The "Singapore Fever" in China: Policy Mobility and Mutation

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Abstract

The "Singapore model" constitutes only the second explicit attempt by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to learn from a foreign country following Mao Zedong's pledge to contour "China's tomorrow" on the Soviet Union experience during the early 1950s. This paper critically evaluates policy transfers from Singapore to China in the post-Mao era. It re-examines how this Sino-Singaporean regulatory engagement came about historically following Deng Xiaoping's visit to Singapore in 1978, and offers a careful re-reading of the degree to which actual policy borrowing by China could transcend different state ideologies, abstract ideas and subjective attitudes. Particular focus is placed on the effects of CCP cadre training in Singaporean universities and policy mutation within two government-to-government projects, namely the Suzhou Industrial Park and the Tianjin Eco-City. The paper concludes that the "Singapore model," as applied in post-Mao China, casts institutional reforms as an open-ended process of policy experimentation and adaptation that is fraught with tension and resistance.

Keywords: China; Singapore; lesson drawing; policy transfer; policy mutation

Much has been made of the significance of the 1992 "southern tour" of the-then "paramount leader" of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Deng Xiaoping 邓小平, in instituting a new round of socio-economic reforms in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Relatively underplayed but not lacking in historical significance was his "southern tour" of Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in November 1978. Recounting this visit in an interview, the former Singaporean prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew 李光耀, described how Deng was "shocked" by what he saw during his tour "because he expected three backward cities. Instead he saw three modern cities and he knew that communism – the politics of the iron rice bowl – did not work."[1] This "shock" jump-started a

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1 "It's stupid to be afraid," *Der Spiegel*, 8 August 2008; To 1981.

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deepening engagement with the regulatory regime in Singapore, previously labelled the "running dog of imperialism" (*diguozhuyi zougou* 帝国主义走狗) by the CCP propaganda machine. Delegations, some of which included Deng's successor, Jiang Zemin 江泽民, began to visit Singapore informally in the 1980s, and "Singapore fever" (*Xinjiapo re* 新加坡热) quickly spread among Chinese policymaking circles following on from Deng's imploration to CCP cadres in 1992 to: "Learn from the world, especially from Singapore. There is good social order there. They govern with discipline. We should draw from their experience – and we will do even better than they."[2]

More delegations were deployed to Singapore in the 1990s. The current Chinese president, Xi Jinping 习近平, went on one of these visits as a city-level official. A bilateral agreement was signed in February 1994 in Beijing to facilitate the transfer of urban and industrial management expertise – portrayed by Singaporean policymakers as a government-to-government (G-to-G) "software transfer" – to the ancient city of Suzhou 苏州. Subsequent G-to-G collaborations were launched in Tianjin in 2008 and Chongqing in 2015. The regulatory engagement was further institutionalized with the signing of two agreements in 1997 and 2001 to facilitate short attachments to key regulatory agencies in Singapore and longer-term enrolment in master's degree programmes offered by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the National University of Singapore (NUS). More recently, the CCP's enchantment with Singaporean neo-authoritarianism appears to have transcended the domains of urban public administration and industrial policy. This is interesting, if not also surprising, as it comes after reported concerns about the "cracks in the Singapore model" following the weakest ever electoral performance, in 2011, of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP).[3] The PAP's subsequent landslide electoral victory in September 2015 suggests that it has managed to reduce the socio-economic problems that triggered a loss of confidence in its governance and that there are new lessons to be drawn on addressing social discontent.

This paper evaluates the emergence and effects of lesson drawing and policy transfers from Singapore to the PRC in the post-Mao era. It has two objectives. First, it re-examines how this Sino-Singaporean regulatory engagement – only the second overt attempt to learn from a particular country following Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 pledge in the 1950s to contour "China's tomorrow" on the Soviet Union prototype – came to be. Second, the paper provides a twofold evaluation of the concrete policies and ideas drawn from Singapore. It begins by assessing the CCP's annual cadre training and exchange programmes through the critical observations of Chinese scholars and policymakers. The constraints of implementing G-to-G policy transfers are then illustrated through a critical review of policymakers' comments and existing research on the Suzhou and Tianjin G-to-G "software transfers."

2 Deng 1993, 378–79.
3 "Cracks appear in the Singapore model," *People's Daily*, 23 May 2011.

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Placed within a broad historical framework, this spectrum of evidence shows how Singaporean-derived lessons and policies mutated when rolled out across Chinese shores. Indeed, inflows of ideas and policies continue to be refracted – if at times actively resisted – by all levels of the party-state apparatus. At one level, this reinforces Gregg Huff's contention that the Singaporean experience "is unlikely to be replicated elsewhere, not only because the Republic is a city-state, but also because few others can develop services exports reliant on location, because of the unacceptability in many other polities of a heavy foreign economic presence, and because of difficulties in effecting the same degree of government control as in Singapore."[4] At another level, the mutation and, in the case of the G-to-G projects, territorial containment of policies, ideas and philosophies from Singapore reinforces David Shambaugh's observation that foreign ideas/practices have been proactively re-adapted to local contexts in China.[5] Viewed as an aggregated process over time, however, existing research remains unclear whether the overt "learning" engagements with Singapore-based institutions and firms are of more political rather than practical value for current and future rounds of institutional reforms across China. This paper will address this lacuna.

The discussion is organized as follows. The second section reviews extant research on lesson drawing and policy transfers and establishes the conceptual parameters that frame the empirical analysis. The geographical–historical conditions that underpinned the China–Singapore strategic engagement are then presented in the third part. The fourth section lists and evaluates the different dimensions of Sino-Singaporean lesson drawing and policy transfers over the past three decades. The relationship between policy mutation and Chinese policymakers' persistence in learning from the Singaporean experience is assessed in the conclusion.

Conceptualizing Lesson Drawing and Policy Transfers

National policymaking is a multi-dimensional and an increasingly cross-border process. This phenomenon is widely connoted by the concepts of "lesson drawing" and "policy transfer." Richard Rose identifies five different degrees of "lesson drawing."[6] Copying is the "adoption more or less intact of a programme already in effect in another jurisdiction."[7] It does not consider cultural, historic and socio-political contexts that could be highly variegated within and between countries. A step removed from copying, emulation involves adapting foreign policies to domestic conditions. Hybridization is a "combination of elements of programmes from two different places."[8] Inspiration is not directly linked to drawing lessons; rather, policies implemented elsewhere are used as stimuli for

4 Huff 1995a, 753.
5 Shambaugh 2008, 103; cf. de Jong 2013.
6 Rose 1991, 22.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.

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formulating new domestic programmes. These five degrees constitute varying dimensions through which ideas, policies, institutions and ideologies move between places.

