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Las Vegas in Singapore: Casinos and the Taming of Vice

By

Kah-Wee Lee

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

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In

Architecture

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Fall 2012

Las Vegas in Singapore: Casinos and the Taming of Vice

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Kah-Wee Lee

Abstract

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by

Kah-Wee Lee

Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Nezar AlSayyad, Chair

This dissertation investigates the historical formation of the modern casino as a “dividing practice” that cuts society along moral, legal and economic lines. It analyzes specific episodes in Singapore’s and Las Vegas’ histories when the moral problem of vice was transformed into a series of practical interventions devised by lawyers, detectives, architects and bureaucrats to criminalize and legalize gambling. Spatial containment and aesthetic form are key considerations and techniques in these schemes. I show how such schemes revolve around the complex management of the political costs and practical limits of changing the moral-legal status of gambling, whether it is to criminalize a popular form of illegality or to legalize an activity that threatens the normative order of society. The rise of the modern casino as a spatially bounded and concentrated form of gambling that is seamless with corporate management practices and popular culture is an indication of how far such costs and limits have been masked and stretched.

The dissertation proceeds by examining three historical projects telescoped through the wider lenses of colonialism (Singapore, 1880-1920), nationalism (Singapore, 1950-1980) and corporatization (Las Vegas, 1950-1990). The colonial project shows how a line was drawn between vice and crime through the political technology of the “Common Gaming House”. By attaching criminality to the built environment and decoding the practices of the native gamblers through ethnographic work, colonial administrators devised a technique to criminalize selectively without sparing anyone. The nationalist project highlights the paradox between the intensified criminalization of vice and the heroism of nation-building. Continuing the analysis of juridical reasoning and police work, this chapter shows how crime was produced by changing the spatial registers of crime within the political technology of the Common Gaming House. At the same time, this attack on the people was ameliorated through the public performance of police work, as well as the sanitized rituals of the national lottery draw and its architectural forms.

The chapter on corporate Las Vegas examines the formation of the dominant casino model today. By tracing the transformation of the industry brought about by the confluence of digital technology, corporate management techniques and changing market conditions, I argue that the modern casino form as devised in Las Vegas effectively defeated the geographical injunctions designed to separate gambling from other spheres of life. In this process, casino design was abstracted into a set of “scientific” principles whose claims of objectivity are often motivated by the industry’s lust for profitability and respectability.

The final chapter synthesizes and reflects on these histories by showing how the Las Vegas model was transformed in order to blend into the spatial-aesthetic order of Singapore's political and urban landscape. It analyzes state discourses, bureaucratic culture and planning practices in order to show how the components of the Las Vegas model were dismantled and reassembled to produce the "Integrated Resort" that the government wanted. I argue that the architecture hides the casino in plain sight and blends into the urban vision of Marina Bay. The Integrated Resort is a sanitized model that facilitates a new scale of expansion and legitimacy for a globalized casino industry.

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link me up with important informants. Unfortunately, I am not able to discuss Macau in much detail in this dissertation. I reserve their contributions for another project.

Many of my informants in Singapore, Las Vegas and Macau chose not to be identified. I hope I have done justice to their time and trust. The conclusions of this dissertation are my own.

I remember fondly my biggest supporter, Sountru. He showed me that life must be lived, and emotions are more important than reasoning. Too often, one does not see the forest for the trees. I wish him all the best.

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Abbreviations

CGM	Casino Gaming Magazine
CGRSC	Center for Gaming Research Special Collections
JIA	Journal of the Indian Archipelago
JMBRAS	Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSBRAS	Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
OHC	Oral History Center, National Archives of Singapore
PLCSS	Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements
SFP	Singapore Free Press
SPD	Singapore Parliamentary Debates
SSDAR	Straits Settlements Departmental Annual Reports
SPJ	Singapore Police Journal
SPM	Singapore Police Magazine
ST	The Straits Times
UNLV	University of Nevada, Las Vegas
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority

Introduction

In 2005, the Singapore government made the decision to open two casinos, one offshore at the tourist island of Sentosa and one at Marina Bay, the new waterfront downtown. This decision seems like a reversal of the anti-casino stance adopted by the government for the last 40 years. The arguments thrown up by the government should sound familiar to people who keep abreast with both contemporary Singaporean politics and casino development around the world. First and foremost, through the voice of tourism experts and financial analysts, the government claims that the casino industry has a global effect on the economy that is significant. It raises the profile of the city as a tourist destination, creates jobs for locals and increases all the economic indicators of tourism like length of stay to expenditure per day per tourist. Second, casino-resorts have changed such that casino gambling only contributes a small portion of the overall revenue. They are more accurately called “Integrated Resorts”, a new breed of sanitized complexes that fits perfectly in the economic agenda of Singapore and the visions for Marina Bay and Sentosa. Third, social costs of casino gambling can be effectively contained. A whole panoply of expert discourses centered on “prevention” and “self-responsibility” came into view to balance the potentially negative effects of casino gambling. Lastly, the government’s moral position towards gambling has not changed. Singaporeans are still discouraged from gambling and visiting the casinos. Thus, amidst the sweep of global forces, the moral authority of the Singaporean state appears eternal. The Integrated Resort at Marina Bay opened in 2010. Named “Marina Bay Sands”, it is operated by Las Vegas based company, Las Vegas Sands.

The Integrated Resort as a discursive and physical object captures the general direction of Singapore’s transformation today. At the level of political economy, it signals the attempt by the state to re-engineer the economy by pursuing the biomedical, creative, leisure, knowledge and finance industries, all of which are believed to propel Singapore to the next stage of economic development. The development of Marina Bay as the new downtown materializes these aspirations through its architecture and urban form, as well as the kinds of people and activities envisaged there. Thus, the Integrated Resort is represented by the government as a booster to tourism in two ways – first, it changes the game by positioning Singapore as a hub for a family of business events known as Meeting, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE), and second, by its spectacular architecture and the casino, it changes the staid image of Singapore (as seen by tourists and interpreted by policy makers) as a boring and sterile place. This “sexing up” of Singapore extends to a wide range of cultural and social policies aimed at producing more babies, entrepreneurs and creative people.¹

The Integrated Resort also materializes the contradictions of this transformation. In order to become a “cosmopolis”, as official discourses represent Singapore of the future, the government has pursued an aggressive immigration policy since 1990s for “foreign talents” and “high net worth individuals”. As both Ong and Yeoh have shown, this has radically changed the notions of citizenship in the city-state, one that is exacerbated by widening income disparities and the influx of low cost labor.² Existing ideologies of multi-racialism, meritocracy/elitism and “Asian values” rub against these new policies, resulting in clashes about what is perceived to be an uneven

¹ Kenneth P Tan, “Sexing Up Singapore” in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6(2003):403-423

² Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Brenda Yeoh, “Urban Political Economy beyond the ‘Global City’: Cosmopolitanism and its Exclusions in Singapore” in *Urban Studies*, 41(2004): 2431-2445

distribution of freedoms and obligations between citizens, permanent residents and foreign talents. The Integrated Resort represents this divided landscape which attracts foreign talents by subscribing to a global image of a cosmopolitan city while connecting back to a history of nation-building by re-invoking the puritanism of the state and, by association, the ideal Singaporean subject.

At the same time, the Integrated Resort is part of a spreading network of casinos in the Asia-Pacific region. This region has a long history of legalized forms of gambling such as state lotteries and casinos. Singaporeans, for example, have access to casino cruises that ply the international waters of South China Sea. At Batam, an Indonesian island about an hour from Singapore, gambling takes place in the shadows of official approval. Malaysia, Australia and Macau offer casino-gambling within a 7 hour flight radius of Singapore. However, the Integrated Resort that appeared at Marina Bay in 2007 marks a decisive moment when multinational gaming corporations make extensive footholds in this part of the world. The first frontier is Macau, which liberalized its casino monopoly in 2001 and opened the Chinese market to six gaming corporations: Las Vegas Sands (US), Wynn Resorts (US), Melco Crown (Australia), SJM (Macau) and Galaxy Entertainment (Hong Kong). Sheldon Adelson of Las Vegas Sands was the key visionary who replicated the Las Vegas Strip at Macau. Reclaiming a large piece of land from the sea, he and other casino developers transplanted their favored architectural forms and urban strategies to the city while adapting to the tastes of the Chinese gambler. Yet, in Singapore, Sheldon Adelson had no such freedom. Instead of “Venetian Singapore” designed by specialist architectural practices like Paul Steelman, Jon Jerde and Gensler, all of whom played a major role in Macau, the development is called “Marina Bay Sands”, designed by international architect, Moshe Safdie, who is, ironically, known for social housing and cultural institutions. Instead of changing the infrastructure of the city to better serve his casino, Adelson realized that government planners had already carved out a site at Marina Bay for it.

Living in Singapore and observing these developments, I realized how important the architectural object is in mediating different realms of meanings. In this case, the building communicates to a realm of “global cities” through its association with the designer and its architectural aesthetic. By so doing, it automatically dissociates itself from other “undesirable” types found in Las Vegas and Macau. In addition to this symbolic function, it materially changes what is legal and moral through spatial containment. Thus, within the casino, gambling is legal, but outside the casino, it is not. The question of morality is more ambiguous, as it is not spatially determined, but flows into larger cultural and political sets of values. Still, there is a sense that such morally dubious activities can be tolerated if conducted in a controlled environment away from public view and if primarily targeted at foreigners. Finally, the Integrated Resort becomes a mirror for what cannot be tolerated and must be criminalized. In this sense, hidden in the shadows of this spectacular building are various forms of gambling practices that acquire negative value simply by the fact that they exist outside the confined spaces of the casino. Thus, all the arguments thrown up to support the casino carry a subtext that is violent and intolerant towards what is in opposition defined as vice and crime. As the arguments build a case for controlled gambling, they also build a case to destroy other forms of “uncontrolled” gambling.

And that is precisely what makes the casino so fraught with contradictions. As my brief introduction shows, the commercialization and legalization of gambling has incorporated a wide

range of experts such as politicians, architects, social workers, lawyers and financial analysts. In their individual capacities, they advocate specific ways to define the problem within their area of specialization and how to solve it. They converge on the contained space of the casino and shape how we think about gambling in terms of morality, economics and law. The casino as an enclosed space and the systems of knowledge have a long history, and share many of the characteristics and objectives of what Foucault calls “dividing practices”. They are “modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science and the practice of exclusion”.³ Scholars have mobilized this concept to study various institutions such as schools, museums and prisons, where a disciplinary order is created through carefully calibrated systems of hierarchy and separation. In these institutions, control is not seen automatically to be repressive. Rather it is translated through multiple technologies to shape the conduct of individuals in productive ways; to facilitate learning or inculcate a certain civic sensibility, for example.⁴ The casino is one such institution that cuts society strategically so as to produce and identify certain kinds of subjects – the recreational gambler, the addict, the professional, the criminal, the pathological, and so on.

This dissertation is an investigation of the history of the casino as a form of dividing practice that cuts society along moral, economic and legal lines. I am concerned first and foremost with how the moralization of gambling as vice becomes transposed onto an array of conceptual and material registers in order that it can be shaped, explained and governed in certain ways. This is not to give morality a certain central or a priori status before other dimensions of gambling. Rather, it is to highlight and acknowledge how in Singapore’s history, gambling has appeared again and again in various institutional and political discourses as a moral problem, one that feeds into larger fears of social order, political stability and national survival. The Integrated Resort is only the latest incarnation of this recurring phenomenon.

In writing this history, I focus on what helps us question the appearance of the Integrated Resort in Singapore and the spread of the casino industry in the Asia-Pacific today. It seems that the debate in Singapore and around the world about the casino industry has settled into a simple equation of economic benefit against social costs. One is measurable and often presented in precise forecasts and grand promises, the other is approximate and often fueled by tragic stories and dour warnings. Despite the incommensurability of such pairings, we seem to have accepted that there is a balance that can be struck. How can we question such distinctions without reproducing them, as is often the case with both proponents and opponents of the casino industry? At the same time, how can we account for the hidden violence and intolerance of the casino? How does vice become crime and harmless entertainment in specific historical moments?

This manner of historical inquiry is influenced by Michel Foucault’s genealogical approach to understanding (or “diagnose”, in his words) contemporary problems. Such a genealogy does not just seek to explain the present. Rather, as a critical project, it aims to give an account of the conditions that make it possible for various systems to be thought of in the first place, and to

³ Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1984), 8

⁴ Sociologists and scholars of gambling have recently connected social theories of risk with the expansion of state-sponsored gambling around the world. Through debates around legalized gambling, they attempt to frame the changing relationship between the state and the citizen as one where the management of risk is transferred from the collective to the individual. My work only speaks to them from a distance. As the introduction will explain, I am much more concerned with the practices and technologies assembled to objectify and govern gambling as vice, crime or business, and the spatial-aesthetics forms of these governing strategies. See James Cosgrave, ed., *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006)

recuperate the possibilities of development that lie within the paradigms from which they originated. In my case, I try to trace back to moments when what appears natural and unassailable today were unstable and open sets of questions. I do so by organizing my analysis around specific historical projects when constellations of problems around gambling emerge and provoke new rounds of investigations and interventions to tame them.

By taming, I evoke Ian Hacking's seminal work on the intellectual history of probabilistic science. In his book, *The Taming of Chance*, he focuses on that critical moment at the beginning of the 20th century when the laws of probability took over the role of metaphysics.⁵ It was no longer human nature or Divine reason that explained the world and gave it a regular pattern that is immutable and universal. Rather, this regularity was to be explained by the laws of probability. In this shift, chance, which used to be the realm of the superstitious, became the very activity of rational thought and human intervention. *Taming is about this gradual transformation of something that was once outside human intervention and clouded in mystery, into something that can be observed, measured and, more importantly, used to explain and change the world.*

The taming of vice describes this process of instrumentalization and rationalization. I make two major arguments in this historical analysis. First, I argue that though political-economic imperatives are often significant in efforts to legalize or criminalize gambling, they do not show how conceptual and material distinctions are made between vice, crime and business. The projects I examine revolve around a complex management of the political costs and practical limits of changing the moral-legal status of gambling, whether it is to criminalize a popular form of illegality or to legalize an activity that threatens the normative order of society. In this process, spatial containment is both the precondition and effect of the taming of vice. Second, though such dividing practices shape how we think about gambling in terms of morality, economics and legality, we also come to think about modern society in terms of gambling – for example, how British colonial administrators thought about gambling as a natural vice of a racial group, or how the Integrated Resort in Singapore was designed to look nothing like similar developments in Las Vegas and Macau. In that sense, the very mechanisms created to govern gambling are often distorted and exaggerated reflections of normative society at large.

The historical projects can be briefly introduced. In the first two chapters, I focus on the colonial (1880-1920) and national (1960-1990) projects to criminalize gambling in Singapore. Through archival work, I examine the combination of juridical reasoning, legal techniques and local conditions of policing to show how a fine line was drawn between vice and crime. I classify this as a “juridical-police” complex and show how it revolves around two axes – a spatial axis that attaches the criminality of gambling to specific kinds of spaces, and an aesthetic axis that influences how this attempt to destroy a popular form of illegality can be justified in the eyes of those who are being attacked. The next chapter focuses on Las Vegas and examines the crucial moment between 1950 and 1980 which led to the formation of a model of casino gambling we see today. Here, I show how corporate practices and new technologies are incorporated into the business of gambling which led to the rise of two kinds of experts – the slot manager and the casino designer. Their simultaneous emergence illuminates on the dynamic between the quest for scientific objectivity and certainty on the one hand, and the maximization of profits on the other.

⁵ Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Foucault's genealogical approach has been questioned for its proclaimed effect of destabilizing the present. One of philosopher Richard Rorty's criticisms is its inability to suggest possible futures.⁶ Without speculation and a vision of utopia, he argues, a genealogy seems to fail at the very point when it tries to be useful. In the last chapter, I try to bring historical insights to bear on what we are witnessing in the present. Moving from archival work to ethnography and cultural criticism, I focus on that moment of collision between 2005 and 2007, when the entire bundle of scientific and managerial discourses and design practices incubated in Las Vegas clash with the bureaucratic processes, state ideology and political-economic agenda of Singapore. By interacting with planners, architects and other experts, I provide an account of how this collision was resolved outside the view of the public. This focused analysis makes selective use of history to critique overt claims that we have entered into a new kind of configuration between gambling, morality and political legitimacy. It is concerned with the political culture of Singapore today, and, at a more theoretical level, how the planning process and architectural object are mediators of meaning at multiple levels. As the "Integrated Resort" becomes a national symbol for Singaporeans and a global icon for the casino and tourism industry, it is important to be alert to its hidden histories.

In writing this dissertation, I connect with a diverse range of existing literature. In the next two sections, I bring them together and show my contributions. Generally, they are histories of gambling and science studies. Both bodies of literature often only hint at the built environment and architectural objects. A key task of my dissertation is to turn this rich body of work towards my empirical materials and inform how I can analyze them. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I reflect on the extent to which I have been successful.

Gambling, space and modernity

Moral interventions are central to the making of modern subjects and such schemes are often forms of dividing practices that are both social and spatial. Numerous scientific experimentations, philosophical traditions and practical schemes are dedicated to the modernization of society based on the faith that man can be improved by acting on the external environment. Thus, to be free from the values of the past is to remake the city from *tabula rasa* or build satellite towns where communities can reconnect with nature (an archaic or purer kind of "past"). To create a new collective consciousness is to build parks and boulevards where bourgeois values can be learnt and picked up by all citizens. Of course, such schemes are also exclusionary and violent, and these contradictions only highlight what Theodore Adorno calls the "dialectics of enlightenment."⁷ Thus, alongside such spaces of enlightenment, one must counterpoise their shadows – leper-houses, prisons, penal colonies and so on. Especially in colonial cities, the liberal and cosmopolitan aspirations of modernity are often undercut by designating the colonized as limited in evolution. They cannot be modern, and when they do become Europeanized in their habits and countenance, they become sorry mimics or dangerous hybrids.⁸ Morality, race and economic value are all mapped onto space in the colonial

⁶ Richard Rorty, 1981 "Beyond Nietzsche and Marx", *London Review of Books* 3(3):5-6

⁷ Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin S. Noerr and trans. Edmund Jephcott (California: Stanford University Press)

⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

city. The “cordon sanitaire” is as much a spatial device as a moral barrier that demarcates the West as modern and the East as primitive, static and inferior.⁹

Gambling spaces fall somewhat uneasily between such distinctions. On the one hand, not all gambling spaces are stigmatized. Neither are all gambling spaces illegal. There are probably as many legal but stigmatized gambling spaces as there are illegal but socially acceptable kinds, and every kind in between. In fact, the act of gambling – to wager something for another thing based on chance – is often inseparable from many aspects of socio-cultural life, such that the idea of a space dedicated just to gambling is highly problematic. A brief review of the ways cultural historians have conceptualized gambling as a social practice will point to this difficulty.

When anthropologist Clifford Geertz analyzes in detail the rituals of Balinese cock-fighting for example, he alerts us to how gambling to win is often not the primary concern. Organizers stage it to ensure a “fair” fight between the cocks so that there is more entertainment value and honor at stake. Participants never bet against their own kinsmen. Gambling is a kind of social text that is written and performed again and again:

Drawing on almost every level of Balinese experience, it bring together themes - animal savagery, male narcissism, opponent gambling, status rivalry, mass excitement, blood sacrifice - whose main connection is their involvement with rage and the fear of rage, and binding them into a set of rules which at once contains them and allows them play, builds a symbolic structure in which, over and over again, the reality of their inner affiliation can be intelligibly felt.¹⁰

Balinese cockfighting was criminalized by both the Dutch and the native rulers in favor of revenue farms. In British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, such revenue farms were a key source of income for the colonialists. As Trocki, Butcher and Lin have shown, in the 19th century, revenue farms helped to attract cheap labor to the colonies while keeping the cost of administration low, since such farms were run mainly by the Chinese capitalists or native governments. For the British, this was especially important given that, unlike India, Malaya was sparsely populated and could not finance itself through land rent. Of the revenue farms, gambling and opium farms were the most lucrative for both the colonialists and the operators. Yet, gambling and opium were also amongst the most reviled “vices” as seen by the British. Gambling, in particular, had an equivalent back in Metropolitan London, and much of the moral opprobrium targeted at gambling amongst the natives were influenced by experiences in controlling illegal gambling in London. The result of this ambivalent position is an uneven geography of illegality, as the Penang, Malacca and Singapore outlawed the gambling farms in the early 19th century, while the Malay states continued to license them until 1921.

Revenue farms are part of the long history of how gambling is tamed through spatial containment. There are, today, many such instances where the legalization of gambling is conditioned on its enclosure, such as horse-racing in turf clubs, state lotteries, bingo in community halls and slot machines in casinos. The casino, therefore, is only one instance of a controlled form of gambling whose legality is tied to the condition that it is spatially bounded. One can also get a sense of this by examining the etymological roots of the word “casino”. 16th

⁹ Nezar AlSayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (London and Aldershot: Avebury, 1992)

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, “Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 449-450

and 17th century Venice serves as a common starting point for historians of gambling. A city of leisure and trade and a crucible of European modernity, Venice was a destination for tourists attracted to its carnivals and gambling halls, known as “ridotti” (singular: ridotto). In an effort to control these illegal forms of gambling, the Council of Venice opened the its own “Il Ridotto” in a wing of the San Moisé Palace in 1638, which became the first public and legal casino in the Western world.¹¹ Walker cites a 1623 dictionary which defined the ridotto as a “place where one meets, refuge, shelter ... the place where people meet together for entertainment.”¹² Etymologically, the word “ridotto” comes from the Italian word “riddure”, meaning to “close off” or “make private”, and was also used to describe “closed sessions of government councils in Venice, or self-contained suites of rooms.”¹³ According to Walker, the related word, “casini”, has a different etymology, appearing in 17th century dictionaries to denote a “little house”, “house of delights” as well as more respectable social places.¹⁴ While these two words appear to be synonymous and used interchangeably, Walker notes that they mark a level of organization distinct from more informal spaces of gambling and entertainment:

In early seventeenth century prosecutions neither was used to describe gambling organized on an *ad hoc* basis by small groups of individuals in rooms or boats. By 1609 *ridotti* and *casini* were semi-permanent operations, although one should probably stress *semi*-permanent. If they attract government attention they shut down or moved and the turnover of sites was high, particularly during Carnival when demand increased. In the eighteenth century, licenses to operate *casini* were granted on a short-term basis during Carnival ... if the patrons anticipated having to move frequently, then the convenience of using a boat is obvious; prostitutes solicited from closed gondolas for the same reason.¹⁵

The casino thus designates a legitimate space of exception where moral and legal norms are renegotiated through an alternative mode of economic exchange, what cultural historian Thomas Kavanagh would describe as the hyper-circulation of capital. At this conceptual level, there is little difference between the ridotti of 17th century Venice, the gambling farms of 19th century Malaya, the private clubs of Pall Mall in 19th century London or the casino-resorts of Las Vegas today. They belong to a class of injunctions that seek to make explicit the margins and monsters of society through spatial containment and representation. “To close off” and “make private” is simultaneously the tactic of criminalization and legalization – the “Common Gaming House” Ordinance which criminalized gambling in colonial Malaya echoes, for example, this definition of the legalized ridotto - right down to the itinerant “boat”. Though it is true that, in this space, things of all kinds dematerialize into exchange value and there is an acceleration in their circulation and conversion the way Kavanagh suggests, the casino also has its own regimented sets of social practices that give traction and meaning to such unhinging of value. Cultural historians have shown why French aristocrats gambled their fortunes away to “protect” their code of honor, why Englishmen gambled secretly in exclusive gentlemen’s clubs while displaying their membership publicly and why Venetians wore masks in the casinos.¹⁶

¹¹ See Schwartz (2006) for a description of the spatial organization of the Il Ridotto and the ways games were played there.

¹² Jonathan Walker, “Gambling and Venetian noblemen c.1500-1700” in *Past and Present*, 162 (1999): 28-69

¹³ *Ibid*, 33

¹⁴ *Ibid*, see footnote 27

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 37

¹⁶ Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the shadows of chance: the novel and the culture of gambling in eighteenth century-France* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Jane Rendell, “The Clubs of St. James: places of public patriarchy – exclusivity, domesticity and secrecy” in *The Journal of Architecture*, 4:2(1999), 167-189; James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (California: University of California Press, 2011)

Indeed, if there is one lesson historians of gambling teach us, it is that although gambling can be found in all cultures from ancient times, its social and cultural significance is historically specific, and that this difference is significant between different games, social classes and physical settings. Furthermore, contemporary values about gambling are inherited from the winners of earlier historical debates. Thus, Kavanagh argues that the current premises that censor gambling - “the supremacy of a reality independent of human volition, the triumph of the rational, the value of productive work, and the necessity of self-control”¹⁷ – represent a heritage of the Enlightenment and prevent us from understanding the symbolic values attributed to gambling in the past. Rather, the history of gambling should be cast as a history of how the circulation of money related to different social groups, and how gambling as the hyper-circulation of money challenged the social structure that defined groups both internally and against each other. The centrality of class and social struggle is also evidenced in the work of Alan Hunt, who argues that when the middle-class sense of morality extended to multiple facets of social life, it helped to shift the political foundations of reform movements from the Church to the state and the social sciences.¹⁸ We are still entrapped in the clutches of history’s winners.

These histories hint at how the attempt to tame vice – to make it amenable to systematic investigation and produce certain knowledge about it that can change and explain the world – involves certain conditions and produces certain effects. Spatial containment is often the precondition of legalization and regulation. It delineates a space within which gambling can be observed, practiced and transformed into a form of sanctioned activity. At the same time, it is also through forms of enclosure, mobility and dispersion that illegal gambling escapes the eyes of law, as evinced by Walker’s quote and the Common Gaming House Ordinance. The problem of legitimacy is tied to but not isomorphic with legality. Depending on who is being attacked and who stands to gain, the legitimacy of gambling is fractured across different social groups, types of games and the locations where they are conducted. As these historians show, gambling performs a social script that intersects with various levels of meaning. Often, these meanings are encoded in the very physical rituals of gambling and the buildings that provide the setting for them. The taming of vice involves not just acting at the level of legality and illegality, but shaping the very ways people gamble and the meanings associated with it.

Despite the central role spatial containment and dispersion play in the history of gambling, these scholars pay little attention to how such conditions materialize and reflect moral-legal divisions of society. This is one of the key contributions of this dissertation. It tries to capture the complex spatial dynamic set in motion between law and its misfits. History offers many examples. On the side of legality (or quasi-legality) are examples such as the San Moisè Palace (Venice, 1638), Palais Royal (Paris, 1789) and Crockford’s gentlemen’s clubs (London, 1793); and on the other side are the salons, public houses, “copper hells”, bucket-shops and “numbers” runners. In my dissertation, I focus on how law and police work tried to penetrate and defeat the evasions and subterfuge of criminalized forms of gambling, while, in the casinos, managers, architects and developers attempt to securitize and maximize profits by shaping the very activity

¹⁷ Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance*, 37-38. Like Walker, Kavanagh cites Geertz’s study of Balinese cockfighting as an important precedent in the study of gambling cultures. What Geertz accomplished through ethnography, Walker and Kavanagh tried to do by interpreting historical evidences.

¹⁸ Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: a social history of moral regulations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

of gambling. Still, these zones are never distinct and separate. Illicit and licit, legal and illegal; their economies intertwine and feed into each other.¹⁹

Such a dynamic captures what Carl Schmidt calls a “state of exception”, a concept subsequently taken up and broadened by philosopher Giorgio Agamben.²⁰ A state of exception is a paradoxical dynamic in which a space devoid of law is created and grounded in the juridical order itself. The power of law to suspend itself creates zones for a different political order that helps in turn to sustain the normative system. Again, these states of exception are spatially and temporally delimited, as Agamben’s examples of dictatorships like Nazi Germany and liberal democracies like France and the US show. Ong projects this concept to analyze the Special Economic Zones of China, wherein market logic and foreign investments are allowed to take hold in specific cities without challenging the normative political order.²¹ Yet, such spaces of exception reverberate into the institution of citizenship, exacerbating the differential distribution of obligations and privileges amongst foreigners, rural migrants and urban dwellers. At a smaller scale, Guggenheim shows how zoning laws become an arena to exclude or assimilate foreign and controversial building types and activities.²² His discussion of how minarets and suicide hospices provoked moral and social anxieties amongst local residents illustrates the permeability of law to extrinsic considerations and how it tried to adapt to such forces by creating divisions and exceptions within itself.

In these analyses, the spaces of exception both preserve and challenge the norm. This dynamic is similar to how criminalization and legalization are tied in a relationship of “porous intimacy”.²³ Discussing the “politics of transgression”, historians Peter Stallybrass and Allon White focus on the carnival as a space where the existing social order is renegotiated and inverted, and as a result of this threatening function, the carnival becomes written out of (bourgeois) history.²⁴ Similarly, Agnew’s study of the market and theatre in Anglo-American thought between 1550 and 1700 charts the rise of an impersonal market culture, one in which the theatricality of everyday life is replaced with a stage whose actors are puppets of the “invisible hand”.²⁵ There seems to be a parallel trajectory in how historians think about gambling in the modern disciplined form of the casino, one where the carnivalesque qualities and magical beliefs of traditional forms of gambling are stifled in favor of social practices and rational calculations that maintain the norms of society-at-large. Thus, if people of different social classes mingled during the cockfighting rituals of Bali, in the casinos, customers are generally stratified according to their wealth – there are halls for recreational gamblers, and there are private saloons for the big gambler. Historian Gerda Reith goes as far as to argue that the modern casino is characterized by the “anonymity” of the house, a strikingly similar argument to Agnew’s impersonal culture of the market.²⁶ This trajectory is not to be taken without some caution. Though gambling in a casino is a highly regimented activity, this is not to say that it is bereft of

¹⁹ See, for example, Amy Chazkel, *Laws of Chance: Brazil’s Clandestine Lottery and the Making of Urban Public Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)

²⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. K Attel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

²¹ Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*

²² Michael Guggenheim, “Travelling Types and the Law: Minarets and Suicide Hospices”, in M. Guggenheim and O. Söderström (eds.) *Reshaping Cities: How Global Mobility Transforms Architecture and Urban Form* (London: Routledge, 2009), 45–62.

²³ James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Citizenship and Modernity in Brazil* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 24

²⁴ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1986)

²⁵ Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

²⁶ Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling and Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 2002)

cultural meanings and spaces for negotiations. Neither is it to say that traditional forms of gambling do not observe certain patterns that reflect rather than transgress the social order at large. Talking back to earlier writers like Huizinga and Callois who emphasize the liberating potential of play and thus gambling, sociologist Ervin Goffman argues that gamblers participate in a given social construction of risk and are not free to construct their own worlds of meaning.²⁷

This dissertation is primarily concerned with the process of rationalization and instrumentalization, what I have referred to as a taming process. Yet, this is not to ignore or diminish the importance of showing the dynamics of transgression that consistently escape and subvert what these schemes try to achieve. In fact, many of the schemes created to regulate or criminalize gambling contain within themselves the marks of subversion and transgression. By focusing on the historical formation of the casino as a dividing practice, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of how norms and exceptions are interconnected in a state of “porous intimacy”. The casino cannot be understood without taking into account of what is destroyed or tolerated in its shadows.

Science, technology and industry

Social and cultural histories of gambling are generally more interested in showing the struggles between social classes over the distribution of wealth and morality that arises out of debates about gambling, than in examining the kinds of practical knowledge produced in an attempt to shape the very activity of gambling. They do not tell us, for example, how the schemes of criminalization and regulation are actually invented and carried out, preferring to interpret the changing status of gambling as the result of the dominance of certain social classes and their economic clout and/or value systems. As a result, one aspect of gambling’s history and its relationship with modernity seldom touched on by historians is the role of law, science and mathematics, which play a crucial role in transforming an otherwise moral problem into practical schemes.²⁸ My evocation of Ian Hacking’s work links the study of gambling to the work of historians and philosophers of science who provide some hints in this direction. Several studies suggest how probabilistic science and politics come together in the process of modernity. For example, Lorraine Daston points out that in 18th century England, there was no legal and mathematical distinction between gambling and insurance. This divorcing between the two depended on a cultural shift towards risk. She argues that thinkers of probability theory were against lotteries because it “symbolized the hope of escaping the stable, orderly world of the probabilists and the calculating reason they sought to model.”²⁹ Thus, the celebration of insurance as risk minimization was the flipside of the condemnation of gambling as risk indulgence.³⁰

For Daston, this cultural shift explains why mathematics of probability remained rudimentary in the field of gambling, but flourished in the business of insurance. Indeed, Hacking, Daston and other historians of science have only a passing interest in gambling – usually beginning and ending with the experiments of Pascal, Fermat and Bernoulli. After that, the forefront of probabilistic thinking moved elsewhere, and so follows their attention. But Daston’s brief

²⁷ Ervin Goffman, “Where the Action is”, in *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 149-270

²⁸ With the possible exception of Thomas Kavanagh.

²⁹ Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 183

³⁰ This purification process is also seen in how American businesses separated gambling from financial speculations. See Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps, Dream Books, and Bucket Shops* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3

excursion into the shared history of gambling and insurance suggests something important. She mentions that the illegitimacy of gambling retarded the development of mathematics of probability in this specific field of application³¹, just as Poisson's law of large numbers was discredited because it was raised in the dubious arena of moral science. It would then, by logical inversion, suggest that with the legitimization of large scale commercialized gambling, this retardation would no longer apply. With new mathematical techniques of taming chance put in practice within the casino, how might the social and cultural practices around gambling change?

Thus, what we learn from them is that the *science* of gambling also changes as a result of political forces, technological development and changing institutional arrangements. On the one hand, there is nothing overly sophisticated about how the casino makes its profits. Walker's point about the organized nature of casino gambling summarizes what seems to be an ahistorical constant: within its spatial limits, the casino works like a mathematical equation whereby players pay a percentage of their stakes as a price to play against the house. It is simply the law of large numbers put in practice. This structural mathematical disadvantage is one way in which gambling is tamed as part of its incorporation into the modern complex of probabilistic science, social regulation and state power. Yet, on the other hand, one sees today how casino mathematics has become extremely sophisticated and arcane, where the actual chances of winning, the perceived chances of winning and the experience of winning are all independently subject to investigation and experimentation. Furthermore, it is not just the games that come under the forensic manipulation, but as part of the corporatization of the industry, the entire complex of consumer psychology, addiction therapy, space management, auditing and marketing. Gambling in casinos today certainly performs different socio-cultural scripts, but it also subjects the player to an invasive regime of calculation. Ethnographer Natasha Schüll calls this kind of voluntary self-exploitation "asymmetrical collusion."³²

Practical knowledge about gambling is conditioned on its cultural and legal status. In 19th century colonial Singapore, for example, policemen and detectives produced much knowledge about gambling as vice and crime, while in 20th century Las Vegas, technologists, financial analysts and architects produced knowledge about gambling as a business. Such forms of knowledge are premised on how gambling can be observed and studied, which in turn produce certain schemes to change its status. In this sense, the schemes to change the moral and legal status of gambling are premised on how it is apprehended as an object of analysis – in the casinos, on the streets or in the prisons. As my work will show, elements of the spatial condition of gambling can be found in the very ways such forms of practical knowledge are constituted in the first place. This is already suggested by how spaces of crime such as the "itinerant boat" are identified and written into the law itself. This sheds light on the circuitous transaction between the actual practice of gambling and its abstraction into forms of practical knowledge constituted to change it.

The rise of the casino industry must be understood in relation to the expertise and values that are both unique to it and common to modern society. In this study, gambling in casinos becomes a microcosm of this process of rationalization and instrumentalization that is shared amongst its supporting and legitimating institutions – the regulatory government and the corporate financial

³¹ This is also picked up and developed by Bellhouse in his study of the Genoese lottery. D. R. Bellhouse, "The Genoese Lottery" in *Statistical Science*, 6/2(1991), 141-148

³² Natasha Schüll, *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012)

world. Abt, Smith and Christensen studied commercialized forms of gambling in the US in the 1980s, and show how this “business of risk” helped to resolve the contradictions of accumulation and legitimation in a capitalist society.³³ Gambling revenue is portrayed as a form of “painless” and voluntary taxation. It gives cash strapped governments a much needed income. At the same time, governments accrue social dividends by claiming that legalizing gambling can eliminate illegal gambling and by using some of the profits for welfare projects. Meanwhile, corporations who operate most of the Las Vegas casinos by 1980s have the freedom, and the implicit support of the government whose interests are now tied to the profitability of the business, to devise ways to enlarge the market by encouraging people to gamble more. Their verdict is scathing:

For individual gamblers, as well as for society as a whole, the price of institutionally stimulated gambling is rising as the revenue imperative forces government to extract more and more money from gamblers to satisfy the state’s insatiable revenue needs. Moreover, the public funds raised through government’s extraordinary claim on gambling revenue are not derived from the creation of wealth (as they are from other taxes); they are derived from gamblers’ losses, causing the economic interests of government players to be diametrically opposed. Government, which bears the primary responsibility for the social consequences of economic activity, has a vested interest in the losses of a large and unprotected body of consumers.³⁴

This fundamental observation about the casino industry in the US has been raised by many sociologists and political economists.³⁵ They generally embed commercial gambling as a social institution within the political economy of capitalist transformation. My dissertation contributes to this scholarship in two ways. First, it analyzes a moment of collision in 2004 when this Las Vegas casino model entered Singapore. Between 1960s and 80s, Singapore experienced a period of intense moralization and criminalization of gambling. As Chapters 1 and 2 will show, this history is complex and intertwined with both postcolonial and nationalist politics. Thus, on the one hand, it inherited a system of legal injunctions that criminalized gambling from its colonial era. On the other, in order to break from its colonial past, Singapore underwent a period of nation-building which attempted to purge sinful and wasteful habits from its citizens. Gambling, along with hippie culture and Communism, were cast as obstacles to this project of modernization and national survival. By the time the decision was made to introduce the casinos in 2004, a quiet balance had been struck between the state-sponsored lottery and the criminalization of vice in general. This moment of collision marks a significant moment in which the Las Vegas model which seeks to maximize profits is transformed and merged into a very different political and cultural regime in Singapore.

Second, my dissertation takes on a more visual and material analysis of this institution of commercialized gambling. Unlike these scholars, my theoretical framework is not structural functionalism or macro political economic analysis. Rather, I continue my focus on how practical schemes involving spatial and aesthetic considerations are formulated and carried out. How, for example, do corporations stimulate demand in the casinos? How does the Singaporean government contain and minimize legalized gambling? These questions alert us to a broader

³³ Vicki Abt, James Smith and Eugene M. Christensen, *The Business of Risk: Commercial Gambling in Mainstream America* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985)

³⁴ Abt (et al), *The Business of Risk*, 175

³⁵ See, for example, William R. Eadington, “The Casino Gaming Industry: A Study of Political Economy” in *The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 474(1984): 23-35; Jerome Skolnick, *House of Cards: Legalization and Control of Casino Gambling* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978); Mark Gottdiener (et al). *Las Vegas*, 1999; James Cosgrave, “Governing the Gambling Citizen” in *Casino State: Legalized Gambling in Canada*, eds. J. Cosgrave and T. Klassen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 46-66

range of experts who are involved. Casino designers and slot managers, who appear in Chapter 3, are quite unique to the industry that grew in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. They rationalize and put in practice ways to maximize profits by designing machines and arranging spaces strategically. In Singapore, lottery stations are distributed island-wide, but they are almost invisible and any overt form of marketing is officially frowned upon. These practices shape and communicate values about gambling and its dubious status in the everyday landscape of Singaporeans. This manner of analysis also provides a materialist understanding of the problem of legitimacy. Though sociologists and political scientists have pointed out how this problem is resolved by directing casino revenue to projects of public welfare, they do not analyze these projects as physical objects or public performances. This level of analysis is important because it explains how the alchemical transformation of “bad money” to “good money” can express and materialize very different political and cultural values. In Singapore, the relationship between the public lottery draw, for example, and the public project that it finances can be explicated as one set of performance, and such performances immediately highlight the complex differences between Singapore and the US, even though, at a general level, they are both concerned with the problem of legitimacy. This partially explains the intense attention paid by the government to the architectural form of the Integrated Resort, since it is part of this process of what I call “moral laundering”. This level of analysis sets this dissertation apart from the macro-analysis of the gambling industry, which generally stays at the level of interest groups, policies and institutional capacities.

Formulating an approach

To study how an activity or phenomenon becomes subject to systematic investigation and intervention is a key objective of a body of work about “governmentality”. When I suggest that the taming of gambling involves practical knowledge produced by administrators, detectives and architects, I am moving away from abstract discussions about gambling as a moral problem. As Mitchell Dean argues, scholars adopting the concept of governmentality are concerned first and foremost with the “programmer’s perspective”.³⁶ They shift the focus from questions about the bases of political legitimacy to the techniques of government devised to act on others and on the self in calculated ways. As such, they dismantle the concept of power as something invested in an institution or social group or the state, into a series of strategies and mechanisms, mediated by and exercised through a heterogeneous field of authorities. Its general effect is to multiply the arenas where one can analyze the exercising of power, each pointing in their specific ways the techniques and rationalities combined to shape society and individuals.

Studies of governmentality proceed by focusing on how these programmers define and act the problem, rather than referring to pre-established sets of social relations such as class or gender. Nikolas Rose terms such an approach as “empiricism of the surface”. This is a crucial perspective, as it trains one to look out for and interpret certain empirical materials in ways that other theoretical frameworks treat as unimportant. In his study of museum practices, for example, Tony Bennett argues that the key difference is that instead of “looking *through* the mechanisms that are produced when particular forms of knowledge and expertise are translated into practical, technical and institutionalized forms to decipher the modes of power that *lie behind* them”, one looks *at* these mechanisms so as to understand the forms of power that are

³⁶ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1999)

constituted *there*.³⁷ In his case, he attempts to show how historical sciences, colonial administration and exhibition practices are tied up in the space of the museum, turning it into a civilizing device that is crucial to the formation of civil society and the liberal subject. Parallel to this claim is that the institutionalized sets of knowledge and practices founded in the museum also rebound on how colonial subjects are ruled. Hence, while artifacts are brought into the museum based on a certain worldview and mode of collection, the world out there also become arranged and administered as if it were a museum. Museums served a different function in the colonies: “what most distinguished the deployment of the historical sciences in these contexts was their use in administrative procedures that categorized indigenous populations as if they were museum specimens and managed their location in social space as if this were a matter of assigning them to appropriate places within evolutionary museum practices.”³⁸

In this dissertation, I identify and approach each historical moment through a specific site where gambling is problematized and translated into various schemes to govern it. These schemes are the primary focus of the study. As such, I do not seek to provide a continuous account of how moral and legal interventions produced different kinds of spaces of exception; neither do I attempt to provide a consistent narrative of how this process serves certain interest groups by hiding political-economic imperative in certain ways. Rather, I attempt to show how, in the name of moral and social order, certain schemes are put in place to change the way we think about ourselves and society. In the first three historical chapters, I reconstruct these schemes through archival work, focusing primarily on legal documents, police reports, mainstream media, architectural plans and oral history. Each scheme foregrounds a different set of actors, in which the built environment serves a different function. Thus, in the first two chapter which focuses on criminalization, it is not a single building that is the focus of the study. Rather, lawyers and detectives had to contend with the total environment where illegal gambling could take place. The laws and policing techniques they put in place were attempts to detect and attack any of these potentially criminal spaces. In other schemes, an intervention of a much smaller scale is analyzed. Thus, within the casinos, slot technologists and casino designers rationalized the placement of machines and how people moved around the entire resort so as to maximize gambling revenue. In contrast, in the state-sponsored lotteries of Singapore, managers carried out lottery draws in enclosed spaces away from public view and disciplined the ritual such that it would not “seduce” people to gamble more. In the final chapter on contemporary Singapore, politicians, lawyers, casino developers and tourism experts all claimed to have an authority over the problem of casino gambling – how to maximize its profits while minimizing its social costs. The building is a setting and an actor, because it is the site where their discourses converge as well as a physical object that communicates directly to a set of aesthetics that fits into the worldview constructed by these experts. But the building is only one part of the larger project to materialize legal and moral divisions – in the process before its construction, there was a public debate and an architectural competition. All these are organized and analyzed as coherent schemes to understand their political and technical efficacies.

