.

The paper will conclude by identifying the way in which the struggle for global ascendancy involves harnessing socio-economic forces which are also detrimental to the development of civic culture, and where the achievement of the conditions of ‘a global city of culture’ is fraught with contradictions.
Bibliography