David Dolowitz and David Marsh conceptualize this movement as policy transfer, namely, the "process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting."[9] Where case studies on "lesson drawing" focus on assessing shifts in policy content as they are implemented in new locations, the related but relatively differentiated policy transfer literature illustrates *how* specific actors enable policies and practices to move across different jurisdictions. Dolowitz and Marsh highlight three factors that impede successful transfers: insufficient information in the importing location, incomplete transfer of policy content, and inappropriate transfer of policies without regard to context.[10] This corresponds with geographical work that demonstrates how place-specific conditions are more "than mere background scenery to the policy actors' performance"; policies "may be crossing borders ever more 'freely,' but this is not yielding a flat earth of standardized outcomes or some socio-institutional monoculture."[11] What typically ensues instead are *mutations* in ideas, attitudes and policies.

Research has further demonstrated how cross-border flows of ideas and policies do not always follow a seamless state-to-state pattern. As Dianne Stone cogently argues, "policy transfer takes place in a multi-organisational context. The transfer of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas happens within regional associations and between international organisations."[12] Relations between different contexts in the form of multi-actor policy networks and "policy assemblages" in and through city-regions also strongly impact the outcomes of lesson drawing and policy transfers.[13] These observations largely apply to Chinese policymakers' process of learning from Singapore: multiple domestic transfer agents and TNCs are involved, as are different levels of the party-state apparatus in the PRC. Some of these "regional associations" have gone on to form quasi-autonomous arrangements with government-linked firms from Singapore,[14] for example the production of the Guangzhou Knowledge City, the Singapore–Sichuan High-Tech Innovation Park in Chengdu, and the Jilin Food Zone. The Sino-Singaporean lesson drawing and policy transfer process must thus be evaluated in terms of its *geographical–historical variegation*.

Aligning with and developing these conceptual and empirical contributions, the next two sections will explore how specific political and economic actors

9 Dolowitz and Marsh 2000, 5.
10 Dolowitz and Marsh 2000.
11 Peck 2011, 780, 781; see also Peck and Theodore 2012; Prince 2012.
12 Stone 2003, 17.
13 Evans and Davies 1999; Temenos and McCann 2013.
14 See Yu, Hong 2015.

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developed favourable conditions for lesson drawing and policy mobility between China and Singapore. However, the existence of different types of lesson drawing and the mutation of policies in the territorially-contained G-to-G projects exemplify the constitutive – if at times constraining – impacts of inherited institutions and practices within the PRC. This multi-dimensional process in turn offers an important prism through which to evaluate socio-economic reforms in post-Mao China.

The Geopolitical Backdrop to Policy Mobility

The picture often portrayed of "feverish" China–Singapore lesson drawing and policy transfers in the 1980s starkly contrasts with the bilateral relations of the 1960s. Just as Singapore attained independence in 1965 after leaving the Malaysian federation, Mao Zedong was about to launch the "Great Cultural Revolution of the Proletariat" across China. At the time, the CCP still officially subscribed to the Leninist internationalist logic that a complete transition to a communistic end-state was premised on "liberating" the entire international community from capitalistic and imperialistic exploitation. To attain this objective, the CCP launched its own version of policy transfer by supporting insurgent movements across South-East Asia. In the Malay peninsula, this process was to be facilitated by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), termed by a recently declassified US government document as "the agent of the Communist Party of China."[15]

The CPM first embarked on campaigns to overthrow the British colonial government between 1948 and 1960, a period also known as the Malayan Emergency.[16] When this failed, its leader, Chin Peng 陈平, fled to China in 1960 and began directing operations from Beijing. The CPM operated a radio station in Hunan province known as the *Suara Revolusi Malaya* (Voice of Malayan Revolution). Broadcasts aimed at Malaya complemented clandestine local cells that worked to expand loyalty to Communist China through guerrilla and psychological warfare.[17] A particular target audience was a group of ethnonationalistic Chinese in Malaya who, in Gungwu Wang's observation, refused assimilation and "wanted all Chinese to be completely and passionately dedicated to the welfare of China and China alone."[18]

Opposing this warfare was Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore. After witnessing the destruction caused by Japanese colonialism and then communistic radicalism in the 1940s and 1950s, Lee became a staunch nationalist and strongly opposed communism. His primary political goal was to

15 Planning Coordination Group, USA. 18 August 1955. "Overseas Chinese students and an Asian university. Classification: secret." Available at Eisenhower Archives, https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/declassified/fy_2015/082_022.pdf.
16 Stockwell 1993; 2006; Ramakrishna 2002.
17 Cheah 2009; Wang, Gungwu, and Ong 2009; cf. Chin, C.C., and Hack 2004.
18 Wang, Gungwu 1970, 11; cf. Chang 1980.

create a meritocratic "Malaysian Malaysia" when Singapore was a part of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965, and following enforced separation, an independent Singaporean identity.[19] To ensure that newly independent Singapore could survive without an economic hinterland, the Lee administration worked at attracting and embedding transnational capital. This stance was summarized in no uncertain terms: "Singapore will survive, will trade with the whole world and will remain non-communist."[20] Lee's proclamation effectively integrated the city-state within the very expansionary system of capitalism that the CCP, then at the apex of ultra-leftist fervour, sought to negate. In addition, this integration process would have nothing to do with "communism," which meant the exclusion of political economies such as the PRC and the Soviet bloc. Unsurprisingly, Radio Beijing and the CPM broadcasts began to label Lee and his "clique" as imperialist "running dogs."[21] Sino-Singaporean relations were tense to say the least, and Singaporean policymakers viewed Chinese foreign policy with immense suspicion.

This frosty stand-off thawed gradually after the-then US president, Richard Nixon, visited Beijing in 1972 and met with CCP chairman, Mao Zedong. Prior to that, as a recently declassified "Outline plan of operations" from Washington reveals, the US government implored its representatives to impress on "local Chinese" in Malaya and Singapore that "help from 'Mother China' would be inviting a fate such as Hungary, North Korea and Viet Minh; that Russia and China impose special harsh treatment upon their colonies, and upon home grown communist leaders after the takeover; and that being drawn into a communist system will lower present living standards and enslave the people."[22] With the US taking the lead in engaging this "communist system," the Lee administration began to respond to these foreign policy shifts. "We thought it would be foolish," recounts former home affairs minister, Wong Kan Seng 黄根成, "not to go and see what China had to offer. So we sent our people there … to understand what was going on."[23]

Despite this new-found enthusiasm, Lee Kuan Yew was keen from the outset to emphasize that Singapore was neither an ethnic nor a geopolitical outpost of China. Underpinning this emphasis was sensitivity to South-East Asian geopolitics: the CPM remained an active, albeit fragmented, secessionist force in the Malay peninsula, while the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) had just been brutally purged (which led in turn to the collapse of the Sukarno administration). And, as Lee observed at a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Ottawa in 1973, Singapore's policymakers had to overtly allay international

19 Singapore Ministry of Culture, 31 May 1965.
20 Press Conference, City Hall, 26 August 1965.
21 Latif 2007, 52; Ong 2015, 87–88.
22 US Operations Coordinating Board. 1957. "Outline plan of operations with respect to Singapore and the Federation of Malaya. Classification: top secret," Office of the Historian, US Department of State, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v22/d463.
23 "The evolution of a policy on China," *The Straits Times*, 17 June 1995.