A precondition of governing is legibility. How are the objects governed made visible and legible to the programmers? There is no single theoretical framework or body of literature that can claim this question for itself. In answering this question, I learn from scholars such as James

³⁷ Tony Bennett, *Pasts beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 5

³⁸ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 10

Scott, Ian Hacking, Timothy Mitchell, Theodore Porter, Thomas Gieryn and Bruno Latour. In their different capacities, they show how modes of representation and technical expertise produce specific forms of legibility which often ignore or hide their own assumptions and justify their consequences. Hacking argues that inside the laboratory, science has a “self-vindicating” effect.³⁹ In the social sciences, this effect exceeds the boundaries of the laboratory. Gieryn, for example, argues that social scientists of the Chicago School framed Chicago as a laboratory in order to abstract universal patterns that will apply for any industrializing city.⁴⁰ Scholars such as Gieryn show how situated knowledge and prescribed sets of practices elevate into abstract theories. They argue that in order to understand the complex processes of socio-political change at the nexus of science and technology, one must consider a complex assemblage of actors, one that often involves non-humans such as machines, natural disasters or animals. Politics happens through the interactions of these different actors and how they situate themselves in the overall process of making scientific or universal claims. Thus, Mitchell describes “techno-politics” as that process through which experts deny the non-human and non-intentional elements, such that the “human, the intellectual, the realm of intentions and ideas seems to come first and to control and organize the nonhuman.”⁴¹

This has particular relevance to this dissertation, as I attempt to show how different actors interact and the kinds of politics they produce through these engagements. Though many of the schemes analyzed in this dissertation might *not* appear to be the kinds of “science” analyzed by the scholars of science studies, the protagonists often attribute scientific status to them. Lawyers, sociologists, planners, casino designers and politicians all draw authority from the world of science by attributing their decisions and products with law-like qualities. They make claims about human behavior that seem to be ahistorical, logical and testable. Like scientists, they form communities that guard the very criteria that are used to test their claims. They prescribe instruments, practices and formulas that can be replicated anywhere, or in controlled environments, with guaranteed or predictable results.

The scholars I have cited use a range of methodologies and empirical materials. Here, I review the materials and methodologies I have employed to analyze the political effects of making things legible and thus governable. In the first two chapters, I attempt to show how crime was made legible within the institution of the law by examining legal and professional documents. One key contribution of this work is to show how crime was *produced* in the institution of law by defining what counts as an evidence of crime. I focus on how crime acquired material and spatial registers, collected and identified by detectives, and then abstracted and rationalized in the institution of law itself. As I move into the casinos of Las Vegas, I show how slot managers and casino designers strived to make the experience of play and customer habits legible in new ways and shape them in order to maximize profits. In this project, quantification was a key mode of legibility. Not only was it the very language of gambling, it helped to connect the casino industry to the regulatory and corporate world as well as their management practices. In this respect, I learn from science and technology studies which analyze the role of numbers in modern culture. Numbers make new objects appear to the experts who use them, but they also inculcate certain values in these experts. Rose argues that numerical literacy

³⁹ Ian Hacking, “The Self-vindication of the Laboratory Sciences”, in *Science as practice and culture*, ed. A. Pickering (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 29-64.

⁴⁰ Thomas Gieryn “City as Truth-spot: Laboratories and Field-sites in Urban Studies,” in *Social Studies of Science* 36(1)(2006), 5-38

⁴¹ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 2002, 42-43

is a condition of the entrepreneurial subject who calculates and optimizes his economic resources in order to actualize him or herself.⁴² Discussing the role of numbers using the case of accountants as an example, Porter argues that our growing trust in numbers balances out a growing distrust in humans – “rigorous quantification is demanded in these contexts because subjective discretion has become suspect. Mechanical objectivity serves as an alternative to personal trust.”⁴³ By examining professional discourses and practices in the casino industry, I show how this question of trust and objectivity is fundamental for an industry that is always at risk of being stigmatized.

In the last chapter, this question of the relationship between legibility and governing is trained onto a different set of actors. I use ethnography, visual analysis and cultural criticism to unpack the hidden world of bureaucrats, planners and architects who worked in various ways to transform the Las Vegas casino model into the “Integrated Resort” of Singapore. It is a constant shift between images and numbers, as both were used strategically to make new objects legible to different audiences for different political effects. My empirical materials are architectural plans and renderings, field-notes from participant observation and the building itself.

Such attention to the technical efficacies, modes of legibility and actual practices set this dissertation apart from most studies about gambling and its politics. Yet, these theoretical frameworks have little to offer in the way of understanding display and performance, crucial element in the rituals of gambling and its manifestations as crime, vice or business. Thus, as I analyze the schemes in terms of how they define their objects and make them legible in certain ways, I also pay attention to their public presentation. This is a crucial moment in the process of making the transformation from bad money to good money visible and convincing. Thus public lottery draws in Singapore are important rituals as they act out the cultural and moral values of the community in which they are emplaced. They are part of the alchemical process. So is the actual Integrated Resort itself, as it displays the correct symbolic content and fulfills a certain pedagogical role in training visitors how to appreciate itself as art, and not a casino. As I discovered in the course of this research, justice also has to be displayed in order to be convincing. The key dictum in jurisprudence is that justice must not only be done, it must also be seen to be done. The violence of criminalizing what is otherwise a popular activity amongst a large number of people demands considerable attention on how police work is carried out and presented to the public. Visual analysis of buildings and images and participant observation are my key methods to understanding the political effects of these publicly staged events.

Plan of dissertation

The first chapter examines how British colonial administrators tried to criminalize gambling in 18th and 19th century Malaya. The economic imperative of such schemes is obvious - taxing the natives for “indulging” in vices through revenue farms (of which gambling farms were extremely profitable) helped to finance the Empire with little capital outlay. But what vexed the administrators thoroughly was the impossible situation of trying to criminalize something which they thought was a natural racial trait. This chapter opens a window into a formative moment when political schemes were invented to draw a fine line between vice and crime. The key political technology was the “Common Gaming House Ordinance”, imported from Metropolitan

⁴² Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 1999, 197-232

⁴³ Theodore M Porter, *Trust in numbers: the pursuit of objectivity in science and public life* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 90

London and India, which criminalized gambling by attaching criminality to the built environment. It worked by attacking the architectural defenses of the gamblers. Thus, houses with suspicious trap-doors and excessive impediments to police raids became automatic confessions of crime. At the same time, it needed to defend against its own excess by putting in place strict investigative procedures and surveillance technologies. Just as all “Chinamen” were gamblers but not all were criminals, not all suspicious houses could be immediately attacked. Thus, detectives and Sinologists helped to sculpt the furious shapeless violence of law with an intimate understanding of the practices and psyche of the Chinese gamblers. For this technology to be effective in the context of colonialism, it was paired with an ethnographic kind of knowledge about vice. The greater significance of the Common Gaming House is its membership in a class of injunctions targeted at vice in general: a set of power/knowledge that criminalizes selectively without sparing anyone.

The second chapter examines how the intensified criminalization of vice was carried out during the nation-building period of Singapore between 1960s and 80s. It opens by showing how gambling was, for many Singaporeans in the 1960s, a legitimate form of livelihood, economic transaction and entertainment. Gambling houses and street-gambling formed an intricate economy outside of the purview of the state. Thus, the criminalization of gambling by the state should be seen as an attack on an existing way of life. The chapter continues the analysis of the Common Gaming House as a political technology by showing how it was recalibrated in order to criminalize more expediently. On one hand, it was a juridical task of altering the spatial registers of criminality so as produce more crime. On the other, it was a political matter because increased criminalization had social and political costs, especially during a period of nation-building. A key maxim in law is that justice must not only be done, but that it must be seen to be done. Thus, I examine these schemes as public performances - that is, how the criminalization of a form of popular illegality transformed from a spectacle of violence into a performance of justice. Referring to the works of scholars who argues that nationalism requires symbolic practices and material forms in order to be real, I provide a broad schematic of the different ways in which justice, in the form of police activity, appeared on the streets and in the media.

Though these two chapters do not focus on the casino, they lay out the historical conditions for its appearance. For it is by attacking all the other kinds of gambling that cannot be contained and regulated that a space and argument is made for the casino to appear. Both chapters chart the ways in which the criminalization of vice was rationalized in terms of the effects and limits of spatial containment and public performances. Colonial administrators imagined how gambling farms as contained spaces of order paired with a visible system of patrolling the streets could have a pedagogical effect on the moral character of colonial subjects in general. Fifty years later, politicians of independent Singapore played a similar balancing act when they tried to contain gambling in state-sponsored lottery stations while cleansing the back-lanes, housing estates and schools with renewed fervor. At the level of economic interest, there might be little difference. Yet, paying attention to these techniques of criminalization that work spatially and aesthetically alerts us to how violence is often insensible at the point when it strikes the hardest.

The two chapters also show the role of science in legitimating such interventions on both colonial and national subjects. Gyan Prakash shows in his historical study of British India that while science was seen by the colonizers as universal reason that could civilize and liberate the natives, the indigenous elites also co-opted its symbols, grammar and techniques in order to

create a modern identity based on Hindu universality. Thus, in both colonialism and nationalism, science signaled an “enormous leap into modernity.”⁴⁴ Similarly, science was called into service to separate crime from vice, to uncover the deep causes of immorality and pinpoint its social consequences. In colonial Malaya, Sinologists and detectives shared a common discourse centered around “ethno-arcana,” a form of knowledge about the Other based on deep currents in pre-historic symbolic practices. In nationalist Singapore, police, political scientists and sociologists concerned with the effects of rapid modernization and massive urban renewal shared a common theory - crime and delinquency rose not from the mysterious depth of native culture, but from the interactions between man and his environment. These forms of scientific abstractions were not only translated into schemes to criminalize vice; they rationalized and produced different amount of crime within the tolerable and practical limits of different political regimes.

Moral proclamations are seldom useful in the taming of vice, even if they often appear as the source of anxiety. Rather, at the level of government, the key considerations are the political costs and practical limits of criminalizing a popular form of illegality. The first two chapters show in detail the constellation of knowledge and practices that come together to assess the costs and change the limits. By historicizing them, I show their epistemological incoherencies and aesthetic subterfuge so that we can recognize them as self-interested and violent schemes, rather than as necessary enactments of modernity or humane projects to discipline those other than ourselves. Reviewing these recent histories, can we still believe that it is pragmatic to legalize and moralistic to prohibit? The colonial masters thought so. Economically, they had much to lose if they chose prohibition. But just as important, they never thought the natives could be fully reformed, so deep was their natural predilection for vice. We forget this unkind moral judgment when we opt for the “pragmatic” option of legalization.

The third chapter examines the internal transformations of the casino industry in Las Vegas between 1950s and 80s. In contrast to the previous two chapters that focus criminalization, this chapter offers a perspective into the historical formation of the dominant casino-form today. Much has been written about Las Vegas from the perspective of political economy and cultural criticism. We know, for example, how Las Vegas became a casino city as a result of a confluence of federal policies, local government intervention and business interests. We are aware of how the corporatization of the casino industry in the 70s and 80s led to both the urban transformation of the Strip and the emergence of the large scale themed environment. Historians tell us how Las Vegas is not an exceptional city, but a model other American cities are becoming, while social scientists discover in Las Vegas the pulse and forms of consumerism in late capitalism.

My intervention is specific. I enter into the discourses and practices of the casino industry by examining materials such as trade magazines, conference proceedings, vendor advertising and architectural plans. I trace the beginnings of a paradigm shift in the way the industry was run to the accumulation of the slot machines in the casino after 1960s. Within the industry, the excitement that slot technology brought to the casino operators was unmistakable. It was not just because slot machines were increasingly profitable. Rather, it was because this technology revealed to operators an automated surveillance system that could extract from the very activity

⁴⁴ Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 12

of gambling data about the habits of the player, the popularity of each game, the rate of play and so on. Slot managers and gaming technologists found themselves empowered professionally as they experimented with ways to transform data into profits. The virtualization process connected with corporate management practices, and it opened up a new horizon where every activity in and out of the casino could potentially be absorbed into a virtual superstructure of numbers. In this rarefied space, rational calculations could produce the maximum profits.

Thus, as casino-resorts became bigger and more spectacular, its internal economy became more virtual. It is possible to see how by 1980s, as the numbers generated from slot machines and table games connected with numbers about consumer psychology and market demographics already produced by the multi-national corporations, that the physical confinement of gambling was finally defeated. For it was not just gambling behavior that corporations analyzed, but its relationship with other economic/non-economic activities in and outside the casino-resort. It is in the context of this quantitative turn in the industry that the casino designer emerged. His response was opportunistic and retaliatory – to insist on the value of the unquantifiable, and yet situate himself as the sole expert who can transform this unquantifiable into quantifiable profits. His role was to connect numbers with emotions and space. Through architectural plans, I show how the design of the casino-resort was transformed into a “science,” much like how the design of shopping malls became formalized into predictable principles and patterns.⁴⁵ In this case, however, its claims to scientific status were often overstretched, reflecting the unstable foundations of the casino designer’s profession and the industry’s lust for certainty and objectivity. The virtual economy of the multi-national corporation, the spatial principles of the plan and the embodied authority of the casino designer constitute what I would call the “Las Vegas model.”

In the last chapter, I bring together these histories to reflect on and critique the contemporary case of Singapore. This synthesis does not try to do equal justice to all that are discussed in the preceding three chapters. It focuses how the Las Vegas model was transformed in order to blend into the spatial and aesthetic order of Singapore. With the historical work carried out in the last three chapters, it should not be surprising that the casino would provoke new rounds of moral and political dilemma. However, it was not just the difficulty of justifying a change in the anti-casino policy – this was quickly accomplished by rehearsing the kinds of truth-claims mentioned at the beginning of the introduction. It was the incompatibility of the Las Vegas model to both the urban vision for Marina Bay and the moral sensitivities of the ruling elites. The taming of vice was therefore about changing the Las Vegas way of conducting business, its figures of authority and its preferred architectural forms. It was a silencing of the “shameful” truths about the casino industry. Not all of these attempts were successful.

The agents who tried to change the Las Vegas model all worked behind the scene. Government planners were prominent as the guardians of the urban vision for Marina Bay. They worked tirelessly to impress upon the casino developers the appropriate aesthetic for this site. They crafted design guidelines to enforce certain architectural forms and to ensure “zero visibility” for the casino, but the more important task was to find an architect who could connect with their vision. Short of designing the building themselves, no amount of guidelines could guarantee the kind of aesthetic they wanted. There was, I suggest, a “gestalt” embedded in the

⁴⁵ Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall” in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), 3-30

plans for Marina Bay, and only someone from a similar professional background could see it. During the competition for the casino license, bureaucrats created matrices of evaluation and bureaucratic procedures in order to judge and select the best proposal from the various bidders. Though the entire process appeared very objective and designed such that the highest score would win, every participant involved in the process strategized by guessing and aiming for the product that the government wanted. Thus, the competition was never really about finding the best proposal, but the right proposal.

The key argument of this chapter is that there is no such thing as an “Integrated Resort” developed in Las Vegas and finally suitable to be imported to Singapore. This narrative only preserves the moral purity of the ruling elites, as if Singapore waited for Las Vegas to ascend to its level of probity. Rather, the Integrated Resort had to be made, in bits and pieces, by many authors, through a tedious process of mutual negotiation. Yet, the traces of this construction were erased to preserve the status of the building and city as art, immaculately conceived and delivered through a seamless partnership between the star architect and the government planner. I argue that the Integrated Resort materializes this art of “blending” where corporate, national and public interests become indistinguishable from each other. Despite its spectacular and iconic status, designed by an international architect, Moshe Safdie, rather than a casino designer or theme park specialist, the Integrated Resort blends into the spatial-aesthetic order established by the lottery stations of Singapore – one that hides the casino in plain sight. The Integrated Resort is marketed as an architectural icon, tourist destination and national symbol. It has become the new aesthetic form that facilitates a new scale of expansion and legitimacy for the globalized casino industry. Singapore’s contribution to the long history of the taming of vice is a set of Emperor’s new clothes.

Chapter 1

Criminalizing vice: The “Common Gaming House” in colonial Singapore

In describing the vices of the Chinese, next to gambling must be considered opium smoking. The one is destructive to their moral and the other to their physical health.

Sir Thomas Braddell, 1856

Addressing the scope of modern Orientalism that began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cultural historian Edward Said attempts to lay out that “reservoir of accredited knowledge, the codes of Orientalist orthodoxy” that demarcated the West from the East.⁴⁶ Although he does not tease out the trope of “vice” from the texts he analyzes, it is everywhere in the discourse that is Orientalism. After all, vice is only “discovered” in relation to an already existing norm, and the classificatory impulse of Orientalist thinking readily supplies this comparative and hierarchical structure. In other words, the Oriental was discovered in a natural state of vice. He or she was always found to be in excess of or deficient in a certain quality, measured against the European ideal, and that was the very source of fascination that sustained the Orientalist gaze. When the British encountered the Arabs, Chinese, Malays, Bugis and other native races in what was then designated as the Indian Archipelago, a whole range of deficiencies or excesses was “discovered”. Indolence, innocence, greed, sensuality, timidity and stupidity were but some of the moral and intellectual traits that explained their states of barbarism. Of the Chinese, the passion for gambling was one of the most persistent images that captured both their economic irrationality and moral depravity.

Said’s book, and postcolonial theory in general, has provoked intellectual debates about the limits of redressing colonialism’s injustices. Several key critiques of postcolonial theory should be noted: that it tends to embrace heterogeneity, complicity and hybridity as a mark of overcoming the Other without reference to historical or material context, or as a way to avoid addressing questions of power and inequality; that it becomes a programmatic metanarrative that reflects less about the subjects it purports to speak for than the politics of the postcolonial intellectual ensconced in a First World institution; and that it whitewashes the nuances of “Orientalist orthodoxy” by reproducing, in an inverse form, the binary of Self and Others.⁴⁷

In a conceptual paper on “colonial governmentality”, David Scott poses a question: Does “race” as a rule of difference operate the same way across the entire history of colonialism?⁴⁸ Or does it enter into new configurations with other modes of knowledge and techniques in the administration of colonies? Using the case study of Ceylon, he revisits a crucial moment in the 1830s when colonial administrators tried to reform the moral habits of the natives by introducing the British juridical system. Though this reform might be explained as a democratization of power based on the model of British liberalism, Scott thought its significance was in how it tried

⁴⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994[1979])

⁴⁷ Some key critiques are collected here: Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Rosalind O’Hanlon and David Washbrook, “After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism, and Politics in the Third World” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(1992), 141-167; Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Globalization* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1997); Ahmad, Aijaz, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992); and Porter, Dennis. “Orientalism and its Problems.” In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. eds., Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 150-161

⁴⁸ David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality”, in *Social Text* 43(1995), 191-220

to create a new set of conditions that will shape the natives to become honest and law-abiding subjects. The courtroom functions like a classroom, one that displays justice at work and performs rewards and punishments in front of both the European and Indian public. Such forms of analysis identify individual sites of political intervention and show in detail the specific strategies at work there. In these sites, the category of race certainly persists, but becomes lodged in different dynamic relationships with other categories within an institutional structure which produces specific effects on individuals and societies.

These political interventions can be located in many sites across the colonial enterprise. In colonial Singapore, Anoma Pieris focuses on the prison where the direct confrontation between the European administrator and the prisoner-laborer allowed for a model of colonial citizenship to arise. This is in opposition to what is the normal arrangement outside the prison, where political control was loose and mediated through native forms of government, such as clan associations and the Malay royalties.⁴⁹ Brenda Yeoh provides an account of the contestations over the use of spaces for living and commercial activities between the natives and the colonial administrators. She argues that when surveillance failed to produce the desired effect, administrators took a more direct approach to clear the verandahs and back-lanes by legal injunctions and physical destruction. Therefore, these public spaces (or, rather, spaces designated “public”) were also sites for the reform and control of the native population, and this necessitated a range of techniques and expertise that were constantly challenged and reformulated in order to be effective.⁵⁰ Between brothels and hospitals, James Warren describes another site where registration, medical examination, sex education and punishment combine in an attempt to control the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases in the 1850s. His detailed account shows how these forms of intervention were conditioned on medical knowledge, colonial understanding of native practices around prostitution, political influences from London and the problem of limited administrative resources.⁵¹ Chang draws a different historical thread from these sites of medical intervention, arguing that on the one hand, tropical science shaped the design of wards and hospitals, and on the other hand, these hospitals, through their architectural form, were symbols of foreign authority in the colonies.⁵²

The various forms of intervention can be analyzed separately without having to collect them under some theory of colonial power. “Race” does not function in the same way across these clusters of complex power-relations, as David Scott suggests. The criminalization of vice is but one of the numerous projects undertaken to reform the natives. Though gambling amongst the natives was reviled again and again in colonial texts, scholars have not examined how practical schemes were created to control it, and how such schemes connected to simultaneous projects undertaken to reform the native population. The paradox which colonial administrators faced was created by their own Orientalist preconceptions: *if gambling were a vice natural to the Chinese race, how should it be criminalized without producing an entire population of criminals?* This chapter provides a focused entryway into this paradox by tracing how the relationship between vice and crime was rationalized and put in practice in the domain of law

⁴⁹ Anoma Pieris, *Hidden Hands and Divided Landscapes: A Penal History of Singapore's Plural Society* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2009)

⁵⁰ Brenda Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relationships and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1996)

⁵¹ James Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-San: Prostitution in Singapore, 1880-1940* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003)

⁵² Jiat-Hwee, Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Singapore in the British (Post)Colonial Networks of Nature, Technoscience and Governmentality, 1830s to 1960s* (Diss. UC Berkeley, 2009)

and police. Unlike many of the histories cited above which provides a detailed analysis of the social and political struggles *through* these schemes of reform, this chapter analyzes the schemes for how they work and the kinds of logics and techniques brought together in order to be effective. It contextualizes these schemes in the connected world of colonial administration, juridical reason and police work. I call this the “juridical-police complex”.

How did the British administrators conceive of gambling amongst the natives and how did this knowledge translate into practical forms of government? In the 1820s, theories of ethno-climatology provided a universal and static world picture wherein the character of the natives was as immutable as the soil that birthed them. This corresponded generally with a model of indirect rule where the taxation of vices was both morally justifiable and economically expedient. By the 1880s, as colonial rule became more interventionist, and as the political dangers posed by gambling syndicates became intolerable, a new form of knowledge was needed to create finer scales of criminality so as to distribute the weight of punishment more effectively and righteously. The “Common Gaming House” Ordinance was introduced in 1888 to effect this transition, but it is more profitably analyzed as a political technology that sought to produce certain political effects by materializing crime in spatial and architectural terms. This political technology tried to defeat the architectural defenses of the gamblers by attaching guilt to specific material traces. Thus, houses with suspicious trap-doors and excessive impediments to police raids became automatic confessions of crime. Simultaneously, it defended against its own excess by putting in place strict investigative procedures and surveillance technologies. Thus, fingerprinting and ethnographic work helped to sculpt the furious shapeless violence of law with an intimate understanding of the practices and psyche of the Chinese gamblers. This was a different form of Orientalism that replaced the static world picture of ethno-climatology. Taken together, the political technology of the Common Gaming House combined a set of knowledge and practices in order to criminalize selectively without sparing anyone.

World pictures

Colonial texts are replete with claims about the Chinaman’s propensity to gamble. Often, such claims flow into other observations about his inherent dishonesty and pecuniary nature, his industry and his secretive forms of association.⁵³ Such Orientalist claims by no means capture the scope of the colonial gaze across the whole of the Indian Archipelago, but its stability has strategic political effects in an environment of limited knowledge and resources. For this part of the world, the British were latecomers. The Portuguese and the Dutch were already here, guarding their monopolies by controlling the seafaring routes between the Far East and Europe. British intervention into Malaya was premised on securing access to China and protecting the seat of empire in India, while avoiding excessive conflicts with the other European and local powers in the region.⁵⁴ The British set up settlements in Penang (1785), Java (1811-1815) and Singapore (1819), but British Malaya as a geopolitical entity only came into form after the mid-

⁵³ One can find such evocations in several journals published about the Indian Archipelago - *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1834), *Journal of Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* (1856) and the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1877, which became the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1923). Some specific references are made in these texts: James Logan, 1846, JIA (for his reference to Marco Polo’s description of the Chinese): 257-258; Francis Light, 1793, quoted in Jean Debernardi, 2004. *Rites of Belonging: Memory, Modernity and Identity in a Malaysian Chinese Community*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 54; Swettenham F A. 1907. *British Malaya: An account of the origin and progress of British Influence in Malaya*, London: John Lane: 247; Mills L A, 2003 [1925], *British Malaya, 1824-1867*, Singapore: JMBRAS: 251

⁵⁴ Nicholas Tarling, *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago 1824-1871* (Kuala Lumpur, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1-18

19th century. Yet, in going through the early British accounts of what was defined more expansively as the Indian Archipelago, it is impossible not to encounter those tomes of texts, engravings and charts that straddled between scholarship and imperialism. The picture of the Indian Archipelago was far more intricately rendered by these early colonialists than their actual physical presence in this part of the world might suggest. By 1820, John Crawfurd had already produced three volumes on the history of the Indian Archipelago, while Sir Stamford Raffles had produced two volumes on the history of Java.

Raffles' history of Java was written at a time when the British and the Dutch were wrestling with each other for control over the seaways and islands in this region. He espoused a liberal system of free trade and attacked the Dutch vociferously for creating monopolies wherever they went. In Java, he argued, there was a contradiction between the fertility of the land and the poverty of its commerce and people. The principles of population, if left alone, would create a growing economy based on the natural reproductive power of the natives and available environmental resources. Yet, the monopolistic policies of the Dutch that taxed the natives heavily and the despotic regime of the native government thwarted this natural evolution. More a polemical attack on the Dutch than a history of Java, Raffles carved out a space for the original Javanese native who needed to be rescued from the entire panoply of political, economic, religious and military forces that was not his own. He cherished the peasant as "simple, natural and ingenuous" - "a piece of white cloth"⁵⁵ - not indolent like how other colonialists saw him.⁵⁶ Raffles also dismissed the native rulers as corrupted by their contact with the West - they "exhibited many of the vices of civilization without its refinements, and the ignorance and deficiencies of a rude state without its simplicity". Against the purity of the peasant, one would discover amongst these rulers, "violence, deceit and gross sensuality"⁵⁷ Islam, alcohol, gambling and opium were foreign imports that contaminated the Javanese natives, abetted by the revenue farms introduced by the Dutch and run by the Chinese.

Simultaneously, the natives had to be rescued from the luxury of their own environment. They lacked industry precisely because they could live off the fertile land without too much effort. In the final judgment, bad government and good soil were to blame for their primitive state. Raffles' scheme gave the natives both a geographical and evolutionary space for improvement if they were placed under a "mild government" that promoted free trade and a peasant-based land tenure system. His reference was Egypt, where climate, government and industry produced a civilization worthy of the British empire. Combining both civilizing zeal and mathematical logic, Raffles wrote about how the Indian Archipelago could also grow in that direction:

Suppose the quantity of land in cultivation to be to the land still in a state of nature as one to seven ... and that, in the ordinary circumstances of the country, the population would double itself in a century, it might go on increasing for three hundred years to come. Afterwards the immense tracts of unoccupied or thinly peopled territories on Sumatra, Borneo, and the numerous islands scattered over the Archipelago, may be ready to receive colonies, arts, and civilization from the metropolis of the Indian seas. Commercial intercourse, friendly relations, or political institutions, may bind these dispersed communities in one great insular commonwealth ... If we could indulge ourselves in such reveries with propriety, we might

⁵⁵ Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol.1 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1817): 273

⁵⁶ On the Orientalist construction of the "lazy native", see gottdi

⁵⁷ Raffles, *The History of Java*, 276

contemplate the present semi-barbarous condition, ignorance, and poverty of these innumerable islands, exchanged for a state of refinement, prosperity, and happiness.⁵⁸

Compared to Crawfurd, Raffles was a mere amateur writer. Crawfurd's position on racial divergence, geography and civilization was far more ambitious and clearly articulated than Raffles'. He, like Raffles, was an advocate of free trade and espoused the theory of ethno-climatology which posited a direct relationship between race and climate. One of the earliest colonial administrators in Malaya who became the President of the Royal Geographical Society in the 1850s, Crawfurd helped to formalize a theory of ethno-climatology in which the entire Indian Archipelago was absorbed into a static world picture. According to this picture, starting at Sumatra and the Malay peninsula at the west part of the Archipelago, civilization decreased as one moved eastwards "in a geographical ratio" until New Guinea, where only savages were to be found. As outsiders to the Indian Archipelago, the Chinese, Crawfurd decided, had a character and morality that could not be explained by the climate and geography of where they migrated to. He declared that they should be seen as extensions of "the singular population of that empire."⁵⁹

These are both classic cases of Orientalist ontology. The general theory of ethno-climatology might sentence natives to a timeless state of barbarism, but it left a space open for their possible improvement. Thus, Crawfurd and Raffles' view on the Javanese natives echoed each other – the natives were a docile, innocent and hospitable people. Like Raffles, Crawfurd did not think they were by nature indolent, but having lived in a state of insecurity and having enjoyed the advantage of fertile soil for so long, they might "one and all be pronounced an indolent race". However, Crawfurd's equation between civilization and climate had the character of an ineluctable law and was extremely severe in its judgment. He was far less generous than Raffles about the evolutionary potential of the natives. Neither cherishing the peasant nor dismissing the local rulers, the natives were a solid and inert unit indivisible from the climate that birthed them. His history sentenced them to a limited civilizational scale between free savages and slaves of despots.⁶⁰ For Crawfurd, the map of the archipelago he furnished in the book was the eternal picture of the world order. Even though he rested his authority on having worked and lived in Java for six years, his goal was to produce a theory that gave order to the world as revealed directly to the European intellect and built itself through a self-referential system of textual and graphic circulation. Pointing out in a footnote that James Mill wrote the history of British India in 1817 without having visited India, he exclaimed that it was a "proud evidence of the diffusion of knowledge among us, and a satisfactory refutation of the pernicious prejudice that an Indian residence is indispensable to an understanding of Indian affairs."⁶¹ His composite map - the "completest yet submitted to the public" – made physical encounter unnecessary since knowledge in its purer form could be derived from and added to its surface. Although stitched from no less than 16 sources, it was presented as a seamless and expandable whole (Fig. 1.1). In 1856, he published a dictionary of the "Indian islands and adjacent countries", hoping that this

⁵⁸ Ibid, 80

⁵⁹ John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago: containing an account of the manners, arts, languages, religions, institutions and commerce of its inhabitants*, Vol 3 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1820), 155. This form of "wild transnationalism" is also described by Ong and Nonini. See Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini (ed.) *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Chinese Transnationalism* (London and NY: Routledge, 1997)

⁶⁰ Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, 1- 28

⁶¹ Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, 53

annotated arrangement of knowledge would “lay the foundation for a more perfect superstructure by those who may follow the Author in the same direction.”⁶²

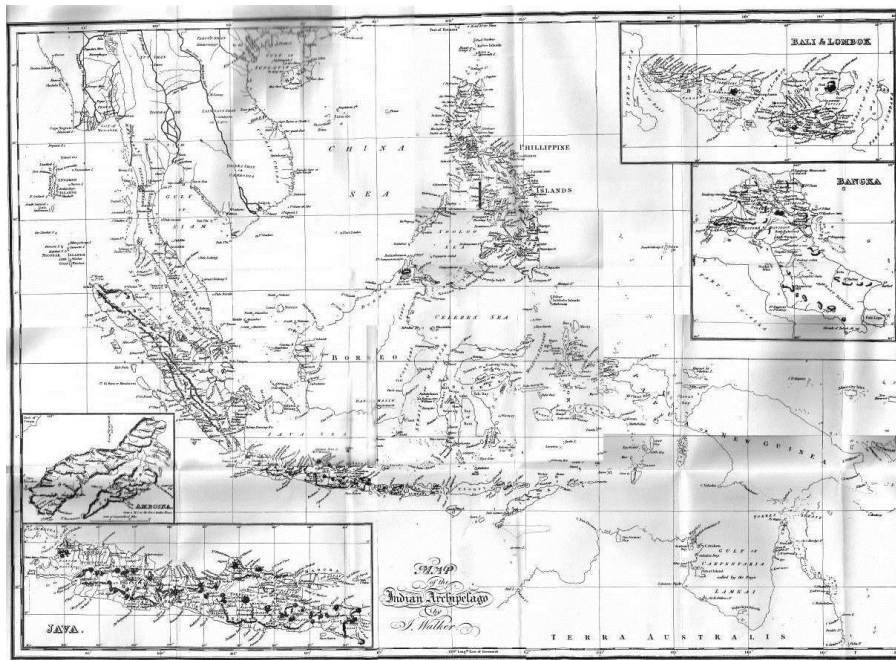


Fig. 1.1: John Crawfurd's map of the Indian Archipelago, John Crawfurd, 1820, Vol 3, Appendix No. 1

World pictures such as these helped to create in the minds of the administrators and planters a universal and static image of Orientalist deficiencies. Its sweeping gaze mirrored the political economic arrangement between capital and labor in this early phase of British colonialism in Southeast Asia. When the British did set up their colonies in Penang, Malacca, and Singapore in the early half of the 19th century, they adopted the revenue-farming system of the Dutch and the natives to impose taxes on “luxuries and vices” of the local population. Under this system, a public auction was held where a farmer bid for the monopoly to sell a certain commodity or service for an annual sum to be paid to the colonial government. The main monopolies included opium, gambling, “arrack” (spirits) and pawn-brokering.⁶³ The revenue farm system forged a model of shared authority where the British relied on farm operators, who were usually leaders of Chinese syndicates known as “kongsis”⁶⁴ for cheap labor and local knowledge, while the kongsis relied on the British for capital and protection. The objective of this system was to bind the interests of the Chinese to the British with minimal effort. Through the self-administration and policing of the Chinese, the revenue farms would ensure steady revenue, prevent activities such as rioting and smuggling which would compromise both British and Chinese interests and, most importantly, attract labor to the colonies.⁶⁵

⁶² John Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1856), Preface

⁶³ Other kinds of farms include pork, tobacco, firewood, salt and river turtle eggs. See Wong, Lin Ken. 1964/5, “The Revenue Farms of Prince Wales Island, 1803-1830” in *Journal of South Seas Studies*, v19: 56-127

⁶⁴ Kongsis are a form of social organization that combined rituals of brotherhood and clan-based affiliations with economic cooperation. For a thorough discussion about the nature, function and history of the kongsi as it was formed in Southeast Asia and more specifically, Singapore, see Carl Trocki. *Opium and Empire: Chinese society in colonial Singapore 1800-1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 11-49

⁶⁵ Wong, *The Revenue Farms of Prince Wales Island, 1803-1830*, 63-64

Between 1820s and 70s, the revenue farm system instituted a particular economy of government in which a small number of foreigners could loosely regulate a much larger population of transient migrants. John Cameron, a chronicler of British colonies in the 1850s, elaborated on its political rationalities in his spirited defense of why such arrangements worked. If the British were to tax directly a paid establishment, he argued, the cunning of the Chinese in evading taxes would reduce revenue collected, and in coming into contact with them, neither native nor European policemen could be trusted anymore. With a revenue farm, the Chinese governed his own kind using a system of “gradually descending responsibility” which “rendered fraud difficult”.⁶⁶ It was better to “set a thief to catch a thief”, a phrase found with disturbing regularity in subsequent reports on the problem posed by the Chinese. It was a peculiar amalgam of Orientalist truths and practical administration.

More importantly, this amalgam was only appeared logical because of the very arrangement of power during this early period of colonialism. The model of indirect rule produced a comfortable buffer of blindness which was as overconfident as the world picture produced by Crawfurd. As Mitchell and Bennett argue, the colonizers’ gaze sets up the world as an exhibition; one bifurcated between an ordered interior and an untamed exterior.⁶⁷ Crawfurd’s map was this form of curatorial strategy where the chaos of the unknown world were either kept out of its surface, or else organized in a way to fill in its blanks. As a symbiotic and exploitative arrangement between the colonizer and the colonized, there were few points of contact other than the one mediated by indigenous forms of government. Vice was measured simply as a quantum proportional to the natural instincts of a population.⁶⁸ Just as Sir Stamford Raffles plotted the reproductive potential of the Javanese against the availability of fertile land,⁶⁹ administrators extrapolated farm earnings from the growing number of migrants under their jurisdiction. Beyond such arithmetic, there were few accounts of how the Chinese actually ran these farms. The world exhibited to and created by colonialism was one seen from a safe distance, mediated by numbers and maps. The system of “gradually descending responsibility”, as John Cameron so deftly euphemized it, and the geographical ratio of Crawfurd’s map rewarded the British for their ignorance.

The profitability of ignorance can be seen in the ways administrators dealt with the failures of their own policies. Already in the early part of the 19th century, the British realized that the increase in population in Penang did not result in a corresponding increase in the revenue of the farms. The Chinese farm operators had cooperated to suppress the auction price and instituted a sub-leasing system that deprived the British of their fair share of profits. Smuggling was not curtailed but was carried out by rival syndicates to undercut each other.⁷⁰ In the 1870s, in the states where gambling farms were still legal, colonial administrators were imbricated in several altercations between farm operators, laborers and other segments of the population. Thus, they came into knowledge that miners were often encouraged to gamble and that gambling allowed the mine operators to “recover in the evening over Chinese Fan-tan mat the wages paid out over

⁶⁶ John Cameron. *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India: being a descriptive account of Singapore, Penang, Province Wellesley, and Malacca; their peoples, products, commerce, and government* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1865), 211

⁶⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (California: University of California Press, 1988); Tony Bennett, *Pasts beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004)

⁶⁸ This can be gleaned by the ways such farm revenues were tabulated and presented in the colonial records.

⁶⁹ Raffles, *The History of Java*, 273

⁷⁰ Wong, *The Revenue Farms of Prince Wales Island, 1803-1830*

the counter in the morning.”⁷¹ As historian Carl Trocki’s work on opium and empire in the 18th and 19th century shows, farm operators trapped laborers in a cycle of debt peonage through opium addiction. Gambling farms throughout Malaya served a similar function in the exploitation of labor – it made capital accumulation possible even when commodity prices were weak and labor plentiful. Opium, pawn-brokering and gambling farms, taken together, were mechanisms that recycled wages back to the employers, and it is not surprising therefore that “general farms” were licensed where these activities were located under one roof.⁷² In return, the colonial government started to lay down more regulations on farm operators to prevent the excessive exploitation of the Chinese laborers, though these were often half-hearted and ineffective.⁷³

Against the backdrop of such comfortable and profitable blindness, other more spectacular images of the Chinaman began to populate the Orientalist imagination. In the colony of Singapore, public gambling materialized vice in a different way, far more visceral and intimidating. Gambling was eminently visible, but more than that, it was everywhere. Gauging by the comments in the newspapers, Europeans were appalled by the way gambling was conducted conspicuously and nonchalantly every day on the streets, in markets, at workplaces and in private homes. Many of the letters sent to the newspapers were particularly detailed about the numbers, locations and operating hours of these illegal gambling houses:

Gambling still continues in Singapore daily, openly, and on a large scale. A species of lottery called Tikam Surat or wah-wee is drawn daily in a house in China Street, the tickets being sold on the public road in Church, Nankin, China, and Chinchew Streets by Chinese book-keepers. There are at present 11 public gambling shops on the commercial side of the river, and 7 in Campong Glam. Play is carried on in these houses in the daytime for the most part, from 9am to 3pm with open doors, the passers-by being invited to walk in and try their luck.⁷⁴

This brazen conspicuity presented itself as a threat to the security of the colony.⁷⁵ The alarmist tone of the report, together with a calm enumeration of the numbers and operations of these gambling houses, suggest a climate of anxiety in the face of government inactivity. Several reports highlighted how policemen strolled past these dens without “noticing” them, or that such illegal activities were carried out within 50 yards of a police station.⁷⁶ The fact that the government had to make concessions allowing the Chinese to gamble openly during their

⁷¹ Hare G.T., report of 19 January 1900. Quoted in John Butcher, “The Demise of the Revenue Farm System in the Federated Malay States” *Modern Asian Studies* 17/3(1983),397; In 1885, a petition was also sent to Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, Acting Governor of the Straits Settlements, and was similarly signed by leading members of the Chinese community to contain the illegal Hua-Hoey lottery. See Kynnersley, C W, A description of the Chinese lottery known as Hua-Hoey” in *JSBRAS*, 16 (1886): 203-250

⁷² “When business was slow the operator and his confederates sometimes started a game of Ho-lan-pai (“Dutch cards”) and continued playing until they attracted a number of players, at which point the operator “gracefully retires, leaving one or two men as croupiers to take the commission and mark up the game shewing the winnings and losses. Once a gambler had lost all his ready cash he could, despite the government’s attempt to ban such practices, sell or pawn one of his possessions, such as a watch or piece of jewellery, so that he could continue gambling until he had nothing left to lose. It was also a common practice for employers to pay workers’ wages at or near a gambling house so that the men might be invited to gamble then and there when they were flush with cash, as it was for employers to obtain a license from the farmer in order to conduct gambling at their mining camps on pay days or on Chinese holidays.” See Butcher J G “An Historical Enigma: a note on the anti-gambling petition of 1905” in *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 56/1(1983), 1-9

⁷³ Butcher, “Demise of the Revenue Farm System in the Federated Malay States”

⁷⁴ SFP, 10 Aug 1849,2

⁷⁵ The general atmosphere, as felt by the Europeans, was one of lawlessness and rampant crime. Widespread illegal gambling was but one manifestation of it. Immigrant population grew exponentially in the mid 19th century, and murder, robbery and gang fights were common. There was no police force in the Straits Settlements until 1857 and even then, it continued to be small and poorly trained for the next few decades. See Constance M. Turnbull, “Internal Security in the Straits Settlements, 1826-1867” in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 1(1970), 37-53

⁷⁶ Jon S.T., Quah, 1979, “Police Corruption in Singapore: An Analysis of its Forms, Extent and Causes,” in *Singapore Police Journal*, v10(1), 7-43

festivals without extending the same privileges to other British subjects was a further reminder of the weakness of British rule vis-à-vis the growing political strength of the Chinese.⁷⁷ Such graphic evidences of vice are superficial, worked up from a confrontational relationship with a conspicuous unknown. Through these encounters and reports, Europeans formed a direct equation between vice and crime which seeped out from the very basic level of economic practice. The value of money and the rationality it conferred on the modern individual, when moved into the strange economy of the Chinese, became perverted and irrational. Such irrational practices contaminated the entire system of exchange value on which a proper market economy depended. Through a trope of contamination, a private passion was transformed into a public disorder: “A crime is committed of whatever magnitude, witnesses are first bribed, the Peace Officers follow, the Interpreters are tempted and if this does not succeed, and the parties are committed, then the same system is followed at the Sessions, the prosecutors disappear, or the statements of the witnesses do not agree with their first depositions.”⁷⁸

The trope of contamination is also a function of the escalating asymmetry between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown. Miasma and Germ theory – prominent in colonies of the tropics – often worked up the idea of contamination based on a sense of the monstrous but undetectable. It is thus here that Orientalist truths must come to stand in as “monsters” against a background of invisible dangers. Crawford’s map and these graphic evidences of vice produced a surface knowledge about the Chinaman, his gambling habits and the socio-political implications of such activities. Whereas the British were “paid” not to intervene in the internal workings of the farms, their eyes were either kept out of the inner spaces of gambling houses, or else treated to a silent but conspicuous display of nonchalance. But, this kind of knowledge - simultaneously theoretical and pedestrian, essential and aesthetic - informed how colonial power thought about the possibilities of governing vice. One important space in which the proper object of government was formulated was in the Legislative Council, through a series of debates that stretched from 1820s to the 80s.

Moral reform and the spaces of tolerated illegalities

The legislative debates centered on the implications of legalizing or abolishing gambling farms. Arguments in support of the termination of gambling farms emphasized British experience at home and in Europe to argue that sanctioning legalized gambling would encourage rather than reduce the vice. Sir Thomas Braddell recorded that the Palais Royal of Paris was used as a “notable example of evils of sanctioning public gaming.”⁷⁹ English law, it was argued, should not be based on the imperfect conditions of the colonies, but on the “general feeling of Europe” which had been consistently prohibitory for the previous century.⁸⁰ Acknowledging the innate passions of the natives to gamble, prohibitive measures in the colonies were never expected to completely remove the vice from the population. Rather, the task of prohibition was to drive persistent gamblers underground and remove all

⁷⁷ “The Chinese were, nevertheless, permitted for a long time to game openly at their festivals, while an interdict lay on every other class of British subjects. This was virtually pronouncing that, the vice which law reprobated and prohibited as injurious, became quite innocuous when fumigated with the incense of the Tokong or Joss-house, and it further involved the startling anomaly of the law protecting and saving harmless amongst one class of subjects, a practice which it condemned, and must have punished as destructive to morals and social order, if indulged in by any one of the other and still more numerous classes.” James Low, *A dissertation on the Soil and Agriculture of the British Settlement of Penang or Prince of Wales Island in the Straits of Malacca including Province Wellesley on the Malayan Peninsula* (Singapore: Singapore Free Press Office, 1836), 239

⁷⁸SFP: 24 August 1849: 2

⁷⁹ Thomas Braddell, “Gambling and Opium Smoking” in *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, New Series, 1(1856), 71

⁸⁰ See especially Attorney General’s speech in PLCSS, 1883: 53-54

temptations which would invariably arise if gambling were allowed in public. Therefore, arguments from this camp implicitly acknowledged that such innate passions could be tamed. Following Raffles' world-view, the natives could be improved, and thus the amount of vice reduced. Secrecy was to be, in this case, a tolerated form of illegality: "It cannot be denied that here, as in London, there are gaming houses which carry on their operations so secretly as to defy the police, but the very fact of the secrecy is a proof that the evil is lessened *as far as the general public is concerned*"⁸¹ (italics added).

Arguments in support of legalizing gambling farms seem to draw logical strength from a pragmatist position – since you cannot eradicate the problem, you might as well regulate it. But colonial discourses remind us that such an argument is also built on a static model of radical difference. The key difference is already suggested in how Raffles and Crawford thought about the evolutionary potential of the natives. Crawford's world-view casts a moral judgment on the limited scope of evolutionary improvement which, in turn, justifies why the natives should be ruled differently from the British:

The Chinese and Malays, and other inhabitants of the Eastern Islands (I speak from twelve years' experience of them), are imbued with a passion for gaming, for which prohibitory or restrictive laws are no match. The tax on gaming has been abolished at Prince of Wales' Island for thirty years, and at Singapore for the last ten, but, at both places, *gaming is carried on at least the same extent as before the prohibition*. The police paid to suppress it have been paid for its connivance, and repeated convictions of its members, including even the European constables, have proved examples of not the slightest efficiency as to prevention. Such is the result of legislating against the genius of a community, and in the spirit of laws framed for a very different state of society – and even for that state, not very consistently acted upon, as is sufficiently evinced by the English duties on cards, dice and similar objects....⁸² [italics mine]

The implicit moralization behind a pragmatic argument is replayed with different registers of difference – race, for example, in the colonial context is substituted for class in the metropolitan context. Unlike the previous argument, this position is built on a case of symmetry – criminalizing gambling produces an equal amount of illegal gambling, suggesting therefore, the immutability of the native's "innate passion." This "innate passion" of the natives and the "genius of a community" in turn justify why policies on gambling in the Malay states should be different from that in Britain. English laws simply would not work here. What was so different between the prevalent gambling found in Europe and in the colonies? "The [Chinaman's] love of gambling is inherent and not acquired as in the case of Europeans."⁸³ Should the natives be subject to the same laws and enjoy the same privileges as British subjects when it came to gambling? No, because it took the Englishmen centuries of "chastisement and training" to appreciate the "present conditions of social and political freedom", while the Chinese have never known "liberty in its true sense"⁸⁴ The consequence of conferring such liberties on the Chinese would only inflame the passions inherent in their nature. The natives needed a less liberal form of rule based on a contract of suspicion, not trust.

Once these Orientalist distinctions were established, the moral imperative turned to regulating this irrepressible vice by confining it to a location so as to keep it under the continuous watch of

⁸¹ Ibid, 69

⁸² John Crawford, 1838, reproduced in PLCSS, 1883: 45

⁸³ PLCSS, 1883: 50

⁸⁴ PLCSS 1886: C82

the government. As such, in formulating the proper object of government, both positions had to carve out an exterior – a move that spatializes moral and criminal qualities amongst the people. Gambling may be a racial constant, but its criminalization cannot be as total and indiscriminate. The trope of contamination reappeared as the categorizing move by which criminality was separated between carriers and victims. The carriers were pinned down under several labels - “habitual criminals”, “bad characters”, headmen of secret societies and so on. On the other side, those who were at risk consisted of women, children, the weak-minded, the poor, the Malay natives and the European constables who, in the course of discharging their duties, exposed themselves to the disease. Both arguments cordoned a space where a certain amount of illegality was tolerated – it was the space reserved for the other half of the instincts spared by law. For those who advocated prohibition, such illegalities were tolerated if they were conducted in secret and in small amounts, while for the regulators the legalized gambling establishment was itself a tolerated form of illegality. And then, there were to be spaces where gambling was utterly criminal and had to be punished: lottery headquarters, large scale commercial gambling dens, cheating (whether in legal or illegal gambling houses), and so on. The space of tolerated illegalities was crucial because it was a safety valve to both show the righteousness of the law and prevent it from being overwhelmed by the crime it produced in the first place. It was a zone where power displayed both its merciful and punitive faces.

Debates by both camps elaborated on an aesthetic dimension of rule. In attacking what was natural to the natives, the improvements to society in general had to be visible and convincing, such that the natives could be persuaded to reform their own habits. As a supporter of gambling farms, Crawford noted that in the 1820s there were twelve licenses issued in Singapore, and all gambling houses were located along one street next to one another, so that they could be under “the immediate eye of the police.”⁸⁵ It was orderly and predictable. The operators would, it was thought, make it their own responsibility to make sure that no public gambling occurred outside their farms. Inside these gambling farms, divisions into smaller spaces for subleasing were a common but illegal practice. But at least, the increase in vice was hidden from public view. Another supporter exclaimed, “I was much struck, on a late visit to Perak, with the gambling house at Thaipeng. There, in the lower room of a large house, were to be seen hundreds of Chinese gambling in a quiet and orderly manner, not during the night, but in the day-time, for the house is closed at 10 o’clock every night. I should like to see a similar house erected in Penang, where the Police and the public could have free access at any time.”⁸⁶ A semblance of order was a desirable aesthetic because not only did it show that the irrational and excessive characteristics of the natives had been tamed, such an aesthetic was itself a didactic instrument for the taming of vice.

For those advocating prohibition, this form of taming was superficial. It had the perverse effect of solving the problem by normalizing it: “Gambling is disgraceful now because it is done in holes and corners. If it were allowed to come out of the holes and corners, and to assume a decent garb and picturesque circumstances, it would be no longer disgraceful, and would be engaged in without shame.”⁸⁷ To insert shame into the general population was the true substance of reform and the government should not take on any “semblance of encouragement”. By

⁸⁵ Quoted in Charles B. Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore, Vol 1* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, Ltd, 1902), 143

⁸⁶ PLCSS, 1883:46

⁸⁷ PLCSS, 1883: 49

keeping the public realm clear of such vice, by casting an even vigilance over the entire surface of the population, the whole of the public realm would become a didactic instrument whose moralizing effects would seep into the private habits of the natives.

The two positions may seem to contrast each other as being idealistic or pragmatic. Yet, both were erected on an a priori judgment about the possibility of reforming the instincts of the native. Those who were more generous about the possibility of reform sided with prohibition, while those who were more severe about any possibility of reform sided with regulation. Furthermore, the object of government and its specified effects differed in both cases. Government, in these debates, would proceed through a spatialization and aestheticization of vice. In these hypothetical schemes and vivid images, a conceptual-material relation was drawn up between the inner nature of the natives and the spaces where such manifestations could take place. Those who sided with prohibition saw the proper object of government as an even terrain where the permanent invisibility of vice would thoroughly reform the private sensibility of the natives. It equated legitimacy with the aesthetic of the whole of the public realm. Those who sided with regulation saw the proper object of government as bounded spaces of exception, where the invisible could manifest under the lenient but watchful eye of colonial power. It equated legitimacy with the aesthetics of these bounded spaces.

It cannot be said, however, that such schemes consisted in any comprehensive programs in the taming of vice, other than resulting in the legalization or abolition of revenue farms. Clearly, sweeping Orientalist truth-claims inflected many of these seemingly grounded arguments. References to Europe reveal a desperate attempt to apply far away lessons through a series of exaggerations and oppositions. In fact, these debates were severely limited by the lack of detailed knowledge about how the farms actually worked, why the Chinese, in particular, gambled, and how to intervene in their lives. In Singapore, where gambling farms were abolished in 1829, and continued to be suppressed throughout the 19th and 20th century, the declared objective of moral reform through the aestheticization of the public realm became less and less representative of what was actually being carried out on the ground. As the rest of the chapter shows, what took over were schemes of criminalization. A more precise and penetrative way of taming vice was invented whereby the police and Sinologists supplied the kinds of ethnographic knowledge that would, in conjunction with the radical transformation of colonial power towards the end of the 19th century, change the landscape of legality and illegality in Singapore.⁸⁸

The “Common Gaming House”

The Common Gaming House Ordinance was introduced in 1888 at a moment of emergency: colonial rule was flagrantly being threatened by an upsurge of popular revolt against increasingly interventionist policies.⁸⁹ As a political technology, it was a way of defining criminality and a

⁸⁸ Scholars such as Harper have identified key changes in the organization of colonial power in Singapore towards the end of the 19th century – a reformed administration that was increasingly staffed by professional trained in London, and not “local adventurers”; a land tenure system that attempted to replace the peripatetic Malay peasant accustomed to flexible access to land with a reliable force of rooted “yeoman peasantry”; the creation of new centers of political power in new towns that shadowed the traditional authority of the Malay courts; and new forms of expertise that sought to govern the population in terms of their welfare and productivity. Key governmental projects include the creation of the Contagious Diseases Ordinance (1870), the Chinese Protectorate (1877) and the Municipal Authority (1888) and the various housing projects sparked by Dr Simpson’s (1907) report on the sanitary conditions in Singapore. Timothy N Harper. 1999. *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. London: Cambridge University Press: 23. Also noted in Brenda SA Yeoh. *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations in the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003[1996]), 11

⁸⁹ Although it was known for sometime that Chinese secret societies had extensive control over the illegal gambling houses in the Straits Settlements, and although it was long suspected that there was in place a system of bribery that kept these houses out of trouble with the police, it

series of techniques to intervene on the very object it created. The Common Gaming House attempted to transform the moral quality of individuals into material traces of a criminal activity. There are many ways in which such a technology can be contrasted with that of the Panopticon, as analyzed by Foucault.⁹⁰ This analysis is thus informed by his work, and others who have been fascinated by the stark clarity of this diagram of power.⁹¹ In this analysis, it is the move Foucault made from the architectural plan of the Panopticon to a technology of surveillance that is useful, not the end result of his analysis.

The very definition of crime can be gleaned from how the police encountered crime in the first place. Vaughan, reflecting on his experience as a Police Superintendent, provides one of the most evocative descriptions of a gambling house in Singapore. It is likely that this was a house he raided:

A dwelling house is hired and then fitted up for gambling. The keeper establishes a shop in the front facing the street, and constructs a passage on one side of it leading to the back of the premises. In some houses the shop communicates by a door at the back with the passage. At the end of this passage a door is placed which leads into a second passage, running in the opposite direction to the first; at the end of the second passage is a door which leads into a third passage, running the whole length of the house, at the end of which is the fourth door which leads into the gambling room; these doors are secured by several wooden bolts, and at each a watchman is placed. It has sometimes happened that the keeper of the last door, on the alarm given that the police was at hand has secured his door and enclosed the other door keepers in the passages, where they have been found by the police. At the outer door a sentinel is placed who gives the alarm by calling out a few words announcing the arrival of the police.⁹²

Thick doors with wooden bolts and narrow passages were the physical defenses that had to be defeated. The heaviness of fortification was directly proportionate to the degree of criminalization, and this did not happen overnight. It evolved from decades of evasion, detection and penetration that gave form to this unusual urban fortification. Already in the 1870s, there was an attempt to amend the Police Act to “permit the possession of unusually strong doors or windows as proof that a house was a gambling den”⁹³ Vaughan, however, could very well be describing a gambling house in Metropolitan London, for thick walls, hidden corridors and other “gambling defenses” that obstructed the eyes and arms of law were also encountered by the police there.⁹⁴ In both metropole and colony, these architectural defenses grew in response to

was only in 1886 that the enquiry made this knowledge explicit and official. The commission set up to investigate the current situation of public gambling in the colony held 30 meetings in Singapore and 14 meetings in Penang between the 8th April and 30th November 1886. The real impact of the enquiry was not in its findings – it was in its manner of investigation. It stirred up the illicit network of patronage and bribery that kept these gambling houses in the margins of tolerated illegality. The commissioners bemoaned that it was difficult to obtain any “truth-speaking witnesses”, but the discrepancies were indicative of a “systematic arrangement...for corrupting the Police Force”. Several months after delivering the report to the Legislative Council, Mr William Pickering, the Chinese Protectorate and one of the commissioners in the enquiry, was attacked in his office, and it was believed, after an investigation, that it was an assassination attempt by the Ghee Hok secret society. The impact of the enquiry and subsequent reforms to police work had to be seen in the context of this flagrant and bloody challenge to colonial rule. See *Report on the Suppression of Gaming Houses*, 30th Nov 1886. In PLCSS, 1886: 659

⁹⁰ Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

⁹¹ See Peter Redfield, “Foucault in the Tropics: Displacing the Panopticon,” ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda. *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 50-82; Patrick Joyce, *Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, New York: Verso, 2003); Paul Hirst. *Space and Power: Politics, war and architecture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003)

⁹² Johann D. Vaughan. 1879. *Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements*. Singapore: Mission Press: 60-61

⁹³ Quoted in Tunbull, “Internal Security in the Straits Settlements, 1826-1867”, 48

⁹⁴ Select Committee, *British Parliamentary Papers: Reports from Select Committees of the House of Commons and the House of Lords on gaming with minutes of evidence appendix and indices* (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1845). See the testimonials of Mr Thomas Baker, the Superintendent of Police, and Sergeant Adams (First Report: 30-48), as well as Richard Mayne Esquire, a Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (Third Report: 63-78). Mr Baker testified that he had great difficulty in entering these gambling houses – “I had Five Doors to pass before I reached the Gaming Room. The First Door is generally kept with a Chain up, and the Person who answers the Door first of all speaks to the Person outside who knocks; and after that, when he has given the Signal to the proper person for Admission, there is a Second Door

how gambling implements were used as evidence of crime in the courts. Architectural defenses delayed the breach by the police and gave time for the gamblers to destroy such incriminating evidences.

The commentary on the gaming laws in 1911 by Sir Roland Braddell provides a window into how law responded to such architectural defenses.⁹⁵ He began with a cautionary note, stressing that the 1888 Ordinance, while acting in the name of suppressing gambling, “is the one which causes these things, legal in themselves, to be illegal”.⁹⁶ Like its predecessors in London and Bombay, its excessively punitive character meant that the law must be interpreted in the strictest sense. Gambling in Singapore became illegal under two circumstances. It was first and foremost a matter of where the game was played and, secondarily, the mechanics of the game that was played. Gambling became illegal when conducted in a “common gaming house”, defined as any place “kept or used or gaming to which the public or any class of the public has or may have access, and any place kept for habitual gaming, whether the public has or may have access thereto or not, and any place kept or used for the purpose of a public lottery.”⁹⁷ Secondarily, after determining that the activity itself was carried out in a common gaming house, the task was to determine whether the game was played for money or money’s worth, in which case it would be an offence.

Though Braddell advised strict interpretation to keep the punitive spirit of this law in check, it is apparent in his commentary that within the definition of the “common gaming house” itself, there were already difficulties in drawing a clear line between what was gaming and what was not, what could be construed as public, or “class of public”, and how the access of this class of public to the common gaming house was to be measured. Instead of precision, therefore, his commentary points to a deliberate flexibility in the very definition of crime. “Place”, in this instance, was given the widest possible consideration. It included any “house office room or building and any place or spot whether open or enclosed and includes a ship boat or other vessel whether afloat or not and any vehicle.”⁹⁷ Consider his rather tortuous attempt to define what was a “class of public”:

Any place to which the public or any class thereof can have access, qua public, is the place aimed at. The expression then becomes narrowed down to classes such as the Chetty community who have access to the Courtyard of their temple by virtue of their being the Chetty “class of the public” ... Many benefactors bequeath to the use of the community at large and to such places the public clearly have access; many other benefactors bequeath land to their own communities as e.g., Kheh Chinese, Parsees, Mohamedans, etc., and to such places clearly a “class of the public” has access. Such then would seem to be the meaning of the expression which is one almost impossible of precise definition.⁹⁸

This peculiarly ill-disciplined definition, instead of undermining the object of this Ordinance, would save it. After all, it survived till Choor Singh’s subsequent review of the gaming law in 1960, when, unable or unwilling to offer a better definition, he quoted it again verbatim.⁹⁹ Through its very ambiguity, law was able to constantly change its target of criminalization. For

in the Middle of the Passage. There is a Parlour on the Right-hand Side, which is the Examination Room, as it is called, to see that you are a proper Person to be admitted up Stairs.” (pp 71)

⁹⁵ Roland Braddell, *A Commentary on the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance (V of 1888)* (Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, Limited, 1911)

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 103

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25

⁹⁹ Choor Singh, *Gaming in Malaya: A Commentary on the Common Gaming Houses Ordinances* (Singapore: Malayan Law Journal, 1960), 15

example, a club, usually not within the Ordinance, may become so if its social purposes became secondary to its use as a common gaming house, as was the case with gambling in a private dwelling. Lotteries, defined as any distribution of prizes or money by lot or chance, might be exonerated if, in its working, it was “unattended by the risk, speculation and uncertainty which makes lotteries void”.¹⁰⁰ Just as the former excused horse racing in turf clubs from criminality, the latter excused charity events and the insurance industry.

Although the object of this law was purportedly against the public nuisance, demoralization and speculative spirit that gambling encouraged, the target of attack was transferred from the gambler to the built environment – the “common gaming house”.¹⁰¹ This transfer of criminality generated, and in turn necessitated, a temporal and spatial assessment of crime. By this assessment, a simple game of blackjack could transform from a harmless social gathering amongst friends into an illicit transaction between strangers. The questions that had to be answered were not just about the location of such activities, but the relationship of the suspected ‘common gaming house’ to the social and physical environment in terms of its use over time and how people accessed it. Thus, in the execution of this law, it was the house or place that was monitored so as to determine its patterns of ingress and egress, how often it was opened for gaming, and the kinds of people who visited it.

This mode of criminalization opened up all kinds of juridical problems because of the various presumptions written into the law. This was the source of its excessively punitive nature. By such presumptions, physical evidence automatically became confession of crime, thus transferring the burden of proof from the prosecutor to the defendant. Given the ambiguity of many of the spatial concepts, these presumptions always threatened to overreach the limits of justice and subvert it from within. Was it fair to presume that every single person found in a house with many wooden doors at the time of the search gambled illegally? Could there not be by-passers, neighbors and family members who happened to be in the same space at the point of the search? If certain gaming instruments were automatic confessions of crime, what if these instruments were also everyday objects found commonly in any household? The mechanism of this Ordinance also attacked one of the foundations of a capitalist society – the sanctity of private property, which, as experience in England illustrates, made the poor more vulnerable to this law. It was easier and less risky to raid a public house than one of the private clubs along St James Street.

In fact, the moment of forcible entry into the suspected premises was so crucial that it became the tactical terrain between the law and its misfits. While the initial search could be conducted only after reasonable suspicion was established that the premises was used for illegal gaming, upon the moment of breach, the space became frozen as a crime scene and automatically stood trial as a “common gaming house” until proven otherwise. As a result of this mode of criminalization, the interior design of the premises could also serve as evidence of guilt:

¹⁰⁰ Braddell, *A Commentary on the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance (V of 1888)*, 21

¹⁰¹ A judge states this explicitly, “The attack aimed at primarily is against a particular locality as distinguished from the persons who live in or frequent it. It is because a house, room, or place is suspected to be a rendezvous of gamblers that the Legislature has authorized the issue of a warrant, the object being to prevent any house becoming the resort of gamblers.” Quoted in Braddell, *A Commentary on the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance (V of 1888)*, 32

any passage staircase or means of access to any part thereof is unusually narrow or steep or otherwise difficult to pass or any part of the premises is provided with unusual or unusually numerous means for preventing or obstructing an entry or with unusual contrivances for enabling persons therein to see or ascertain the approach or entry of persons or for giving the alarm or for facilitating escape from the premises it shall be presumed until the contrary that the place is a common gaming house.¹⁰²

The drama of entry and the use of architecture to both escape capture and ascertain guilt marked a most radical form of legal intervention into the built environment, because space became not just criminalized but *criminalizing*. The fortifications that were built to defeat the police became the very evidence used to criminalize it, and in that same stroke threatened to stretch the power to punish to the brink of indiscriminate excess. It is important to note that the effect of this political technology is not about making visible what was once hidden, as one might expect of many projects of government. Rather, it punishes the hidden. What is criminalized is a specific visual, temporal and physical relationship that takes the form of an inverted Panopticon. Here, surveillance is turned inside out and trained onto the warden; the paths of escape are designed to undercut the paths of entry; and the subjects are always one step ahead of the instruments of law. In the inverted Panopticon, it is the tower that becomes criminal, for it has been taken by those whom the law seeks to place under watch. What makes the Panopticon such an efficient machine of discipline and surveillance produced, in this form, both an excess of power and crime. All such spaces become suspicious, regardless of their actual purpose and use. All such spaces become targets of violence – the police could, once it came into knowledge of such a space, serve notice to its owners to effect their demolition (Fig. 1.2).¹⁰³

Yet, in this moment of insurrection, there is also an elegant silence. As an abstract diagram, it could assume the form of any kind of shelter or spatial condition. As vice is located in every person, the Common Gaming House as a political technology is really an undifferentiated terrain of criminality. Until the moment of forcible entry, where its power dynamics freeze into the precise geometry of a Panopticon, it exists as an abstract potentiality in the built environment. All the spatial definitions and physical attributes evoked to materialize crime produce infinite divisions within this generalized form without piercing it. Though judges, lawyers and policemen complained for decades between England, Bombay and Singapore about the inconsistencies and ineffectiveness of such an Ordinance, adding clauses here and stretching definitions there, there was never a question about its basic form as an idealized political technology. The power it grants to the government is a way of criminalizing selectively without sparing anyone. Foucault has given much thought to this form of totalizing and individualizing power in his discussion of the disciplinary technique of examination.

Between these two forms - a precise geometry of insurrection and an undifferentiated terrain of criminality - the Common Gaming House oscillates between the bloody vengeance of the sovereign and the silent techniques of discipline. To find an optimum frequency for this oscillation, the police and the sinologist enter the scene. What is at stake is the effective and righteous application of force on the population - to curb its own excesses and to concentrate the force of law on a select few. What is produced is a corpus of knowledge that is intimately tied to the everyday practices of the natives and the opportunities for infractions, both tiny and monstrous, in these routines.

¹⁰² Braddell, *A Commentary on the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance (V of 1888)*, 110

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 110-111

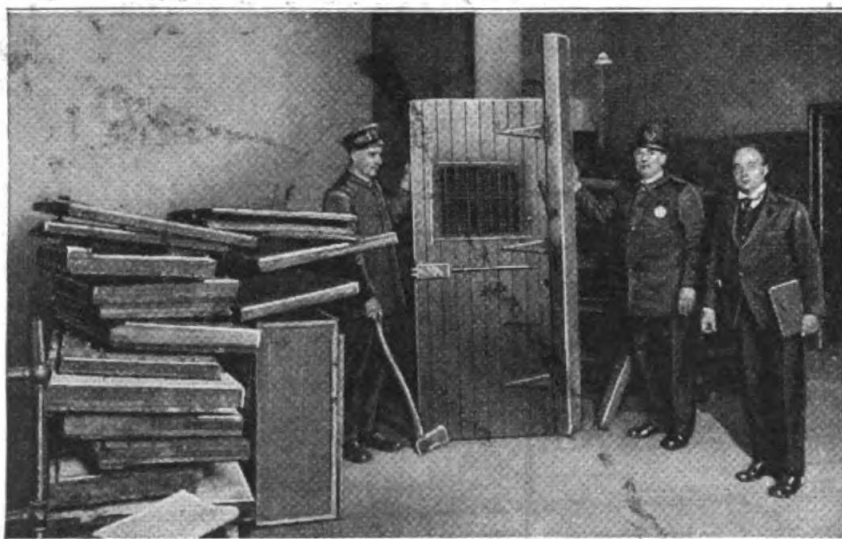


Fig 1.2: Similar laws pertaining to the criminalization of gambling can be found in many other countries. This picture shows a police raid of a Chinese gambling house conducted in Portland, Oregon, 1919, with the caption, “Note the Heavy Hinges and Locks and Solid Construction of These Bars to Law and Order.” In California, Chicago, Nevada, Australia, Canada and Hongkong, where Chinese migrants settled, such raids were widely reported. The similar scene is less about how the Chinese gambled, and more about how crime was produced, defined, and provoked by law in the first place. Source: H.H. Windsor (ed.) “Coast-city police collect gambling house doors,” in *Popular Mechanics*, (July- Dec 1919, Chicago: Popular Mechanics Company), 32

Police work and the disciplining of law

Braddell began by warning about the punitive nature of the Ordinance, and spent many pages subsequently advising on ways to tame it. The “alarming and extraordinary” presumptions, he noted, were not new, but merely an extension of English laws active in London, India and the Crown Colonies. Strict investigation procedures and juridical flexibility were the counterweights that should keep this excess in check. Thus, a series of steps had to be observed by the police before a warrant to raid was given so as to check the possible abuse of power and infringement of civil rights. What was to count as reasonable suspiciousness? The policeman should set himself up and monitor the premises over a period of time, keeping track of when the accused entered the premises, ascertain if he was the owner or occupier and if he had use of the place.¹⁰⁴ The Justice of Peace should obtain “written information upon oath” that the suspected premise was a common gaming house before issuing the warrant. Once the warrant was issued, the premises had to be searched within reasonable time. However, once breached, any person caught escaping or attempting to obstruct the entry of the police was presumed guilty until proven innocent (Fig. 1.3).

Braddell noted that many of the cases brought to court were not convicted due to the failure of observing due procedure and the lack of evidence. What had to be guarded against was not the lack of arrests made possible under this Ordinance, but the potential perversion of law due to the local conditions of policing. Unlike London, where the difficulty was in seizing instruments of gaming for use as evidence, in the colony one would find plenty of “false evidence” planted by informers.¹⁰⁵ There were other difficulties in making successful convictions – the proof of occupation, for example, was particularly vexing, as most Chinese practiced subletting. Thus,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 64

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 46, 94-96.

finding instruments of gaming in a particular room or cubicle could not be used against any of the inhabitants except the “occupier of that very part of the house in which the instruments of gaming were found.”¹⁰⁶ The Inspector-General of the police complained about these obstacles that made police work onerous and conviction difficult:

The gambling in Singapore mostly took the form of what are known as ‘Pintu Kechils’¹⁰⁷ which are exceedingly difficult to deal with effectually, as there is always a watchman at the door, special barricades and trap-doors and one or more exits over adjacent roofs or walls. No arrest can be made in such places except by the assistance of Chinese traps, and as their evidence is generally rejected by the Magistrate there is little use in trying to effect an arrest. The only other way of dealing with such places is to compel the landlord to eject his undesirable tenants, and to remove the trap-doors and other obstacles.¹⁰⁸



Fig. 1.3: A former Deputy Public Prosecutor in Singapore and Inspector of Prisons of the Straits Settlements, Mr Innes, gave a sensational account of the treachery of native informants. A robber tried to betray his accomplices to the police by acting as an informant. But, the police arrived too soon and caught him in the act of crime, in this case, pulling the pigtail of the shopkeeper. This picture also captures the moment of breach as the moment of criminalization. J.R. Innes, “Chinese Criminals.” In *The Wide World Magazine: An illustrated monthly of true narrative: Adventure, Travel, Customs and Sport*, (London: George Newnes Ltd., Oct 1905-Mar 1906), 488

Police work helped to tame the punitive excess of law. At the same time, police work itself had to be tamed because it was the physical and visual projection of juridical power onto the people. Like how earlier debates about gambling farms revolved around the aesthetic dimension of rule and its pedagogical effects, lawyers worried about how justice appeared in front of those

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 65

¹⁰⁷ “Pintu kechils” means “small doors” in Malay.

¹⁰⁸ SSDAR, 1904:258

it attacked. Thus, there were considerations about the morality of the police in plotting and carrying out these raids – to raid and search without successful conviction might compromise the moral authority of the police as much as not raiding at all. The reports on detective work in Singapore do not delve into much detail here, but this point can be picked in the Minutes of Evidence produced by the Select Committee on Gaming Laws in London in 1845. A superintendent submitted a report describing the kinds of problems he faced in prosecuting the numerous large and well-known gaming houses in Metropolitan London. He complained that the various internal checks made it very onerous on the police to even obtain a warrant to search a place:

As the present law stands, before I can enter a gaming-house with safety, I am obliged to go through the following forms; 1st, to make such an inquiry as to leave no doubt that gaming is carried on in a house; 2d, to make a report of the circumstances to the commissioners; 3d, to show the said report to the housekeepers residing in the parish and neighbourhood where the house is situated, and the offence carried on, for them to make the necessary affidavits; 4th, to prepare affidavits for the housekeepers to sign, in the presence of the magistrates; 5th, to make a report of the same to the commissioners when sworn to; 6th, to make out the commissioners' warrant for me and the police under my command to enter; 7th, to endeavour, if possible, to get an officer in disguise into the gaming-house to witness play being carried out on previous to my entry, which is the most difficult task to encounter, as no one is admitted unless brought there by a Bonnet or a play-man, as a pigeon, or freshman, commonly known as Punters or Flats.¹⁰⁹

Focusing on the 7th point, the Select Committee was perplexed as to why it was necessary for there to be an agent in the house to make sure that play was ongoing when the police raided it. The Police Commissioner replied that if the police had raided a place but found no gambling, the officers could be exposed to a charge of trespassing. In fact, he pointed out that there had been cases whereby lights were put up in houses to “entrap police to go in.”¹¹⁰ Thus, to protect themselves legally, it was necessary to infiltrate the suspected premises so as to minimize the chance that a raid produced no crime. The circularity of this argument did not escape the Select Committee, particularly since the power given to the Police to raid was never conditioned on the guarantee of conviction. This excessive prudence seemed to suggest some kind of laxity or even collusion between the police and the gambling houses. The Police commissioner was quick to defend himself:

I should state, that our unwillingness to act is not from any unwillingness to enforce the law, or from any apprehension of risk to ourselves, but we thought the *moral power* of the police would be affected if it appeared that they had in any case exceeded the strict legal powers given by the clause¹¹¹ [*italics mine*]

The rest of the questioning need not detain us here.¹¹² By the time this piece of legislation arrived in Singapore, some of the internal checks had been removed – for example, obtaining affidavits from housekeepers was not in Singapore's 1888 Act. The distinction between games of skill and chance that so bedeviled this legislation in London was removed in Singapore, making any game played for money or money's worth criminal, as long as it was carried out in a Common Gaming House. The police in Singapore were also empowered to search the person, in addition to the house breached. There appears to be no cases of entrapment in the colonial records, though the

¹⁰⁹ Select Committee, *British Parliamentary Papers*, 15

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 8

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 16

¹¹² For a useful discussion of this important report on gambling in nineteenth century England, see Michael Flavin, *Gambling in the nineteenth century English novel: 'a leprosy is o'r the land'* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), 28-42

kinds of gambling defenses and reluctance of the residents to aid police seem to be a common problem in both London and Singapore.¹¹³ But, one can see from this discussion how the perceived rightness of police violence is a two-way valve that can either expand or retract the spaces of tolerated illegalities. The techniques of criminalization do not flow directly from a juridical center. Rather, considerations of justice-in-action feed back into how crime is to be defined and how much crime can be produced in the first place. No doubt, in the case of 1845 London, this valve turned the other direction immediately after the enquiry - the police quickly carried out raids on all 17 well-known gambling houses, much to the approval of the Select Committee.

In Singapore too, police work swung drastically in the direction of criminalization. For the next few years after the 1888 legislation and accusations of corruption within the Police, every warrant issued, every raid carried out, and every successful conviction was reported in the Annual Reports of the Police Department (See Tables 1 and 2). The morality of the police became tethered to the criminalization of gambling. An increase in the number of arrests simultaneously meant the increased effectiveness of the police and the increased criminality of the natives. A decrease in the number of arrests meant the same – the police had emerged victorious in suppressing the vice but the criminal elements were lying low and cunningly evading detection. The stratagems of infiltration and the violence of breach became justified in retaliation against a monstrous enemy – raiding *without* successful conviction did not seem to be a problem for the Singapore police. Thus, the Inspector-General was able to declare in 1909 that although 986 cases were sent to the Courts, the number of futile police raids was much higher; in 1910, of the 1037 warrants issued, only 378 produced convictions and 150 of the raids found nothing.¹¹⁴

Table 1.1: Warrants and Arrests by Gambling Suppression Department in Singapore in 1891.

Such detailed accounting was discontinued after 1893

Source: SSDAR, 1891

Warrants Issued	404
Warrants Executed	367
No. of persons arrested	1838
No. of persons brought to the Courts	17 for Wah Way lottery 237 for Common Gaming House 47 for gambling in public Total: 301

¹¹³ David Miers, *Regulating Commercial Gambling: past, present and future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-60

¹¹⁴ SSDAR, 1909: 31 and SSDAR, 1910: 429

Table 1.2: Breaches of Common Gaming House Ordinance

(Figures from 1880-1885 were reported retrospectively in the 1886 report)

Source: SSDAR, 1886-1904

Year	Singapore	Penang	Malacca	Total
1880	275	142	18	435
1881	235	127	22	384
1882	320	172	13	505
1883	214	210	8	432
1884	339	197	3	539
1885	370	297	5	672
1886	476	328	16	820
1887	667	346	21	1034
1888	390	327	17	734
1889	388	416	29	833
1890	636	479	22	1137
1891	439	401	16	856
1892	348	452	56	856
1893	403	370	26	799
1894	596	438	19	1053
1895	781	587	35	1403
1896	667	414	34	1115
1897	774	560	44	1378
1898	765	477	54	1296
1899	733	631	28	1393
1900	872	617	36	1525
1901	706	423	32	1161
1902	636	371	29	1036
1903	699	558	28	1285
1904	438	493	24	955
1905	554	494	65	1116

Internal surveillance: reforming the police

The successful implementation of the Common Gaming House as a political technology requires a juridical reformulation of crime. At the same time, as is clear from Braddell's elaborations, it entails a rethinking of how police work is to be carried out as well. Thus, as a political technology, the Common Gaming House encompasses the entire juridical-police complex. It produces, calibrates and mediates between material and conceptual registers of vice and crime. Braddell's commentary should not be seen as a center of power which produces the foundational concepts of criminality which are then actualized by the police. Rather, police work itself figures in the very definition of crime. Whether it is in the apprehension of crime so as to produce what can be accepted as evidence in the courts, or the aesthetic projection of justice in these modes of apprehension, colonial rule takes into consideration the limits of its power in relation to what is practically possible and socially acceptable. The next two sections will show how techniques of surveillance are trained onto both the police and the subjects to be controlled so as to distribute the weight of punishment more economically and righteously. The movements between two

forms of the Common Gaming House – a precise geometry and an undifferentiated terrain of criminality – depended on such disciplinary techniques which are built into the very “architecture of vice”, not attached to it. It follows, therefore, that new techniques of surveillance have the effect of altering the internal division between vice and crime in the first place.

In order not to produce an excess of crime, in order that the morality of colonial violence be justified, the police had to be disciplined. They had to be placed within the very same political technology devised to criminalize gambling. After all, gambling transformed from private passion to public disorder through a series of contaminations, and the police were the most suspicious because of their direct contact with the criminals. Like the 1845 Select Committee Report in London, the 1886 report on the suppression of public gambling which led to the introduction of the Common Gaming House Ordinance in Singapore revealed how there was in place a dense network of patronage and bribery that kept many gambling houses safe from police intervention. A series of recommendations were made in this report: on the side of public flogging joined recommendations to tattoo head-gamblers (a “painless and better process than photography”¹¹⁵), deport conspirators who bribed the police and destroy “gambling defenses and appliances” without reference to the owner of the house; on the side of registrations joined recommendations to improve the “interior economy” of the police, purify the network of informers and distribute culpability amongst landlords who allowed their properties to be used as gambling houses. These recommendations highlight the two forms of the Common Gaming House – one punitive and concentrated, the other silent and distributed.

Emplacing the police within the Common Gaming House, as these recommendations suggest, was intended to prove its “interior economy” while protecting itself from criminal elements. To penetrate without contamination was its objective. Such reforms, of course, provoked much consternation within police quarters. Colonel Dunlop, Inspector-General of the Police Force, was infuriated by the accusations made by the commission that even the European Inspectors – himself included - were corrupt. Opening his annual report with a defensive litany, he asked his readers to consider the improvement in security in the colony during the 15 years when he was in charge of the Force:

How has the immunity from social perils, which now exists, arisen? Is it from the advance of education and civilization amongst the heterogeneous population which fills our towns, or are the thousands of semi-barbarous coolies, who year by year flock to our shores, more easily controlled now than formerly? As one in a position to judge, I unhesitatingly answer, no. I ask any European who has lived here for 15 years, and become acquainted with the people, whether the Chinese Baba, born and bred in the Colony, or the Malay headmen, are one whit more useful now in influencing for good their fellow countrymen, than they were 15 years ago, or are they more willing now than then to personally aid in the preservation of peace and good order? My experience is that they are less so. Are the coolies who land here daily to seek their fortunes more amenable than their predecessors were to our lenient laws? I have not observed any improvement amongst them in this respect. They are as prejudiced as ever, and, where not held in check by fear, as unruly as ever.¹¹⁶

Colonel Dunlop only lasted two more years in the force. But this opening, although exaggerated by anger, captured how police work was thoroughly suffused with the general atmosphere of Orientalist authority. Ever since the police force was set up in 1820, it had been organized along

¹¹⁵ Ibid: 660

¹¹⁶ Dunlop, S. 1887, SSDAR: 155

racial lines. Europeans were superintendents and inspectors, while the Sikhs, Malays and Tamils occupied the ranks of non-commissioned officers. Malays were the most numerous, mainly filling the ranks of constables. The criminality of the Chinese was seen to be so virulent, their character so compromised that, until the commission, they were never employed in the Force except as informers or plain-clothes detectives (Table 1.3). Until the 1890s, European police officers were taught Malay, but not Chinese, and had no ability to communicate directly with either the Chinese community or criminals. The culture within the police force frowned upon European officers being too friendly or informal with the native policemen and people.¹¹⁷ Within this division of power, the Europeans were the only rightful interpreters and executors of law, while the native policemen served as the feelers and muscles that carried the force of law to the ground. Relying on local informers and native policemen to locate crime and supply the inspectors with information, what was criminal or not was first passed through the discretionary filter of the natives. This attenuation, created to insulate the command level and economize on limited European manpower, also produced the zones of tolerated illegality enjoyed by the colonial subjects and taxed by the European inspectors. The persistent complaints recorded in the annual reports about the native contingents and the local informers as ill-disciplined and unreliable only point to this comfortable double criminality built on an illicit exchange of benefits. It is not surprising then that after 1886, when various reforms were made to reduce these zones, there was a commensurate increase in gambling-related crime recorded in the police reports.

Table 1.3: Size of Police Force, Singapore, 1895-1914
(Source: SSDAR 1895-1914. Figures after 1914 were not reported)

	European Contingent	Sikh Contingent	Malay and Kling Contingent	Eurasian Detectives	Special Contingent	Chinese	Total
1895	26	111	655	-	12		804
1896	28	122	618	-	46		813
1897	29	126	643	-	42		840
1898	30	156	570+	2	43		810
1899	Figures unclear						
1900	38	169	584	4	48		843
1901			Not reported				
1902			Not reported				
1903			Not reported				
1904	63	171	727	4	36		1001
1905	63	185	723	3	31		1005
1906	Only consolidated figures for the Straits Settlements were given						
1907	Only consolidated figures for the Straits Settlements were given						
1908	63	167	778	4	40		1052
1909	71	150	638	3	30		1046
1910	Only consolidated figures for the Straits Settlements were given						
1911	Only consolidated figures for the Straits Settlements were given						
1912	47	216	817	3	38		1121
1913	50	237	895	2	41		1225
1914	49	233	896	3	41		1222

¹¹⁷ These impressions can be gleaned by reading the Departmental Reports of the Police Force between 1886 and 1920. Also, see Alec Dixon, *Singapore Patrol* (London, Bombay and Sydney: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1935). In this book, Dixon recollects his experience as an inspector in the Singapore police force in the 1920s. According to Dixon's autobiography, this culture was particularly strong amongst the "older generation" of European policemen. His native assistant also seemed to advocate this formality, advising him not to mix too closely with natives so as not to "lose face".

A series of organizational reforms were undertaken that recalibrated the racial divisions within the police force. The first was the introduction of Chinese constables into the Force. It was deemed a failure almost immediately. 54 Chinese policemen imported from Hong Kong in 1890 and 1891 were tasked to deal with gambling suppression, but were found to be of “bad character” and suspected of being party to gambling interests themselves.¹¹⁸ By 1893, their services were discontinued.¹¹⁹ But this only marked the beginning of a series of attempts by the police to penetrate the Chinese communities without contaminating themselves. The reorganization of the detective department was another key experiment. This department was often censured in the official reports as inefficient and incapable.¹²⁰ Detective work, however, was essential to a more interventionist approach to policing that would actively seek out criminals by working on clues, collecting incriminating evidence and prosecuting them in courts. This covert industry was stymied by the different customs of a racially mixed community, the difficulties of gaining their trust and the perceived poor training of the native detectives.¹²¹ Instead of “working up cases and unraveling crime”, the detectives were derided as “plains-clothes police who depend entirely on informers for any information they obtain”.¹²² Chinese detectives, in particular, were seen as the “blackguards”¹²³ who more frequently perverted the execution of law than aided it.