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concerns that the city-state was not a territorial extension of China.[24] Lee further affirmed the distinction between "Chinese" and "Singaporeans" in his historic meeting with Mao Zedong in May 1976 (Figure 1). Former politician Lee Khoon Choy 李炯才, one of several Chinese-educated personnel to be co-opted as one of Lee Kuan Yew's "lieutenants," puts the latter's position in clear perspective:

> In 1976, when I arranged for Lee to visit China … we saw Mao Zedong, who was already mentally and physically frail. Lee's delegation consisted of 17 members. Other than Rajaratnam [then foreign minister] and me, the group included Malay Parliamentary Secretary Ahmad Mattar. It was to show that the visit was not meant to be a "kinsmen Chinese" visit of Singapore ministers. The mixed group served to allay fears or suspicion by Singapore's neighbours.[25]

Although no significant foreign policy breakthrough emerged from the meeting between Mao and Lee, it softened the Sino-Singaporean stand-off and generated gradual modifications in Singapore's foreign policy towards the so-called "communist spectre" in South-East Asia. A new position was subsequently presented by the-then Singaporean foreign minister, S. Rajaratnam, in an address to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 1977:

> Within our own countries we must continue to fight our communists because in every one of the ASEAN countries the people have made it abundantly clear that Communism is not for them. But outside of ASEAN the question of whether a government is or is not Communist is irrelevant. The only test is whether it is friendly or unfriendly; whether it is under a compulsion to liberate us from ourselves or leave it to each of us to seek the better life our own way … I think today and in the future great powers will seek friends and allies not on the basis of increasingly irrelevant ideological affinities but on the basis of national interests.[26]

This shift from ideological internationalism to political realism established the platform for a "friendly" Deng Xiaoping to launch the previously mentioned visit to South-East Asia in 1978. The Singaporean media were keen to portray Deng's visit as an eye-opening experience, as indeed was Lee Kuan Yew in several subsequent interviews (Figure 2). Judging from Deng's October 1979 address to domestic policymakers, this portrayal might be largely correct: while plans to launch the special economic zones were proposed by key cadres such as Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋 and Yang Shangkun 杨尚昆 as early as 1977, the Singapore visit arguably catalysed the involvement of foreign capital in new rounds of socio-economic reforms:

> I went to Singapore to understand aspects of how they utilized foreign capital. Foreigners established factories in Singapore and Singaporeans reaped several benefits … We must develop this resolve, weigh and be clear about the pros and cons, and do it even if it means suffering some minor losses.[27]

24 Lee Kuan Yew. 1973. "On the change in great power relations at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Ottawa, 3 August." Available at National Archives of Singapore, http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/lky19730803.pdf.
25 "Descendents influenced by the soil," *The Straits Times*, 6 July 2013.
26 Rajaratnam 1977.
27 Deng 1994, 199, authors' translation; cf. Chen, Hong 2007.

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Figure 1: **Mao Zedong (third from right) Meets Lee Kuan Yew (second from right): The First Time a Chinese Leader Received a Foreign Leader of Chinese Ethnicity**

Source:
People's Daily, 13 May 1976.

The commitment to learn from Singapore entailed a policy about-turn that illustrated Deng's chameleon-like approach to governance. As the memoirs of the-then leader of the CPM, Chin Peng, reveal, it was Deng who, in 1961, instructed Chin not only to maintain but also intensify military struggle in the Malay peninsula when the CPM was planning to wind up its operations.[28] The goal was twofold. Apart from spreading communistic revolution to other parts of Asia, the CCP also tried to drive and draw on ethno-nationalism; following Lee Kuan Yew's request, however, it was the same Deng who mandated Chin to cease the CPM radio broadcasts immediately. This sharp reversal underscored the classic "black cat, yellow cat" instrumentalism Deng first promulgated in the 1960s – any cat that is capable of catching mice is a good cat. And the "mice" Deng really wanted since the early 1960s was economic rejuvenation. After phasing out communistic internationalization, the Deng administration intensified a process that was unthinkable just a decade earlier – global economic integration.[29]

Most prominent of Sino-Singaporean exchanges in the 1980s was the 1985 appointment of Goh Keng Swee 吴庆瑞, the former deputy prime minister of Singapore, as the advisor on coastal development and tourism to the State Council of China.[30] Despite this engagement, lesson drawing from Singapore remained largely in the "inspiration" realm throughout the 1980s. Concrete policy transfers to particular cities, if and when they occurred, were neither tailored by Singapore-based agencies nor intended for nationwide adaptation. This was owing primarily to the legacy of the urban–rural dual structure: 80 per cent of China's population was categorized as "rural" at the onset of the

28 Chin, Peng 2003.
29 Heaton 1982; Chen, Zhimin 2005.
30 Desker and Kwa 2011; Zheng and Wong 2013.

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Figure 2: **The Portrayal of Deng's Visit to Jurong Industrial Park in Singapore**


THE STRAITS TIMES, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1978

Mr. Teng planting a pong pong tree on Jurong Hilltop.—Pictures by TAN WEE HIM and YOW YUN WOH

Singapore's success: Teng sees for himself

Source:
The Straits Times, 14 November 1978, Singapore Library Archives.

1978 "reform and liberalization," and Deng's domestic emphasis was to increase both productivity and enthusiasm through reforming rural production.[31]

The year 1989 proved to be the crucial watershed in transformative changes in Sino-Singaporean relations. For the leaders of Singapore and other ASEAN political economies, lingering suspicions of China eased following the surrender of

31 Oi 1999; Bramall 2007.

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the CPM in southern Thailand and the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In view of this underlying concern with the "communist spectre" in South-East Asia, Singaporean foreign policymakers opted not to establish formal diplomatic relations with China until October 1990, two months after the Suharto government of Indonesia did likewise.[32] Within China, the massive social instability leading up to and after the military crackdown on civilian protesters in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989 triggered strong reflections on the effects and future trajectories of post-1978 socio-economic reforms. The conjuncture was thus characterized by a strange mix of improved foreign relations with domestic socio-economic chaos: as foreign fears of the "China threat" were allayed and laid new foundations for cross-border collaborations, a growing range of social problems in both rural and urban areas demanded resolution. Specifically, Deng Xiaoping and his successor, Jiang Zemin, urgently needed new approaches to manage the intensifying urbanization that accompanied market-oriented reforms and, consequently, assuage concerns by the strong conservative faction that deepening reforms would exacerbate political dissent.