Between 1890 and 1897, proposals were made to introduce Eurasians of a “superior class” who could take the place of European detectives. These Eurasians would only do detective work, and “ought never to appear in Court, so that their identity should be concealed as much as possible”.¹²⁴ After two Eurasians were recruited in 1898, the department was reorganized again to recruit Chinese head detectives and a special Chinese sub-inspector in the hope that “such officers will add very materially to the efficiency of the supervision of the Chinese element in the force and that they will in short while be able to carry out the training of Chinese recruits in the Police duties”¹²⁵. Nevertheless, the inability of the detectives to follow up on clues by themselves, thus supplanting the need for unreliable informers, continued to be cited as the key problem that could not be solved. By 1913, Inspector-General Chancellor was forced to excuse this impasse by returning to the self-evidence of race and class: “There is no doubt that a detective is born and not made, and four-fifths of the material that passes through the detective branch very soon show that they do not belong to the former category.”¹²⁶

How, then, to ensure the loyalty of this half-criminal (Chinese Sub-inspector) and half-caste (Eurasian)? The internal miscegenation was a highly controlled experiment hedged on all sides by more systematic forms of recruitment, training and self-surveillance. Between 1886 and 1920, various means were explored to recruit a better “class” of natives – higher wages, better pension schemes and welfare, importing specific races from other colonies, etc. A training depot was set up in Malacca in 1906 to train local recruits “Police duties, drill and first aid to the wounded.”¹²⁷

¹¹⁸ See SSDAR, 1890, 1891 and 1892

¹¹⁹ This scheme was apparently revived in 1903, where it was reported that the experiment to introduce plain clothes Chinese constables to each division was “successful”. SSDAR, 1903: 147

¹²⁰ According to Colonel Dunlop, “of the 500 cases placed in the hands of the department, not 5% have been discovered.” SSDAR, 1888: 70

¹²¹ SSDAR, 1891: 140; SSDAR, 1893: 251

¹²² SSDAR, 1912: 328

¹²³ SSDAR, 1894: 21

¹²⁴ SSDAR, 1895: 33

¹²⁵ SSDAR, 1903: 151

¹²⁶ SSDAR, 1913: 218

¹²⁷ SSDAR: 1906: 62

Self-surveillance, in particular, was the central pivot that would reorganize the practice of everyday police work. “Nothing but the unceasing vigilance on the part of the Inspectors can get any result out of the class of natives of all races with whom they have to work,” Inspector-General Pennefather said as he appraised both the detectives and the Malays of the native contingent.¹²⁸ In the annual reports, the problems of internal discipline were listed as an exhibition of native failure across 40 categories, ranging from disciplinary infractions like “asleep on duty”, “absence” and “disobedience of orders” - three categories which consistently ranked amongst the highest - to moral lapses like “cowardice” and “receiving gratification”.¹²⁹

This self-exhibition is merely a silent replay of Colonel Dunlop’s litany and justifies why internal supervision by Europeans cannot be relaxed. Consider the series of changes after 1894, which emanates from a desire to free the European from the desk and make him more mobile and sensitive to cultural difference, while at the same time restricting the movement of the native police and confining them to drills, classrooms and technical legalities: the redistribution of the duties of the European inspectors so as to give them more time for “outdoor supervision”;¹³⁰ the training of European and non-Chinese inspectors in Chinese language and customs;¹³¹ the promotion of most European sergeants and constables to the inspector and superintendent ranks (again, more supervisory roles, but also less contact with the ground); introduction of classes for native policemen on the laws of the colony; the reworking of the “time beats” around the town so that it would be impossible for native policemen to “go to sleep or unduly absent themselves from their duty on these beats”.¹³²

The animating rationale of these reforms is very similar to how John Cameron thought about the Chinese who operated the gambling and opium farms in the 1850s: it is far more effective to set a thief to catch a thief, and only the Chinese can govern themselves effectively. This is a common practice in the colonial context, for the imperial policy of “policing strangers by strangers” was carried out in colonies as far apart as India, Hong Kong and Africa.¹³³ However, there is in this reinterpretation of an old adage none of the static picture that Crawford provided for those interested in filling in its blanks. In introducing the criminal element into the system, what was created, instead, was a more rigorous form of self-surveillance, one that maintained the racial hierarchy while at the same time allowed for more intimate penetrations into the psyche and movement of the native policemen.

External surveillance: patrols, detectives and fingerprints

This racialized form of internal surveillance was mirrored in projects to improve the external surveillance of the native population. This section canvases three overlapping modes of surveillance – the general ritualized mode of patrolling, the precise penetrative mode of detective work, and the invisible cumulative mode of fingerprinting. In all three modes, spatial and aesthetic calculations were central to how they performed justice and produced crime.

¹²⁸ SSDAR, 1898: 71

¹²⁹ The list includes infractions committed by all policemen in the Force, Europeans included. However, reading the evaluations of the native and European contingents, it is clear that most of these infractions, except perhaps “drunkenness”, were attributed to the native policemen.

¹³⁰ SSDAR, 1904: 256

¹³¹ A new “Police Probationer” scheme was implemented in 1904, where European and non-chinese recruits were trained for 2 years in Chinese language and customs. Mr Savi, Mr Wright and Mr Wyly were sent to China to study various Chinese dialects in 1905 and 1908. SSDAR, 1904: 256; 1908: 89. See also Patrick Morrah, *The History of the Malayan Police* (London: MBRAS, 1963), 99-103

¹³² SSDAR, 1894: 17

¹³³ Mike Brogden, “The Emergence of the Police – the colonial dimension” in *British Journal of Criminology* 27/1(1987),11

The optimum manpower required for the constant surveillance of the natives was in direct proportion to the length of streets and back-lanes that needed to be patrolled. In 1907, the Inspector-General argued that he needed at least 60 more constables based on this formula:

There are 97 miles of roads and streets within the Municipal limits which have to be policed – the very large number of houses built within the last three years of course gives the Police more to look after. Taking the Morning State for the 1st December, 1905, a day on which the number of men sick, on leave, and absent was unusually low, I find that after deducting recruits, non-effectives, and Non-commissioned Officers on Station duty, there would be about 500 men of all nationalities available for duty within Municipal limits. This would give about 167 men for beat in each Section, deduct from this number those required for Police Courts, Guards, Quarantine duty, Escorts for prisoners, etc., and there will not be more than 1 man per mile of Street - an insufficient allowance in crowded streets.¹³⁴

This calculation had to be further adjusted for local environmental conditions. Thus, in Singapore, where population and building density was very high within the Municipal limits, the optimum figure had to be increased. Although by 1912, the total length of streets and back-lanes that needed to be patrolled only increased slightly to 105 miles, it was compounded by a drastic increase of 941 new houses built within the last five years.¹³⁵ Within the European districts, where many housebreaking cases happened, winding paths and dense vegetation made observation difficult and concealment easy.¹³⁶ Outside the town limits, inefficient transport meant that the police could not reach the crime scene in time, allowing suspects to escape easily. By this calculus of population density, physical environment and police manpower, the Inspector-General considered Singapore to be the “worst policed” amongst the Straits Settlements.¹³⁷

How well a space is policed is thus not evidenced by a high or low crime rate, but by the evenness and regularity of surveillance. This project of accounting for every mile and hour as units of surveillance seemed to have all the characteristics of a political machine that substitutes personal authority with “distributions of body, surfaces, lights and gazes.”¹³⁸ Yet, in practice, it was highly racialized and never could approach the efficient anonymity of this machine. The body invested with state power remained racially marked and inassimilable. Only Malays and Sikhs were used for beat duties, and, dressed in their uniforms patrolling the Chinese districts, they were more like mobile exhibitions of colonial power, rather than invisible guards in a looming tower. However tainted this ritual may be by the irreducibility of racial difference, it should be obvious that this physical performance of patrolling was as important as the mechanical accounting of surveillance – the constables were often admonished for not doing their drills sharply, or not keeping their uniforms tidy, or not walking in step, or not acting on crime when sighted.

Recruiting better classes of natives and casting a more regimented system of patrol worked hand in hand to renovate the police image in order to convince the colonial subjects on the legitimacy of colonial rule. Patrolling, thus, had this passive-active effect on crime – as a

¹³⁴ SSDAR, 1905: 170

¹³⁵ SSDAR, 1913: 330

¹³⁶ SSDAR, 1907: 368

¹³⁷ SSDAR, 1905: 170

¹³⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202

repetitive and public ritual, it did not attack crime as much as displace it outside its performance schedules. Yet, in its regularity and visibility, it actively projected a moral-aesthetic order to the colonial subjects through the physical perfection of the native policemen. Again, this strategy of incorporating the native-in-uniform was extensively practiced in the colonies – Brogden argues that this was in fact a lesson translated from the “citizen-in-uniform” movement in Britain which both incorporated and delegitimized local practices in a process of “internal colonization”.¹³⁹

Working within this regularized grid of open surveillance, but without respecting its geometry, were the detectives. They compensated for the dumb ritual of patrolling with the silent cunning of infiltration. The former strategy only encountered random cases of gambling in public, and it often fell upon the discretion of the police to either fine or just disband these minor miscreants. In contrast to the regularity of patrol and the randomness of its encounter with crime, detectives plot and concentrate the entire punitive weight of law on a select few. After 1890, the detective department grew more autonomous and specialized – the idea of a Criminal Investigation Department was borne from this desire to break detective work from the administrative burden of police duties, allowing the detectives “to keep in constant touch with the movements of known professional criminals.”¹⁴⁰ Against these “professional criminals”, administrators debated on effects of fining, imprisoning, de-registering and otherwise coercing those who gambled frequently and those who organized gambling activities. It was immediately apparent that fining had very little effect on large scale gambling operations since these fines were a pittance compared to the profits they made. Imprisonment seemed to have some effect, especially against the higher classes of natives, but it only worked if the key organizers were arrested, not the many peons who were often paid to serve the sentences in the first place. Also, imprisonment deprived the police of the funds to pay informers. Confiscation of properties and shutting down and de-registering of societies had the effect of hindering, but not eliminating, illegal gambling, and if done too recklessly had the reverse effect of making police detection more difficult as gambling operations became more mobile and dispersed.

A scale of punishments was thus formulated over time that ended with banishment as the most severe and effective method of expunging the most undesirable of characters entirely from the territory. This scale of punishment, however, needed to be braced by a scale of accumulative criminality - a way to track how criminal an individual was based on his history of convictions (Fig. 1.4). To mark the most extreme end of what was thinkable in terms of how these two scales propped each other, one might recall a particularly vituperate remark made in the 1888 report on the suppression of public gambling to justify the tattooing of head-gamblers: “In urging this to be done, it must be remembered that we are not dealing with our own countrymen, who might be reformed, but with aliens, re-convicted persons, whose characters are hopelessly bad, of whom there is a constant stream arriving, and they remain here because our law and prison life have little terror for them.... Their life in prisons should be made more repugnant to them, the regime less pleasant.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Brogden, *The Emergence of the Police – the colonial dimension*, 13-14

¹⁴⁰ SSDAR, 1901:266

¹⁴¹ PLCSS, 1886: 666-667



Fig. 1.4: Some “typical Chinese criminals.” From left, Jau Kap, convicted of robbing women in the streets, Jeli Ah Hu, forgery of bank notes, and Li Hong, a ‘notorious criminal’ convicted several times of robbery and violence. J.R. Innes, “Chinese Criminals.” In *The Wide World Magazine: An illustrated monthly of true narrative: Adventure, Travel, Customs and Sport*, (London: George Newnes Ltd., Oct 1905-Mar 1906), 490

This melding of punishment with surveillance was never carried out in such a vulgar form because a more elegant but no less unforgiving technique made that unnecessary. In 1899, it was reported that the registration of criminals was being pursued with the objective of making the supervision of known criminals “thoroughly systematic”. A treatise on the “Classification and Finger Prints” was received from Mr. Henry, a former civil servant of the Indian colony who had become the commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police.¹⁴² Based on the Indian model, it rapidly proved to be extremely useful in tracking criminals. By 1904, the Inspector-General commented on the usefulness of this practice, declaring that 2968 persons had been finger-printed in Singapore, “resulting in the identification of 294 of these persons as having been previously convicted.”¹⁴³ Of these, one was identified to be returning illegally from a banishment order. Within the next few years, the technique of finger-printing began to replace the old tedious practice of keeping a register of ordinary and habitual criminals. The number of persons finger-printed escalated, and by 1906 the total number of finger print records of convicted and banished persons in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States grew to 12, 716. These records were centralized in Kuala Lumpur, such that individuals could no longer escape from their past criminality by traveling to another colony. Finger-printing had none of the goriness of tattooing and all the sterility of systematic filing:

Duplicate sets of all impressions are now taken from accused persons at each head station. One set is sent directly to the Registrar of Criminals, while the other is sent to this office for enquiry. As soon as the Registrar of Criminals receives the “Enquiry Form” (or impression) he “looks up” his files and “wires” back stating whether the accused is “known” or not. In all cases where persons are “known” at the Central Registry sentences are deferred (when necessary) until the return of the “Enquiry form” from Kuala Lumpur which usually means three or four days after date of arrest. At the conclusion of the case, both “Enquiry forms” with result of case “Entered up” are sent to the Registrar of Criminals for filing.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Morrah, 1963, JMBRAS: 104

¹⁴³ SSDAR, 1904: 257

¹⁴⁴ SSDAR, 1910: 427

The ability to track and identify individuals with past convictions is instrumental to a system of surveillance that remembers. Its key efficacy lies in keeping the criminality of individuals a secret from him or herself. Repeat offenders can no longer claim to be a different person so as to escape the escalation of punishment. Crimes committed in other British colonies become invisibly attached to the same individual that is then used to build a history of criminality. New categories of criminals appear whose severity is not the result of a single act of rebellion, but a result of this accumulation of small infractions.¹⁴⁵ For them, the greater crime is their addiction to crime.

This unforgiving system makes the criminal pay cumulatively for the crime that he or she committed again and again, and while it is done to prevent the individual from moving elsewhere to “commence a fresh career of crime”, it also condemns him or her to a life of incremental criminality. For those who cross a certain threshold, they become “habitual criminals”, “notorious bad characters” and “professional gamblers”, and like other abject cases where fining, hard labor or imprisonment are either useless or too merciful - chandu¹⁴⁶ smugglers, vagrants, pimps, members of secret society, morphine addicts and “coiners” - they are all liable to be banished (Table 1.4). Repeat offenders also find themselves under different kinds of focused police supervision. In 1912, it was reported that 610 persons were entered into the registry of “bad characters”, of whom 83 were still under observation, 216 had been banished, 32 were in prison and 441 released from observation or missing. A higher level of criminality moved them up from this register to direct supervision, where they had to report monthly to the police. This direct supervision was also reserved for those who could not be banished because they were British subjects, or those who were freshly released from prisons. There were 44 such people in 1913.

Patrols, detectives and fingerprints – they combined to bring about a radical transformation in the zones of illegalities in Singapore after 1888. Public rituals, cunning infiltrations and invisible and individualized histories projected a layered geography of criminalization that was at once material and virtual, seamless and penetrative. The corpus of criminal knowledge that was built up through such forms of interventions challenged many of the Orientalist truths perpetuated by earlier scholar-administrators, though they by no means debunked them completely. After all, the police had to take seriously what it means to use a native to catch a native, not as a strategy of distance enshrined in a picture of a static world order, but as a series of stratagems to marshal local knowledge and loyalties. The role of the Sinologist is critical at this juncture because he alone could penetrate the native’s world without fear of contamination.

¹⁴⁵ Conlay, the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Criminal Registry in Kuala Lumpur, expressed the accumulative effect of criminality when he suggested that it was necessary to banish “these whenever convicted of (I suggests) one serious offence against property or two smaller offences of the nature of theft”. Quoted in Morrah, *The History of the Malayan Police*, 106

¹⁴⁶ Chandu refers to processed opium, while coiner refers to counterfeiters of money.

Table 1.4: List of persons banished in 1895.

Some of the criminals had multiple aliases, and the Chinese names were obviously very badly Romanized, creating opportunities for disguise and evasion. One person was caught returning from banishment under 3 different names: Tan Li, Tan Bi and Tan Chi Bi. None of these would matter once the fingerprinting system was implemented. Source SSDAR, 1895

Name	Cause of Banishment	Name	Cause of Banishment
Lok Ah Kui	Habitual Criminal	Leong Tih	Brothel-squeezing
Koeh Ui	Habitual Criminal	Wong Sang <i>alias</i> Mong Kwo Shau	Brothel-squeezing
Tan Sun	Habitual Criminal	Chau Chhiong	Brothel-squeezing
Go Bi Bau	Brothel-squeezing	Ah Leong <i>alias</i> Lam	Brothel-squeezing
Lim Chiu	Brothel-squeezing	Tai Chek U	Brothel-squeezing
Teng Tua Chit	Brothel-squeezing	Tan Li <i>alias</i> Tan Bi <i>alias</i> Tan Chi Bi	Returning from Banishment
Chu Peng	Brothel-squeezing	Lai Ping	Wai Seng Lottery
Phun Leong	Brothel-squeezing	Chan Ying	Wai Seng Lottery
Tso Wing	Wai Seng Lottery	Chau Peng	Wai Seng Lottery
Luk Yim	Wai Seng Lottery	Tan Thoan	Secret Society
Chin Fun	Wai Seng Lottery		

Anthropological knowledge as police work

In 1936, Mervyn Wynne completed his ambitious work, *Triad and Tabut*, which was meant to be circulated only amongst officials. It collected all known records and evidences on both Chinese and Muslim secret societies and presented them mostly verbatim in one volume. Wynne intended this work to point to “a history of criminal under-currents that have flowed hither and thither in different parts of Malaya during the past hundred and thirty-five years.”¹⁴⁷ In his introduction, he recalled that the purpose of British imperial policy was the “gradual spread of freedom among all His Majesty’s subjects ... to teach these people to stand always a little more securely on their own feet.”¹⁴⁸ This “human factor in colonial administration”, he stressed, required a more robust connection between the techniques of colonial government with the science of social anthropology. He cited passages from one of the key founders of social anthropology, Professor Radcliffe-Brown:

Social anthropology ... aims at investigating, from a theoretical point of view, the nature of human society and of such social phenomena as systems of morality, law, religion, etc. It does this by systematic comparison of societies of diverse types, and, while it does not and cannot neglect the complex societies of civilised peoples, it devotes its attention chiefly to the simple societies of non-European peoples ... The colonial administrative officer is a practitioner ... The question we have to consider is, to what extent and in what way the social anthropologist can supply the colonial administrator with knowledge that can be of use to him in his practical task.¹⁴⁹

To break up the web of secrecy and loyalties that prevented the British from locating the secret societies and replacing their laws with a foreign one required not military strength but

¹⁴⁷ Mervyn L. Wynne, *Triad and Tabut: A survey of the origin and diffusion of Chinese and Mohamedan Secret Societies in the Malay Peninsula A.D. 1800 – 1935* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1941) ix

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xv

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xv

anthropological knowledge. Wynne called his work “ethno-arcana”, an attempt to understand the arcana of the “human mind among the thousands of races and tribes that comprise the citizenship of the empire”¹⁵⁰ Colonialism brought different races together, and the proper object of rule was not property, he stressed, but humans. Because of the asymmetry in evolution, the burden rests on the European man to reach out to the natives in the colonies. Only by doing so can the colonial administrator rule effectively, because he would understand the “vital hidden springs and sources whence these institutions in turn derive – the underside of native culture and organization and the powers and influences that govern them.” Applied anthropology, he argued, could contribute to the eradication of maleficent secret societies by learning about them from the inside.

It was a different form of Orientalism that brought together an anthropological sensitivity to cultural difference and a rigorous historical and geographical approach to grasping causality. In the history of colonialism, Radcliffe-Brown was a central figure in the shift of ethnographic authority from lay administrators to professionally trained anthropologists.¹⁵¹ The anthropologist had an advantage over the police: due to his scientific training and scholarly detachment, he could penetrate without fear of contamination. By the 1880s, specially trained civil servants were deeply involved in furnishing extensive and richly detailed field reports written so to be accessible and useful to the colonial administrators. On how gambling as a criminal activity was made visible through this circuit of knowledge production, on how this knowledge fed into police work, one can follow the scholarship of Mr. George T. Hare.

Hare was a sinologist in the British civil service who worked in Selangor as the Secretary of Chinese Affairs before being transferred to Singapore. He was instrumental in producing knowledge about the Chinese and shaping the way the colonial government interacted with them. He spoke Chinese and Hokkien and wrote, in 1892, a text book of “documentary Chinese” for use by British civil servants. He also produced two key reports on lotteries extremely popular amongst the Chinese in Singapore and the Malay states: “Chap-ji-ki” (十二支) and the “Wai Seng” (围姓) lottery. In 1894, in response to the increasing prevalence of the Wai Seng lottery, he traveled to Canton to understand how the game was played and who its perpetrators were. The resulting report is both thorough in its investigation and dogged in its attempt to explain the Chinese’s love for this game. Pointing to the difficulty of ascertaining truth in affairs connected to the Chinese, Hare nevertheless intended his report to be nothing less than a complete exegesis of an immense and quasi-legal industry that stretched across Macau, Canton, Peking, the Straits Settlements and the Malay States.¹⁵² Why was this lottery so popular with the Chinese? Hare decided that the huge profitability of the lottery and the clever ways it marketed itself was not a sufficient answer. Neither did he pin it down to the nature of the Chinamen as “inveterate gamblers.” Rather, Hare stressed that its popularity could only be understood by entering into a historical and cultural space radically different from the West. The obsession was fueled by a kind of pan-geographical and timeless connection with the Chinese civilization. The Wai Seng was a form of lottery where punters guessed the surnames of candidates who successfully passed the Civil Competition Examinations held in Canton and Peking. Explaining the tradition of the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, xiv

¹⁵¹ James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority” in *Representations* 2(1983) 118-416

¹⁵² “When enquiry goes below the surface in China, there is nothing more difficult than to get at the facts ...it is only much enquiry, comparison and sifting that I have ventured to accept any information about the origin of the Wai Seng Lottery” George Thompson Hare, *The Wai Seng Lottery* (Singapore: SBRAS, 1894: 7)

Civil Competition Examination, he said, “Distance and time cannot lessen it. Foreign scenes and new ideas do not supplant it. It is, in spite of abuses, the one solid unchanging element in the Chinese economy that every Chinaman instinctively learns and pin his faith to.”¹⁵³

On the “Chap-ji-ki” lottery, he again mused about why it was so popular amongst the Chinese women. Where was this “evil” located? It was, he answered very quickly, to be found in “the passion for gambling it excites”. When it came to gambling, Hare reiterated, “its speculative character, its prospects of loss or profit, appeal irresistibly to his genius.”¹⁵⁴ The Chinese had no love for physical exertion - “a mild kick at the flying shuttle cock ... is quite enough for him” – unless it came with a prize at the end of the game. Thus, the evil was a product of a natural genius and the mechanics of the game itself, and combining the two catalyzed an excess of excitement which transformed a harmless recreation in an indulgence and a vice. Since the basic principle of how a lottery works would not be foreign to a European, what is significant about Hare’s report is how it both distanced the Wai Seng lottery from familiar lotteries back home and yet made reference to them very lightly. Only at one point in the Wai Seng report did Hare point out that the guidebooks released by the operators about the candidate’s past performances in the examinations were “like guides to the turfs that give the previous performances of the horses.”¹⁵⁵ Hare made more concessions in his report on “Chap-ji-ki”, when he wrote, “Anyone who has read of the universal high playing amongst English ladies at Vaux Hall in the days of the restoration of Charles II will have some faint idea of how passionately absorbed the Chinese women of Singapore were in this new form of gambling.”¹⁵⁶

In subsequent chapters on the Wai Seng lottery, he laid out in the minutest details how the governments in Canton and Macau regulated the lottery farms and how much a farm could potentially earn, down to the design of the tickets and how people placed their stakes. The appendix reproduced both original lottery tickets and stakes record books, and his translated versions of them. How the game and the industry worked, its history and origins, and, most importantly, its appeal to the Chinese race was demystified and made understandable to the Western mind. The difficulty of establishing the truth about China and the Chinese only make his work appear more authoritative. The much shorter report on Chap-ji-ki managed to do as much. If Hare’s voice was almost invisible throughout the report, on issues relating to the Chinese sense of morality, it quivered with the gentle authority of an anthropologist. Referring to the bribery and corruption commonly connected to the lottery, he simultaneously spoke as an interlocutor of the Chinese and an outsider: “All right-thinking Chinamen agree that to have no Wai Seng lottery at all would be best ... at any rate, the Chinese mode of morality on this point differs widely from the Western one”¹⁵⁷

As a civil servant, Hare’s job was not confined to investigation; he also had to make recommendations on how to deal with the problem. The fact that both lotteries were illegal in the Straits Settlements already framed the nature of the reports. For the administrators who read his report, Hare educated them on how to locate the criminals by mapping out the network of offices, runners and ticket trails. Explaining the mathematics of the lottery allowed

¹⁵³ Hare, *The Wai Seng Lottery*, 8

¹⁵⁴ George Thompson Hare, “The Game of Chap-ji-ki” in *JSBRAS*, 31(1898), 64

¹⁵⁵ Hare, *The Wai Seng Lottery*, 17

¹⁵⁶ Hare, *The Game of Chap-ji-ki*, 63

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 36-37

administrators to conceive of ways to starve the operators of their sources of profits. Most importantly, reproducing the original tickets helped the police decode the secret language and subterfuge of these lotteries and use them as evidence in the courts. The tickets and record books of the Wai Seng lottery, Hare showed, were full of arcane characters carefully disguised so as to be “capable of two interpretations when produced in a law court as evidence.”¹⁵⁸ He pointed out to his readers that a lottery ticket sold in Singapore was disguised as a newspaper, while another ticket claimed to be selling “goods”. Buyers also frequently used nicknames when signing their tickets.

On the “Chap-ji-ki”, Hare credited the Straits Chinese women for ingeniously reinventing the game so as to leave minimal material traces. The playing board was completely dispensed with. Instead of Chap-ji-ki cards, innocuous objects like strings of beads and arcane symbols were used – “nothing is ever stated clearly on the writing paper they carry with them ... sometimes the number of spots in a particular kind of handkerchief affected by Straits ladies are made up into a signal code”¹⁵⁹ As the expert on Chinese customs and languages, Hare’s translations and notes carried out the police work of deciphering these disguises in advance (Figs. 1.5 and 1.6).

¹⁵⁸ Hare, *The Wai Seng Lottery*, 33

¹⁵⁹ Hare, *The Game of Chap-ji-ki*, 67

海潮揭三縣大文洪宮

即日開收
現銀交易

各卷先派部遲滿之卷先派部後出文章經古

伍元卷首名加袍
金銀壹百伍拾大
元叁元卷首名加
袍金銀伍拾大元

公 泰 興

如有代收現銀來
新投買者每百元
扣用叁元多少照
數推算童叟無欺
本廠啓

府縣案首不入限姓
內者俱皆全計至尾

府縣十名內	
海潮揭	府 黃其煥 二林 三盧 四陳 五柯 六吳 七陳 八劉 九謝 十沈
揭	案 鄭祖成 二鄭 三鄭 四趙 五余 六鄭 七姚 八許 九張 十蕭
元	周 文 二鄭 三林 四孫 五邱 六陳 七林 八許 九王 十陳
縣	盧 義 二黃 三劉 四賴 五陳 六章 七陳 八黃 九劉 十詹
案	鄭明德 二趙 三姚 四林 五張 六林 七連 八許 九姚 十黃
元	周 文 二邱 三郭 四許 五陳 六林 七袁 八李 九楊 十王

限姓
陳李黃何張梁潘劉林湯歐譚凌卓涂項關陶洗樊邵龔
紀梅錢甘敖孟符成裴崔瑞鄒柳貝白焦葛刁龐向顏童
簡霍宗賀鄧蒲薩卜鄉鄉鮑壬房余余吉傅傳車車甯甯

一以壬辰年歲考取潮州府海陽潮陽揭陽三縣文靈宮姓氏為據連本身
府加額賣額承額學俱皆同計以簪花靈案榜上姓氏為定倘有攻覆未定
簪花後補上者俱皆不計其餘別府別縣學及客商籍學並上限出六十六
姓一概不計外任揀二十姓為額寫多向尾除去寫少寫重寫犯限之姓乃
係自換一雙姓取頭一字作姓先取中姓多為第一同中姓論名多為第一
同中同分各卷以收一千條為滿如收不足者謝教照數均派各卷均列三
名中式謝教銀兩每員先扣費用銀六分及其部銀均在謝教內扣除所有
事款章程均照舊例茲不細載倘有懷疑幸勿賜教

貨價
價銀伍大員
價銀參大員
價銀壹大員
價銀式大員
價銀壹中員

不限姓畧列	
盧周鄭楊謝郭蔡吳許馬連邱王莊鍾趙倪姚鄧胡	龍葉彭黎翕高洪蘇陸曾容麥柯魏沈廖巫邢程方
孫唐徐賴區任章江鄒祝石饒戴游古羅杜宋汪盛	朱薛施范茹毛伊尹文田阮蕭伍溫顧熊韋史萬呂
韓袁鄭夏金池雷左康原辛侯利雲段英羽司老秦	藍丁詹
刑邢同計	姓氏太多不能盡錄

舖在廣東省城柔佛新山大街開張

Figs. 1.5. A Wai Seng lottery ticket
Source: Hare, *The Wai Seng Lottery*, 83

The Primus (3) selected by the Prefect and District Magistrate are not among the tabooed surnames and may be staked on with the rest.

Our firm is in the Great Street of the new Country (i.e., Johore) in the city of Canton in the Kwong Tung Province.

The Wai Seng books that are filled up first will be distributed first. The books that are made up later will be distributed before the list of the students who have passed in the classics is published. (1)

We begin selling tickets to-day. Ready money must be paid.

The B. A. or Sau-Ts'oi Examination in the three districts of K'it-Yeong, Ch'iu-Yeong and Hoi-Yeong.

<p>If any one buys tickets for others and comes to Johore with ready money to get them, he will get a commission of \$3 on every \$100. If he buys less, then in proportion. Both young and old are treated fairly in this matter.</p>	<p>KONG T'AI HENG. (Name of the Wai-Seng Lottery Firm.)</p>		<p>A bonus (5) of \$150 will be given to the first winner in the \$5 volume series, and a bonus of \$50 to the first winner in the \$3 volume series.</p>
<p>A few of the surnames not tabooed are given here.</p>	<p>Price of the goods. (2)</p>	<p>Price \$5.</p>	<p>Tabooed surnames.</p>
<p>Here follows a list of 123 surnames.</p>	<p>Price \$2.</p>		
<p>The surnames are too many to be all printed.</p>	<p>Price 50 cents.</p>	<p>Price \$1.</p>	<p>A translation of this section is given over the page Section I.</p>
<p>Here are printed the conditions of the Lottery. They are translated below, Section II. See over the page.</p>			
<p>Sixty-six surnames are written here.</p>			

Fig. 1.6: A decoded Wai Seng lottery ticket.

In his report, Hare reproduced both the original placard announcing the sale of Wai Seng lottery tickets in Singapore and his own decoded version. He also pointed out how the placard tried to confuse the authorities by claiming to be declaring the “price of the goods”. Source: Hare, *The Wai Seng Lottery*, 113

Providing a privileged insight into the minds and eyes of the Chinese, Hare's work zoomed in and out to produce more complex scales of criminality. Zooming out to the scale of the region, Hare presented a situation very familiar to the administrators ever since the Straits Settlements banned gambling farms while the other Malay states did not. For the government, two undesirable consequences invariably emerged from this uneven geography of legality. Firstly, gamblers simply traveled to the next town where gambling was legalized. On the moral front, there would be no real improvement amongst the habits of the people and, on legal front, it would be impossible to control the farm because it was located outside one's direct jurisdiction. Secondly, gamblers spending their money elsewhere represented a loss of taxes to the local government. Hare showed that when the Wai Seng lottery started in Portuguese-occupied Macau, it created these same problems in nearby Canton. Ultimately, a farm was set up in Canton, and a few years later, the two farms merged. He then traced the subsidiary farms in the Malay states. In Johore just north of Singapore were four main offices. Promotion and sales agents expanded the network to Singapore, Penang, Klang, Taiping, Rhio and Banka. "There are practically only two ways of dealing with the lotteries effectively," Hare recommended, "one is to get the Wai Seng farm abolished in Johore ... and the other is for the government of the Straits Settlements to license the lottery."¹⁶⁰

Zooming in to the scale of ticket stubs and handkerchiefs, Hare's report showed how, particularly in the case of lotteries, it was extremely difficult to fix criminality in space. The networks of runners, missives, tickets and small transactions of money were incredibly mobile and dispersed. While there might be centralized offices collecting and coordinating the operations, they could easily locate themselves outside the juridical reach of any one government or move between different private houses to avoid detection. Hare spared no details in describing how the Chinese women moved around in small groups to witness the picking of the winning numbers so as not to draw attention to themselves. The house where the lottery was drawn was always equipped with "some means of escape through a back door into back streets or by drying lofts on the roofs into adjoining houses."¹⁶¹ His report supplied the police with sufficient knowledge of how these games operated so as to execute the legal clause that criminalized gaming based on the mechanics of the game itself and attached criminality to its material traces. To be found in possession of a ticket stub or other objects associated with an illegal lottery presupposed guilt, and it was important to identify these traces and know where to find them. Both gamblers and police became engaged in a battle of deception and detection. Hare's research shows how the ethnographic method becomes a form of police work that produces knowledge in service of the colonial enterprise.

A criminal milieu

By the 1900s, it seems that the intersections between police work and anthropological knowledge had become so intricate that one would mistake police reports for those written by Sinologists. René Onraet's reflections on his service in the police force from 1907 to the 1940s evinced a deep fascination and sensitivity for the natives he worked with and policed.¹⁶² To him, public

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 36

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 69

¹⁶² René Onraet, *Singapore: A Police Background* (London: Dorothy Crisp and Co.Ltd, c.1940). Towards the end of his career, Onraet was the Director of the Criminal Intelligence Department (1929-1936) and the Inspector-General of the Straits Settlements Police (1936-39). See Leon Comber, 2009, "The Singapore Mutiny (1915) and the Genesis of Political Intelligence in Singapore," *Intelligence and National Security*, 24:4, 529-541. According to Drysdale, he would disguise himself as a coolie and rickshaw puller to locate Communist agents. John Drysdale, *In the Service of the Nation* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1985), 15

order was at stake and the stakes of such an order were shared by both the British, and the natives. He had no doubt that friendship was forged between the natives and the British and that the Japanese and the secret societies were the common enemy. The Chinese gambler was, in his mind, a victim of unscrupulous syndicates and professional criminals, even though “the sympathy of the public is always with the gamblers”.¹⁶³

Crawford’s world picture of the Indian Archipelago is, at a general level, as Orientalist as Hare’s meticulously decoded lottery ticket. Yet, they are crystallizations of very different constellations of power/knowledge centered on the problem of gambling as vice. The surface knowledge that buttressed much of the discourses of the administrators before 1880, concerned first and foremost with the possibility of moral reform and framed by the static world-view of ethno-climatology, faded into the background. In its place was a deep knowledge of the criminal nature and practices of the natives, drawing from ethnographic investigation and police work. The Common Gaming House as political technology reconstructed the entire architecture of vice and crime in order to maintain the economy and legitimacy of colonial rule. This is not to say that the natives were in general seen as more criminal and less moral, but rather, that in preparing for a more effective and righteous form of government, morality became a dimension of criminality, perhaps even its mere consequence. It was through understanding these criminal elements that the morality of the population could be improved. It was through the excision of those who did not belong that the internal war for society could be won. Banishment and surveillance formed two poles in the spectrum of strategies in this war effort, reflecting the two forms of the Common Gaming House. Nationalism, as the next chapter shows, reformulated these strategies of criminalization with renewed vigor.

¹⁶³ Onraet, *Singapore: A Police Background*, 139

Chapter 2

Aestheticizing Vice: Nationalism and its embarrassments

In official discourse, Singapore's rapid rise from a British colony into one of the four "Asian Tigers" with aspirations to achieve the living standards of Switzerland has served as a metanarrative that is as seductive and all-encompassing as modernity's myth of progress.¹⁶⁴ From a political science perspective, this presents some kind of a conundrum to those who believe that capitalism opens the gates to democracy. In the other Asian Tigers like South Korea and Taiwan, for example, the people have access to avenues of public debates and demonstrations through strong unions and multi-party political systems. In Singapore, the trend has moved in the reverse direction. Between 1960s and 70s, Singapore convulsed in the birth pangs of independence. The collective future of a new imagined community was up for grabs, and multiple factions emerged during this burst of political pluralism. Yet, within 10 to 20 years, the political culture of Singapore was constricted by both a hegemonic nationalist imagination and an authoritarian political structure.¹⁶⁵

This only points to how the relationship between capitalist development, political order and civil society cannot be explained through the experiences of the West, at least not in a teleological way. Singapore's development has been covered by many scholars who seek to point out the complex interrelationships between economic development, authoritarianism and nation-building, ultimately trying to explain how the state retains its peculiar brand of hegemony. Between 1960s and 80s, Singapore pursued an aggressive policy to attract multi-national corporations with tax incentives, available land and cheap labor, a process known as "export-oriented industrialization". At the same time, the government undertook massive urban renewal projects to move people into public housing at the periphery of the city and clear land for foreign investments. In this sense, scholars have classified Singapore as a "developmental state", a state that is concerned "above all else" with economic growth. At the core of this engine is a coalition of politicians, bureaucrats and private capitalists who interact with and consult each other to guide the market.

Overlaid on this state-market relationship is a complex process of nation-building. Scholars have generally studied this in two directions. One direction highlights dramatic episodes of political repression as milestones in the rise of a dominant single party system. Thus, scholars point to Operation Cold Storage, the nationalization of unions, and the closing of newspapers and schools that were seen to promote "Chinese chauvinism". This attrition of resistance led to the concentration of power to rule in a tightly knit political party that is almost synonymous with the state and the civil service. In another direction, scholars have pointed to projects and ideologies that contribute to the stability of a new socio-political order. Beng-Huat Chua's analysis of the relationship between public housing and political legitimacy is a classic example.¹⁶⁶ He shows how the ability to provide affordable mass housing for the people was a key pillar in the

¹⁶⁴ The four Asian Tigers refer to Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong, all of whom experienced rapid economic growth and industrialization between 1960 and 1980. In 1984, the government declared that it will aim to achieve for Singaporeans the living standard of Switzerland in 1984 by 2000.

¹⁶⁵ Michael Barr and Carl Trocki (eds), *Paths not taken: Political Pluralism in Post-war Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008). For a thorough review of this moment of political pluralism and agitation, see Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore, 1945-55* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973)

¹⁶⁶ Beng-Huat Chua, *Political Legitimacy and Housing: Stakeholding in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1997)

legitimacy of the new government. Such a system fostered a sense of belonging, giving people an emotional and economic stake in the well-being of the nation. But it also created a docile labor pool, since people paid for public housing through a nationalized saving system which meant that they had to seek formal employment with entities that participated in this system. Similarly, Hill and Fee shows how the creation of a Singaporean identity tried to break from both the colonial past and Malay-dominated neighbors. Under the banner of “pragmatism”, Singaporean citizenship was premised on a liberal but segmented construction of a multi-racial and meritocratic society.¹⁶⁷

Scholars have alluded to how nation-building is a cultural project that tried to build a “clean and rugged” society. The anti-yellow culture campaign of the 1950s and 60s, the mobile cultural performances known as the Aneka Ragam Raa’yat and monumental projects such as the National Stadium, National Theatre and National Conference Hall are all part of this attempt to create an “imagined community” from a composite of migrants and ethnic enclaves.¹⁶⁸ They generally point to how state ideologies, enshrined in powerful concepts such as “pragmatism”, “communitarianism” and “multi-racialism” have guided this process. To the extent that nation-building is successful, scholars generally interpret that to be because such state ideologies have been accepted by the people.¹⁶⁹

The violence of modernization and nation-building and how people coped with and experienced such dramatic transformations to their lives are now slowly being recuperated from the archives. Memoirs written by the first generation of leaders contain glimpses into the resistance of the people to modernization, but are generally seen from the perspective of “winners” of history. Elsewhere, historians have tried to furnish a more nuanced account of what has been silenced or distorted in this metanarrative of success. George Clancey, for example, provides an insightful reading of how short term emergency accommodations influenced how public housing was planned in Singapore, thus casting a deep shadow over how officials often represent public housing as something that was formulated rationally by a central intelligence and carried out linearly from concept to reality.¹⁷⁰ Loh use oral histories to show how natural disasters such as the conflagration of Bukit Ho Swee in 1961 was essential to the project of urban renewal since it provided an opportunity for the newly elected government to demonize *kampungs* as fire hazards and accelerate the resettlement process.¹⁷¹ Working from the opposite direction, scholars analyzed how the values and beliefs of prominent politicians inflected their views about how to run a nation.¹⁷² Lee Kuan Yew’s subscription to eugenics and its translation into the “graduate mothers” policy is one oft cited example.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee, *The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995)

¹⁶⁸ “Aneka Ragam Raa’yat” is Malay for “People’s Cultural Concert” or “People’s Variety Show”. It was a roving cultural performance organized by the Ministry of Culture between 1959 and 1964. It generally organized the items around the official designation of the four racial groups in Singapore – Chinese, Malay, Indian and “Others”.

¹⁶⁹ Beng-huat, Chua, *Communitarianism and Democracy in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1995); Garry Rodan, “State-society relations and political opposition in Singapore”, in *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*, ed. G. Rodan (London: Routledge, 1996), 95-127; John Clammer, *Singapore: Ideology, Society and Culture* (Singapore: Chopman Publishers, 1985); Heng Chee, Chan, “The PAP and the restructuring of the political system”, in *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*, eds. K. S. Sandhu and P. Wheatley (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies); Edwin Lee, *Singapore: The Unexpected Nation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008)

¹⁷⁰ Gregory Clancey, “Towards a spatial history of emergency: Notes from Singapore” in *Beyond Description: Singapore, Space, Historicity*, eds. R. Bishop, J. Phillips and W.W. Yeo (London: Routledge, 2004)

¹⁷¹ Kah-Seng, Loh, *The 1961 Kampong Bukit Ho Swee Fire and the Making of Modern Singapore* (PhD diss., Murdoch University, 2008)

¹⁷² Michael Barr, “Lee Kuan Yew: Race, culture and genes” in *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 29(1999): 145-166; Souchou Yao, *Singapore: The State and the Culture of Excess* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007)

The criminalization of vice between 1960s and 80s is part of this process of nation-building, urban renewal and socio-economic transformation. I have provided this brief background to highlight my contribution to and departure from the extant literature. First, the criminalization of vice tends to fall outside the radar of most scholars. It is neither violent enough like riots, political dragnets and urban renewal, nor is it visible enough like cultural shows and national monuments. Though the moralizing project of nation-building has been talked about through cultural policies, no attention has been paid to its more violent criminalizing half.¹⁷³ Second, I am wary of the various conceptual labels Singapore has accumulated over the years, some of which I have listed above. Though these are useful within their fields of scholarship, they tend to reduce the entire history of Singapore and its complex processes into set categories that are delimited by theoretical constructs and informed by contemporary anxieties. The overwhelming attention on the state and the ideologies of the ruling party influences our interpretation of history, forcing us to write against it or to account for its rise. Such labels acquire inertia as we attempt to explain how things have changed (or not) by attaching more prefixes to them – “neoliberal developmental” being one of the newest hybrids. Yet, it is never clear why one should attribute an a priori status to the “state”, “authoritarianism” or “developmentalism”.

In this chapter, the schemes to criminalize vice will be analyzed by putting together the discourses and spaces where this problem was raised and formulated, rather than frame it within a certain ideology or state-driven policy. This analysis is severely limited by the lack of archival materials on this subject. As such, the chapter will be more speculative than the previous. I identify and analyze three such spaces – a body of government-academic discourses between 1960s and 70s concerned with the impact of urban renewal on social order and delinquency, the juridical-police complex where crime is defined, produced and apprehended, and the legalized public lottery draws as a disciplinary space.

If colonial administrators grappled with the question of how to criminalize something “natural” to a race without producing an entire population of criminals, nationalist leaders asked how to criminalize more and yet integrate everyone into a unified consciousness. In this effort, new questions were raised in government, academic and police discourses between 1960s and 70s: How far can the space of popular illegality be shrunk? What techniques can be used to push criminalization to this new limit, and how can this attack on society be justified in its own name? These questions produced a relationship around crime, environment and culture. In this modernist and nationalist project, Man could be completely reformed by working from the outside. The built environment became the constitutive elements of his inner self. Meanwhile, in the courts, lawyers reformulated the Common Gaming House Ordinance: internally, the spatial registers of crime were shifted in order to produce more crime; externally, the severity of crime became inflected by its location such that the same type of gambling might attract greater moral opprobrium (and thus punishment) depending on where it was conducted.

To answer the question of how to criminalize more and yet build a nation, the chapter foregrounds the public dimension of law and police work. As the previous chapter shows, the juridical-police complex has a side that appears before the eyes of both criminals and citizens, whether it is the visual orderliness of spatially contained gambling farms, the dumb ritual of patrolling or the precision of detective infiltration. It is through the representation and

¹⁷³ Lily Kong, “Cultural policy in Singapore: Negotiating Economic and Socio-cultural Agendas” in *Geoforum* 31(2000): 409-424

performance of police work that the state could simultaneously decrease the political and social costs of criminalization, while pushing the criminalization of the people to a higher level. To attack society in its own name, justice adopted many appearances – from the heroic to the friendly to the invisible. I show how mass media portrayed crime and vice as undesirable elements outside of and dangerous to the “imagined community”¹⁷⁴ of Singaporeans. It is in this context that legalized state lotteries became an embarrassment because it acknowledged a residuum of human nature no amount of reform or punishment could remove. Like the juridical-police complex, this embarrassment has a physical and aesthetic form: unable to reconcile the simultaneous legalization and vilification of gambling, legalized lotteries became invisible and sanitized affairs; acknowledging this inextricable residuum of human nature to gamble, legalized lotteries became ubiquitous in the urban landscape of Singapore.

Gambling as social practice and livelihood

The vilification of gambling as a vice between 1950s and 80s was set against a backdrop of open and widespread gambling in various quarters of the urban environment. Oral histories provide a glimpse of this social practice during this period of time. It is seductive to situate these narratives as something authentic and precious before the heavy hand of state-led modernity swept them away. However unintended, a degree of romanticization is inevitable, given that oral histories are by their very nature semi-idiosyncratic and highly personal reconstructions of the past. But that is the very source of their authority, especially given how the state continues to guard its recent past jealously.¹⁷⁵ The task is not about speaking the truth in the face of power, but about interjecting these fragmented vignettes into the purified narrative of the present. Serving this crucial function as unwitting interrogators, oral histories also restore the emotional tenor of memory.¹⁷⁶ Although this section will follow the voices of several ex-residents of Chinatown, the main protagonist will be Ong Ah Meng (王亚明), an ex-watchman for gambling dens, coffee-shop assistant, gangster and beggar. They were interviewed in late 1990s.

For many Chinese, the Chinatown district was the most vibrant and exciting place to be between the 50s and 70s. Divided into “Da Po” and “Xiao Po” by the Singapore River, each street had its own concentration of trades, customs and clan-based divisions not captured in official maps and censuses.¹⁷⁷ Gambling activities and spaces seemed to observe one clear hierarchy irrespective of these ethno-dialect and socio-economic divisions – the gambling worth of the clients. Starting at the lowest end of this industry: On the streets and in the back-lanes, one would find simple stalls – made up of a wooden crate with a plank on top – where games like “gongzai” (公仔) and “tikam tikam” were played,¹⁷⁸ or where groups of people simply gathered and squatted on the ground for a game of “fantan” (番摊) and cards. For these transient and exteriorized forms of gambling, implements were minimal, while capital costs and stakes were

¹⁷⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and NY: Verso, 1991 [1983])

¹⁷⁵ The last decade has seen a recent string of revisionist histories written by scholars eager to balance and disrupt the dominant statist narrative with more complex accounts left by the ‘losers’ of history. Many have lamented the inability to gain access to materials still deemed “sensitive.” See especially Kah Seng, Loh and Kai Khiun, Liew, eds., *The Makers and Keepers of Singapore History* (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2010); Soo Kai, Poh, et al., *The Fajar Generation: The University Socialist Club and the politics of postwar Malaya and Singapore* (Malaysia: Strategic Information and Research Development, 2010); Kah Seng, Loh, “Kampong, Fire, Nation: Towards a Social History of Postwar Singapore” in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40(3) (2009): 613-643; Michael Barr and Carl Trocki, eds., *Paths not taken: political pluralism in Post-war Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008); Peng Er, Lam and Kevin YL, Tan, eds., *Lee's lieutenants: Singapore's old guard* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1999)

¹⁷⁶ Charles T. Morrissey, “Public Historians and Oral History: Problems of Concept and Methods,” in *The Public Historian* 2/2(1980), 22-29

¹⁷⁷ Da Po and Xiao Po mean “big town” and “small town” respectively.

¹⁷⁸ OHC, interview with Ng Hong Fatt, Special Project (Chinatown)

low. The clients tended to be casual pedestrians who gambled while going about their everyday lives: “These street games have very high ‘turnover.’ People walk by, play one or two rounds and leave. There is constant traffic (来来往往).”¹⁷⁹

Included in this casual form of gambling are mobile carts using games of chance to stimulate the sale of other goods, such as sweets and drinks. The distinction between trade and gambling cannot be easily distinguished in these socialized forms of elastic transactions. An element of risk and prize was a legitimate way to make an honest living, not too different from lucky draws and other advertising gimmicks used today. And what governed these elastic transactions was an ethic of honesty. Of course, this did not preclude customers from trying to “break” the game through skill, or the operator from creating games clearly in his/her advantage. Still, unlike the transient stalls where there was no lack of tricksters, traders who used games to stimulate sales understood the basics of customer relations. Customers learnt quickly through experience and street-talk how credible and fair these games were. The story of a hawker selling soya sauce ducks illustrates this socialized form of elastic transaction. This hawker would carry his ducks in two baskets slung over his shoulders and move around looking for customers. Each duck cost \$5, but a customer could elect to play a game instead. Both parties would roll three dice thrice to see who scored the highest points. If the customer won, he would get the duck free. If he lost, he would lose both the duck and \$5 to the hawker.¹⁸⁰

There is a close relationship between the legitimacy and profitability of a business and its spatial fixity. Many of these stalls and gambling operations were mobile, but they continued to operate in a given area so as to build up a network of regular customers who trusted them and protected them from the law or other competitors. Recollections of these businesses stressed this sense of familiarity between the operator and the clients. There was an undercurrent of geographical awareness – transmitted through street-talk and a competency with navigating the urban fabric - that allowed the interested party to locate these itinerant peddlers. The constant harassment by the police had at least two effects on this informal system: it made these operations even more mobile and transient as a form of retaliation, but as a result, it also eroded the very spatial-ethical bonds that kept these games honest and commercially viable. This is not very different from how continual persecution by the state transformed legitimate clan associations into “criminal organizations.”¹⁸¹

Moving up from this casual form of gambling where the stakes and capital costs were low generally entailed moving indoors. Although gambling was carried out conspicuously everywhere in Chinatown, two streets stood out for their concentration of gambling activities – Johore Road and China Street. At Johore Road, prostitution and gambling brought large numbers of customers and curious onlookers to the area. Lottery results were broadcast loudly on radios. Ong’s recollection of this street is extremely detailed. It provides an insider’s and gambler’s perspective into the commercial and social settings of these gambling practices. When asked how many mahjong houses there were along Johore Road, he said:

¹⁷⁹ OHC, interview with Phoon Kim Seng, Special Project (Chinatown)

¹⁸⁰ OHC, interview with Sew Teng Kwok, Special Project (Chinatown). See also interviews of Chan Kin Fai.

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Carl Trocki, “The Rise and Fall of the Ngee Heng Kongs in Singapore,” in *Secret Societies Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia*, eds. D. Ownby and M. S. Heidhues (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 89-119

Many. Some are on the upper floor, I did not visit those. On the ground floor, one of the houses is called “xian cai” (咸菜). It’s opened by a Hakka. There are six tables inside, and all six are full [of gamblers]. Full all night as well. And they play very big. \$30 per round; \$20 to \$30, you can earn so much from commissions alone ... \$30 per round with \$3000 as capital, he [banker] takes \$200 and returns you \$2800 for playing. Each player pays \$200. That’s \$800 for four players, how much is that already? ... You count [based on] six tables playing continuously?

Ong’s incredulity over the size of the profits and his attempt to communicate this incredulity to the interviewer might appear theatrical. But this is no less theatrical than the police records that use these numbers to represent the amount of vice that must be destroyed. Ong also highlights the porosity of this economy. A system of profit-sharing kept the economy sustainable. As commercial enterprises invested in the sustainability and reputation of their operations, the gambling houses depended on the protection of triads, the continued visitations of their clients, and a whole range of supporting activities in the vicinity. Because triads were territorial and occupation-based, each gambling house paid a fee to the triad in charge of the area where it was located. Profitable houses often had to pass a larger proportion of their earnings to triad members, who would then spend on entertainment, food and other expenses for their own members and families. The vast profits made by these gambling houses, Ong reiterates, trickled down to the local community directly and indirectly:

Opening a gambling house incurs great expenses. You see: 20 to 30 waiters, four watchmen in front, one accountant in charge of recording the bets and disbursing salaries ... at the end of the day, the profits are split amongst the shareholders. Better shareholders would reward their employees. Besides the salary, each might receive \$20 bonus. So if the house wins, everyone earns \$20 more.¹⁸²

Such flows of capital were often re-absorbed into the bricolage of activities found in the same location. Prostitution, bars, markets, restaurants, coffee shops, street hawking, pawn-brokering and other petty commercial activities released and absorbed the excess capital coursing through these gambling houses.¹⁸³ Similar to the kinds of elastic transactions that mediated most forms of activities in the street-economy, wins and losses over games were only the beginning of a series of transactions that extended the flow of capital beyond the gambling houses. The social practices of tipping, providing complimentary services and extending credit maintained an order essential to the commercial success and sustainability of the enterprise. Security measures accounted for the large numbers of watchmen, croupiers and supervisors who made sure no one – players or employees – cheated. Also, customers demanded a certain level of service in these higher-end gambling houses, hence the large numbers of waiters and cooks. Self-regulation and customary rules determined that big gamblers and women sat, while the small gamblers hovered at the back. Though not all diners gambled their worth on the table, it was part of good business strategy to not overdiscriminate, as long as people came to gamble. These are familiar practices in the modern casino industry, which will be the subject of the next chapter, but one would find them here as well.

The system of credit that operated equally on trust and thuggery was critical to the social practice of gambling. It had both exploitative and ameliorative dimensions. It was exploitative for the punishing levels of debt it placed on those who were drawn into a cycle of excessive gambling. Ong, for example, recollected that many of the croupiers were indebted to loan-sharks,

¹⁸² OHC, interview with Mr. Ong Ah Meng, Special Project (Chinatown)

¹⁸³ See especially interview with Mr. Lee Soo Seong, OHC, Special Projects (Chinatown)

since these croupiers often had to gamble when there were not enough clients to start a game. Other recollections did not fail to point out the inherent danger in gambling and falling into debt. But it was also a system of liquidity for the poor, who could convert goods into credit and back again. Pawn facilities and loan-sharking were often found in or around these gambling houses. Ong insisted that most of the bosses were very reasonable people. They would extend credit if one proved him/herself to be a trustworthy person. After all, no one wanted to lose a good client. Since the business earned through commissions, the surest way to increase profits was to increase the number of players and their gambling stakes. The entire operation must build on the players' sense of trust, security and satisfaction. Violence was usually the last resort for both the gambling house and the sponsoring triads. In this sense, triads, pawnshops, loan-sharking and gambling as a whole represent an early form of microfinance.

The term “earning a living” (賺吃) appears again and again in these recollections of Chinatown in the 50s and 60s. This is different from being greedy, and far from addiction. In Ong's recollections, Chinatown represented a space with many opportunities for people of his class to earn a living. In his words, there was “freedom” to do what one wanted, and things were “casual” (随随便便). Another resident longed for this Chinatown when he compared it to the Chinatown of today:

In the past, you could run around freely. Now, it is all “skyscrapers.” It is so inconvenient to get the things you want ... In the past, it was more casual. You can enter any shop – to drink a cup of black coffee, you just walk into the coffee shop. Things are cheap. It is also easier to earn money ... now it is a dead town. Now all the shops close at 8pm. All the shops are moved indoors.¹⁸⁴

In the author's conversations with an ex-resident of Bugis Street, this sense of enclosure and the attendant loss of livelihood were also dramatically conveyed. This man used to earn his living taking pictures for tourists and the transsexuals working there. He talked about how busy and flourishing Bugis street was, and how this single street “fed many mouths.” Transsexual performers, gamblers, street urchins, waiters and shoe cleaners all earned a living by working in the complex and porous economy of the street. He recalled how street urchins could earn “hundreds of dollars” playing “tic-tac-toe” with tourists (a tourist would place \$50 under a beer bottle and challenge the urchin to win him in the game), and how Japanese tourists would line up to take photographs with the transsexuals for a small sum. He talked about how he would photograph the transsexual performers so that they could use them to advertise their services. He did not hesitate when asked how it all ended: 1985, when the government closed down the street bazaars. Now, he sells old postcards and photographs for a living at the flea market (Fig. 2.1).¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ OHC, interview with Tan Gake Hoon, Special Project (Chinatown)

¹⁸⁵ Author's interview, anonymous, 20 February 2011



Fig. 2.1: The last night of the transsexual shows in Bugis Street, c. 1985.

The streets and verandahs were often extensions of social and commercial activities carried out indoors, but they were also economic zones in their own right. During the colonial period, contestations over the use of the verandahs for hawking resulted in outbreaks of violence and civil disobedience.¹⁸⁶ After independence, between 1960s and 70s, these zones continued to be where many of the residents made their living. This brief sketch of the spatial-economic conditions of gambling is only the tip of the iceberg. Oral histories contain numerous references to popular lotteries such as Chap-ji-ki, Chee Fah and horse betting. These forms of gambling are much more spatially dispersed, but they also occupied this liminal space between entertainment, economic survival and danger. One can see them as forms of “urban informality” - coping mechanisms of the poor and their everyday strategies of making a living out of whatever means are available.¹⁸⁷ It is precisely these dense networks of livelihood that are completely anathema to the modernity envisaged by the state. Thus, the criminalization of gambling is merely a frontispiece leading to the sustained assault on a way of life. By removing the streets and resettling the people into contained and ordered spaces, urban renewal and criminalization of vice are forms of primitive accumulation.

Cultural and social histories of gambling often stress the stigma attributed to the lower classes for gambling while exonerating the same practices conducted by the upper classes. In his book, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance*, Kavanagh argues that the current premises that censor gambling - “the supremacy of a reality independent of human volition, the triumph of the rational, the value of productive work, and the necessity of self-control”¹⁸⁸ – represent a heritage of the Enlightenment and prevent us from understanding the symbolic values attributed to gambling in the past. He proposes that the history of gambling should be cast as a history of how the circulation of money related to different social groups, and how gambling as the hyper-

¹⁸⁶ Brenda Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 243-268

¹⁸⁷ For a thorough discussion of the concept of “urban informality,” see Ananya Roy and Nezar AlSayyad (eds), *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from Latin America, Middle East and South Asia* (Maryland, USA: Lexington Books, 2004)

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth Century France* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 37-38.

circulation of money challenged the social structure that defined groups both internally and against each other. In 18th century France, the nobility gambled according to a “courtly ethos” – a sense of self built around a detached and dismissive relationship with money. This was a compensatory attempt to set itself above the increasingly “imperious rule of money,” represented by the bourgeoisie whose “social status depended entirely on acquired wealth and a compulsive mimicry of aristocratic conduct.”¹⁸⁹ In 19th century America, under this “imperious rule of money,” the business and financial communities retaliated by separating gambling from stock market speculations so as to legitimize one set of economic activity while stigmatizing another.¹⁹⁰

The street-economy one glimpses through these oral histories has much in common with the diffused economy of the illegal numbers game in Brazil. Historian Amy Chazkel shows how the illegal lottery, “jogo do bicho”, was worked by petty entrepreneurs who had free access to public space. The marketization and enclosure of public space in the 19th and early 20th centuries restricted these activities and constituted part of the process of criminalization.¹⁹¹ Similarly, historian Matthew Vaz argues that though people lost more than they gained in these games, the operations were amongst the few ways the poor could alter their lives significantly. More importantly, they provided jobs for many, especially the socially and economically marginalized. These games had low odds and reasonable payouts, which is in contrast to the astronomical odds of state lotteries and their “obscene jackpots”. Thus, while these numbers games distributed money across the hands of many, the state lotteries concentrated wealth in the hands of the few. The monopolization of such vernacular games should be seen as inculcating the poor to a different logic of wealth distribution that is in accord to the dominant paradigm of capitalism.¹⁹²

In Singapore, nationalism and modernization also brought with them a new set of reform movements fuelled by social sciences, state power and an impassioned imaginary. The hyper-circulation of money on the streets challenged the formal labor structure that was necessary for a Fordist regime of accumulation led by a partnership of state bureaucracy and multi-national corporations. Enveloped by the shadows of the Enlightenment, gambling replayed its role as a moral problem that generated political and social strife. In addition, it took on new valences as a way to break away from the colonial past and legitimize the intensification of criminality. To understand the elements that made primitive accumulation appear in the guise of progress, the next section examines how the police, academia and government projected their own anxieties and prejudices onto the problem of gambling.

Interlocking discourses: crime, environment and human nature

In an article published in the journal of the Singapore Police Force in 1962, Mr. G. G. Thomson provided the “last gasp” of colonial self-representation. It was a gracious but tired exit. Colonialism had exhausted itself, he declared. What should be the role of the Police in the newly independent Singapore, and how was that different from the colonial period? The techniques to maintain law and order would remain the same, he argued, but its relationship with the people would change. A colonial government always acted in the interest of an alien power and not the

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 48

¹⁹⁰ Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps, Dream Books, and Bucket Shops* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3

¹⁹¹ Amy Chazkel, *Laws of Chance: Brazil's Clandestine Lottery and the Making of Urban Public Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)

¹⁹² Matthew Vaz, “Jackpot Mentality: The Growth of Government Lotteries and the Suppression of Illegal Numbers Gambling in Rio de Janeiro and New York City” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011)

people it ruled – that was its “essential weakness.”¹⁹³ In this arrangement, the police always bore the ugly mark of any policy that was unpopular with the natives, and could never bring the people onto its side. Upon independence, he thought, the role of the police would be less conspicuous and continuous, since they would only be summoned into action by the democratically elected government of Singapore.¹⁹⁴ Coercion would be replaced by persuasion. The police would become a defender and friend of the people; his appearance will take less the form of a military patrol, and more of “Bobby” walking alone or in pairs, ever ready to help a child or old lady across the road:

The main function of the police is ... to defend the individual citizen and his democratic right to the preservation of his life and property and the safety of his living and working in Singapore. It is to strengthen his defence against the gangster, the robber, the prurience-peddler, and the shady shop-keeper. That is, the idea of the police as a “Force” with a capital “F”, a collective para-military unit, must recede and the picture of the individual police-man must come to the fore. Publicrelations is personal relations; the good relations of the police is the sum of good relationships between each individual police-man and members of the public.¹⁹⁵

By Thomson’s own admission, this project, once carried out through sinologists, patrols and detectives with limited success, would finally be possible under self-government. The picture he provided, however, did not materialize in full for another 20 years when community policing was introduced on an island-wide scale. In fact, he already sensed a growing intolerance in the newly independent Singapore, stoked by the flames of nationalism. It was not surprising, he thought, that Pulau Senang, an offshore penal settlement, was established after self-government.¹⁹⁶

National records here must be treated as critically as the colonial archive – as yet another form of self-representation produced and masked by an asymmetrical relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Its sparseness alerts the historian to the prematurity of making claims about a past still guarded jealously by the present. Yet, in these journals intended primarily for internal circulation, a metanarrative is stark. Criminality ceased to be a common denominator or residue in the native races. The usual suspects - secret societies, vices and rising crime rates - were re-conceptualized variously as ahistorical and “deeply rooted” evils, or as colonial legacies and foreign imports, or as the results of modernization and urbanization.¹⁹⁷ Instead of flaws inherent in the racial stock, these explanations externalized the causes of disorder to abstract forces. The racialized division of police work was similarly silenced. Instead, an idealized image of oneness was cultivated in these pages. Thus, one would find short articles written by young cadets in Chinese and Malay, as if their voices would finally indigenize the police and bring it to the side of the people. One would find exhortations that “the relationship between the police and the public has never been so good.”¹⁹⁸ And last but not least, one would find the voice of Dr Jon Quah, a political scientist who worked closely with the police from 1970s to the 80s. His

¹⁹³ G.G. Thomson, “The role of the Police in the State of Singapore,” in *SPM* 6(2) (1960): 2-4; “On the beat in a self-governing state,” in *SPM* 8(4) (1962): 8-11

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 3

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 4

¹⁹⁶ Pulau Senang was a prison settlement set up in 1960 on an offshore island in Singapore based on the principle of reform through manual labor. In 1963, a riot broke out which killed several officers and wardens. The experiment was terminated. See Alex Josey, *Pulau Senang: The experiment that failed* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1980)

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, Sing Ngie, Kwok, “Youths in Singapore,” in *SPM* 14/3(1968), 13-14; P. Rajaratnam, “Crime Prevention and Detection,” in *SPM* 13/4(1967), 9-10; Damordehran, Nambiar, “Aid to Crime Prevention,” in *SPM* 16/1(1970), 21-22; Fook Fong, Lim, “Cultural Impact of the West on Crime in Singapore,” in *SPJ* 3/1(1972), 45-52; Jee Bah, Tan, “Secret Societies in Singapore – The Present Trend,” *SPM* 12/2 (1966), 10-15

¹⁹⁸ Yew Toong, Yew, “Better Relationship between the Police and the People,” in *SPM* 6/1(1960), 3

argument that the British model of the police as a “servant of the people” should move towards the European model of the police as “a servant of the government” had a lasting impact on the justification of state-sanctioned violence.¹⁹⁹

Quah’s entry marks the threshold when the national began to surpass the colonial. The native intellectual not only speaks in the space once occupied by the colonial, but he could now strategically represent the colonial so as to construct a self-image of national modernity.²⁰⁰ In other words, in the archives, the colonial is being colonized. In this relationship, two inversions become obvious. If Thomson argues that the “essential weakness” of the British colonial police model is its inability to be one with the people, Quah argues that its weakness is its inability to rule more decisively and directly – the role of the police is too limited as a “servant of the people.” If Thomson thinks that the police in independent Singapore would become less “continuous and conspicuous”, Quah thinks that the police would and should take on more roles to ensure the internal security of Singapore.

In his study of police corruption, this narrative is confidently replayed: “Singapore has been transformed since 1959 from a colonial society tolerant of corruption to first a self-governing state and later, an independent new state, determined to wipe out corruption among the population at large.”²⁰¹ He does not recognize that the colonial model of indirect rule is a highly efficient system where a “thin white line”²⁰² could govern large numbers of natives across continents. And this is possible not only because of gunboats and cannons, but also because of the intervening space of tolerated illegalities that economizes on the costs of government. In Quah’s world-view, the colonial period is simply cast in a condition of excess and inefficiency, which sets up favorably the national period as a heroic process of purification and rationalization. Poor government is replaced by good government. Bad natives are replaced by disciplined citizens. With reference to gambling, the corruption of the police force in independent Singapore is no longer caused by the ingenuity or virulence of the Chinese, or the laziness of the Malay constables, or the intransigence of the natives, but by isolatable sociological factors.²⁰³ The reference points are no longer other Chinese-dominated societies or colonies, but Chicago and New York, where the modern discipline of criminology is practiced.

If the colonial archive exhibits the fallibility of the native policemen in order to excuse the difficulties of colonial rule, the national archive exhibits the infallibility of the police (and by association, the government) as part of the metanarrative of progress and oneness. Even though Quah’s article relies heavily on mainstream media, and he himself acknowledges the difficulty of doing research on police corruption in a political climate utterly intolerant towards any signs of corruption, his narrative is as confident and linear as John Crawford’s map of the Indian

¹⁹⁹ Jon S T, Quah, “The Role of the Police in a new State: The case of Singapore,” in *SPJ* 8(1) (1977): 15-22

²⁰⁰ Dr Jon S. T. Quah began his research on police corruption while reading for a doctoral degree at Florida State University. Subsequently, he taught at the National University of Singapore for 35 years in the department of political science. For his service to the police between 1977 and 1982, he received the High Commendation Award. Between 1970s and 1980s, he published several papers that position Singapore as a model or success story to be emulated. <http://www.jonstquah.com/> (accessed March 2012)

²⁰¹ Jon S.T., Quah, “Police Corruption in Singapore: An Analysis of its Forms, Extent and Causes,” *SPJ*, 10(1) (1979): 39

²⁰² A.H.M Kirk-Greene, “The Thin White Line: The Size of the British Colonial Service in Africa,” in *Africa Affairs*, 79/314(1980), 25-44

²⁰³ First, he dismissed racial essentialism, arguing that “the assumption that orientals have a natural propensity for bribery is not only questionable and unacceptable but also smacks of ethnocentrism.” Then, he listed 7 factors that gave rise to police corruption in colonial Singapore: 1. Low salaries; 2. Poor working conditions; 3. High degree of formalism; 4. Poor recruitment and selection programs; 5. Inadequate controls; 6. Lack of training programs; and 7. Society’s tolerant attitude toward corruption. See Quah, “Police Corruption in Singapore”, 28, 38. Another author who substituted structural-functionalism for ethnocentrism is Yen Ching Hwang. See Ching Hwang, Yen, “Gambling in the Chinese Community in Singapore and Malaya, 1792-1911,” in *Asian Culture* 14 (1990), 47-55.

Archipelago one century earlier. Just as Crawford did not think residence in India was necessary to understand the Indians, Quah's work (and this despite him being a "native") erects a theoretical structure which is more about adapting from its source than about penetrating its destination. Hence, the choice of the source is part of modernity's selective historical and geographical awareness. From a critical perspective, Quah's scholarship, situated in the thick of historical change, is a vital coordinate in connecting police discourse to the larger nation-building project.

Other coordinates can be identified to show how modernity both distorts history and calls up new ways of knowing to birth itself. Another scholar who studied gambling amongst the Chinese and worked briefly with the police is sociologist Mak Lau Fong. His work focused on secret societies in Singapore and Malaya, but he also published a short study on gambling amongst industrial workers.²⁰⁴ He set out to test the hypothesis that social alienation results in a higher frequency of gambling amongst industrial workers. Working with a sample of 270 cases from a public housing estate, a set of variables were tested and the findings presented in an integrated model (Fig. 2.2). In his study, gambling was not framed as criminal. Rather, it was a social activity that compensated for what these industrial workers were deprived of in their familial and economic lives – decision-making, responsibility, and enduring social relationships. Although not stated as such, excessive gambling reflected the anomic lives of these workers. To solve the problem of gambling, one must normalize the lives of these workers.

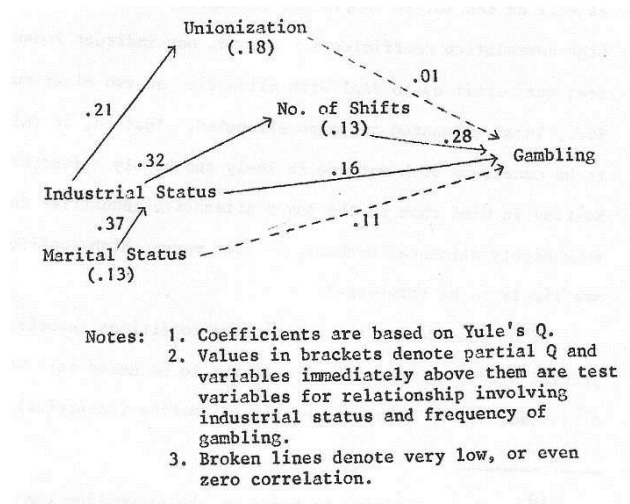


Fig 2.2: Factors influencing gambling frequency amongst industrial workers
 Lau Fong, Mak, 1979, 12

Such sociological investigations depart significantly from an anthropological understanding of gambling and crime. If sociology were the discipline created to understand modern society, leaving for anthropology the space of the faraway "others," then for a society that imagines itself to be modern, it must turn to sociology for answers. Through this scientific lens, society would emerge as specific groups with more or less regular and identifiable features, arranged in more or less understandable relationships, and ultimately speak back to overarching political-economic

²⁰⁴ Lau Fong, Mak, 1979, *Gambling and the Industrial Workers*. Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, No. 112 (Republic of Singapore: Nanyang University), 1-19

structures where the energized State is located. The mysterious ways of the native that can only be obtained through ethnographic investigation becomes irrelevant in a postcolonial world. Anthropology's construction of a timeless culture outside modernity is neither useful nor acceptable. What is needed is a framework to understand the changes in the lives of Singaporeans during a process of modernization.

Indeed, there was intense governmental and academic attention on the sociological effects of rapid modernization on the people. Mak's study on gambling on industrial workers unfolded into a series of interlocking investigations dedicated to tracking the psychological, social and economic lives of citizens resettled as a result of comprehensive urban renewal projects between 1960 and 1975.²⁰⁵ These studies generated a range of critical and conservative voices, but taken as a whole, they were wary about high-rise high-density living, being influenced by the general climate of urban sociology at that time:

Pushed by stress, pulled by autonomy, people in high-density conditions tend to retreat into a private world where they believe that they are self-sufficient. They create a way of life, and an environment, which reflects this belief; and this way of life, and this environment, then propagate the same illusion ... Unless the social and physical environment is structured in such a manner as to obviate this syndrome, urban development may produce serious and pathological mutations in human personality and perhaps in human nature.²⁰⁶

Thus, the research questions generally assumed the penalizing effects of such a living condition, and sought to test its applicability or variance in the Singaporean context: How are the new residents coping? Are there signs of social fragmentation, psychological damage and political danger? Are the residents satisfied with the new living conditions, and do the neighbors interact with each other the same way as they used to in the kampongs? The questions of crime and delinquency were thus set against the disruptive nature of resettlement and the new socio-spatial conditions of the public housing estates.

Sociologist Riaz Hassan's work consistently focuses on the impact of urban renewal on the poorer segments of the population, and his is one of more critical voices within this academic-governmental discourse in the 70s. In one of his studies, he argues that poorer families in smaller flats are more vulnerable to juvenile delinquency. Working parents have no resources to supervise their children. The lack of space forces children to play outside where they become exposed to bad elements. Yet, the other option of preventing them from leaving the crowded interior of the flat hinders their studying and socialization skills. To compound the problem, mothers tend to be oblivious to such structural factors and perceive their children as "stupid," who in turn internalize this stigma and become self-fulfilling school drop-outs and delinquents.

²⁰⁵ A selection of such studies are used for this short overview: Stephen Yeh (ed), *Public Housing in Singapore: A Multi-Disciplinary Study* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, Housing and Development Board, 1975); Stephen Yeh, *The Extended Family and Employment* (Singapore: Economic Research Center, University of Singapore, 1970), *Homes for the People* (Singapore: Government Publication Bureau, 1972); Peter D. Weldon, John S. Weldon and Tan Tsu Haung, *Housing and Satisfaction with Environment in Singapore* (Singapore: University of Singapore, Dept of Sociology, 1973); Riaz Hassan, *Social Status and Bureaucratic Contacts Among the Public Housing Tenants in Singapore* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1972), *Social and Psychological Implications of High Population Density*, Sociological Working Papers No. 47 (Singapore: University of Singapore, Dept of Sociology, 1975), *Families in Flats* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977); Ching Ling, Tan and Peter S.J. Chen, *Life and Living Environment in Kampong and HDB Public Housing Estates in Singapore* (Singapore: Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Graduate Studies, Nanyang University, 1977)

²⁰⁶ Riaz Hassan, *Social and Psychological Implications of High Population Density*, Sociological Working Papers No. 47 (Singapore: University of Singapore, Dept of Sociology, 1975), 6. Similar observations were made in a separate report conducted by a women's organization, Persatuan Wanita Singapura, in 1965. Pek Leng, Seow, *Report on New Life in New Homes* (Singapore: Persatuan Wanita Singapura, 1965)

What makes Hassan's studies stand out is his use of the ethnographic method to understand the hardship these families have to endure as a result of resettlement. His work comes closest to showing how resettlement is also a form of primitive accumulation, and that delinquency is an effect of losing the traditional sources of livelihood.²⁰⁷

Studies between the 50s and 60s on the housing conditions of Singapore prepared for and justified the large scale demolition of areas like Chinatown.²⁰⁸ In contrast, these kinds of studies produced in the 70s, after the first decade of urban renewal, positioned the public housing as the crucible of a normalized society – vulnerable, disciplined, and increasingly impossible to think outside of. By “sneaking” in his ethnographic studies, Hassan's work shows how difficult it was to speak outside the structuralist paradigm that governed how society was to be known and constructed. Taken in total, these studies set up an expanded field of possibilities for governmental interventions. Delinquency did not begin with the confrontation between the police and gangster. Rather it lurked in these modern flats, in the interstices of daily activities when the child might be exposed to bad elements, in the ill-design of this new environment which made it difficult to exercise the forms of informal social controls once practiced in the kampungs.

Through these reports and studies, sociological methods preset the parameters within which modernity is to be defined. They implicitly agree that qualities like cleanliness and neighborliness are to be the conditions of modernity. This list of criteria does not stop at making society legible; it extrapolates an idealized end-state.²⁰⁹ From public housing estates to the national space, the clean environment becomes a pedagogical space to reform the anti-social habits of the pre-modern individual. A stark example of how such rationalities were directly translated into practice is the series of nation-wide “Keep Singapore Clean” campaigns. These campaigns urged the individual to practice an ethic of mutual inspection and self-responsibility to keep the public realm clean. While a clean environment was the measurable and visible result, it was not the real target. The real target was the individual - to transform this “creature of habit,” to “revolutionize the outlook of the people”²¹⁰ (Fig. 2.3).

²⁰⁷ Riaz Hassan, “Families in Flats: Five Case Studies,” in *Families in Flats* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977), 145-198

²⁰⁸ See, in particular, Kaye Barrington, *Upper Nankin Street, Singapore: A Sociological Study of Chinese Households Living in a Densely Populated Area* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960) and Goh Keng Swee, *Urban Income and Housing* (Singapore: Department of Social Welfare, 1956). Loh Kah Seng has also made this point about what he calls “reform literature.” Kah-Seng, Loh, *The 1961 Kampong Bukit Ho Swee Fire and the Making of Modern Singapore* (PhD diss., Murdoch University, 2008), 5

²⁰⁹ As James Scott argues, what appears as a method of organizing society into a format convenient for administration become “categories that organize people's daily experience precisely because they are embedded in state-created institutions that structure that experience.” Scott J, *Seeing like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998), 83

²¹⁰ Sian Chin, Chua, “Singapore Success Story,” in ... *towards a Clean and Healthy Environment*, (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1972), 1

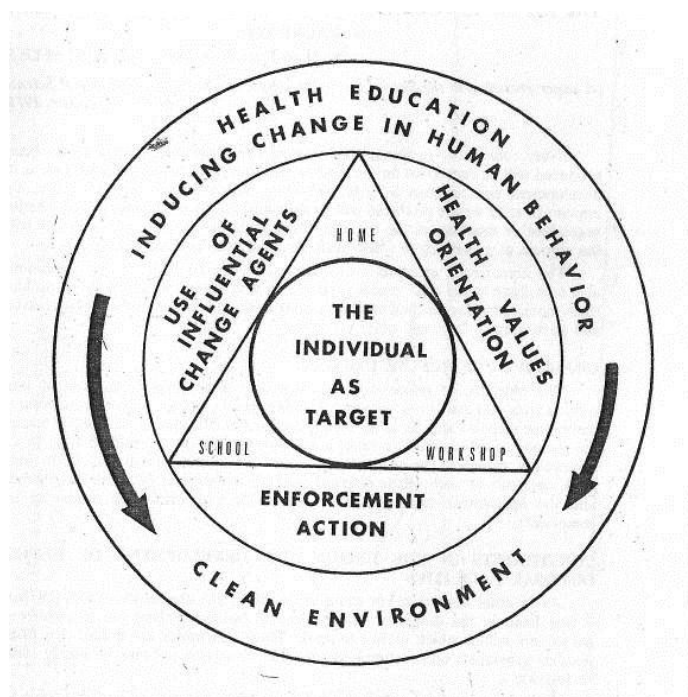


Fig. 2.3: “The individual as target”. Source: Fatt Lye, Thim, “Health Education and Public Information for Solid Wastes Management” in *Towards a Clean and Healthy Environment*, ed. Ministry of the Environment (Singapore: Ministry of the Environment, 1972), 60

This diagram gives stark legibility to what is at its heart a modernist project. To place man at the center of change is to act from the outside in, not, as the British Sinologists imagined, inside out. To bring about modernity, one must act directly on all the environments which would, through the process of interpellation, constitute the internal sensibilities of the modern subject. Juxtaposing these sets of interlocking discourses, it seems that between 1960s and 70s, racial essentialism gave way to a new paradigm that emphasized the malleability of man. Crime, as Quah argued, is suppressible if the police took on more duties as servants of the state. Delinquency and anti-social behavior can be reduced if the environmental and social conditions were improved.

The outermost ring of the diagram – “clean environment” – therefore encompasses all aspects of the individual’s lifeworld as defined by the space of the nation. Though not always successful, the extent to which nation-building was premised on such a modernist principle can be seen in the struggle over culture. Between 1960s and 1970s, culture was transformed into a matter of “practical politics.”²¹¹ As a political strategy to “outflank the communist with puritanical zeal,” the Ministry of Culture under the People’s Action Party (PAP) prepared several brochures that articulated this transformation. The arguments furnished in these brochures discredited the entire notion of cultural essentialism. In its construction, culture is merely a “sum total of the various elements constituting it and that the individual elements are constantly modified, rejected and replenished with new elements.”²¹² Culture as practical politics includes

²¹¹ Ministry of Culture, “Malayan Culture in the Making,” in *Towards Socialism 2* (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, Singapore Printing Press, 1964), 1

²¹² *Ibid*, 6

“all the socially created beliefs, customs, laws, political and economic institutions and the material creations of man which mould the thoughts and attitudes of man.”²¹³ Culture, if there is any essential quality about it, is essentially heterogeneous and hybridized. These moves are, of course, necessary to wipe clean a slate for a whole new cultural formation to take place – in this case, a homogenous nationalist culture.²¹⁴

Dr. Goh Keng Swee, one of the founding members of the PAP, was a key interlocutor of the new Singaporean subject who must be built from afresh. One must shed his/her “benighted” beliefs and take on new coherent ones, he argued in a 1972 seminar, in order to become modern.²¹⁵ What are the ways in which this modern subject can be built? He identified five “impact points” – the physical environment, education, mass media, work experience and the government. Reframed as practical politics, culture broke apart into numerous projects of government. These led to the proliferation of cultural activities held in community centers, void decks and schools. Multi-racialism took visual and bodily form in these activities which were staged in the styles of the four official races. But, as a process of purification, it also incorporated a deep intolerance of internal Others. In the place of the departing colonial powers, several internalized monsters needed to be purged in order that this community could imagine itself as new and indivisible. Within the ideology of the PAP, materialism and individualism, juvenile delinquency, hippyism, drug-use, and pornography were branded as vices imported from the West, while gangsterism, secret societies, Communism, clannishness and tradition (of the benighted kind) were cast as internal obstacles to modernity.²¹⁶ Culture started to take on moral-nationalistic tones.

Yet, the question of human nature as a great inertia to modernity did not completely dissipate. The insidious figure of gambling as vice continued to exist in the form of a paradox: on the one hand, nation-building entailed a belief that it is possible to thoroughly reform Man into a modern citizen, a belief abetted by the modern sciences of sociology and criminology; on the other hand, in the face of gambling, such heroism gave way to an essentialist argument: that it is in the nature of man to gamble, and no amount of criminalization or reform can eradicate it.

A brief analysis of the parliamentary debates around the legalization of the state lottery will show enduring conceptual blockages that set in opposition the pragmatic and the moral. In the 1960s, an argument was made for state-sponsored public lotteries. Like many lotteries in history, this legalized lottery was framed as a form of moral laundering – it purported to transform bad money into good money, diverting what would otherwise go into the pockets of illegal

²¹³Ibid, 1

²¹⁴ For an insightful reading of how modern Singapore was constructed in the discourses of three leading statesmen in the 1960s and 70s, see Wee, C.J.W-L., *The Asian Modern*, 33-51. He argues that Singapore’s version of modernity was one that embraced the telos of progress through economic development and “cultural deterritorialization”. He also points out how such discourses tapped into postwar US social sciences paradigms, something I have developed in the previous section on delinquency and crime. I am in general agreement with his arguments, though I am more interested in the schemes that transform culture into “practical politics”.

²¹⁵ Keng Swee, Goh, “Modernisation in Singapore: Impact on the Individual,” in *Modernisation in Singapore: Impact on the individual*, ed. Nanyang University Staff Academic Association and Singapore National Academy of Sciences (Singapore: University Education Press, 1972), 18

²¹⁶ Phillip Holden gives a concise summary of the Anti-Yellow Culture movement in the 50s and 60s. Phillip Holden, “At Home in the Worlds: Community and Consumption in Urban Singapore,” *Beyond Description: Singapore, Space, Historicity*, eds. Ryan Bishop, John Phillips, Wei-Wei Yeo (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 79-95. Amrith shows that by the 1970s, the cosmopolitan imagination which cut across established geopolitical boundaries to create a non-aligned Third World was rapidly attacked by the PAP as “anti-nationalist.” Amrith SS, “Internationalism and Political Pluralism in Singapore, 1950-1963,” in *Paths not taken: Political Pluralism in Post-war Singapore*, eds. Michael Barr and Carl Trocki (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008)

syndicates to fund a project of public good.²¹⁷ Between 1960 and 1966, when the state justified its entry into this criminalized economy, the ideological dominance of the ruling party quickly overrode the weakening voices of the opposition members of Parliament.²¹⁸ Dissenting voices pointed out that a socialist government should not promote gambling because it extracts more from the poor than the rich and perverts the value of hard work with the promise of easy money.²¹⁹ In return, supporters in the Parliament argued that this was not an attempt to promote gambling, but an attempt to divert funds already spent on gambling to the government. In any case, gambling was part of “human nature” and ineradicable:

But human nature is such that even if we do not allow gambling, a large amount of money will be spent on gambling - and illegal gambling at that - which will encourage gangsterism, protection rackets and all sorts of crimes ... Therefore, if we want to eradicate gambling, it is not by shutting our eyes to it or wearing blinkers in order not to see that the evil exists, but through education ... It is through education in the long run that we will be able to change the nature of our population. But until then, let us *tinge our idealism with a little bit of realism* and see that whatever money is spent by the people in gambling does not leave this country.²²⁰ (*emphasis added*)

If the cleavage between a pragmatic and moral argument was, during colonialism, premised on the static model of the native whose potential for civilization was limited, it was, during nationalism, premised on an ineradicable essence located within a heroic malleable subject. This contradiction was ignored by the pragmatist camp who eventually won the day. Minister for Labor, Mr. K.M. Bryne, declaring that “we of the PAP above all are realistic”,²²¹ pointed to the current contradictions of criminalizing popular gambling while allowing the Turf Club to continue conducting horse-racing for its club members. There was, in fact, “no moral difference between betting in the Turf Club and outside of it.” He argued that there was already legalized gambling in Singapore, and that the public could already buy lottery tickets from petrol kiosks and Federation Social Welfare Lottery. He attacked the current ineffectiveness of criminalization, arguing that off-course betting facilities would replace the illegal bookmaker and squeeze the secret societies, not increase the total amount of gambling. Illegal lotteries were so rampant, he continued, that “there are some operators within 50 yards of this Assembly House and everyone knows that.” Even though the PAP, as a socialist government, also thought that gambling was evil, it should control rather than ban it. The three Bills were estimated to net the Singapore government about \$10 million a year in revenue. Final decision: 28 in favor, 6 against, and 17 were absent.²²²

²¹⁷ The 1960 Common Gaming Houses (Amendment) Bill was introduced to exempt the approved racing associations from its provisions so that the club could conduct public lotteries legally. The 1966 Betting Sweepstakes Duties Bill was introduced to exempt such legalized lotteries from duty so as to direct all proceeds for approved welfare project.