Against this backdrop, Deng reaffirmed the regulatory experiences of Singapore as a potential developmental prototype during his 1992 "southern tour." What he sought was a *pragmatic resolution* to the domestic crisis, and as Huff argues, Singapore offered a "reliable" model for emulation: "Perhaps the most important reason why interventionism succeeded in Singapore was because of a pragmatism – the test of what works – rather than rigid ideological commitment to a free market or to state direction."[33] Contrary to the more informal learning of the 1980s, what followed in the 1990s were successive waves of lesson-drawing campaigns and policy transfers that collectively constituted the "Singapore fever." These were accompanied by a consistent rhetorical commitment from the Chinese party-state to learn from Singapore, even as both the PRC and Singapore's strategic and economic circumstances evolved and changed at the global scale.[34] The Chinese party-state, it appeared at the time, was very serious about formulating a Singapore-styled reform blueprint.

The Realities of Lesson Drawing and Policy Transfers

Institutionalized learning in Singapore: effectiveness and constraints

The first concrete expression of lesson drawing from Singapore arguably began in 1992 with the introduction of bespoke programmes for Chinese public servants in the Nanyang Technological University. The choice of NTU as the first institution of teaching-cum-learning for visiting CCP cadres is interesting: it occupies the site

32 Tan 2009.
33 Huff 1995b, 1435.
34 Cf. Huang and Lou 2014.

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of what had formerly been known as Nanyang University, the first university outside of China (including Taiwan) that offered Chinese-language tertiary education for ethnic-Chinese from South-East Asia. First driven by Tan Lark Sye 陈六使 and launched in 1955 with the assistance of private donors, Nanyang University did in fact become a hotbed of pro-communist activism in the mid-1960s.[35] Concerns over communist-ideology slippage into mainstream society prompted the Singapore government to ultimately terminate the exclusively Chinese-based educational system in Nanyang University in 1980.[36]

Yet, one might speculate that the subsequent Singaporean choice to pitch NTU as an attractive training ground for Communist Party cadres from China was connected precisely to that vexed heritage from the 1960s. Indeed, the-then NTU president, Su Guaning 徐冠林, even proposed renaming NTU as Nanyang University in the mid-2000s. The CCP for its part did not specifically indicate that it wanted to engage NTU until an official agreement on lesson drawing was drawn up in April 2001. While the renaming bid proved unsuccessful, the symbolism of NTU's collaboration with the CCP should not be lost on observers of Sino-Singaporean relations: it revived and fulfilled one core objective of the original Nanyang University – the use of Chinese-language syllabi for advanced studies outside China – almost four decades after its establishment.

As enrolment in these courses expanded, NTU developed the first overseas master's degree programme for higher-ranked Chinese officials in 1998. While the medium of instruction for most courses in NTU is English, the two master's programmes for Chinese officials – namely, the Master of Science in Managerial Economics (MME) and Master of Public Administration (MPA) – are both taught predominantly in Mandarin. Both programmes are dubbed the "mayor's class" (*shizhang ban* 市长班) in China today. As these programmes gained in popularity, NTU set up the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration (NCPA) in December 2009 in order to offer executive training for senior Chinese civil servants. Between 1992 and 2012, more than 12,000 mid- and senior-level government officials from China were trained, with many becoming "influential decision-makers and key officials in the Chinese government" upon their return.[37]

This long-standing relationship took on more concrete institutional expressions after the PRC's Central Organization Department and various municipal Party committees designated NTU as the best overseas institution for the training of Chinese government officials. In 2011, the PRC's State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs (SAFEA) certified NTU as an overseas expert organization and training institution. With this certification, NTU was authorized to

35 van der Kroef 1964; 1967.
36 Yao 2008; cf. Zahari 2007, Ch. 14.
37 Nanyang Technological University. 2012. "NTU launches the new Mayors' Programme for high-level Chinese officials," 11 April, http://media.ntu.edu.sg/Pages/newsdetail.aspx?news=7d670892-53db-4056-abea-f16764d7226c. Accessed 20 September 2016. For an overview of the demographic makeup of the officials, see Yu, Wenxuan, Rubin and Wu 2012.

conduct personnel exchange programmes for Chinese officials. In 2010, the NUS joined NTU in receiving Chinese officials into its professional programme at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Only senior CCP cadres who are section chiefs with at least ten years of working experience can be accepted. These strengthening linkages between the Chinese party-state and Singapore-based academic institutions collectively exemplify a sustained preference on the part of the CCP for emulating and drawing inspirations from Singaporean regulatory policies.

The intensification of knowledge exchange and formalized learning positively impacted CCP cadres across the party-state structure. For instance, cadres from the municipality of Shanghai and the city of Qinhuangdao 秦皇岛 published a two-volume book reflecting on their experience in Singapore and how they could adapt best practices.[38] This corresponded with discussions on the connections between the Singapore experience and the importance of the rule of law;[39] the lessons to be drawn from the Singaporean Central Provident Fund;[40] and the factors of benevolent governance.[41] In 2007, the-then Party secretary of Guangdong, Wang Yang 汪洋, called on Shenzhen 深圳 municipal officials to "be daring in matching up to the model of Singapore" (*jiaoban Xinjiapo* 叫板新加坡). A large number of delegates were subsequently mobilized on learning visits to the city-state, and in November 2008 Shenzhen University launched a new centre for Singapore studies.[42] When Singapore's prime minister Lee Hsien Loong 李显龙 visited Shenzhen in 2014, the Shenzhen mayor, Wang Rong 王荣, proudly proclaimed the results of this "matching up": "amongst the cities across China trying to learn from Singapore, Shenzhen is one of the closest and the best."[43]

At the national level, the current Xi Jinping administration has established a consensus to emulate and hybridize Singaporean policies. Citing an unnamed political theorist who consulted the CCP on new ways to emulate Singaporean policies, the *New York Times* reported that Xi had had a low-profile meeting with Lee Kuan Yew at the beach resort of Beidaihe 北戴河 in October 2010 after learning that he was to assume the next Chinese presidency.[44] Lee, then "minister mentor" in the Singapore parliament, had met earlier with Jiang Zemin, who had overseen the first wave of "software transfers" in the 1990s. According to the report, Xi and Jiang agreed after meeting Lee "to try to