²¹⁸ In 1963, a dragnet named, Operation Coldstore, was conducted which crippled the leftist party of Barisan Socialis. Other trade union leaders and student activists were also rounded up on the charge of Communist connections. In the momentous 1963 elections, the PAP was able to garner 73 percent of the number of seats and consolidated its hold over the government machinery. A PAP member reflects that “if Barisan’s top leaders were not detained and could stand in the elections, it would certainly have done even better.” Sonny Yap, Richard Lim and Weng Kam, Leong, *Men in White: The Untold Story of Singapore’s Ruling Political Party* (Singapore: Straits Times Press, 2009), 256.

²¹⁹ SPD, Betting and Sweepstakes Duties (Amendment) Bill, v25 (1966) cols. 401-402. See also David Marshall, ‘The evil of gambling,’ ST, 8 May 1968, 8

²²⁰ SPD, Betting and Sweepstakes Duties (Amendment) Bill

²²¹ Quoted in ST, 14 May 1960, “Off Course Betting,” 8

²²² ST 14 May 1960, “That lottery Bill is passed,” 9. As a result of these Bills, Singapore Pools was set up in 1968 to operate the first national lottery and the Singapore Turf Club was allowed to set up off-course betting facilities for horse-racing in 1966.

Mr Bryne might have wished that legalization would smooth away all these contradictions left behind by colonialism, but it only introduced new ones. As a result, around the issue of gambling, the moral and the pragmatic came into an uneasy relationship which propped each other even at the same time that they threatened to overrun and contaminate each other. To intensify the criminalization of vice was a moral project within the larger framework of nation-building. To legalize public lottery was a pragmatic project for the instrumental purpose of securing funds for public good. To “tinge idealism with a little bit of realism” suggested that such laws were first and foremost morally founded, though compromised by “pragmatic concerns”. But, since pragmatic concerns implicitly passed a judgment on human nature and thus superseded any moral position, these also threatened to devalue a nationalism built on puritanical zeal and a vision of modernity.

These interlocking discourses on crime, environment and human nature set up the complex milieu within which gambling as a vice was attacked. In practice, criminalization, moralization and legalization became trapped in a tussle of irreconcilable contradictions. A series of practical problems grew out of this: How far can this space of popular illegality be shrunk? Conversely, what are the new limits of criminalization under the nationalist regime? What techniques can be used to push criminalization to this new limit, and how can this attack on society be justified in its own name? The rest of the chapter will show how these problems were worked out in practice.

Producing crime through the “Common Gaming House”

To show how a given amount of vice can multiply into a large amount of crime, one begins at the courts. Even as the relationship between people, police and government was reformed, the technologies of criminalization remained intact. The Common Gaming House Ordinance as a political technology proved to be both resilient and flexible. Surveillance and detection continued to be the primary concerns of the police in tackling the problem of gambling and related crimes. When Judge Choor Singh reviewed the Common Gaming House Ordinance in 1960, a series of familiar questions were thrown up around the optimal distribution of criminality that would be both effective and righteous. But, a new problem was taking shape, and that was the problem of the expediency of justice.

The rush towards modernity demands a way to criminalize expeditiously without exceeding the limits of the tolerable and the practical. This is not simply a question of increasing the police force and conducting more raids. These quantities are the external manifestations of a deeper transformation in the political rationality of crime and its construction through abstract spatial concepts. In Choor Singh’s review, the convolutedness of such concepts and their legal reasoning becomes burdensome. Like Sir Braddell before him, Choor Singh opens his review with a clean distinction – gaming is lawful unless it is conducted in a public place or in a common gaming house. But, as his review progresses, both generic definitions of “public place” and “common gaming house” becomes fractured into a range of specificities.²²³ The doctrines of

²²³ What was a public place in legal terms? The definition was drawn from an earlier ordinance on vagrancy - “every person playing or betting by way of wagering or gaming in any street, road, highway, or other open and public place to which the public have or permitted to have access at ... shall be deemed to be a rogue and vagabond within the meaning of this Ordinance...” “Public place” was not defined, merely multiplied in tautological terms. A few cases were discussed which shows how the cumulative effects of such specificities generated irreconcilable contradictions that made the practice of law clumsy and self-defeating. The interior of a railway carriage could only be construed as public if one could prove that it was used for conveying passengers, one case argued. The New World Amusement Park in Singapore was construed to be a public place even though there was an entrance fee and the manager reserved the right to refuse entry to any undesirables. Hotels were “public,”

“predominant use” and “indivisibility of space,” invented to protect private clubs from the law, added new unquantifiable ambiguities to the very definition of crime. Would a specific room within a social club which is used habitually for gaming thereby criminalize the entire club? Attacking this ambiguity, a lawyer argues:

It would be a most lamentable thing if the administration of our law were to give rise to the idea that indulgence in games of chance for money stakes, a common social amusement, notoriously practiced by all classes of the community, becomes penal if practiced by a Chinese night club. The real question in issue was whether premise raided on this occasion were devoted exclusively to gambling or to general social purposes among which games of chance were included.²²⁴

These endless divisions to the generic categories of public place and common gaming house were only exacerbated by each attempt to refine it. Law was caught up in this never-ending process of revision in order to criminalize specific practices and excuse others. These revisions risked exposing law’s own weakness – not just its inability to define clearly its object, but that its object was an empty sign. Gambling is a nuisance, an inconvenience, and an invitation to disorderliness. But to whom? Law replies: “to the Public.” It is, after all, the public that must be protected from these minor groups of criminals and miscreants. However, each attempt at specificity spawned contradictions in such a way that exposed how law had become a tool to target specific social groups for political reasons and administrative convenience, rather than a tool for a common moral good. The accumulation of specificities in which the public could be potentially contaminated would reach a threshold where it would appear that it was the public that was attacked, not protected. As the generic concept of the public revealed itself to be an empty sign, the moral authority of the law itself would follow, as will the narrative of oneness cultivated as part of the project of nationalism. Choor Singh cites a case to end this discussion where it is argued that the definition of public place is perhaps neither necessary nor desirable. Rather, it is the substance of the law that should be the criterion of criminality – the “evilness” of the act must be that which is assessed since that is the original object of the law.²²⁵

But law in practice could not countenance such an intrusion into its economy. The juridical effort at reinterpreting the law to match the crime was already vastly disproportionate to the ease with which gamblers erased the very structures designed to criminalize them. If gambling in every other mode of transport after the railway carriage required a fresh interpretation for its “evilness” or its “publicness,” the entire edifice of legality would collapse. In Choor Singh’s review, the whole argument about legal presumptions took on such an economic function. In order to preserve the moral authority of law, there had a similar rebalancing in the economy of indictment and proof.

How is this achieved? Choor Singh states that “the object of statutory presumption is not to create new offences. Nor is it to lead to the conviction of innocent persons. It is to ensure that the *Courts should draw from certain facts, once they are proved, the inferences, which are deemed to arise under the statute.*”²²⁶ (italics added) Then, he argues that such presumptions which shift

since anyone could have access to them, though one must show that there were vacancies. But, public houses were not public, since, it was argued, the customer’s right to enter could be withdrawn. Choor Singh, *Gaming in Malaya: A Commentary on the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance, 1953, of the Federation of Malaya, and the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance, Cap. 114, of the State of Singapore* (Singapore: Malayan Law Journal, 1960), 87-89

²²⁴ Singh, *Gaming in Malaya*, 12

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 88

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 69

the onus of proof onto the accused are an extension of the Evidence Ordinance, which provides that “when any fact is especially within the knowledge of any person, the burden of proving that fact is upon him.”²²⁷ A subtle but significant movement can be detected in this transition. Legal presumptions are still worrisome for being excessively punitive and a source of injustice, but they are also increasingly justified as economical and necessary to arresting the very object of law (“evilness,” as Choor Singh suggested). With more presumptions established in place, less time would be spent on uncovering the details of each case, less room would be left for gamblers and lawyers to maneuver, and the entire system of justice would catch up with the “increased” rate of crime. Once the onus to prove the facts is passed to the defendants, the ignorance of the courts need no longer stay its power to punish. An accelerated modernity demands an accelerated judicial mechanism.

To summarize: the accumulation of ever-shrinking and discriminating categories made the practice of law more and more inefficient. As new divisions were made in the Ordinance to criminalize some and excuse others, as gamblers retaliated with new forms of evasion and subterfuge, a way to release this internal stress had to be invented. The internal reformatting of the Common Gaming House as a political technology was a crucial step towards a new economy of criminalization. Gambling offences constituted the majority amongst all other crimes reported in the 60s (Table 2.3). This rise in crime was only possible after legal presumptions were rationalized as economic rather than punitive. It was only possible after the private knowledge of the gamblers became just as criminalizing as the architectural defenses designed to thwart police penetration. This new economy is most visibly etched in the criminalization of Chap-ji-ki: it was no longer a question about whether or not it was a lottery, and thus illegal. That was given the status of a legal presumption. The opprobrium was that it was a swindle. The game was rigged because the operator did not pick the winning numbers randomly, but chose those that would give him the highest profits. Its cost on society was commensurately doubled, and so should its punishment be swift and heavy.²²⁸

²²⁷ Ibid, 69. There are even finer distributions of power within this mechanism, which may or may not be significant to the analysis. Choor Singh states that the burden of proof is asymmetrical for the prosecutor and the accused. Thus, if the onus of proof is placed on the prosecutor, the case has to be proven “beyond all reasonable doubt” that the accused is guilty. If, however, the onus of proof is placed on the defendant, he could disprove his guilt by raising a reasonable doubt. Such doubts involve attacking the factual bases of these presumptions, without which inferences cannot be drawn. This leads Choor Singh to discuss the kinds of evidences admissible in court since these would determine the circumstances under which such presumptions legitimately arise, and thus where the burden of proof is to be located. As can be expected, the enumeration of admissible proofs is unwieldy and uneconomical – like all the different definitions of “public space,” there is only so much one can discriminate before the law collapses upon itself. See Singh, *Gaming in Malaya*, 67-84

²²⁸ Choor Singh’s review includes a detailed description of how the Chap-ji-ki lottery works, as given by an expert witness. See Choor Singh, *Gaming in Malaya*, 42-44. This became the official version of how Chap-ji-kee was played. Oral histories, however, show that it was played in many different ways. See the list of oral history records in the bibliography.

Table 2.3: Number of prosecutions, 1967-1968

Source: Singapore Parliamentary Debates, 1968, "Criminal Prosecutions: Subordinate Criminal Courts", v28

Assault, causing hurt, grievous or otherwise, with or without weapons	1,110
Robbery	373
Extortion	143
Theft / Housebreaking	1,877
Cheating	126
Criminal Breach of Trust and Misappropriation of Property	147
Sexual Offences	86
Vagrancy	83
Drunkenness	1,275
Gambling and connected offences	12,147
Opium smoking and connected offences	2,146
Smuggling and connected offences	292

In Foucault's analysis of the sovereign-police-discipline triplex, the substitution of society for sovereign as the enemy and victim of crime produced a graduated system of criminality. Crime against the sovereign always provoked a violent and spectacular form of punishment, since such a transgression was always in the order of treason and regicide. Crime against society, on the other hand, necessitated a more meticulous calculation that matched the crime to the punishment in terms of its costs on both society and the criminal.²²⁹ This economic consideration, as the previous chapter shows, was already in place in the colonial period. There were petty gamblers, and then there were professional tricksters and syndicate leaders. There were fines, finger-prints and registrations, and then there was banishment, which marked that point of collision when the stubborn flaw of the human stock exceeded the ability of law to remove it. Vice only became crime when it exacted a cost on society, though the boundary between private passion and public disorder was notoriously elastic.

Transferred to different regime where what was at stake was the precarious fate of a new nation, the entire scale of criminality was both lifted and compressed. Thus, punishments became more severe while, as Choor Singh's review shows, the divisions became more discriminatory. After the review in 1960, a string of amendments were made to existing legislations so as to remove impediments to the expediency of justice – the procedures for obtaining warrants to conduct searches were simplified, the power to arrest people escaping from the scene in addition to those found in a space that was raided was granted, the power to criminalize semi-private or commercial premises such as hotels was extended, the use of legal presumptions to criminalize specific forms of lotteries as established in the courts without reference to how each game was played differently was established, and the length of jail terms and quantum of fines were increased.²³⁰

²²⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

²³⁰ SPD, Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) (Amendment) Bill, v356 (11 June 1958). Other legislative revisions include Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) (Amendment No.2) Bill (1959), Hotels (Amendment) Bill (1959) and Societies (Amendment) Bill (1960). The Common Gaming House Ordinance was revised 4 times in a span of 10 years. See Common Gaming Houses (Amendment) Bills (1958, 1960, 1961, 1971).

Space-Crime compression

At various scales, this expediency of justice can be felt. Crime has a geography, expressed as a relationship between space and population (Fig. 2.4). This map published in the police journal captures this logic which materializes into massive state-led efforts at containment and distribution necessary to the remaking of society. The previous section focused on the internal transformations of the Common Gaming House as a political technology of the juridical-police complex. This section examines its external forms – police work on the streets and their representations in mainstream media.

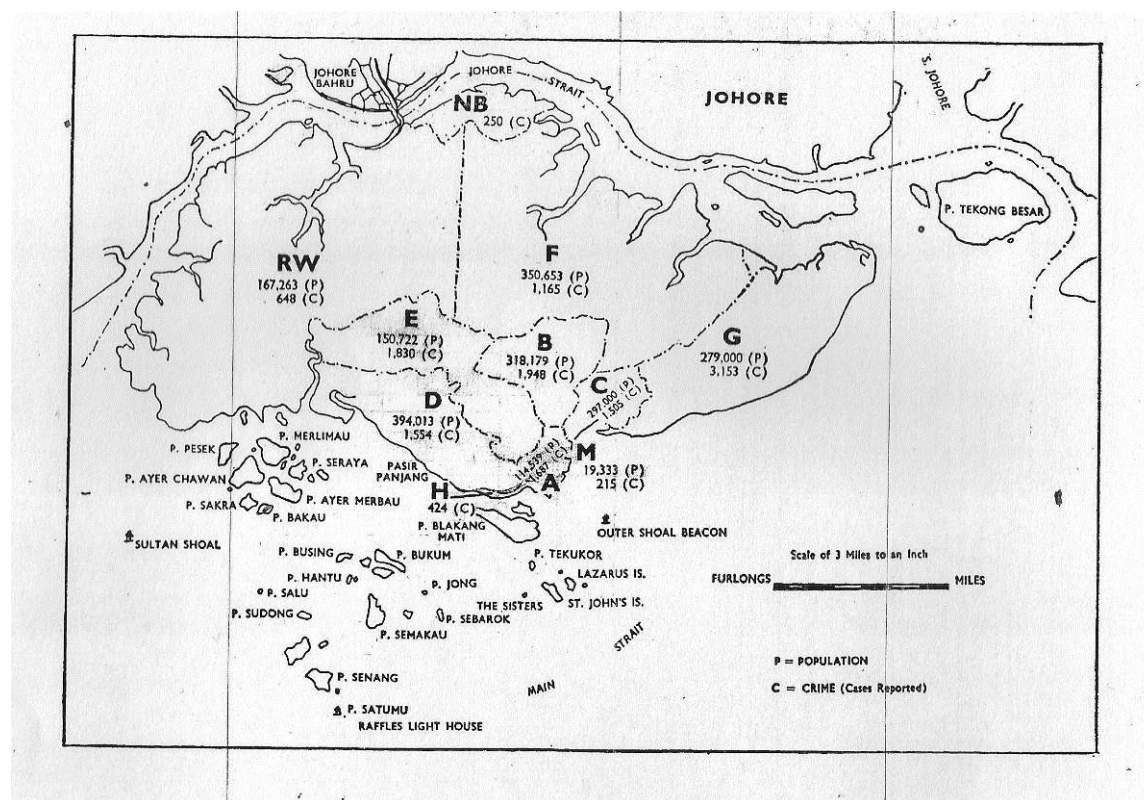


Fig. 2.4: “Population and Crime Distribution by Police Divisions in 1970”

Source: Singapore Police Force Annual Report, 1970

Though spatial-criminal categories appear as discrete and bounded zones on this map, they are in reality as transient and disobedient as the bodies, tickets and dice that make up the raw activity of gambling. Despite what the map suggests, the increased criminalization of vice produced a series of multi-nucleated zones that repelled, attracted and flowed into each other. There were zones of vulnerability – schools, public housing estates, markets and community centers. Failure to monitor and protect these zones could result in misguided youths, dysfunctional families and corrupt community leaders. There were zones of contamination – back-lanes, red-light districts, known gambling dens and dense slum areas. Here, the police must apply all its force to contain, penetrate and dismantle. And then, there were zones of suspicion – rural villages, off-shore islands, private clubs, and hotels. Because people can gather legitimately but remain hidden from view there, these zones must remain back-lit in the radar of police

intelligence. The term “space-crime compression” captures this decreasing space between crime and vice, and the overloading of criminality as a result of this compression.

Between 1950s and 1980s, space-crime compression emerged out of the dynamics between police action, retaliatory maneuvers, and urban transformation. It was the effect of disequilibrium between crime and punishment brought about by an overloading of extrinsic considerations. Choor Singh’s review points to the increasing pressure of excessive criminalization on the juridical system, and how the proliferation of divisions produced contradictions that reveal the incapability of law to define its object and purpose. It does not reveal another perhaps more corrosive intervention – as space became loaded with moral-nationalist valences, so did the way it functioned within the juridical-police system. For the same act of transgression, the degree of punishment might vary depending on where this act was conducted, because the pathways of criminality - from vice to petty crime to big crime to national survival - were no longer predictable. Every minor spatial division, intended originally for greater precision and discrimination, would instead be inflected by a host of moral-nationalist considerations that threatened to infiltrate, exaggerate and overtake the already stressed logic of the courts.

The national archives provide scant empirical materials that show how police work is strategized, carried out and represented in media. At this point, one can only provide, by using mainstream media as a project of nation-building, a schematic of the different zones where moral-nationalist valences become entangled with notions of crime and vice. First, zones of contamination: In gambling dens, disputes over one dollar led to murder. Another man died from 19 stab wounds after a dispute at a back-lane gambling den. Secret societies were suspected to be involved.²³¹ A completely irrational escalation of crime happened in these iniquitous spaces, and a small infraction must thus be pre-emptively returned with great force. The dense urban conditions of Chinatown, Jalan Besar and Geylang were the preferred haunts of organized syndicates who escorted their valued customers in Mercedes Benzes, hid their operations behind trapdoors, and hired gunmen to exact revenge on the innocent.²³² Urban renewal and police raids were part of the same project to demolish these breeding sites of crime, vice and resistance.²³³ As discussed in the previous chapter, this is the paradigmatic spatial condition of the inverted Panopticon. Nothing less than a consistent barrage of police action and comprehensive resettlements can bring them down (Fig. 2.5).

²³¹ “Killing at gambling den: Five years,” *The Straits Times*, 6 February 1968, 9; “Death from 19 wounds after gambling den dispute,” *ST*, 30 September 1969, 6. China Street (中国街) in Chinatown was also known colloquially as Gambling Street (赌间口). See 许永顺, 记得, 大坡牛车水 (新加坡: 许永顺工作室, 2002), 44

²³² “Twelve Gambling rings hit by raids,” *ST*, 2 June 1975, 21

²³³ Kah Seng, Loh, “Black Areas: Urban Kampongs and Power Relations in Post-war Singapore Historiography,” in *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 22:1 (2007), 1-29; “Conflict and Change at the Margins: Emergency Kampong Clearance and the Making of Modern Singapore,” in *Asian Studies Review*, 33:2 (2009), 139-159

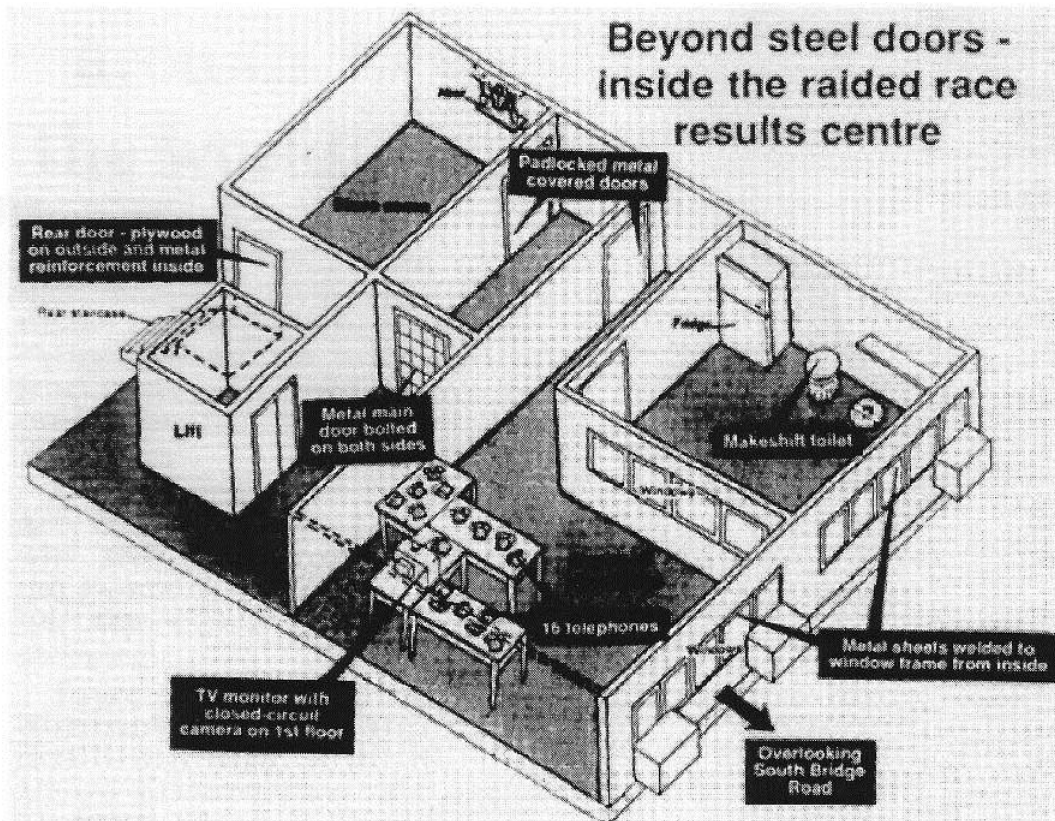


Fig. 2.5: Exposing gambling fortifications

The police remarked that “this centre (at South Bridge Road) is the most extensively fortified one that we have come across.” There were steel doors and closed circuit cameras. An “additional touch” was the sign at the door which read “Merlin Imitation Jewellery.” David Miller, “Racing Centre raid hits about 90 bookies,” *ST*, 19 Sept 1988, 15

Second, zones of vulnerability: In schools, a direct order from the Ministry was given to all principals instructing teachers and pupils to stop gambling.²³⁴ A ticking off and some lessons on the evils of gambling were sufficient to ward off the bad elements of society. But, given the vulnerable space of the school, the smallest hint of moral turpitude would attract a disproportionate amount of retaliation. Thus, the selling of “tikam tikam” cards²³⁵ to school children attracted the attention of the juvenile courts. Raids were carried out around the schools to arrest “gambling stall racketeers” who used “wheels of fortune” to stimulate the sale of sweets and iced drinks.²³⁶ Similarly, around community centers and public housing estates – the vaunted crucibles of modernity - lottery agents and organizers operating in their homes were threatened with eviction notices,²³⁷ while shopkeepers were advised not to let their premises be used to

²³⁴ “Ministry orders teachers: Don’t Gamble,” *ST*, 24 September 1968, 9; “Ministry explains that ‘no gambling’ order,” *ST*, 26 September, 1968, 7. See also archival materials stored in NAS: Ministry of Education, *Encouragement of Gambling and other undesirable activities*. (1960-1968) 2190/60

²³⁵ “Tikam tikam” cards refers to any of those game cards where the buyer stands to win a prize.

²³⁶ The article describes the moment of the raid, and the petty nature of these operations: “... 4 hawkers selling drinks, Kelly and sweet meats, on whose carts schoolboys were placing bets dashed off. On each cart was a wheel of chance – a wooden board with numbers and a wooden shft with a wire needle attached. The wheel is spun and the prizes are iced drinks and food.” “Police raid gambling stall racketeers near schools,” *ST*, 27 June 1952, 7

²³⁷ “Don’t misuse flats, HDB warns again,” *ST*, 12 December 1973, 11; “\$20,000 fine on three for running 4-D lotteries (two of them women),” *ST*, 1 April 1976, 10; “Illegal betting a serious problem in HDB estates,” *ST*, 12

promote betting on “fighting fish.”²³⁸ The public housing estate was a new type of space that confounded the standard practices of patrolling and surveillance. Robberies, house-breaking, gambling and secret society activities all seemed to nest in these spaces designed to modernize and normalize the new Singaporean subject. The traditional “lateral-patrolling system” was ineffective in these high-rise environments where criminals could easily escape “upwards.” What was needed was a “vertical policing” system.²³⁹ Youths were a constant source of anxiety, as they were seen to be susceptible to the lure of secret societies on the one hand, and the decadence of Western culture on the other.²⁴⁰ They were a mobile category of their own, radiating a zone of vulnerability wherever they collected. The shadow of criminality was extending a penumbra into these stationary and mobile zones. From big criminals to petty profiteers, all were the same under the harsh moralizing light of police scrutiny (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7).

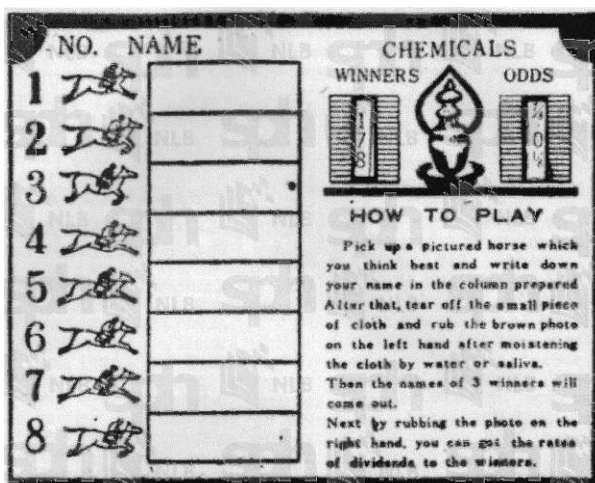


Fig 2.6: Contaminating objects

Sold in packets of twelve or ten for 60 cents in the 1960s, eight people can play at a time. After placing their bets on the horses (left boxes), the winning horses and dividend rates are revealed with a chemically treated cloth (right boxes). Police reported that toy shops in Chinatown were the wholesale distributors of these cards. The prosecutor argued that it was “a game of chance.” The magistrate said, “I have never seen such cards before.” The printer of these cards was arrested and fined \$50. See “The latest horse gambling craze: A \$50 fine,” *ST*, 8 March 1963, 16; “The magic race cards go under the counter,” *ST*, 15 March 1963, 7

²³⁸ “The police move was only against those indulging in fish-fight but also against aquarists and coffee shop proprietors who allowed their premises to be used for such purposes . . . many aquarists are known to promote fish-fight as a side line. Others carry their “fighters” in bottles to coffee shops where contests are held. Betting on these fights is heavy.” “Fish Fights and gambling: A warning to shopkeepers,” *ST*, 21 September 1961, 9

²³⁹ Cher Yak, Chua, “Crimes in Housing & Development Board Estates – A Glimpse,” in *SPJ* 5(2) (1974), 14-18

²⁴⁰ “Let us never forget that the vast mass of our young people, just like people anywhere else in the world, want to live happy, active and eventful lives. Tedium, boredom and a sense of emptiness in their lives can lead to a vacuum which cannot have useful social results. Let us help fill up the minds and the time of our youth with healthy and wholesome activities.” Lee Kuan Yew, 1960, quoted in Jackie Sam, ed., *The First Twenty Years of the People’s Association* (Singapore: People’s Association, 1980), 37

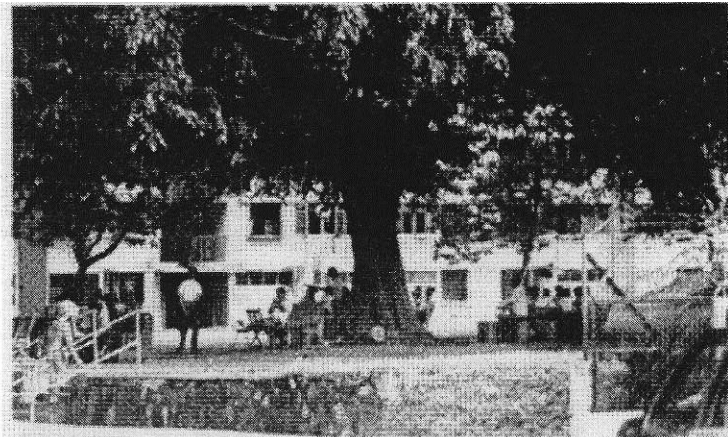


Fig. 2.7: Zones of Vulnerability

Police surveillance exposing “mini turf clubs” and “gambling spots” in public housing estates. “A gambling spot by any other name,” *ST*, 16 December 1985, 32



Third, zones of suspicion: In hotels and private clubs, big-time gamblers were finding ways to evade police detection. These spaces were fortified not by heavy doors and locks, but by their aura of respectability, the self-interest of these legitimate businesses, and advanced technologies of evasion.²⁴¹ Yet, some of heaviest gamblers, especially foreigners and the wealthier classes, could be found here.²⁴² The spaces of the carnivalesque also became suspicious. In bars, rules and regulations were set by the Ministry of Culture: female employees were not allowed to sit or dance with customers and all performances had to be vetted to make sure there were no “indecent gestures or actions” and mingling.²⁴³ In fun fairs, arcade centers and amusement parks, games that approximate pin-ball machines and fruit machines became objects of great suspicion. Dancing and traditional games of chance found in fun fairs amplified each other’s sins when carried out in the same space (Fig. 2.8).²⁴⁴ Such activities were sometimes tolerated in the established amusement parks around the urban fringes, but, when carried out in housing estates, they crossed the line and became criminal.



Fig. 2.8: Zones of Suspicion.

Dancing girls and beer hostesses must behave appropriately. The line of propriety and legality seems to be challenged when game stalls “outnumber food and snack stalls by six to one.” The clients are recognizable, because they are not yet criminals. “All’s not fair at the fair,” *ST*, 11 February, 1989, 12

The map of crime furnished by the police suggests that crime was primarily an urban problem. Yet, the urban periphery where Malay kampongs and informal settlements of Chinese migrants were located had its own moral-nationalist valence. In the 1960s, many rural settlers were strong supporters of leftist or Communist parties such as the Barisan Socialis and the

²⁴¹ In the Derrick Club run by an American, for example, guards used walkie talkies to warn the players of police presence. “Club used walkie talkies to foil police on gambling raids,” *ST*, 31 July 1973, 1. In another club, hidden watchmen and specialized electrical alarm system were used to thwart police raids. “Club’s special alarm foiled police raids,” *ST*, 8 September 1973, 7

²⁴² Gerry de Silva, “The big-time gamblers play it cool in hotel rooms,” *The Straits Times*, 2 November 1972, 6; Fernando Doray, “Gang that operates gambling ‘dens’ in posh hotels,” *ST*, 15 March 1975, 7; “Gambling: Police put the heat on clubs,” *ST*, 2 August 1973, 4; “Smashed: Gambling club in Chinatown for towkays,” *ST*, 14 April 1974, 9

²⁴³ “Barring Vice: Divisions keep tight lid on bars,” *Police Life* 4(16) Oct/Nov 80

²⁴⁴ “All’s not fair at the fair,” *ST*, 11 February, 1989, 12; “37 rounded up in crackdown on mini-casinos at trade fairs” *ST*, 24 January 1989, 17

Malayan Communist Party. In 1960, “kampong patrols”²⁴⁵ were sent out to rural areas and surrounding islands in bright red vans, known in the Hokkien dialect as “Ang Chiia.” The first patrol started at Chua Chu Kang Road, spent the night at Pasir Labar and continued to Tuas the next morning.²⁴⁶ They had this to report:

Near the main road the people were friendly and obviously quite used to the Police, but as the patrol went inland they found the kampong folk in many ways very suspicious of the Police and it was surprising to note that they even tried to hide on our approach. On many occasions they mistook our objectives to be that of spying on them and checking pig and dog licenses. A lot of explaining was necessary to convince them that we were their friends and had come on a visit to get to know them better and try and help them ... There was one instance where an elderly Chinese on seeing the approach of a patrol was seen to lock himself in his house ... This of course proves the value of kampong patrols. It shows that the Police should have frequent large-scale patrols go out and meet the people and encourage them to give information which may assist the Police in their fight against crime.²⁴⁷

To shift these political dissenters and skeptical subjects towards the internal space of society, the police had to be conspicuous. It had to declare itself as a friendly power, and leave those who stand against it the dubious advantage of being invisible.²⁴⁸ And of course, these uncharted territories were also hiding spots for miscreants of the law, and the conspicuous appearance of the police was both intended to stage an open confrontation with them and to establish the locals as informants.

Fourth, zones of exception: these are spaces outside normalized society, quarantine zones for the criminal and the undesirable. Acting like a cordon sanitaire, the vices and crimes that cannot be deleted can be contained here. Offshore islands and rural areas sometimes served this purpose in addition to being suspicious zones of undetected crime. Reflecting the contradictions between a rugged nationalism set against the perceived hedonism of the West and an open economy built on tourism and foreign direct investment, zones of exception include spaces where foreign elements are tolerated or contained. Thus, Singapore Airlines introduced the first “flying casinos” for flights connecting Singapore to San Francisco in the 1980s (Fig. 2.9). By the same logic, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew thought in 1965 that one of the offshore islands could be used for casino development. It would cater to the sins of the West while maintaining the purity and ruggedness of the Singaporean subject:

We’ve got an island set aside for all this. We don’t want all this. We don’t want to go greyhound racing or in the Casino – that’s no good. But the American tourists like it. And all Malaysians can go there. Singaporeans will serve them. But, for Singaporeans, we will go to sleep early. We will wake up early. Tomorrow we work hard. If you go for a massage and tomorrow your bones are weaker, we will never succeed. Let the other fellow have a good time. Never mind. We will give the full red-carpet treatment. But, for Singaporeans, I say: “First thing in the morning, physical jerks – P.T. Those who want a real massage, we can beat them up properly”.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Kampong is the Malay term for rural enclaves or villages.

²⁴⁶ These areas are located in the west and northwest part of Singapore mainland. In Fig 2, they fall within the area marked RW.

²⁴⁷ Ang Chiia, “ ‘Ang Chiia’ visits the Kampongs,” *SPM* 6(1) (1960), 13-14

²⁴⁸ For a historical account of the struggles between these informal settlements and state-led resettlement projects, see Kah Seng, Loh, “Dangerous Migrants and the Informal Mobile City of Postwar Singapore,” in *Mobilities* 5(2) (2010): 197-218

²⁴⁹ “Casino Isle off S’pore?”, *ST*, 25 Oct 1965, 1. P/T. is the military abbreviation for “physical training.”



Fig. 2.9: Zones of exception. In the 1980s, Singapore Airlines fitted slot machines in the planes plying the Singapore-San Francisco route. Source: Fey, 1994

Aestheticizing vice and crime

These abstract and material distortions to vice and crime added up in the courts and the streets. The acceleration of modernity threatened to derail the very order on which it was to be founded. Internally: space-crime compression brought the police and juridical orders in conflict with each other. On the one hand, the police consistently found itself short of manpower to deal with “increased” rates of crime. On the other, the court found itself overburdened to charge every suspect who was hoisted in by the police. “Playing a game of chance with slips of paper is not an offence in Singapore. It becomes an offence only when this game of chance is played in public with money or money’s worth,” Choor Singh said as he threw a case out.²⁵⁰ The court also resisted relinquishing its power to determine what was or was not gambling to the police and its “expert witnesses.”²⁵¹

Externally: there were moments when the cost exacted on society in its own name appeared too unconscionable. There were displays of irrational fear – gamblers leaping off buildings during a police raid suffered severe injuries that were totally disproportionate to the punishment they would have received if they were arrested.²⁵² There were cases of excessive suffering – an elderly woman threatened suicide if she were evicted from her apartment for a minor case of illegal gambling.²⁵³ There were petitions against what appeared to be the excessive display of police power. A policeman reflects on this unhappiness:

In order to prevent them from going back to the same place, shame them, you know. Collect all the [gamblers] and tell them to walk in one line; along the street back to the police station. So everybody will see these are the gamblers caught, you know. Walk back. You don’t transport them back in a bus. It is not very far from the police station *lah*, about 500m or something like that ... Of course we thought it was a

²⁵⁰ “Judge: No such offence in law,” *ST*, 25 November 1965, 8

²⁵¹ “Court refuses to accept ‘expert’s’ evidence in gambling case,” *ST*, 23 March 1976, 7. This is already a problem Choor Singh discussed in his 1960 review.

²⁵² “7 hurt in 30-ft jump to escape police,” *ST*, 29 December 1973, 28

²⁵³ SPD, *Debate on President’s Address*, 15 May 1968, 10 May 1968

good solution. But we got a lot of petition, why are you so inhuman? We stopped ... That is just an example of what we tried to do to prevent all these gambling.²⁵⁴

If Choor Singh's review already reveals this disequilibrium wherein the entire scale of criminality was both lifted and compressed, the overwhelming force of police intervention had an externalized effect that was uncomfortably visible. It was acceptable that the gamblers continued to outwit the police with their trapdoors, invisible ink and walkie-talkies – this only fueled the David-Goliath story. Their “cunning” dramatized the “heroism” of the police, and this was part of the effort to turn the people against the very forms of popular illegalities they enjoyed. It was acceptable if the criminals were exhibited as fortified rooms or dubious figures with their faces blanked out; or if their faces were revealed, it was only because this exposure shamed them, and thus saved them from turning into criminals (see figs.5-7). They should never be recognized simply as members of the imagined community, as fellow citizens. Thus, when the fear of punishment becomes so disproportionate to the punishment itself, when the instruments of law seem to enclose both criminals and citizens in one uncaring sweep, the entire performance of justice becomes unstable. It is thus in the aesthetic realm that intensified criminalization must find a way to redress and justify the injuries it inflicts on the people.

Aesthetic considerations permeate the juridical-police complex. What the police faced in the 1960s is no different from how the colonial administrators thought about the Malay constables who had to perform their patrols in a disciplined and convincing manner. It is also for the same reason that G.G. Thomson argued against the use of police in plain-clothes, insisting that “justice must be openly seen to be done.”²⁵⁵ In mainstream media, gambling was reported only when it was criminal, or when it was something that happened outside of Singapore.²⁵⁶ As Benedict Anderson²⁵⁷ argues, the role of print-media in the project of nation building should not be underestimated, and the total effect of such representations is to erect a hall of mirrors to exaggerate and introvert the protected space of the nationalist imaginary. In these pages, the effort to suppress the vice and crime of gambling is given a heroic character, as if the police and the nation were the David of Modernity struggling against the Goliath of Human Nature and History. This is, of course, an amplification of Quah's narrative within the police discourse. Such rhetoric waxed and waned proportionately to the scale of criminality, and the general message was to educate and reform the public by branding these activities as immoral or criminal.²⁵⁸ A convincing performance of justice helps to shrink the spaces of tolerated illegalities by simultaneously decreasing the political and social costs of criminalization, while pushing the criminalization of the people to its tolerable limits.

²⁵⁴ OHC, interview with Geok Ek, Poh

²⁵⁵ “In Uniform or Plain-Clothes,” *SPM* 6(3) (1960).

²⁵⁶ Therefore, one would find advertisements for gambling resorts/events in other parts of the world; or reports on the larger-than-life stories of Howard Hughs in Las Vegas and Stanley Ho in Macau; or reports about the “gambling-mad” nations like the UK and Germany, where gambling was legalized. In 1964, a series of articles was published in the Straits Times to “educate” the public about the “ABC” of gambling. Yet, its tongue-in-cheek subtitle suggests that these were intended for adults only, and the primary message was that the odds were always stacked against the player, whether the game was honest or not. See Peter Lim, “Who's for Strip Poker? Tonight?” *ST*, 16 August 1964, 3; “It's called the Great Equaliser,” *ST*, 9 August 1964, 17; “It's lose now, pay later,” *ST*, 2 August 1964, 7; “The ABC of gambling: FOR ADULTS ONLY,” *ST*, 26 July 1964, 18

²⁵⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*

²⁵⁸ The author has not looked at newspapers of other official languages. There is certainly room for a more thorough analysis of how different print-media represented gambling and how that reflects their internal politics and the constituents of their target audiences. The task of this analysis, however, is not the representation of gambling per se, but its shifting spatiality as a heavily loaded register of moral and criminal practices.

The efficacy of the Common Gaming House as a political technology is its ability to criminalize selectively without sparing anyone, thereby managing the very proportion and distribution of crime. As the previous section shows, the social and political costs of intensified criminalization cannot be entirely accounted for within the juridical-police complex. Crime is not an autonomous object, as much as the police and judges would like it to be. It is a multi-nucleated spatial system that makes sense of itself by attaching to identifiable and stable material traces. Thus, it is made up of numerous situated encounters between the police, the judge, the criminals, the citizens and other symbols of state-sanctioned violence that ultimately set the quantitative and qualitative limits of punishment. The cumulative effects of these encounters produce fine calibrations in the internal machinery of the Common Gaming House, but they also rebound onto the public imagination as so many displays of violence.

Thus, the reconstruction of space-crime compression in the previous section serves another purpose. It presents visceral scenes of such situated encounters as communicated by the state to its citizens. It is by reflecting and expanding on these scenes that one can try to understand the political effects of aestheticizing vice and crime. Several theoretical perspectives are useful here. Cultural theorist Tony Bennett has tried to discuss the relationship between the visible and the hidden in his work on museum practices. Working with Foucault, he nevertheless chides him for his “incautious generalizations” about how political technologies perfected in the prison made possible a disciplinary society where punishment ceased to be a spectacle. Rather, society continues to be rendered as a spectacle, of which the institution of the museum occupies a central place in a permanent “show and tell” of specific installations of power/knowledge. As such, Bennett’s “exhibitionary complex” carries forward the concept of disciplinary power as one that is productive rather than repressive, but does so into a highly visible order:

The peculiarity of the exhibitionary complex is not to be found in its reversal of the principles of the Panopticon. Rather, it consists in its incorporation of aspects of those principles together with those of the panorama, forming a technology of vision which served not to atomize and disperse the crowd but to regulate it, and to do so by rendering it visible to itself, by making the crowd itself the ultimate spectacle.²⁵⁹

It certainly is incautious to treat the panoptic and the panoramic as historical scenes that usher in one after the other, or as separate sets of practices found in different settings. Nonetheless, Bennett’s ultimate concern is with museums as schools with prison-like effects. It is an enclosed space opened to the public, and despite what he claims, the emphasis is on the visible, rather than on the relationship between the visible and the hidden. He does not concern himself with moments of violence and disorder – they exist as anti-matter that provoke all the sets of practices and knowledge that form the focus of his study. In contrast, when analyzing how the justice itself becomes the “ultimate spectacle,” one should keep in mind that the work of the courts and the police cannot be opposed to each other as prisons to museums, one hidden and the other visible. To produce docile subjects, scenes of disorder and violence are not always hidden. Rather, they must be strategically staged. To maintain this separation between the visible and the invisible, between violence and silence, ignores how the targets of intervention are not just the criminals, but all the other potential criminals who are mercifully spared. In the theatre of crime and vice, the spared are also interested spectators.