38 Shanghai Municipal People's Procuratorate 2003; Ma 2006a; 2006b.
39 Li 2008; Yang, Jianxue 2009.
40 Wang, Zhiying, and Ren 2008; Han and Li 2012.
41 Kuang 2013; Wu 2014.
42 "Shenzhen daguimo paituan pu Xinjiapo xuexi" (Large-scale deployment of delegations on learning trips to Singapore), Xinhua, 9 January 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2008-01/09/content_7389795.htm. Accessed 30 December 2014; "First China centre for Singapore studies," *The Straits Times*, 3 November 2008.
43 "Shenzhen shiwei Wang Rong huijian Xinjiapo zongli Li Xianlong yixing" (Shenzhen mayor Wang Rong greets Singapore prime minister Lee Hsien Loong's delegation), *Shenzhen tequ bao*, 14 September 2014; cf. Zhang 2012.
44 "Many urge next leader of China to liberalize," *New York Times*, 21 October 2012.

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adopt the Singapore model down the road."[45] Xi visited Singapore a month later, and in 2011, General Liu Yazhou 刘亚洲, an advocate of Party reform, dispatched a team of military officers to live in Singapore and prepare a study.

Following these initial visits, a policy agenda developed by the Development Research Centre of the Chinese State Council (DRC) for the first Third Plenum to be chaired by Xi (in November 2013) explicitly recommended that state asset management reforms (*guo zi gaige* 国资改革) be modelled on Temasek Holdings, one of the two holding-cum-investment vehicles financed directly by the Singaporean government. It was soon announced that this recommendation would be adopted.[46] A cryptically named "small learning group" (*xuexi xiaozu* 学习小组) affirmed the potential of the "Singapore model" via an editorial in the Party mouthpiece, the *People's Daily*:

> The leadership team of Xi Jinping is currently searching for an effective developmental model. To China, the Singapore model allows for more liberal economic policies to coexist with one-party governance, this point is very attractive. In addition, Singapore has shaken off the "middle income trap" successfully, this is another area especially worthy of learning.[47]

In spite of these concrete engagements and rhetorical commitments, analysts have documented strong obstacles to actualizing lessons drawn from Singapore. According to Fan Lei 范磊, a researcher at the Charhar Institute in Inner Mongolia, CCP cadres found it difficult to accommodate the Singaporean experience in China:

> Context is an important factor to consider when learning from Singapore. More than 50,000 government officials have been trained in Singapore over the past 20 years. This is a considerable figure; on average every township would have an official who has been to Singapore. Yet it has been more than 20 years since the first batch of officials returned from Singapore, and the impact of "learning" is not at all clear. Why is it that so many officials were sent in search of "holy scriptures" (*qujing* 取经) for dissemination at home, only to have them return and revert to their old ways?[48]

Zheng Yongnian 郑永年, a Singapore-based political analyst of PRC–Singapore relations, offers a similar observation:

> Take the social housing construction in China for instance, it is an example of failed learning from Singapore. Although housing reforms in China are always portrayed as learning from Singapore's housing institution, that is to allow the majority of the people to buy their own housing, in practice what goes on is land-financed development, it is to rule through real estate development. The same situation [of failed learning] can be said of the provident fund institution.[49]

Underpinning "failed learning" was arguably the short-termist developmental outlook known colloquially as "GDP-ism." Following the gradual implementation of market-like rule, local CCP cadres gained more autonomy in driving

45 Ibid.
46 "Singapore's Temasek to be 'model' for SOE reform," *China Daily*, 28 January 2014.
47 "Xi Jinping, Li Guangyao yu Xinjiapo moshi" (Xi Jinping, Lee Kuan Yew and the Singapore model), *People's Daily*, 24 March 2015. Authors' translation.
48 "Fan Lei: "Xuexi Xinjiapo xu jianchi sanweiyiti" (Fan Lei: "Learning from Singapore" must emphasize three intergrated components), *Lianhe zaobao*, 29 September 2014.
49 "Xinjiapo: moshi banyang weiji" (Singapore: crisis of a model), *Phoenix Weekly*, 24 May 2014.

growth. They were then impelled to increase extra-budgetary fiscal revenue after the 1994 national fiscal reforms granted a larger apportionment of locally collected taxes to the central government. The consequent prioritization of capital-friendly initiatives over social service provision (especially for migrant workers) became a structural barrier for the successful implementation of Singapore-styled development.

Obstacles to direct borrowing are also shaped by the politics of scale within the administrative structure. This is made clear in a candid reflection by Lee Hsien Loong on the attempts in Shanghai to adopt Singapore's compensation strategy to deter corruption:

> I think China's circumstances are very different from ours. Your scale is much different from ours. I mean, we are the equivalent of one small city. Even Shanghai has 20 million people, four, five times the size of Singapore. So what we do in Singapore is not so easy to do all over China. I once had a discussion with a vice-mayor in Shanghai, and he said to me, "You pay your ministers well, and your civil servants well, properly. And if we were Shanghai, all by ourselves, we could do that also. But if I did that, people to the west of me would have a view, people to the north of me would have a view, the people to the south of me would have a view, the people in the centre would have a view. So it is not so easy for me to move, and it's a real problem, it's a different situation." But in Singapore, what we have tried to do is have strict rules, to have transparent systems, so if there is an exercise of discretion, it cannot be completed without checks and balances.[50]

These three preceding accounts highlight a distinct trait within the party-state apparatus in the PRC, namely, the need for *reciprocal accountability* between different administrative jurisdictions.[51] As such, one jurisdiction (Shanghai, in this case) could not act autonomously – which, as Lee's account implies, refers to the implementation of "strict rules" and "transparent systems" across the country – without the agreement of actors located at other administrative levels. By extension, Singapore's capacity to respond swiftly to global economic shifts (including the 2008–2009 global financial crisis) contrasts with the multi-tiered, consensus-driven administrative system in China.[52] Singaporean policymakers' ability to micro-manage social and economic affairs and simultaneously "scale up" the regulatory outcomes to the global scale (as opposed to the provincial and central governments in China) has been predicated on an "urba-national" entity that Kris Olds and Henry Yeung term the "global city-state":

> In global city-states, the (national) state has virtually direct access to the global economy. State policies can be shaped to develop the city-state into a global city-state … the political power and control of a developmental city-state distinguishes it from municipal governments in most global cities because it is able to bypass national-state/provincial-city politics typical in many global cities.[53]

This tangible difference underscores three contrasting aspects of Chinese politico-economic regulation: the demands of maintaining a unified party-state apparatus

50 "Lee Hsien Loong on what Singapore can – and can't – teach China," *Caixin*, 17 February 2014, http://english.caixin.com/2014-02-17/100639482.html?p0#page1. Accessed 1 May 2015.
51 Shirk 1993.
52 Cf. Huff 1995a; 1995b; Lim 2012.
53 Olds and Yeung 2004, 508, 512.

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despite increasing differentiation between Party and bureaucratic functions; the challenge of aligning bottom-up initiatives after greater regulatory autonomy was delegated to local governments;[54] and the increased emphasis on policy experimentation in the post-Mao era.

Beyond the tangible realm, the historian Xue Yong 薛涌 attributes the constraints to effective lesson drawing and policy transfers to a "big country mentality,"[55] namely, the tendency to assess others from the self. Underpinning this "mentality" are two schools of thought. One is termed "neo-authoritarianism" (*xin quanweizhuyi* 新权威主义), and the other "neo-Confucianism" (*xin rujia sixiang* 新儒家思想). The former explores possibilities for the concentration of political power to drive market-based reforms, and many Chinese intellectuals and policymakers regard Singapore as an exemplar in this aspect. "Neo-Confucianism" was a movement predominantly driven by Tu Weiming 杜维明 from Harvard University. Paralleling Max Weber, Tu postulated that Confucianism had the same effect on the economic "rise" of Japan and the four Asian dragons (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) in the same way that Protestant ethics impacted the rise of capitalism.[56] As such, mainland policymaking and academic circles erroneously believed Singapore was founded on Confucian principles.[57] Uniting these two camps, Xue Yong argues, is a distinct lack of interest *in* the Singaporean experience, but rather a tendency to advance inward-looking agendas *through* making references to Singapore. This further explains why lessons and policies drawn from Singapore mutated after reaching China.

G-to-G projects: are geographically targeted policy transfers effective?

Apart from academic-based learning, specific policy transfers were and continue to be instituted through territorially contained G-to-G projects. Primarily involving the integration of industrial park development with the provision of social amenities in targeted cities, these projects emerged out of a "software transfer" initiative mooted by the Singapore government in the early 1990s. Fundamental to this arrangement is the deepening of economic relations through promoting policies that have proven effective in Singapore.

In February 1994, the governments of China and Singapore signed a landmark collaborative agreement that formally allowed Singaporean state-linked and private agencies to transfer their economic management experiences to Chinese partners. These experiences encompass land-use planning, building control, environmental regulation, planning and management of industrial estates, public utilities management and labour management. The first designated "microcosm"

54 Shirk 1993. For a geo-historical overview of central–local relations since 1949, see Lim 2016.
55 "Xue Yong: Zhongguoren de Xinjiapo qingjie" (Xue Yong: the Chinese man's Singapore story), *Lianhe zaobao*, 15 March 2013.
56 Tu 2008.
57 Cf. "Singapore plans to revive study of Confucianism," *New York Times*, 20 May 1982.

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was the China–Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park (CS-SIP), a 70 km^2 industrial park and residential community in Suzhou. Estimated to cost US$20 billion upon completion, the goal of the CS-SIP was to consolidate Chinese capacities to create investor-friendly environments for foreign capital. A consortium of Singapore government-linked companies took a 65 per cent stake and a Chinese consortium the remaining 35 per cent. According to Zhang Xinsheng 章新胜, Suzhou mayor at the time, Suzhou was selected over other economic regions in China because it successfully lobbied for the support of the Chinese central government.[58]

Despite this support, the project was unable to meet its original objectives. After the SIP plan was approved, the Suzhou city government re-started the development of a dormant project, the Suzhou New District Industrial Park (SND). This was clearly a competitive, if not cannibalistic, measure: the SND was geographically proximate to the SIP. With a majority stake in the SND, the Suzhou city government largely ignored the SIP and concentrated on promoting the SND instead. The-then Suzhou vice-mayor, Wang Jinhua 王金华, went to Germany and advised investors to invest directly in the SND rather than the SIP because it was not only more cost-effective but also because Chinese president Jiang Zemin did not favour the G-to-G project in the first place.[59] This aggressive approach reportedly caused the CS-SIP to lose US$77 million between 1994 and 2001.[60] After repeated requests for assurances that local Suzhou officials were not undercutting the G-to-G project, Lee Kuan Yew went on CNN in June 1999 to announce the Singapore consortium would be pulling out.[61] Shortly after that interview, Lee elaborated on the Singapore pullback:

> We would have liked to stay, but not in the way events have developed. It isn't worth our while to go on with it and have constant friction. And it's not just over costs – it's over ways of doing things … The problem was to change work styles, work habits and systems. So, I think it's best that they decide what to pick and choose and adapt to their systems.[62]

The friction was officially resolved in 2001. The Singapore consortium lowered its stake to 35 per cent, raised the Chinese consortium's stake to 65 per cent, and reduced its involvement in the construction from a planned 70 km^2 to just 8 km^2. Yet, a part of Lee arguably felt that point-to-point transfer and subsequent nationwide adaptation would have been possible had the Chinese central government followed through with what it had previously "assured" – that the project received "special attention."[63] This setback triggered reflections by key Singaporean policymakers involved in the project, which in turn revealed the difficulties confronting CCP attempts to emulate, hybridize or transplant policies from Singapore. To

58 "S'pore-style management in Suzhou Park 'a critical factor'," *The Straits Times*, 14 April 1996.
59 Teng 1998, 1.
60 "Seeing double," *The Straits Times*, 29 May 2004.
61 Unedited transcript, Singapore Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA), 7 June 1999.
62 "Carry on? Suzhou must make a case," *The Straits Times*, 25 September 1999.
63 "Singapore drops control of Suzhou park," *South China Morning Post*, 29 June 1999.