²⁵⁹ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (NY and London: Routledge, 1995), 68

The images and cases in the previous section can be re-organized and expanded to present the different moments of this performance. For the purpose of analysis, this can take the form of a gradation that begins from the extreme end of total visibility to the other end of total invisibility. 1. The visibility of criminals as recognizable individuals and the visibility of the heroic policemen who arrested them: in this relationship, the act of crime and the act of sanctioned violence attempt to terminate each other without any excess. Police raids, for example, must be justified by the monstrosity of the crime. Such an attempt at visible symmetry is always a tricky maneuver, as the short quote from the policeman shows – not all spectators think that the gamblers should be paraded, as it marked an excess of power; 2. The visibility of potential criminals and the visibility of the police: unlike the first moment of total visibility, the balance is not struck between criminals and heroes, but the potentiality of both. This is an imprecise zone where the general criminality of the people is both acknowledged and suspended. Thus, the residents in rural Singapore or high-rise flats and the highly visible “ang chiia”/patrols doing their rounds are exposed to each other, and it is through this exposure that violence is made unnecessary. Similarly, in Figs.2.6-2.8, when the morally dubious citizens and criminalizing objects are exposed by the hidden eyes of the police, or better still, the enraged eyes of a fellow citizen (even more invisible because it could be anyone), crime is forestalled; 3. The invisibility of criminals and police but the visibility of crime. Fig. 2.5 shows an emptied out gambling fortress without any traces of criminals. The emptied serenity of the gambling den is a deliberate aesthetic masking of the violence of the raid, and the careful enumeration of architectural defenses serve as evidence of criminal activity which in turn teaches the public the language of law. This is an autopsy of crime and a posthumous victory for justice.

And so on as one moves towards the complete invisibility of crime and violence, of pure surveillance: “all “18,000 pairs of eyes [in the Police force] will be made available to keep the authorities informed of the activities of undesirable characters.”²⁶⁰ Known secret society members and released prisoners could be cultivated, as well as “waiters, waitresses, barbers, taxi-drivers, car-rental operators, bar tenders, school boys, bandboys and pawnbrokers ... The potential information pool is immense.²⁶¹ Fingerprinting and blacklisting began this process in the colonial era. The end point, of course, is the Panopticon in its most efficient and pervasive form.

In this theatre of crime and vice, of violence and silence, each actor fades in and out and takes different guises in different encounters. Each encounter demands a careful symmetry between the visible and invisible manifestations of power. Philosopher Jacques Rancière uses the simple and flexible concept of the “distribution of the sensible” to argue that aesthetic regimes reflect and reproduce political structures because they determine what can be seen and what can be said.²⁶² Scholars have appropriated it to analyze built environments and other forms of material culture as aesthetic regimes, to understand the kinds of political effects brought about by the manipulation of the sensible.²⁶³ And so, it is by tracing the moves of this performance – carried out in the streets and represented in the media - that one might return to G.G. Thomson’s

²⁶⁰ Kong Song, Koh, “The Need for an Intelligence Unit in the Criminal Intelligence Department,” in *SPJ* 2(1) (1972): 40

²⁶¹ Reginald, Sandosham, “The Tradecraft of Intelligence in Secret Societies,” in *SPJ* 4(1) (1973): 42

²⁶² Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2004)

²⁶³ See, for example, Asher Ghertner, “Rule by Aesthetics: World-Class City Making in Delhi,” in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of being Global*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy (MA, Malden & UK, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell), 279-306; Michael Shapiro, *The Time of the City: Politics, Philosophy and Genre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010)

question in the 1970s: Why did his vision of a different model of policing where the police is a defender and friend of the people, and not a “paramilitary,” take almost 20 years to emerge? It is not because modern criminology finally caught up with policing practices in Singapore, or that high-rise housing and the decentralization of population demanded a more diffused network of policing, or that there were limitations to police manpower and a more efficient model had to be implemented.²⁶⁴ All these reasons can already be found in one form or another in police discourses in the 60s and 70s. Rather, it is because criminalization had to be absorbed into the commonsense of everyday life as justified and necessary, and over time, as commonsense is transformed, criminalization takes on a different aesthetic that places the police on the side of the people. The decreased rate of crime and the emergence of the “defender” are bought at the cost of the reduced space of popular illegalities amongst the people.

One might describe how the attack on the spaces of popular illegality becomes insensible as a process of normalization. In other words, it is no longer felt, seen and discussed *as such*. Thus, even though gambling as crime and vice never left the public imagination and the radar of the state and the police, the asymmetry in power and the loss of privilege is made insensible. The aestheticization of vice and crime plays a pivotal role in this process. Another special space in which a different set of normalizing techniques is brought to bear on the bodies and senses of the gamblers is in the public ritual of the state lottery itself.²⁶⁵

The performance of state lotteries

Beyond its obvious economic objectives, the state lottery is a strategy to relieve the stress of intensified criminalization. By absorbing the reformed and repentant gamblers into its fold, the leftovers can be criminalized righteously and harshly. If colonial administrators only saw these farms as sources of revenue and contained spaces of tolerated illegality, nationalist leaders saw these spaces as highly regulated reformatories. If the former had little to say about what went on in these farms or the ways they should look, the latter were all too aware of the paradox that such spaces inserted into their vision of nationalist modernity. To operate something that it zealously criminalized and moralized, the government had to observe all the right moves. It had to substitute for its direct presence a cast of intermediaries and distractions. The logic of substitution renders the state invisible and uncontaminated.

This distribution of the sensible can be best analyzed by looking at the public lottery draws. In the late 60s and 80s, the earliest public draws were held weekly at prominent shopping centers, conference halls or open spaces. These were bustling events, hosted by television celebrities and featured ladies parading with winning numbers in front of a crowd. These draws were sometimes part of a carnival with music, dancing and performances. The television celebrity would sometimes give a symbolic turn to the machine to open the ceremony. Sunday draws were televised and special draws were staged for festivals such as the Chinese New Year, with electrical appliances instead of money as prizes (Figs 2.9-2.11). In order to shift gamblers from illegal operators to legalized venues, in order to accustom the public to the new games

²⁶⁴ Jon S.T. Quah and Stella R. Quah. *Friends in Blue: The Police and the Public in Singapore* (London: Oxford University Press), 1-9; “Promoting Neighbourly Concern”, *Police Life* 5(4) (1981): 4-5

²⁶⁵ Private gambling in the form of betting on racehorses has always existed in Singapore in the Bukit Turf Club. In 1960, it was legalized to open off-course betting stations and operate the Singapore Sweep to combat illegal gambling. In 1968, the state lottery came into operation through the setting up of Singapore Pools. This analysis is not too concerned with the separate histories of these institutions. Instead, it seeks to offer a more theoretical insight into how aesthetics play a part in the legitimization of vice. For a historical account of Singapore Pools and this early period of legalization, see Ilsa Sharp, *Just a Flutter: The Singapore Pools Story* (Singapore: Singapore Pools (Private) Ltd, 1998)

introduced, open and aggressive marketing of legalized gambling was carried out. Besides these centralized draws, people could also buy tickets from the many booths placed outdoors in the city. Within a year of its operation, the number of ticket booths increased from 32 to 96, and, according to Sharp, the chronicler of Singapore Pools' official history, "even the shyest young girls took to the streets with enthusiasm to tout Toto to the public ... [and] others were sent out to do mail-drops of promotional pamphlets at the new housing estates."²⁶⁶ These lottery booths were standalone objects and painted a bright orange to attract the attention of the punters.

According to the ladies who used to carry these numbers on stage and operated the lottery drums, the entire event could last up to three hours, depending on the game. It was tiring, but the discipline of rolling the drums had to be visible and flawless. Each lady had to make sure to rotate the drums about ten times, at about the same speed, and when the rotation stopped, to make sure the ball dropped out onto the mat without any further nudging. Rehearsals were conducted to make sure this rhythm was absorbed into the body memory of the ladies. Their roles were highly prescribed – for example, they were never allowed to touch the balls before, during or after the draw. Thus, together with the carnivalesque atmosphere of these early draws, there was always a visual and bodily discipline that had to be practiced and communicated. After all, the audience was there to be entertained *and* to audit the drawing process.²⁶⁷



Fig. 2.9: Early lottery draws, 1960s-80s. Source: Ilsa Sharp, *Just a Little Flutter: The Singapore Pools story* (Singapore: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 1998), 28

²⁶⁶ Sharp, *Just a Flutter*, 27

²⁶⁷ Author's interview with Alice and Jennifer (employees of Singapore Pools), 13 July 2010



Figs. 2.10: Early lottery draws, 1960s-80s
Source: Sharp, *Just a Little Flutter*, 29

EXTRA PRIZES TO BE WON
CHINESE NEW YEAR SPECIAL DRAWS
Draw Nos. 10-18/84 **TOTO** 5th Feb.-4th Mar 1984
Four Lucky Numbers Game

1st Prize: Double Bonus Plus Cash to Life Annuity with interest at Month 6 Interest of Philippine Airline ticket
2nd Prize: Philips CTX CT4225 with Telenor Plus 20 Center
3rd Prize: Philips CTX CT4225 with interest
4th Prize: Toshiba Washing Machine JWS1102
5th Prize: Toshiba Electric Oven HGR110E
100 Bonus Prizes: Sharp AR-2000A Fax Copier Model 4200
1000 5th Prize: Sharp SC-5000A Scanner 500-110
100 Bonus Prizes: Sharp SC-5000A Scanner 500-110

Figs. 2.11: Early lottery draws, 1960s-80s
Source: Sharp, *Just a Little Flutter*, 33

While lotteries may be as old as history, and while the mathematics underlying lotteries has not really changed, as public rituals involving the interactions of humans, machines and space, they communicate and put into practice different sets of values about gambling and the authority that sanction it. This combination of the disciplined and the carnivalesque runs deep in the history of lottery draws, and it is useful to contrast the Singaporean scene with another well-known scene to identify its peculiarities. Historians of gambling remind us how the Venetians of the 13th century were the first to practice large scale lotteries which then spread to the rest of Europe. They invented the system of using blindfolded “charity boys” to draw simultaneously from two urns – one for the winner and the other for the prize.²⁶⁸ The first state-sponsored lottery draw in England in 1566 followed this Venetian process of using blind or blindfolded children to draw from two large drums simultaneously. The sales did not go well, despite Queen Elizabeth’s promise that for seven days “any ticket buyer would be safe from arrest for anything except major crimes.”²⁶⁹ The draw finally began on 11 January 1569, at the west door of St Paul’s Church and the entire process took four months to complete. Only parts of this process need to be recalled to appreciate how laborious it was: upon collecting the receipts, the middle portions of the tickets sold were cut out, rolled and fastened with thread or silk. They were then placed in a box marked ‘A’ which was then placed in another strong box secured under seven different locks, the keys of which were held by seven different managers under seal until the draw began (Fig. 2.12). The outermost portions of the tickets were also cut out, rolled and fastened and placed in box ‘B’, but this was done in public. On the day of the draw, the boxes were carried to the Guild Hall. Then,

the outer boxes being unlocked and removed and the tickets well shaken, “an indifferent and fitt person” shall take out a ticket from box “A” and another “indifferent and fitt person” a ticket from “B”, which tickets shall be opened and “named aloud”... and so the drawing shall proceed, the boxes being locked up each night.²⁷⁰

These boxes were 12 or 18 inches thick, with openings for the hand to reach in and suspended on the center to facilitate shaking and mixing.²⁷¹ By 1770, the “indifferent and fitt persons” were required not only to be either orphans, or blindfolded, or blind, but also to hold one hand behind the body while drawing so as to prevent them from switching winning numbers.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ David Schwartz, *Roll the Bones: the history of gambling* (NY: Gotham Books, 2006), 86-87

²⁶⁹ Jack, Scarne, *Scarne’s complete guide to gambling* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 129

²⁷⁰ Ewen, L’Estrange, *Lotteries and Sweepstakes: an historical, legal, and ethical survey of their introduction, suppression and re-establishment in the British Isles* (London: Heath Canton Limited, 1932), 128-9

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 233

²⁷² *Ibid*, 129

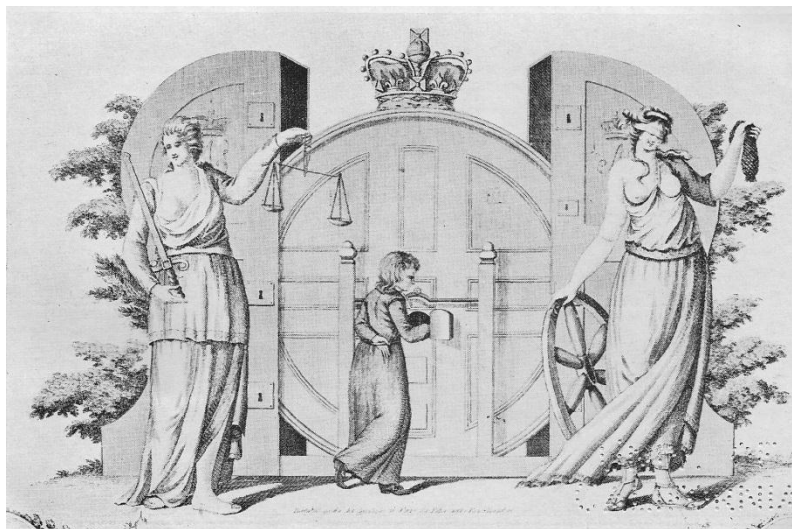


Fig. 2.12: The strong box with seven locks, c. 1776

Source: British Museum, reproduced in L'Estrange, *Lotteries and Sweepstakes*: 129

Several connections can be made across these two scenes. In England, the moral authority of the state is bestowed by its location – the Guild Hall and St Paul’s Cathedral – and extended through a temporary withdrawal of sovereign power in the form of a universal amnesty. This is a great symbolic gesture, at once suspending the general law of the land while concentrating the display of this temporary clemency onto a single event. It is almost as if the entire weight of criminality attached to gambling amongst the people has been transformed into a single project of virtue monopolized by the Crown. In Singapore, this symbolic gesture is distanced from the state. Singapore Pools is a private company who, with the help of Bulgarian advisors²⁷³, operated the lottery. The locations of the draw seem to be accessible but pedestrian. The moment of temporary lawlessness in England transform into a dual spectacle in Singapore – the spectacle of gambling in these legalized locations, but also the spectacle of intensified criminalization described in the previous section. Both, of course, are symmetrical expressions of sovereign power – the power to create exceptions, to temporarily suspend itself.

Another connection links the opaque drum and the figure of the blind orphan-child, one arm behind his back, to the opaque drum and the lady, trained to spin the machine at a specific rate. By sanctioning lotteries or other large-scale forms of gambling, the sovereign or state stakes its moral authority on the truthfulness of the game. It is not enough that there is put in place a series of technical procedures and mechanical devices to ensure that what emerges from the draw is a result of pure chance, but that this discipline must be performed for the public to see. Thus, the witnessing of the draw by the public completes it as a truthful event. In the 16th century, the public would trust an opaque box, but only if the person drawing the number is this ridiculous figure of a blind orphan-child – not just innocent but also handicapped. Despite this artificial tragedy, he is still dubious – he has to keep an arm behind his back in plain view of the public as a mark of his corruptibility. In Singapore, it seems, people trust the lady working on the opaque metallic drum, but only if she seems to be a mechanical extension of this contraption, as if she has no volition of her own, and can do nothing to influence the results of the draw. And in order

²⁷³ In the 1960s, it was of course more politically acceptable to learn from a fellow socialist country on how to run lotteries.

to verify this – since an element of distrust is still present - one must approach the machines and examine closely. The mechanics of rotation, like the exact posture of the orphan-child, is the very register of truth itself.

State lotteries are also alchemies of money. They transform vice into virtue, by concentrating the diffused circulation of illicit money into a single project of honorable cause. In 1569, the money collected was intended to repair the harbors, amongst other kinds of public works. In 1960s Singapore, it was meant to fund the National Stadium. Thus, when the foundation stone was laid for the stadium in 1970, this alchemy had to be communicated to Singaporeans through words and architecture. Dr Goh said:

Singapore and her sportsmen and sportswomen deserve this. They have been carrying on on a shoestring so far as financial and material resources go ... [Pools,] by taking advantage of a natural weakness of human nature, makes sure that not all the money spend on gambling is totally wasted.²⁷⁴

This alchemy is a complex one. In the place of a natural weakness, the rugged Singaporean emerges. The exploitation of this natural weakness is carried out by Singapore Pools, not the state. The beneficiary is not a single Singaporean athlete, but an entire nation. As Lee Kuan Yew also said, the stadium is not about producing star performers who could win at international or regional events. Such stardom gives little to the nation. Rather, it is the overall culture of healthy living that this building emanates and makes visible: “Healthy, wholesome exercise and recreation can make up for the passive entertainment which filled the lives of many people, the TV, cinemas, floorshows and exhibitions.”²⁷⁵ Mass participation and mass spectatorship is the means to produce a disciplined workforce and vigilant military.²⁷⁶

The Brutalist form of the National Stadium completes the alchemy from natural weakness to national discipline. It is designed to express size and strength, through its symmetrical form, the use of bare concrete, the articulation of large structural elements and the dramatic steps that lead up to the main entrance. The lack of any figurative elements and the geometrical intensity that focuses all attention onto the field produce a space that speaks about the collective, rather than the individual. Drawn from examples in Japan, Moscow and England, to be modern means, again, to be selective about one’s inspirations and models. (fig. 2.13)

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 29

²⁷⁵ Lee Kuan Yew, speech at the official opening of the National Stadium, 21 July 1973

²⁷⁶ Mike McNeill, John Sproule and Peter Horton, “The Changing Face of Sport and Physical Education in Post-colonial Singapore,” in *Sport, Education and Society* 8/1(2003): 35-56



Fig. 2.13: National Stadium, Singapore, 1973. Source: NAS

The elements of this alchemy can be iterated. They range from the actual spaces in which legalized gambling takes place to the practices, objects and abstractions that make legalized gambling visible in specific ways. Thus, if crime and vice belong in the back-lanes, fortified dens and other dubious spaces, the legalized lottery stations shall be open, public and accessible. After 1970s, brightly painted lottery stations began to appear near wherever illegal gambling could be found, but in this opposite aesthetic. Tickets, architecture, advertisements and machines all play a part in giving a proper aesthetic to the entire performance. The visible amount collected through the legalized lottery becomes a “truthful” reflection of the hidden economy of illegal betting, and it must be given a material form that reminds the public of this alchemical conversion from bad to good money. Ideally, this is carried out by redirected these monies to fund public buildings and social welfare projects.

The balance between the carnivalesque and the disciplined, however, is not stable. This performance of legalized gambling is intricately tied to the theatre of vice and crime which it is designed to replace. For the alchemy to be convincing, national progress has to be seen to take the place of individual vice. Thus, with the completion of the National Stadium, the entire performance had to be reassessed. Without a convincing endpoint, the bustling scenes of these lottery draws could not be justified. The state and its intermediaries cannot be seen to excite and exploit this “natural weakness” of Man. Instead, it must appear in a much more sanctimonious guise. After the completion of the National Stadium, all forms of advertising became suspicious. An aesthetic transformation took place - the carnivalesque receded while the technical and masculine took over. In 1978, lottery telecasts were stopped “in line with the government policy

of discouraging public gambling²⁷⁷, and in its place, the results were announced through radio.²⁷⁸ It is not known when the special draws ended though they probably fell victim to the same suspicion that they could have induced gambling by targeting specific festivals with specific prizes. In the place of these moving images and bright posters, the sterility of numbers was substituted (Fig. 2.14). The public rituals also slowly became enclosed. TV celebrities and the bevy of ladies disappeared. In their place were the technician, the auditor and the commentator (Fig. 2.15).

SPORTS BETTING			
League	Home Team	Away Team	Match Kick-Off
S.League	Guan	Bal Khasto	Thu, 10/06/10 7.45pm
S.League	Young Lions	Gombak	Thu, 10/06/10 7.45pm
S.League	Albirex	SAF FC	Fri, 11/06/10 7.30pm
World Cup	South Africa	Mexico	Fri, 11/06/10 10.00pm
World Cup	Uruguay	France	Sat, 12/06/10 2.30am

All World Cup matches are on sale.
For more details, please check Singapore Pools website.

MOTOR RACING		
Canada Race	Qualifying	Sun, 13/06/10 1.00am
	Final	Mon, 14/06/10 12.00am

LOTTERY

TOTO Draw No. 2543/2010
Draw Today: Thursday, 10 June 2010

Group 1 Prize
\$3,000,000

Sales close today 6pm

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Prize) Centre
1 Selegie Road, POB 91 Singapore 188309
Time: 6.20pm

HOT STORY
Call us, if story is published you get this
HOT PHONE
HOTLINE: 1800 733 44 55

Singapore Pools World Cup 2010 Information Note

- World Cup Accounts** - in use till 12th July 2010. Lucky draw for sign-ups before 11th June 2010. Sign-ups available online or at Singapore Pools branches. Terms apply.
- World Cup Cards** (\$100, \$500 and \$1,000) for top-up of World Cup Accounts are on sale at all Singapore Pools authorized outlets.
- Up to \$50 from Singapore Pools for qualifying customers to help defray the cost of their World Cup telecast subscription packages. Terms apply.

For more details, visit www.singaporepools.com.sg or call 6786 6688.

Always play with care. Do not bet heavily.
Enjoy the World Cup. Know Your Limits.

Fig. 2.14: A Singapore Pools lottery advertisement and announcement in *The Straits Times*, 7 June 2010



Fig. 2.15: Public lottery draw in the late 80s.

Source: Singapore Pools, *In Celebration of 20 Years: Singapore Pools Anniversary* (Singapore: Singapore Pools, 1988)

²⁷⁷“Toto telecasts to be stopped in Dec,” *ST*, 20 Sept 1978, 8

²⁷⁸ “Rediffusion to take over Toto results,” *ST*, 28 Oct 1978, 10

Ironically, the sanitization of this ritual made the spread of lottery sales booths around the landscape of Singapore possible. In 1980s, the outdoor lottery booths began to disappear as the sale of tickets moved indoors. In 1986, J.B Jeyaretnam, a member of Parliament from the opposition party asked if Singapore Pools had plans to set up betting centers in housing estates, and if the residents had been consulted on this move. The Minister of Finance replied:

...Singapore Pools (Pte) Ltd will be replacing, in stages, its Toto booths with sales agency outlets in shops and shopping complexes. The Company has no immediate plans to set up new betting centres, as such, in housing estates. The sales agency outlets will, whenever possible, be located in the neighbourhood of existing Toto booths. The existing outlets have been in operation for some years and these have been no objections from the residents in their vicinities... [Singapore Pools] applied for a location at the NTUC Fair-Price Block 109, Bukit Purmei, within the Anson Constituency, but it was turned down by the HDB. So I think there are adequate safeguards.²⁷⁹

The Minister's cautious reply is emblematic of the sensitivity of the issue. By 1988, however, another legalized gambling game – the 4-D – was already widespread amongst the housing estates. There were 150 agents in 61 constituencies located around these Toto booths and HDB estates.²⁸⁰ The logic of substitution rationalized the spread of legalized lotteries to wherever illegal lotteries could be found: since it is in the nature of man to gamble, since the criminals are operating everywhere, it is in order to attack illegal gambling that legalized gambling must become prevalent. This becomes the official reason for the spread of legalized gambling stations around the island.²⁸¹ But this reason is based on a key assumption, namely that the total pool of vice is a constant and therefore the loss of illegal operators is equivalent to the gain of the State. More gambling opportunities do not translate into an increase in the gambling habits of the people. This assumption also becomes an operational principle – legalized gambling must only cater to what Abt and Vicki calls the market of “unstimulated demand.”²⁸²

Based on this principle, architecture, like the public ritual, is similarly sanitized. It has to be indoors, or else merge into the everyday landscape (Figs. 2.16 and 2.17). The process developed such that by the late 1990s when the lottery was once again used to finance the theatre and arts center – the next big national project to be funded by the lottery after the National Stadium - media coverage and official rhetoric spent little attention on the source of its funding. Instead, it was the iconic architecture and its ambitions for the local and international arts scene that were focused on. The relationship between the lottery and the building became distanced. One would find images of the future building imprinted on the lottery ticket itself, but one would find little mention of the lottery in association with the building, at least not with the same kind of passion as Dr Goh's opening speech for the National Stadium. It was almost as if the spectacular architecture of the arts center, instead of transforming bad money into good money, might serve instead as a kind of seductive image to induce gambling amongst the people. Thus, its appearance could only be tolerated on the lottery tickets since it would target the existing gamblers, not the general populace. Such is the aesthetic and formal translation of the principle of “unstimulated demand”.

²⁷⁹ *SPD* “Betting Centres in Housing Estates (Consideration for residents' views)” 20 March 1986 Col.768

²⁸⁰ *SPD*, “Singapore Pools (Pte) Ltd” 25 March 1988, Col. 1416

²⁸¹ See, for example, the short debate between Low Thia Kiang and Teo Chee Hean. *SPD*, “Off-Course Betting Centres,” 25 May 1995, Col. 1120

²⁸² Vicki Abt, James F. Smith, Eugene M. Christiansen, *The Business of Risk: Commercial Gambling in Mainstream America* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985)



Fig. 2.16: Lottery station in a public housing estate. Source: Author, Aug 2011

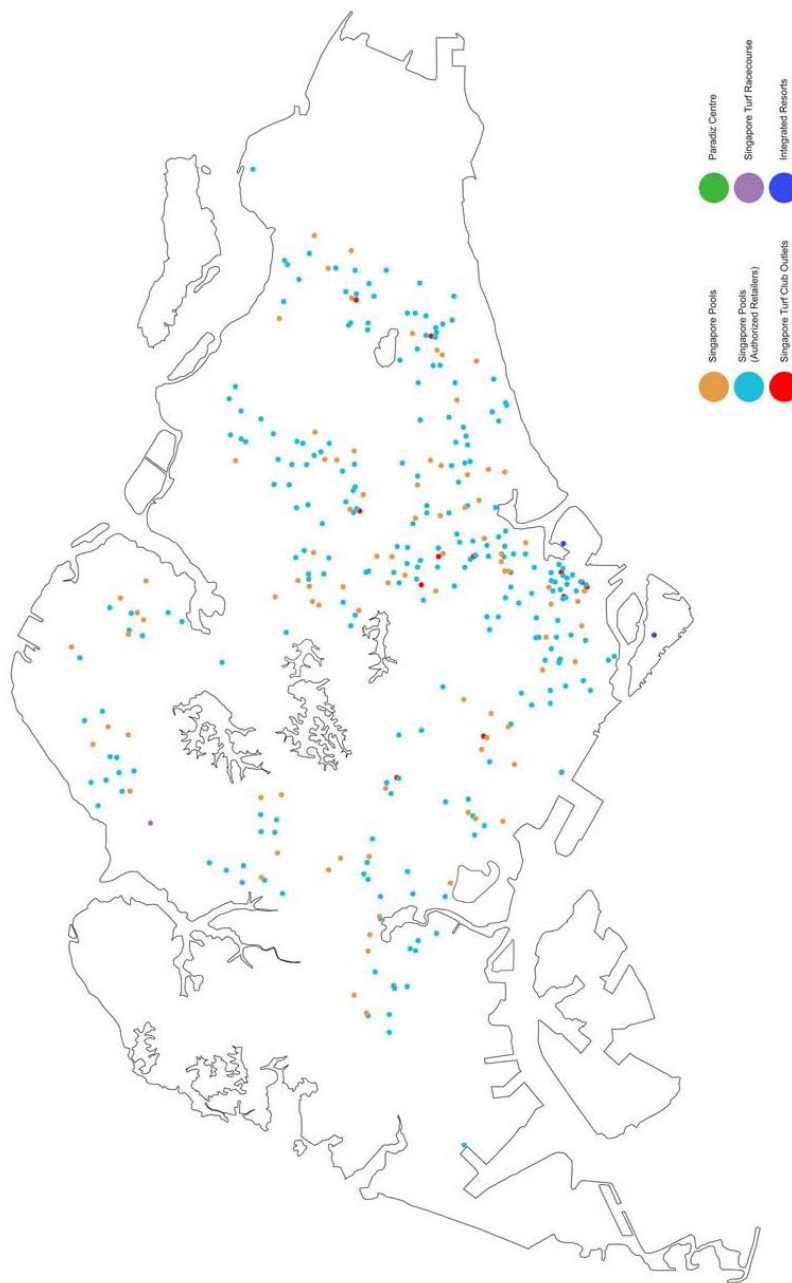


Fig. 2.17: Locations of all legalized gambling outlets in Singapore, 2011. Addresses of Singapore Pools outlets and Singapore Turf Club outlets are taken from the respective official websites
Source: Author; Graphics: Tammy Lephram

A scene today

In Singapore, the public lottery draw is held several times a week on the 2nd story of a shopping mall. It is usually attended by about 80 or so Chinese middle aged punters, mostly men. To enter this room where the event is held, the visitor walks through a neon-lit tunnel, where he/she will be casually inspected by a friendly usher to make sure he/she conforms to the appropriate dress code. The fan-shaped room is simply furnished, clean and comfortable. There are no windows or visual connections to the outside. Rows of chairs have been arranged in front of a simple stage, raised about one foot above the audience level and cordoned off. On this stage, an unusual machine is placed. It is a transparent plastic bubble with several tubes attached to its back and a ramp sliding down to the front. A table is set up between the audience and the stage, and on this table rests a device with a red button.

By 5:30pm, the room starts to become crowded. Staff members in red uniform mingle discreetly amongst the punters. There seem to be very little need for them to do anything more than be present – the punters know the drill, and wait patiently for the draw to begin. At the designated time, three officials approach the stage. The male presenter welcomes the audience and announces the number of this draw. Another official unlocks a metal suitcase and methodically transfers all 45 balls into the tubes of the machine. The third official audits the process, and the presenter calls out the number of each ball as it is loaded. With the loading complete, one volunteer is requested from the audience. His/her identity has to be checked to make sure he/she has not volunteered more than five times in the last few draws. The stage is then evacuated. The officials and the volunteer sit at the desk, while the presenter stands to one side. The volunteer is given the honor of pressing the red button, and instantly, all 45 balls fall into the bubble, where they spin around rapidly but silently. Every 10 seconds or so, one ball is sucked into a tube extended into the center of the bubble. This ball then rolls off onto the ramp that carries it to the front of the machine – its number clearly displayed and magnified on the digital screens. Five more balls are sucked out of the bubble to produce the winning sequence of the day. At the end of the draw, the punters dissipate as uneventfully as they had filled the room.

What an unusual but familiar scene! It is a public ritual that is so embarrassed of itself it must be regulated, at the smallest details, through space, machines and bodies. The male presenter announces and welcomes, but there is no female counterpart to glamorize or seduce. The officials stage the event, but do not intervene, instead passing the moment of truth to the innocent volunteer. The figure of an external auditor, the methodical steps – each of which must be announced, accounted for and conducted in sequence, the dress code of the audience and the orderly arrangement of furniture – an entire choreography designed for the proper conduct of all involved in this performance. In this performance, there is a simmering tension between excess and restraint. The euphoric hope of becoming an instant millionaire is suffocated by the sanctimonious ritual. If the punters were excited – and indeed they are – their expressions are subdued to the level of slightly audible gasps and studious recording of winning numbers on notebooks.

In this scene, there is also at work a series of disciplinary technologies concerned with the production of pure chance. On the one hand, there is an unbreachable space between the machine and the human, and yet on the other, the human eye breaches all barriers and subjects the

machine to a total and continuous surveillance. Since machines are never transparent, what is significant is how this machine *makes a performance out of transparency*. Its magic lies in producing movement without moving and without human intervention. Pure chance is produced within the bubble by releasing an energy that cannot be seen or manipulated, but visibly registered in the random movement of the balls. The production of pure chance is thus a pure spectacle of movement. The untold dreams and desires piled onto these five numbers dissipate. The very figure that authorizes this spectacle becomes invisible.

Looking at the actual performances of this alchemical process of moral laundering, one gets a much more nuanced reading of what seems to be a common process of legitimation in all legalized forms of gambling. In Singapore, the disciplined and hidden performance of the public lottery draw is indexical of the taming of vice through a period of intensive criminalization and moralization. By the 90s, there was an overall atmosphere of silence and invisibility, a far cry from the heated rhetoric, buildings and performances that made up the theatre of vice and crime during the nation-building phase of Singapore's history. Indeed, it is this spatial-aesthetic order that had to be preserved in 2004 when the government decided to open two casinos in Singapore. To understand how the Las Vegas model of casino gambling threatens this order, I turn my attention to Las Vegas in the 1950s when the corporatization of the industry gave rise to a distinct confluence of practices, technologies and values. Only then can one understand why the Las Vegas model would appear so naked and scandalous from the perspective of Singapore.

Chapter 3

Maximizing Profits: The Las Vegas model

In the 1950s, the main gambling activity in the city of Las Vegas was concentrated at Fremont Street. It was experiencing a boom as a result of the federal policy to locate defense facilities and manufacturing plants to the north of the city, thus bringing both customers and infrastructure to the city. American soldiers returning from war also provided a new market for these resorts offering a holiday in the sun and away from mainstream culture. As historians have shown, and as cultural theorists have observed, the first wave of a Las Vegas aesthetic appeared there – the ‘Glitter Gulch’ known for its elaborate and outlandish neon signs.²⁸³ Along the highway connecting Las Vegas to Los Angeles, the first few casino-resorts based on a suburban inward-looking typology was also being constructed. Thomas Hull, who developed the El Rancho, was an experienced hotel developer. To avoid city taxes and zoning laws, and to obtain large plots of land cheaply, his choice of site outside the center of activity was met with some skepticism. Yet, it proved to be successful, and in the next few years, other casino-resorts such as the Flamingo and the Desert Inn Hotel were located there. This “Strip” is an index of the flow between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, a productive exchange of Hollywood glamor, workers, customers and architects. A publicity brochure from 1955 shows how Las Vegas was in its entirety one integrated resort offering multiple adventures in and outside the hotels, and it was marketed as such. (Fig. 3.1)

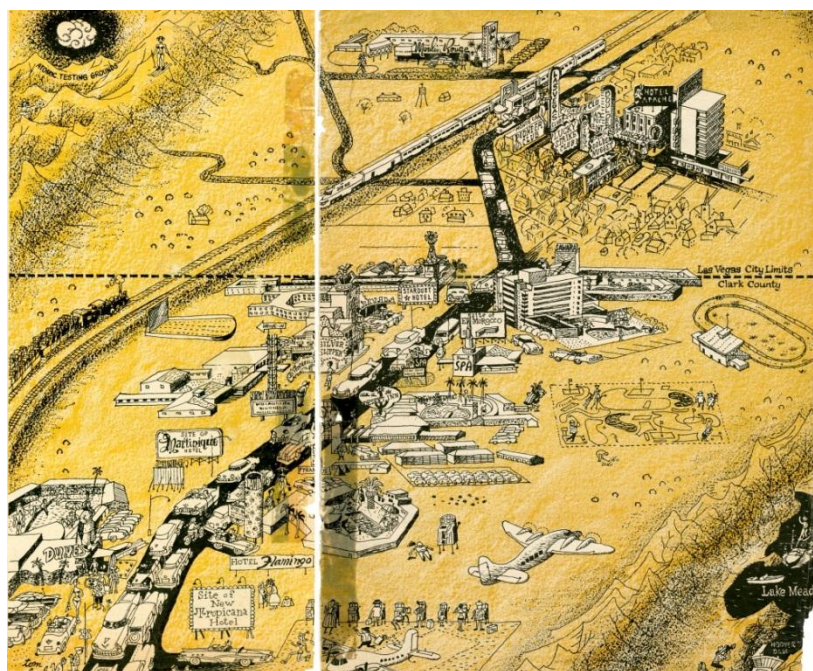


Fig 3.1. Marketing Las Vegas in 1955. As this picture in a lifestyle magazine shows, Las Vegas offered a variety of leisure activities. In the resorts, one could gamble, relax by the pool or in the spa, and play golf. Outside the resorts, there was Lake Mead and Hoover Dam, as well as atomic bomb sightings in the mountains. Source: *Life* 38(25), 20 Jun 1955. Marshall Wright Collections, CGRSC.

²⁸³ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2000); David Schwartz, *Suburban Xanadu: casino-resort on the Las Vegas Strip and beyond* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003)

Already in the 1950s, Las Vegas could hardly be seen as the exception to American society at large. This argument is pursued in Moehring's history of Las Vegas from 1930 to 2000, and also echoed in Schwartz's historical analysis of the casino resort on the Las Vegas strip. Schwartz argues that post-war wealth gave the American middle class more discretionary income to travel to Las Vegas for leisure, and that they would seek out a vacation that "resembled the orderly life of the suburbs while allowing a modicum of hedonistic release."²⁸⁴ Moehring argued that by 1945, Las Vegas politics, like all other sunbelt cities, converged on the need for a "well managed, business-oriented government with low taxes and a commitment to growth."²⁸⁵ Gottdiener, Collins and Dickens, adopting a socio-spatial perspective to understand how conflicting interest groups operating at various scales shape the urban development and social structure of Las Vegas, press even further, arguing that "Las Vegas is becoming a more typical American city, while the rest of the country is changing in ways that make it more like Las Vegas."²⁸⁶

The transformation of Las Vegas and casino industry happened in these crucial years and the changes are evident in both the urban form and architectural aesthetic. The casino-resorts after the El Rancho were not run by hotel developers, but by gamblers and criminal syndicates. Many of them moved to Las Vegas as a result of a federal level anti-vice campaign led by Estes Kefauver in 1951. These gambler-developers disagreed with Hull's design, since the casino was inaccessible from the main lobby. At the Flamingo, for example, the developer, Billy Wilkerson, had another design in mind: "The layout he had in mind was radical. It called for the casino to be placed at the center, 'the hub' of the hotel. No guest would be able to move around the hotel without passing through the casino. There will be windows ..."²⁸⁷

There is another transformation that is just as spectacular but also utterly invisible. As Figure 3.1 shows, along with gambler-developers, celebrities and vacationers, slot machines arrived in large quantities to Las Vegas. The campaign led by Estes Kefauver did not just displace criminal syndicates. It moved large numbers of these criminalized machines into the casinos of Las Vegas where they were legal. The picture shows a train full of slot machines arriving at Las Vegas. People are playing slot machines at the airport, and one dead gambler is found next to a slot machine in the desert. In the 1950s, the accumulation of slot machines was visible and palpable as this picture suggests, but it also introduced a different technology of gambling to the casinos. Such machines had to be not just profitable; they also had to be secure, fun and economical. At this moment, the slot manager and the gaming technologist were born.

The slot machine is but one coordinate in a new technical, social and political network that is casino gambling in Las Vegas. As Moehring suggests, a "well-managed, business-oriented government" was become the norm in Las Vegas by 1950s. But how was this carried out at the level of practice? The cover page of the 1962 report from the Nevada Gaming Commission shows a montage (fig. 3.2) titled "The Hands of Gaming Control" with the following caption:

²⁸⁴ Schwartz, *Suburban Xanadu*, 78

²⁸⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 72

²⁸⁶ Mark Gottdiener, Collins C and Dickens D. *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (MA, Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999)

²⁸⁷ W. R. Wilkerson, *The Man who Invented Las Vegas*. 1st ed. (Beverly Hills, CA: Ciro Books, 2000), quoted in Stefan Al, *The Strip: Las Vegas and the Symbolic Destruction of Spectacle* (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2010), 42

Clockwise from top – an enforcement agent of the Gaming Control Board tests cards picked up in a routine check of a casino; a clerk adds new index cards to the more than 100,000 in the investigative files of the Gaming Control Board; perfection of a die picked up from a craps table is tested with a microcomputer; an agent, following the strict security procedures of the gaming control agencies, puts obsolete records through a paper shredder; an applicant for a Nevada gaming license is fingerprinted as the first step in the licensing process; an auditor checks the revenue report of a casino to insure that proper taxes have been paid to the state.²⁸⁸

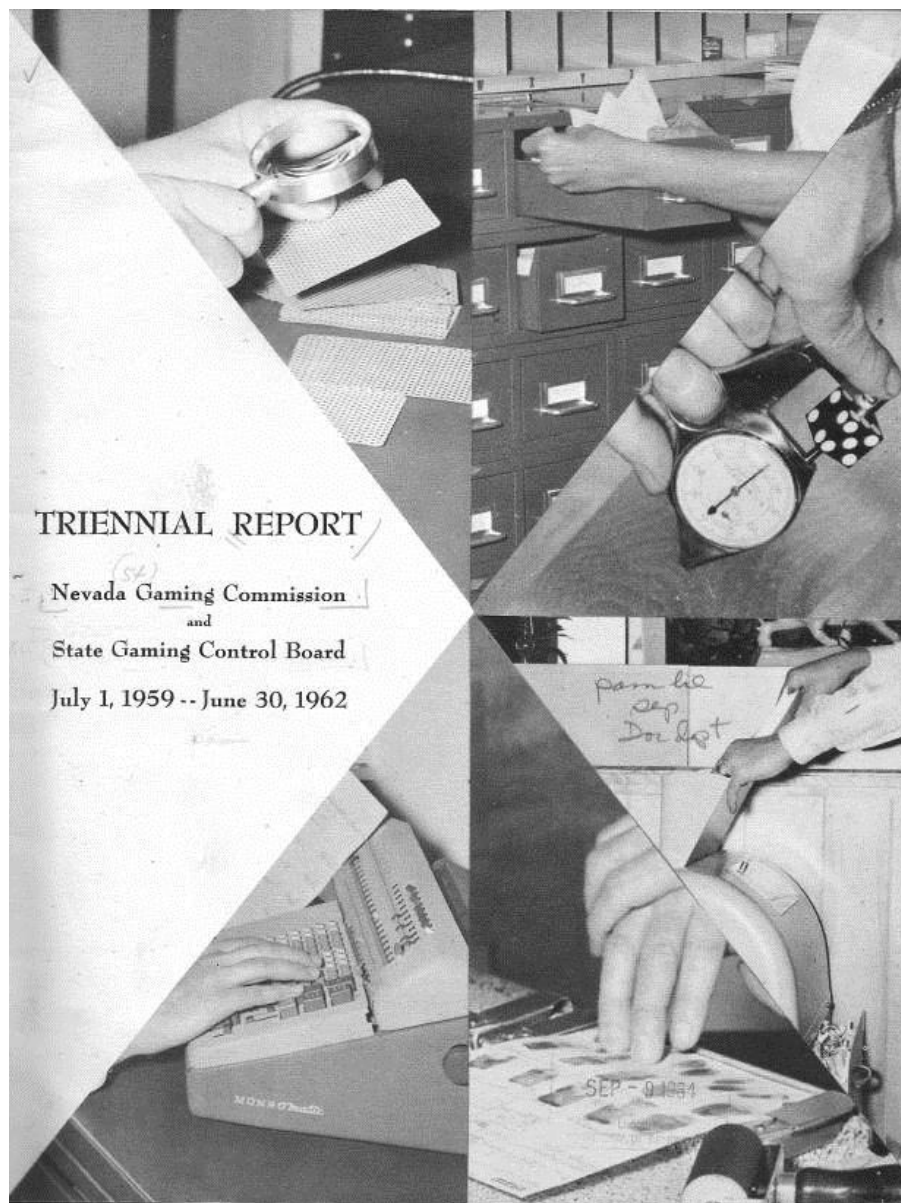


Fig 3.2. The Hands of Gaming Control.