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George Yeo 杨荣文, Singapore's minister for trade and industry at the time, cultural differences were the primary impediment to successful policy transfers:

> Fundamentally, the problem of Suzhou is a cultural problem. To a certain extent, for China to modernize, some of its cultural characteristics must change. But will China become like Singapore? That's impossible … There are some things that China can benefit from by studying the Singapore experiment, but there are many things which are irrelevant because conditions are different. The difficulty of the Suzhou project, I think, has proved that we are different from the Chinese. This also gives us some comfort that the success formula of Singapore is not easily copied. If we're so easily copied, then we'll be under competitive pressure very quickly. But because the Singapore model is not easily copied, what we have is an enduring advantage, not an ephemeral thing.[64]

For Lim Neo Chian 林梁长 and Chan Soo Sen 曾士生, the first CEO of CS-SIP, differences in perceptions of contracts and policies – and by extension, the rule of law – were a major issue:

> The way we look at a contract or an agreement is quite different from how the Chinese look at it. Once signed, we have every intention to stick to the contract but they don't. They are quite happy to come back and see what they can do to re-negotiate some terms or to get out of some obligations. But you can't change the Chinese mentality and Chinese system overnight.[65]

> In Singapore, policies are very explicit, down to the last detail. But China is too big. If a policy is too explicit and not open to interpretation, it becomes useless because every province will have exceptions and need to be exempted at different points. Therefore, Chinese policies are more general. Far better to state the spirit of the policy rather than to document the exact details.[66]

Of particular interest is the gradual success of the SIP after the Singapore-based firms engaged in more intense tacit knowledge transfer. As Andrew Inkpen and Pien Wang show, the Suzhou policymakers responded competitively because of perceived "asymmetric collaborative incentives."[67] It was only after the local consortium was given more control that the SIP began generating profits and became re-emphasized as a policy template for industrial park development across China. This corresponds with Lim Neo Chian's observation and underscores an important aspect of the policy transfer process: subnational policymakers are not passive agents who respond mechanically to central injunctions. Where their vested interests are not aligned, they could sidestep or undercut existing arrangements.

Empirically, the crucial question is whether the Suzhou experience – particularly the "cultural problem," to re-borrow George Yeo's term – would re-emerge in the second Sino-Singaporean G-to-G project. Named the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City (*Zhong-Xin Tianjin shengtai cheng* 中新天津生态城), this 30 km^2 project was launched in 2008 at the eastern border of Tianjin, a centrally governed municipality of 15 million people. While the total investment remains undisclosed, project officials claim 40 billion yuan (around US$6.5

64 Interview in *Lianhe zaobao*, 9 June 1999, translated and transcribed by Singapore Ministry of Information and the Arts. Retrieved via National Archives of Singapore.
65 Lim Neo Chian. 2001. "It's a chess game; move one piece at a time," *The Straits Times*, 6 May.
66 Chan Soo Sen. 2004. "Seeing double" *The Straits Times*, 29 May 2004.
67 Inkpen and Wang 2006, 805; cf. Pereira 2007.

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billion) was invested in fixed assets by 2012.[68] Launched against a backdrop of acute environmental pollution and income inequality, the Tianjin Eco-City project represents an ongoing concern with environmentally unsustainable urbanization. Recounting the formation of this project, former Singaporean prime minister Goh Chok Tong 吴作栋 explains:

> China at that time was emphasizing the environment, green development, urbanization without too much pollution. So, we had the expertise in Singapore, so I was able to align our expertise with China's interest of wanting to have a clean environment for its urbanization.[69]

Despite these top-level commitments, it remains unclear if transfers between Singapore and Tianjin could, in Goh's terms, actualize their proponents' visions of "replication" (*fuzhi* 复制) and "expansion" (*tuiguang* 推广).[70] Through a comparative study with Dongtan 东滩 Eco-City in Shanghai, Bo Miao and Graeme Lang conclude that central governmental support explains why the Tianjin Eco-City kept running while the Dongtan project failed.[71] Even so, differences in opinions between the Chinese and Singaporean partners on what constitutes an "eco-city" became apparent. As an investigative news report reveals, regulatory short-termism endures in the Tianjin Eco-City project. While Singaporean planners would have liked to have had housing board-style public housing that catered for low-income Chinese, Tianjin Eco-City officials were reportedly lukewarm to the idea of the uncertainty over the costs of subsidizing the apartments.[72] A Tianjin official whispered in the ear of a Singaporean colleague:

> By the time the public housing project is completed, many of us Tianjin officials would likely be promoted elsewhere. Who would still be around to ensure that it is really the poor people who are relocated to this public housing estate?[73]

As an unnamed staff member from the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City adds, policy transfers could succeed only if they were aligned with local officials' agendas:

> We have very strong high-level government links – but not with officials at the lower and provincial levels. It's the Tianjin officials' support we need to get things done – be it focusing only on green projects, building a light-rail transit line in the Eco-City or creating a community mix of different income groups.[74]

New research is beginning to demonstrate policy mutation in the Tianjin Eco-City. Comparing the Tianjin project with Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, Federico Caprotti illustrates the importance of probing beneath the Chinese eco-cities' association with functionality, rationality and efficiency.[75] While Goh Chok Tong correctly depicted the Chinese party-state's concern with

68 "China's future city," *MIT Technology Review*, 18 November 2014.
69 Goh Chok Tong. 2014. "The practice of foreign policy for sustained growth – the Singapore experience," 17 October, https://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2014/201410/press_20141017.printable.html?status=1. Accessed 20 September 2016.
70 Ibid.
71 Miao and Lang 2015; see also Pow and Neo 2013.
72 "Rumblings in Tianjin Eco-City," *The Straits Times*, 27 December 2009.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Caprotti 2015; cf. Rapoport 2014.

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environmental quality, Caprotti argues that eco-cities appear green only because it makes financial sense.[76] This finding overlaps with that of Miao and Lang: not only were the original objectives of the Tianjin Eco-City revised to more modest levels but they were also more closely aligned with economic objectives.[77] Caprotti together with Cecilia Springer and Nichola Harmer further demonstrate how this G-to-G project "is discursively constructed as ecologically beneficial for its inhabitants rather than for the broader socio-environmental landscape."[78] These studies collectively foreground a technocratic, a-political and ultimately economistic approach to lesson drawing and policy transfers in Tianjin Eco-City. Politically sensitive issues that require urgent attention, such as intra-urban social polarization, institutionalized social segmentation and entrenched vested interests in polluting industries, have not been explicitly encompassed by the "eco" and "sustainable" concepts.

Conclusion

Within the PRC, much has been made of the principle of "learning" from Singapore. Yet, the aggregation of lesson drawing and policy transfers from Singapore by China within a *longer* historical framework complicates the story of state-to-state policy mobility. Embedded herein are *simultaneous* copying, emulation, inspiration, hybridization and synthesis. That policymakers and planners from both China and Singapore believe some policies – such as those introduced in the G-to-G projects in Suzhou and Tianjin – are replicable across China indicates a belief in the possibility of copying. CCP cadres undergoing training in Singapore are implicitly encouraged to emulate and draw inspiration from key tenets of Singaporean public administration (for example, minimal corruption, high-efficiency, forward-planning, respect for contractual laws, etc.). Other projects range from emulation (for example, attempts to introduce the Central Provident Fund in cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen) to more hybrid forms of adaptation (for example, the ongoing attempt to repurpose the practices of Temasek Holdings, the Singaporean sovereign wealth fund and holding company of state-linked enterprises). Within the senior CCP echelons, the overarching characteristic of "learning" is to draw inspiration for devising new regulatory solutions on the basis of one-party authoritarianism and global economic integration (see the summary in Table 1).

On the one hand, this multifaceted attempt at learning from the "Singapore model" exemplifies the fluidity of socio-economic reforms in post-Mao China. It recalibrates notions of "Chinese exceptionalism" by showing how the dynamic *interaction* with foreign policies and practices constituted these reforms. On the other hand, enduring institutional aspects of the Chinese experience arguably became more pronounced after overt and tacit attempts to learn from Singapore. As

76 Caprotti 2015.
77 Miao and Lang 2015, 249.
78 Caprotti, Springer and Harmer 2015, 495; Yang, Mu, and Lye 2009; Chen, Gang, and Zhao 2014.

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Table 1: **Sino-Singaporean Lesson Drawing and Policy Transfers: An Overview**

Policy domain	Characteristics and objectives	Key actors and institutions	Spatial scale of transfer	Type of transfer (ref. section 2)	Constraints to transfer
Industrial park development & management	• Integral aspect of inter-governmental agreement in 1994 to facilitate "software transfer," or expertise in producing a pro-investor climate • G-to-G projects first launched in Suzhou in 1994; now extended to Tianjin (2008) & Chongqing (2015) • Singapore government-linked corporations (GLCs) involved in several other joint-ventures (e.g. Guangzhou Knowledge City & Jilin Food Zone)	• Government of Singapore • Jurong Town Corporation • Multiple state-linked agencies in Singapore (e.g. EDB, URA, HDB, PUB) • Proactive officials from designated local governments in China like Wang Yang, Zhang Gaoli, Huang Qifan • Chinese SOEs	• Intra-urban	• Hybrid: co-driven by state-linked actors in Singapore & specific city-regional governments (except Suzhou Industrial Park)	• Parallel competition by local governments, increasing risks of duplication • Short-termist approach to planning, based on the GDP-focused institution of cadre performance appraisal
Management of SOEs	• Emulate strategies of Temasek Holdings, a government-linked holding company • Enforcement of "separation of politics from firms" (*zhengqi fenkai* 政企分开) , a principle first introduced in 1988	• Development Research Centre of the State Council • Temasek Holdings • Centrally & locally owned SOEs	• National & provincial	• Voluntary (initiative of Chinese state agencies)	• Place-specific path dependencies • Resistance by established interest groups within SOEs & local governments

Continued

Table 1: **Continued**

Policy domain	Characteristics and objectives	Key actors and institutions	Spatial scale of transfer	Type of transfer (ref. section 2)	Constraints to transfer
Public administration	• Increase efficiency & integrity; expand rule of law; reduce resource wastage & corruption	• Nanyang Centre for Public Administration, NTU • Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS • Central & provincial cadres	• National selection, Singapore-based training	• Voluntary (initiative of Chinese state agencies)	• Interlocked & entrenched Party–SOE connections • Excessive emphasis on extra-budgetary financing, creating a colossal "grey zone@ in fund-sourcing"

Source:
Authors' compilation.

Table 1 shows, constraints to transfer are evident in each policy domain. This underscores, in turn, how the evolution of the Chinese political economy is not predicated on a fixed playbook of policy and practice. If some commentators claim Chinese policymakers are exporting an internally coherent developmental "model" to less developed political economies in Africa, Latin America and central Asia, the Singapore connection actually underscores how post-Mao reforms remain an *open-ended process* of policy experimentation and adaptation that is fraught with tension and resistance.[79]

Two defining aspects could be abstracted from the policy mobility and mutation between Singapore and China. First, the "authoritarianism" of the Singapore context has been qualitatively different from its Chinese variant. Socio-economic regulation in Singapore was and remains predicated on the principle that no entity – including the ruling party – is above the law. Across China, the CCP technically controls the legislative system, which renders it at once within and outside the legal system. This positioning injected significant flexibility in the interpretation and implementation of law amongst cadres. Second, intense competition between Chinese municipal governments has undermined Singapore's foreign-investor and knowledge-purveyor primacy. Ironically, as the Suzhou and Tianjin cases reveal, local projects launched by the central government in the name of the "national interest" mattered only if such projects could be credited to local officials. In Suzhou, the SIP showed improved results only after more benefits – albeit in the form of tacit knowledge – were offered to local stakeholders. And emerging evidence suggests local officials in Tianjin are behaving similarly.

Given the unclear effects of policy transfers to date, why do Chinese policymakers, from local officials to Xi Jinping, continue to proclaim the importance of learning from Singapore? The most plausible rationale could be political. In the process of policy formulation and/or modification, it may be more palatable to cite an Asian rather than Western developmental inspiration, especially when that Asian trajectory includes a positive record of incorporating Western best practices. Indeed, while many observers in China recognize Japan as the Asian exemplar of successful "Westernization," its bitter historical relationship with China renders any overt learning attempt politically impossible. Whether lessons are truly learnt, whether policies are truly transferred, and, indeed, whether China truly possesses the geo-historical conditions that made possible the Singaporean economic success since the mid-1960s are arguably secondary considerations.[80] What matters is the *appearance* that change is coming; that change is not directionless but "modelled" on global best practices. During the late Qing era, the "model" was Japan; the Soviet Union represented "China's tomorrow" to the Mao administration; for Deng and his successors, the explicit "modelling"

79 Cf. Shambaugh 2008.
80 Cf. Ortmann 2012; Ortmann and Thompson 2014.

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focus has shifted to Singapore, a city-state in South-East Asia no bigger than Shunyi district 顺义区 of Beijing.

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摘要: "新加坡模式"是 1950 年代早期毛泽东誓言以苏联经验塑造 "中国的明天" 后中国共产党第二次明确表明学习的外国对象。本文评价后毛时代中国对新加坡经验的学习和政策的传送。著者重新审视邓小平 1978 年到访新加坡后中国在监管领域上借鉴新加坡经验的历史起源, 而重新诠释新加坡对中国实际的政策传送可否跨越意识形态, 抽象理念和主观态度的差异。本文仔细分析新加坡大学培训对中共党员回国后的影响和中新政府在苏州和天津合作项目中的政策传送和突变。分析结果显示 "新加坡模式"应用于后毛时代中国反映了中共制度改革上的开放性和实验性, 也凸现改革过程中的张力和阻力。

关键词: 中国; 新加坡模式; 政策传送; 政策突变; 借鉴经验

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