Source: Nevada Gaming Commission and State Gaming Control Board, *Triennial Report*, cover page

²⁸⁸ Nevada Gaming Commission and State Gaming Control Board, *Triennial Report: July 1, 1959 – June 30, 1962* (Nevada: Nevada gaming commission and State Gaming Control Board, 1964). See also United States Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling, *Gambling in America* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1976), 40-46

The rigor of these routines is not very different from how public lottery draws are conducted in Singapore today. From microcomputers that picked up the slightest imperfection in a die to the meticulous accounting of revenues, these practices produced an “avalanche of printed numbers.”²⁸⁹ For regulators, investors and casino operators, the objectivity and certainty promised by numbers agitated against the specter of chance and the suspicion of criminality. Thus, the annual reports of the Nevada Gaming Board built the case of economic benefit, professionalism and social order through statistics – gaming fees and revenue were listed quarterly; number of jobs created by the growth in gaming industry was calculated in relation to state population; the locations of licensees and the numbers of slot machines allotted to them were tabulated.²⁹⁰ At the first Annual Conference on Gambling held in Las Vegas in 1974, the “serious study” of gambling was dominated by economists, psychologists, sociologists and mathematicians who employed quantitative methods.²⁹¹

Yet, within academic discourse, Las Vegas is seldom discussed in terms of these internal discourses and micro-practices. Political scientists and cultural theorists often present Las Vegas as a “truth spot”²⁹² for understanding and critiquing the spatial and cultural forms of late capitalism. They focus on its spectacular architecture and accelerated cycles of creative destruction as emblematic of capitalism’s crisis tendencies. Or they examine the political-economic alliances between big corporations, local communities and state governments in a bid for profits and tax dollars. The accounts that construct how the casino industry took off in the 1970s on the back of corporate capital often do so by looking at the movers and shakers – from Howard Hughes to Kirk Kerkorian to Steve Wynn. At this level of analysis, one need not be too concerned with the everyday routines carried out by managers and regulators, and the kinds of practical knowledge produced by researchers for the industry. Yet, as the opening image suggests, without understanding these internal discourses and practices, one cannot grasp the specificities that define casino gambling as a business in Las Vegas.²⁹³

Furthermore, such micro-analysis fractures some of the conceptual categories and theoretical leaps that seem to structure our understanding of Las Vegas and casino gambling. For example, much of the literature about Las Vegas locates a milestone in the 1969 Nevada Corporate Gaming Act, which allowed publicly traded companies to own and run casinos. This brought a new level of respectability and capital to gambling and Las Vegas, and inaugurated the corporatization of the industry. Yet, examining how the industry was run at this mundane level of technical expertise, one would realize that rigorous accounting techniques were already put in place by both the regulators and the casino operators. Analyzing the records of Charles Hirsch, an accountant working for a casino in the 1960s, historian David Schwartz suggests that such

²⁸⁹ Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*

²⁹⁰ See Gaming Commission Staff (revised ed.), *Legalized gambling in Nevada – its histories, economics and control* (Nevada: Nevada gaming commission and State Gaming Control Board, 1964)

²⁹¹ William R. Eadington, ed., *Gambling and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies on the Subject of Gambling* (Illinois, USA: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1976)

²⁹² Thomas Gieryn “City as Truth-spot: Laboratories and Field-sites in Urban Studies,” in *Social Studies of Science* 36(1)(2006), 5-38

²⁹³ The literature on Las Vegas is immense. Representative texts in the area of social sciences and cultural studies that look at Las Vegas as a postmodern city of spectacles are Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999); John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). Representative text that looks at the political economy of the casino industry is Vicki Abt, James F. Smith and Eugene M. Christiansen, *The Business of Risk: Commercial Gambling in Mainstream America* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985); Representative histories that look at the urban transformation of Las Vegas in relation to local politics and corporate capital is Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2000). Las Vegas also occupies an important space in architectural discourse. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later part of the chapter.

rigor became an example for other industries to follow. Not only was there little fundamental difference between the “administration of a casino and that of the more usual industrial enterprise”, Hirsch thought that the “*industry* has finally accepted the validity of casino functional controls.”²⁹⁴

As with the general direction of inquiry in the previous chapters, this chapter is concerned with understanding the Las Vegas model of casino gambling at the level of practice. Taking the leap from Singapore to Las Vegas, one enters into a very different project in the taming of vice. Yet, it is precisely this difference that needs to be unpacked in order to shed light on the moment of collision when Las Vegas casinos appear in Singapore in 2007. In both Singapore and Las Vegas, spatial containment and the objectivity of numbers help to merge a dubious activity into the conduits of legitimate business. But only in Las Vegas does the phenomenon of mass gambling in enclosed environments provide a fertile empirical ground to test how to *maximize profits* by changing the very practice of gambling. As Abt, Smith and Christensen argue, the fundamental difference between the American gambling industries and the regulated versions in the UK is how the latter works on the principle of “unstimulated demand”, while the former actively promotes gambling, “using all the resources and advertising techniques of modern commercial enterprise, as though it were soap or some sort of passive entertainment, like movies or television.” By stretching the natural limits of consumer spending, they argue that “the amount of money gamblers can spend on gambling is (at least theoretically) unlimited, and all gambling games entail (at least theoretically) the possibility of ruin.”²⁹⁵

The corporate project of taming vice is therefore a history about the quantitative turn in the industry. It shows how this stretching of the natural limit of spending was carried out at the confluence of new technologies and mundane practices by following two experts who emerged between 1950 and 1990. During this period of time, slot managers and gaming technologists rose in prominence in the forums of professional exchange. Slot technology revealed to operators an automated surveillance system that could extract from the very activity of gambling data about the habits of the player, the popularity of each game, the rate of play and so on. Numbers produced from slot machines and table games connected with numbers produced by the corporations about consumer behavior and demographics. Casino operators began to foresee a future whereby every economic activity in and outside the casino-resort could be absorbed into a virtual superstructure of numbers where rational calculations could produce the maximum profits. Casino design fell in step with this quantitative turn. The casino-resort was disaggregated into a system of parts with specific internal relationships and numerical dimensions that no longer needed to be verified by context. At the same time, in retaliation to this industry-wide fascination for numbers, casino designers emerged as experts of the unquantifiable, for they alone could show how to design experiences in order to maximize profits. Thus, while numbers transformed gambling into an object of scientific investigation, they also fed into feverish dreams about what numbers could do. If numbers help to draw a line between legitimate and illegitimate business, between harmless entertainment and unhealthy addiction, they also help to mystify the industry’s agendas and hide its anxieties. The economy of the multi-national corporation, the

²⁹⁴ “Engineering Square Bones,” *Newsweek*, July 3, 1961, quoted in Schwartz, *Suburban Xanadu*, 119. Schwartz might be too hasty to agree with Hirsch about how the accounting techniques developed in the casinos shaped how other industries worked. As he also points out, Hirsch was acting as a spokesperson for the casino industry and was therefore mindful to portray it in a favorable light. Nevertheless, Schwartz’s analysis shows how precision and rigor was already part of the casino industry, and not something brought in by the corporations.

²⁹⁵ V. Abt, J. Smith and E. Christiansen, *The Business of Risk*, 158-9

spatial principles of the plan and the embodied authority of the casino designer constitute the “Las Vegas model.”

Dematerialization and the psychology of large numbers

One can begin by looking at a moment of technological transition - the invention of the first electro-mechanical (EM) slot machine. This hybrid machine standing between fully mechanical and fully electronic machines marks a critical moment when the laws of probability slowly escaped the constraints of mechanical parts. In the service manual for this machine, it was reported that the EM circuitry introduced in 1964 revolutionized slot technology. Within 5 years of this new technology, the mechanical slot machine based on the “Liberty Bell” invented by Charles Fey in 1895, became obsolete. Consider this passage in the manual:

The first new concept was the 1964 Model 785 Double Progressive. With two meters there was always a sizable jackpot after a large win was ‘hit.’ These machines became very popular after the introduction of the 1971 Model 922, 5-line Progressive followed by the Model 952 5-Coin Multiplier the next year. The multi-coin play resulted in five times larger jackpots. It took just one more year for Bally to produce the Model 984 Big Shot Continental that featured four, 25-stop reels. The latter machine was able to offer a giant jackpot due to the 1 in 390,625 chance of hitting the big win one. This was an immense gain over the 1 in 8,000 odds offered in 1964. In the late 1970’s it had become popular in casinos to link a bank of 5-reel Bally progressive machines and offer a jackpot up to \$250,000.²⁹⁶

The quote clearly lays out the path of development that would drive reel-type slot machines for the next 20 years in three stages – 1. increase in the number of reels; 2 increase in the number of stops per reel; and 3. linking up machines together so as to pool the total number of reels and stops.²⁹⁷ All pressed ahead to raise the size of the jackpot prize. Yet, its significance foreshadowed its obsolescence immediately. The EM reel mechanism, while revolutionary, did not entirely escape the basic blueprint of the original Liberty Bell. Like the Liberty Bell, the reel mechanism used a sensor-arm to detect depressions on the contact plates of the rotating reels, which then regulated the payout. Thus, in the next service manual for the fully electronic slot machine (SERIES E-2000) released between 1980 and 1986, the entire mechanical assembly of the contact plates and the sensor-arms was replaced by a microprocessor chip. The fully electronic machine completely broke with the mechanical and EM way of producing randomness. At this point in the 80s, there was theoretically no limit to the size of the jackpot. When Bally completely replaced the mechanical reels with the microprocessor, it declared that “the final barrier to high-jackpot innovative games” was finally removed.²⁹⁸

Dissolving the material constraints of creating big jackpots is insufficient because this theoretical infinity is meaningless if people do not actually invest the time and money to grow

²⁹⁶ Marshall Fey, *Bally Slot Machines: The Complete Service Manual for Electro-mechanicals, 1964 – 1980* (Reno: Liberty Belle Books, 1994), 16

²⁹⁷ A brief explanation of how the reel mechanism works helps us understand the quotation better. The EM reel mechanism can generally be conceptualized as a way to produce a number of combinations, some of which pay, of which only a few triggers the jackpot. Each reel has a contact plate and wiper arm. (See Fig 2a) When a reel “stops,” the wiper arm touches the plate at the certain spot, and this completes a part of the electrical circuit. The entire circuit route is thus made up of the different positions of the wiper arms on the contact plates for each of the reels in the slot machine. (See Fig 2b) The total number of different circuit routes determines the total number of combinations. By increasing the number of combinations, one reduces the chances of hitting the jackpot, and thus the amount of the jackpot can increase. Before entering the casinos, slots in the 40s mostly had three reels with 10 or 20 stops each, thus allowing 1,000 to 8,000 combinations (10x10x10 / 20x20x20). With EM technology and digitization, the number of combinations leapt into the realms of millions. Writing in 1983, Fey recorded a video slot machine that could handle 15,752,961 combinations. See Marshall Fey, *An Illustrated History of America’s Most Popular Coin-operated Gaming Device* (Nevada: Nevada Publications, 1983), 235

²⁹⁸ *Bally Gaming Corporate History*, CGSRC, UNLV, Bally Gaming Materials

the jackpot. It is to solve this problem that the third stage came about – linking up separate machines so that they all contribute to a single pool of winnings. These “wide-area-progressives” (WAP) took the casinos by storm in the 80s. International Game Technology (IGT) introduced the “Megabucks”, an online system of video slots in 1985-1986, followed by “Quartermania”, “Nevada Nickels” and “Nevada Fabulous 50s’.” Imagine, an article said, “a patron drops a silver dollar in a progressive slot machine at Harvey’s Resort in Lake Tahoe, and progressive meters in identical slots hundreds of miles away at the California Hotel in Las Vegas or the Comstock in Reno rise incrementally.”²⁹⁹ As the CEO of IGT explained, the Megabucks was modeled on California’s lottery and giant jackpots, where “competing casinos would play the role of the lottery agent, providing space for the machine and receiving a portion of the take ... The only way it is possible to achieve something like this is through many, many casinos cooperating.” Between 1986 and 1995, IGT overtook Bally and shot to market dominance with these innovations, operating and owning about 3200 machines in Nevada and all 1,050 machines in Atlantic City.³⁰⁰

This was also when corporations involved in gaming, hospitality and finance were beginning to think on the national scale, linking up not just casinos in Las Vegas, but also Atlantic City, and other non-gaming businesses around the US. The slot machine showed the multi-proprietary casino operators a way to conquer geography and extend the lure of large numbers to wherever a single machine can be placed. Like lotteries, WAPs both increased the limit size of the jackpots and accelerated their rate of growth through a diffuse network of agents working around the clock. The advertisements for the Megabucks Progressives in 1990 reveal how game designers connected the seductive power of large numbers to the psychology of players, and in that connection, transformed the social and cultural practice of gambling dramatically. The key tagline was “One pull can change your life”. They continue, “Hit it and buy your dream house. Your dream car. Or your dream vacation.” The advertisements show a jackpot of \$2,345,678 - “How does a Megabucks pay so much? For starters, it’s the world’s first multi-casino (91 and counting) progressive jackpot. That means all those players in all those casinos throughout Nevada are contributing to a single constantly rising jackpot.”³⁰¹ In a 1997 survey, 500 players were interviewed in Las Vegas, Reno and Laughlin. They were asked if a large progressive jackpot enticed them to play a few extra dollars they might not ordinarily spend. 62% said “yes” to some degree, leading to the conclusion that “the large size of the jackpot was the overwhelming reason why people were attracted to and played the WAP machines.” The same question – “what makes people gamble more” – had quietly transformed from a criterion of criminalization during the period of Prohibition into a strategy of stimulating demand in the contained spaces of the casinos.

Huge jackpots entice people to play more; but without people playing, jackpots cannot be paid out at all. Game designers realized very early that while winning big was a huge draw, players also wanted to win often. The early gambling machines found on bar counters and in drinking parlors were already designed with the experience of play in mind. After all, one popular way to evade the law was to insist that this was amusement, not gambling. Then, designers understood instinctively that the experience of play was a productive activity that

²⁹⁹ “Megabucks: First inter-casino slots before Nevada Gaming Board,” *CGM* (Nov 1985): 56-57

³⁰⁰ Salomon Brothers United States Equity Research, “Gaming”, (24 Nov 1992), CGSRC, UNLV, International Gaming Technology

³⁰¹ *IGT*, c. 1990, CGSRC, UNLV, IGT Corporate Materials

masked or compensated for the low chances of hitting the jackpot and helped to stimulate spending on other goods. But in the casinos, gambling was not a “trade stimulator” but the key economic driver and there was no need to evade the law. Fun was being reformulated as a legitimizing, scientific and economic project. Between 1950s and 70s, pro-gambling journals and newsletters were beginning to tip the discursive scale of gambling from “vice” to “nice” using the weight of psychology and tourism.³⁰²

Reflecting on the 70s, a Bally representative talked about the performance of the “Blazing 7s” slot machine: “The player response was just exceptional. You could see the excitement. You’d put 10 machines, 20 machines out there, and the jackpot would hit every 15 minutes. Players would see someone hit the jackpot, and they’d want their jackpot too.”³⁰³ Twenty years later in the 90s, a slot director at Excalibur repeated this balancing act between the attraction of large jackpots, the actual chance of winning and the experience of play:

I don’t think we can ever do enough to thank the customer for coming here. My whole idea was to make the player feel better when he got up from playing than when he first sat down at the machine. So we started out to offer a high progressive jackpot game, but not at the expense of what a normal dollar slot machine would be, which is liberal. I felt that the price the customer had to pay in terms of hold, was too high for normal large jackpot game. I wanted to provide a fair hold, plus an attractive top jackpot, plus the frequency of what the customer wants in \$1,000 jackpots. And bonus pays are the key to that.³⁰⁴

Both managers were attentive to the expectations of the gambler, but they were also interested in articulating and shaping the experience of playing slot machines in a casino. Their diagnoses were also only possible in the context of casinos where they could observe this mass phenomenon and draw patterns inductively from it. In the 70s, managers learnt that gamblers playing together in a room exerted a certain group psychology on each other; hence one should put more machines out there to drum up the excitement. In the 90s, the manager wanted to make the individual player feel better after playing, thus one should try to meet his/her expectations by letting him/her to win more often. Between this span of 20 years, such empirical observations about group and individual psychology were combined and translated into the designs of slot machines. They became both a subject of analysis and a catalyst of experimentation. Going through “Casino Gaming Magazine,” the first industry journal dedicated to casino gambling in the US, the internal discourse of the industry between 1985 and 1990 was a busy exchange of ideas about: 1) the physical dimensions and design of slot machines; 2) the graphic and signage design of slot machines in relation to other machines and the casino floor; 3) the varieties of “celebration music” that should be played when a jackpot was hit and how that contributed to and were affected by the general ambience of the casino; 4) the optimal balance between pay frequency and jackpot size to encourage more play ; 5) the ways to lay out slot machines in a casino and how to mix the different machines to maximize “real estate”; and 6) the different ways to build excitement and suspense through new kinds of games or game features in the slot

³⁰² See, for example, the “Psychology Corner” editorial which ran on every issue of *Gambler’s World*, a pro-gambling magazine in the 70s; See also “Las Vegas: nice not vice” in *Gambling Illustrated* (Dec 1965): 2. In another magazine, a professor argues that gambling is not a pathological self-destructive act, but fulfils two basic needs of Man – to “satisfy his need to confirm his existence and his worth.” See Kusyszyn, I. “Why we gamble”, *Gambling Quarterly* (Spring 1974): 45-46. I have already mentioned the first Annual Conference on Gambling held in Las Vegas in 1974, which was dominated by economists, psychologists, sociologists and mathematicians. A genealogy of the shifting discursive terrain of morality in the context of gambling in Las Vegas is provided by Mike Panasitti and Natasha Schüll, “Re-articulating the moral economy of gambling”, *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 77 (1994), 65-102

³⁰³ Green M, *Bally’s 75th Anniversary 1932-2007: A legacy of innovation* (Nevada: Ascendmedia, 2007), 26-27, CGSRC, UNLV

³⁰⁴ *Slotline*, 3(1997):2

machines. The overwhelming consensus of this discourse was unmistakable – a kind of scientific rationality conjoined with new technologies promised a more efficient, systematic and objective way to understand the player as both an individual and a demographic, and that this knowledge could be used to explain, and more importantly, change playing habits.

From mechanics to professionals: a “wealth of information”

The editors opened the inaugural issue of *Casino Gaming Magazine* with this unequivocal statement of fact:

What has changed? Principally, it is the increasing use by the casino industry of sophisticated electronics of all sorts. This trend has, of course, been spearheaded by the increasing importance of micro-processor based gaming machines to casino revenues. But it goes beyond that. The dynamic technical and economic trends of the electronics industry are opening up ever more exciting possibilities for bringing more innovation and fun to the players, and expanded marketing and control tools to management.³⁰⁵

These “expanded marketing and control tools” were a mixture of empirical observations gleaned from the casino floors, corporate practices, applied mathematics and new possibilities opened by digital technology. Ten years earlier in 1976, Bally had introduced the first online accounting and security system for slot machines, Slot Data System (SDS). Its main function was to link up the slot machines electronically and capture, at any one point in time, the total number of coins circulating in and out of the slot machines, the numbers of games played, and how many times the handles were pulled. By 1986, SDS began to include customer tracking features.³⁰⁶ A slot manager reflects on how SDS ushered in “corporate-style strategic thinking”:

We just had a wealth of information, and a system that would give you the information in just about any form you could think of. You could see, sometimes in a matter of hours, the results of your efforts. If you put a new type of machine on the floor or moved it to a new location, you’d know immediately whether you made the right move or not.³⁰⁷

This was in contrast to the pre-SDS era of the 70s, when he had to record the meter readings of each machine manually on a “5-by-7” card, send them to a bank for data analysis and wait about two and a half weeks for the results to return. 15 years ago, he was just a mechanic repairing and maintaining machines. In 1986, he became a slot manager working with data continuously extracted from the activity of play. Speed, precision, accumulation and flexibility – these newly anointed professionals could isolate and call up instantly from this flux of data a range of variables to test their correlative effects on each other: “detailed maps ... concerning the general mix of the floor, location and denomination”; “employee utilization of time”; “graphics which show coin-in [or handle-pull] by model for a given week”; “machines not reaching, within a set time, a certain point of their theoretical hold.”³⁰⁸ In 1994, a Bally spokesperson advertised the second SDS package by pointing to how it could produce “sharp, three dimensional, full-color graphs of everything from slot performance by model, denomination and geographical location to player activity by day, month or year.”³⁰⁹ Visualization of numbers was done in real-time: it

³⁰⁵ Duane Burke and Susan Burke, “The North American casino industry gets its own professional magazine”, *CGM* (May 1985): 3

³⁰⁶ “Bally expands its Slot Data System”, *CGM* (Feb 1986): 40

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 55

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 40-41, 48.

³⁰⁹ Frank Legato, “Bally Systems: mastering the technology”, *Casino Journal Reprints* (June 1994): UNLV Special Collections. For a detailed analysis of the development and capabilities of the Bally Slot Data System from 1976 to 1989, see Cristina Turdean, “Casinos and the Digitization of the Slot Machine, 1950-1989”, *Annals of the History of Computing* 33/2 (2011): 46-59.

was more customizable and easily disseminated for immediate action. In other words, numbers became utterly pervasive, interruptive and indispensable (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Features and capabilities of Bally Systems products in 1996

Source: "Bally Systems" corporate materials, UNLV Special Collections

	SDS/Gamekeeper™
1	Multiple-property reporting
2	Variable date creation and modification for tracking special events
3	Easy-to-use data selection buttons
4	Over twenty graph types for a wide variety of visual analysis tools
5	New graph controls for customizing any graphs
6	E-mail support for quickly distributing reports and graphs
7	Selectable fields for displaying just the information you need
	SDS/GameWatch™
1	Display graphs of slot floor activity in near-real time
	Player Marketing Features of SDS/6000
1	Automatically sends personalized greetings and messages to valued players
2	Automatically identifies "hot players" based on play rate for a specified period of time. Criteria can be customized and floated based on activity on the floor. Thus, someone "who is a hot player at 2a.m. on Tuesday may not be considered a hot player at 4p.m. on a Saturday."
3	Tracks players across different properties and different games

These kinds of information are more than just about how much and how long people play at the slot machines. Slot technology opened up the casino industry to the possibility of an automated surveillance system that disassembled the player and the activity of play into streams of virtual data that could be reassembled to construct the internal economy of the casino.³¹⁰ It was a new way of knowing that utilized and enriched the language of mathematics by stretching its capacity to explain different sets of relations and thresholds once inexplicable. It promised to merge the various activities in the casino into a virtual superstructure of numbers, from which decisions could descend without ambiguity. In Haggerty and Ericson's words, it conferred the power to make up "surveillant assemblages."³¹¹ As these slot managers effused, there was an exponential growth in the applicability of this "wealth of information."

Yet, these bare rudiments of knowledge also produced ambiguities. In 1974, before SDS was introduced, Friedman would say this about how to lay out slot machines on the casino floor:

An establishment should situate its machines strategically to maximize their customer appeal and potential earnings. A casino can evaluate its coin Drop to determine which types of machines generate the largest Drop and which the smallest. Actually this information has limited use since many factors may contribute to the difference in slot activity ... at present time, each slot manager must develop his own intuitive theory of what constitutes the most effective slot mix. As one manufacturer of coin-operated gambling devices has stated: 'Damnest thing. Still don't understand it. Take a box, put lights on it, make it do something, and people will put money in it.' (emphasis added)

³¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 1980)

³¹¹ Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, "The Surveillant Assemblage", in *British Journal of Sociology* 51/4 (2000), 605-622

Even in the 80s, this sense of the unknown is not uncommon. In the first five years of *Casino Gaming Magazine*, when numerous slot managers talked about how to rationalize the relationship between space, humans and machines to maximize profits based on this “wealth of information,” there was always an irreducible element of intuition and experience. For example, a slot manager for two different casinos related how he standardized the types of computer analysis and printouts for both properties, but stressed that the same numbers had to be interpreted differently: “Sometimes you can look at the past history of a game and put your finger right on it; you can say, ‘I have more of that type of people at the Hacienda than I do at the Sahara.’ ... Of course, sometimes the theories don’t work, and they pull the rug on you.”³¹² Twenty years later, in a 1994 manual for casino operators produced by IGT, four slot managers were interviewed about the elusive “ideal slot mix”. One said that it was based on past experience and trial and error. Another seemed to echo this, saying that “daily analysis” was necessary and the “pursuit of the perfect mix” was an “ongoing process”. The third agreed that this pursuit was an ongoing process, though he thought that this was an “unanswerable” question. And the last thought that determining the ideal slot mix was an “evolutionary process”, a matter of “setting those win objectives and meeting them, and combining that with the customer perception of looser machines.”³¹³ And the manual’s final advice to casino operators? A matrix that could be used as a “blueprint for maximization of revenue.” This blueprint should be customized based on space constraints, competition and management philosophy, while, it stressed, maintaining a “vigilant eye on your customers’ gaming tastes” (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: IGT’s “blueprint for maximization of revenue”

Source: IGT, *Getting Started in Gaming* (1994), 22, IGT Corporate Materials, UNLV Special Collections

	Upright Reel Slots	Slant Top Reel Slots	Upright Reel Poker	Slant Top Video Poker	Bar Top Video Poker	Total #	Total %
5¢	80	20	0	0	0	100	10%
25	390	50	14	36	40	530	53%
50	18	10	6	6	0	40	4%
\$1	256	20	6	8	10	300	30%
High Denom.	26	0	4	0	0	30	3%
Total #	770	100	30	50	50	1000	
Percentage	77%	10%	3%	5%	5%		100

The process of taming an unknown world through numbers is evident here. But what is more interesting is the simultaneous unknowability and reification of the “ideal slot mix.” Slot managers seemed to suggest that the wealth of information only helped them transform “unknown unknowns” into “known unknowns,” producing unknown side effects that necessitated more supervision and experimentation. Thus, not only did this expanded cast of “known unknowns” *not* replace the need for intuition and experience, it made this unquantifiable mode of learning-by-doing even more instrumental.³¹⁴ In other words, by making more

³¹² “Leonard Wood: Directing Slots at Both Ends of the Strip”, *Casino Gaming Magazine* (August 1986): 45

³¹³ International Gaming Technology, *Getting Started in Gaming* (Las Vegas: IGT, 1994), 20-22, IGT Corporate Materials, UNLV Special Collections

³¹⁴ This draws upon some of the key arguments made by Ulrich Beck about “manufactured non-knowledge” as a contemporary existential condition. See Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (UK: Polity Press, 2009), 113-128

unknowns appear, slot managers aggrandized their professional value. Gaming technologists were part of this process of “experts in the making”. As the rest of the manual showed, each machine was defined by its space requirement, theoretical profit, coin denomination, win frequency, jackpot limit, game feature and cabinet design. And if this proved too complex, IGT provided a comprehensive “order completion time schedule” for customers who wanted to begin running their casinos pronto – from plan to installation, the entire process would take only 20 weeks. There was no room for chance or error.

But, like the wise slot manager, gaming technologists avoided professional suicide by becoming indispensable through the very knowledge they produced. Despite the overt commitment to positivist measure and calculation, they insisted on the contingencies and unpredictability that made constant vigilance, learning and intuition necessary. An advertisement from a gaming technology company shouted: “How to get slot machines to tell you their deepest secrets?”³¹⁵ The marketing brochure for SDS II began ominously: “The fact is, what you don’t know can hurt you.”³¹⁶ The escalation of knowledge mirrored the growing fear of non-knowledge, and the price of not knowing became monstrous. In this convulsive moment, gaming technology companies were not just discovering, but rather creating, a new terrain of professional expertise by using numbers in ways that also cemented their professional distinction.

In the 1970s, slot machines were “widely viewed ... as window dressing, or as something to keep the ladies busy while the men played the tables.” In the 1980s, slot machines “typically accounts for around half of the revenue in given casino, and slot management has grown into a highly-specialized, strategic and technical profession.”³¹⁷ Casino operators began to question how to reform the rest of the industry based on what slot technology revealed to them. In 1987, a casino director of Admiral Cruises wrote to the editor of *Casino Gaming Magazine* lamenting that increasingly profitable slot machines were replacing table games. Casinos should “reassess their fundamentals” and try to reduce the costs of running table games. His suggestion is prophetic – since the main costs of running table games are the salaries of employees, importing technology from slot machines would reduce manpower by automating surveillance and security procedures. “In the casino of the near future,” he said, “chips would have a bar code on their edges and could be read by scanner strips on the bottom of a float tray. This would give an on-line reading of exactly what the float was on any table ... More information about play patterns, activity, cash drop and peak times, etc. would help in all areas of casino management.”³¹⁸ Comparing table games to slot machines, another journalist described the outdated way players were tracked at the tables. Pit-bosses and table managers were assigned the task of identifying loyal patrons, but this left out a large part of the market base – “people who don’t raise any eyebrows with their betting levels but whose consistent play make up most of a gaming hall’s table action.”³¹⁹

These technological interventions absorbed activity at the table games into the bank of data created by slot machines, and initiated a process of economic re-calculation that rippled outwards

³¹⁵ Technical Casino Services Limited, “How to get slot machines to tell you their deepest secrets?”, *CGM* (Aug 1989): 4-5

³¹⁶ Bally Systems. “Let your slots tell you the real facts of life”, (1992) *Bally Systems Corporate Material*, UNLV Special Collections

³¹⁷ “Casino Gaming in America: Then and Now”, *CGM* (August 1986): 20

³¹⁸ David Stanley, “Table Games: untouched by technology”, *Casino Gaming Magazine* (April 1987): 40

³¹⁹ Frank Legato, “Gaming Data System: A new twist to player tracking”, *CGM* (Feb 1989): 22

to encompass the entire scale of the industry. In 1989, the managing director for Technical Casino Services, a gaming technology company based in London, lamented about the slow pace of technological integration in Las Vegas, arguing that in Europe, table games had been integrated into the same “reporting structure,” and that the system could be applied “to all other sales outlets within the organization, such as shops and bars.”³²⁰ In the same year, Tropicana became the first casino in Las Vegas to test an online player tracking system for table games. Thus, as SDS and other similar online systems started to incorporate more sophisticated player tracking functions, the synergy between corporate marketing and the management of multi-proprietary gambling operations was hard to miss.

A director of marketing in a casino at Laughlin remarked in 1986 that although gambling halls in the 70s would run flashy promotions, they were “just sitting there waiting for customers to stroll in.”³²¹ Marketing programs then were informal and largely targeted at high rollers and junkets. Another marketing director in a Las Vegas casino reflected that the dominance of public companies, the slot machine boom, competition between casinos and the advent of Atlantic City all contributed to the importance of market research in the 80s.³²² At another hotel-casino, a complimentary card program modeled after airline frequent-flyer concept was introduced: “gamblers accumulate points they can use for limousine rides, suites and taking guests to dinner in the Claridge gourmet restaurant ... it’s the only computerized player rating system in the business right now that includes all table games and all slots.”³²³ In the 70s, Bill Friedman was teaching future casino managers how much to compliment customers through a mixture of intuition and conscientiousness, and how to recognize those frauds who tried to weasel benefits without gambling enough.³²⁴ None of these would matter with these player tracking technologies - the amount of complimentary benefits would simply be “directly proportional to the amount of money the customer spent.”³²⁵

Between Las Vegas, Atlantic City and other jurisdictions that were beginning to relax gaming laws in the 1980s, corporations foresaw a future through these technologies where a vast and seamless network could track players as they gambled at different locations and left the casinos to continue with their everyday lives. It projected an end point to the market size – the global population. Jean Baudrillard’s television screen that invaded the home appeared at this juncture in the casino. Examining how media saturation is changing social and political life, he shifts the Marxist critique of alienation to the more dubious phenomenon of transparency: “everything is exposed to the harsh and inexorable light of information and communication.”³²⁶ He theorizes about a world without interiors. The value of communication is nothing but communication itself, he laments, something that sounds very similar to how Bally sold its 1996 products – “if one activity is most crucial to any size casino, it is the act of communicating information to the proper decision makers.”³²⁷ Here, in the interiorized space of the casino, the

³²⁰ Martin William, “Security and the Slot Machine: The Two Key System is Obsolete”, *CGM* (July 1989): 17

³²¹ “Casinos in America: Then and Now”, *CGM* (Aug 1986): 22

³²² Ibid

³²³ “Big Bird”, *CGM* (Nov 1986): 10

³²⁴ Bill Friedman was a key witness and protagonist of the transformation of the casino industry in the 1970s, taught in the College of Hotel Administration at the University of Las Vegas since 1970 and was a dogged proponent of gambling as a legitimate form of entertainment and business. Bill Friedman, *Casino Management* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1974)

³²⁵ “Casinos in America: Then and Now”, 41

³²⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “The ecstasy of communication” in *The anti-aesthetic: essays on postmodern culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: New Press, 1988), 145-155

³²⁷ “Bally Systems”, (1996), *Bally Systems Corporate Materials*, UNLV Special Collections

screen signaled the dissolution of the architectural and geographical injunctions designed to segregate “gambling” from other spheres of life. Legalization through spatial containment catalyzed the mutual incitement of technological possibilities that were once held in different economic and social institutions. Patterns emerged in an enclosed environment where mass gambling could be observed. Numbers accumulated and became statistics. Marketing techniques connected with the instrumental potential of statistics, and followed gamblers in and out of the casinos. Playing habits translated into dining, sleeping, shopping and entertainment habits in the casino-resort, as well as family vacation plans, work schedules, and other bits of information outside the casino-resort. Between WAPs and SDS, slot technology foreshadowed the appearance of internet gambling. In the 80s, this scale of expansion was only national, but the relaxation of gaming laws in many jurisdictions was already making the casino operators drunk with possibilities. By 1990, in the US, the “casino” understood in the historical and etymological sense, “to enclose” and “make private”, no longer exists.

David Kranes and the birth of the “casino designer”

Within architectural discourse, Las Vegas occupies a particularly ambivalent position. In 1969, architectural historian Reyner Banham wrote, “the point of studying Las Vegas, ultimately, would be to see how far environmental technology can be driven beyond the confines of architectural practice by designers who (for worse or better) are not inhibited by the traditions of architectonic culture, training and taste.”³²⁸ For Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, whose book “Learning from Las Vegas” became a cornerstone for architectural postmodernism, Las Vegas was a “found” object whose everyday and popular aesthetics challenged the modernist distinction of high and low culture. In the formulation of their project, there was an assumption that Las Vegas represented something unplanned and authentic. A “deadpan” and voyeuristic documentation of this found object was intended to open the architect’s sensibilities to the iconography of the everyday.³²⁹ If Banham thought of Las Vegas as a product of untrained designers, Las Vegas was, for Venturi and Brown, authorless, a phenomenon borne immaculately from the imagination of the masses. “Learning from Las Vegas” was never about learning from Las Vegas architects.

On the other hand, architecture’s contribution to the internal discourse of the casino industry between 1970s and 1990s was almost negligible. Friedman did not talk about casino design in his 1976 textbook on casino management. The proceedings of the national gaming conferences from 1976 to 1990 did not include any paper by architects or design-related professions.³³⁰ Articles by architects in the first five years of Casino Gaming Magazine³³¹ (1985-1990) were few, and conformed to the general trend of appealing to science and economic logic. Thus, environmental psychology, psychographics and ergonomics were sounded as the kinds of applied sciences that could give casinos a design advantage.³³² Still, these were advertorials rather than any serious attempt at forging an avant-garde relationship between design and the industry. If the industry

³²⁸ Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago), 269

³²⁹ Martino Stierli, “Las Vegas Studio,” *Las Vegas Studio: Images from the Archives of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown*, eds. Hilar Stadler and Martino Stierli (Zurich: Museum im Bellpark, Kriens, and Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG, 2008), 15

³³⁰ The proceedings of these early conferences were published sporadically and edited by William R Eadington. See William R Eadington, *Gambling and Society: Interdisciplinary studies on the subject of gambling*, (Illinois: Charles Thomas Publisher, 1976); *The Gambling Papers: Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on Gambling and Risk taking (v1-13)*, (Reno: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Nevada, 1982); *The Gambling Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference on Gambling and Risk taking (vol. 1-5)*, (Reno: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Nevada, 1985)

³³¹ Casino Gaming Magazine was the first industry magazine in the US dedicated to casino gambling.

³³² See, for example, “Design Construction Firms: providing returns on casino investment” in *CGM* (Nov 1985), 25.

was exuberant about the building boom in the mid '80s, it was owners, builders and contractors who presented their projects in this magazine, not architects. Between 1985 and 1995, the first academic journal in the US dedicated to gambling research, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, did not include any article about architecture or, given its research agenda, any work about the relationship between casino design and gambling pathology. In fact, most of their research was carried out in laboratory conditions, and rarely acknowledged that gamblers could behave differently in the specific spatial context of a Las Vegas casino.

One ambitious “advertorial” in *Casino Gaming Magazine* written by architect, Anthony Marnell II, in 1989 captures the profession’s lack of clout in the casino industry.³³³ He lamented that the design of casino-resorts had become cook-book recipes that were “literal translations of the studies set into motion by the business degrees ... and then managed by pure accounting procedures.” He was clearly referring to the professionalization of every aspect of casino gambling, and the increasing clout of those who worked with numbers. Ending with a hopeful note, he wrote, “we all know the Three Golden Rules of Gaming that each and every guest desires: 1. A better game; 2. the friendliest service; and 3. Ample parking or convenient vehicular access. Soon, we will have the Rule Number Four ... the environment, expressed through the art form of architecture.”³³⁴ It should not be missed that within the industry in 1989, architecture ranked below car-parking in importance. Thus, despite the spectacular developments that were appearing on the Strip from 1970s to 1990s, and despite the attention architects lavished on Las Vegas as a new paradigm of architecture, there was a double silence - the architectural profession was silent within the internal discourse of the casino industry, and the architects of Las Vegas were silent within architectural discourse.

The first paper in the *Journal of Gambling Studies* that made the connection between design and gambling was written by David Kranes in 1995, a professor of English and playwright at the University of Utah. Kranes’ article is a polemical piece with sparse references to environmental psychology, phenomenology and cultural history. He cites Johan Huizinga’s concept of “*Homo Ludens*” where “*play is not ordinary or real life. It is a stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own.*”³³⁵ This leads him, ironically, to argue that since “home” is the most empowering, inviting, natural and intimate space we all wish to “get-away” to, casinos should be designed like *Home*. The reification of *Home* in his text (capitalized and italicized) is quite unexpected. The contradiction of his argument escapes him: if play is a “stepping out of real life,” why should it take place in *Home*, a place where we naturally return to? Are we escaping from “real life” or are we returning to “natural life?” But Kranes will not be stopped. *Home* should be centered. A strong and clear vertical axis should give it a sense of order that is also found in sacred places. *Home* has a clear threshold where “crossing over” is a magical, vital and mysterious feeling that stays with the individual – “We cross in as pilgrims; we cross out as priests.”³³⁶ Then, he borrows the concept of “legibility” from urban designer and theorist, Christopher Alexander, thus transforming the metaphysical order of *Home* into the cognitive order of “place.” He concludes:

³³³ Anthony Marnell subsequently designed several mega-resorts owned by Steve Wynn, including *Mirage* (1989), *Treasure Island* (1993), *Bellagio* (1998) and *Wynn Las Vegas* (2005). He also built and ran *The Rio* (1990) Source: http://gaming.unlv.edu/hof/1998_marnell.html

³³⁴ Anthony Marnell II, “The Art of Hotel-Casino design” in *CGM* 5/7(1989),28

³³⁵ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (New York: Beacon, 1971). Quoted in David Kranes, “Playgrounds”, *Journal of Gambling Studies* 11/1(1995), 91-102

³³⁶ *Ibid*, 94

So: it would seem that we like mystery; we like surprise; but we want the assurance that – though a given place has hidden nooks and crannies – we will not get lost. Above all, we want a sense of orientation: of vantage, of prospect, of centeredness. The trick, then, of any large casino space is to provide “explorable space” which never makes the customer feel disoriented.³³⁷

Having established these principles a priori, he tests them by visiting casinos on the Strip, evaluating how the “feel” of a place might cause him to play or leave. At Harrah’s, he was repelled by the moat. His senses were “assaulted” by the chaos of signages and the “tension of defense.” At the elevated entrance of the Imperial Palace, he thought that “openness and vantage engender amiability.” From this elevation, the entire space was legible and “vanishing points” invited him to the dollar slot carousels. He saved his best report for Mirage. Mirage had the most “delicious sort of player ‘engagement.’ Before one was even aware of the hotel casino, one could hear water and see green space.” Its space was so legible and visually engaging that “visitors often find themselves in the middle of the casino before they realize they’ve entered.” Sunlight filled the casino, a feature that would induce players to stay longer because “we are creatures made to feel alive and vital by the sun.”³³⁸

To his discredit, Kranes slips between speaking for himself and speaking for all players and sun-loving humans, without skipping a heartbeat. To his credit, he never claims that these are design principles or even that they can directly improve profitability – thus, familiarity and habit, he notes, might cause some to patronize a place that is completely disorienting and uninviting. He warns, however, that competition might tip the scale and cause even regular customers to leave their favorite haunts. Four years later in 1999, this article was revised and printed in the proceedings of the 9th and 10th International Conference on Gambling and Risk-taking (1994, 1997).³³⁹ In this second paper, the ground has shifted – it now offers “essential elements” of design founded on the science of psychology and the philosophy of phenomenology. His embodied authority as a phenomenological subject recedes into the background. The voice becomes passive: “Today’s casino world is one which hopes to convert the ‘unlikely’ player into a player. In that world, it is not enough, simply, to provide games and play. One has to understand as deeply as possible what ‘play’ *is* – and then build play grounds.”³⁴⁰ In 1995, he warns that good casino design might become more important as the market becomes more competitive. Casinos should be designed like *Home*, but “nooks and crannies” have their place as well. In 1999, there is no longer any room for mistakes or ambivalence. The cost of bad design is the prospect of bankruptcy.³⁴¹ David Kranes, professor of English, writer and playwright, has become a most unlikely founder of a “school of thought” about casino design.

Kranes’ arguments and politics are emblematic of an opportunistic and retaliatory reaction to the rise of numbers and the new phalanx of professionals adept in using those numbers. The political significance of his intervention is in providing intellectual capital, rather than design

³³⁷ Ibid, 95

³³⁸ Ibid, 99

³³⁹ This revised version is divided into two separate papers – the first tells his personal but authoritative judgment of Rio and Harrah’s casino as “story spaces,” and the second retains the key argument of his original piece.

³⁴⁰ David Kranes, “Towards more adventurous playgrounds: casinos lost; casino regained” in *The Business of Gaming: Economic and Management Issues*, eds. William R. Eadington, and Judy Cornelius (Reno: Institute for the study of gambling and commercial gaming, 1999), 342

³⁴¹ He writes: “Casino expansion is everywhere. Still there are ‘Lost Worlds’ with locked doors. Or which have declared bankruptcy or are on the verge of doing so. How to survive? Who will grow? Who will fold?” (1999: 333)

tools, for architects and interior designers to meet the challenge of these changes and participate rightfully in the internal discourse of the industry. Kranes did not change the direction of casino design - he merely valorized Steve Wynn's Mirage as an exemplar of this new "paradigm." He did not invent the importance of story-telling through architecture – casino-resorts had always been themed environments that communicate to gamblers and visitors through the medium of space and figurative elements. Rather, he gave practical concepts and symbolic distinction to what was already built and what was becoming the norm of the industry. The way he sets up the 1999 article strategically capitalizes on these norms but also sets his contribution apart as something new and irreducible to them. The dividing move is captured in this dichotomy between the quantitative and the qualitative:

The "problem," in most cases, is that a casino management's need for *space utilization* conflicts with the casino patron's need to *experience space*. Builders tend to *measure* space, to think quantitatively, in Euclidean terms: "How many slots can I fit into x square feet?" Players tend to think of space in qualitative, topological terms: "How does this space make me *feel* when I cross the threshold from real life into it?" These conflicting needs come head to head with the casino the loser. A casino may have managed to get ten more slot machines, eight more tables into a given area than seemed mathematically possible. A patron approaches and emotionally "reads" the *chaos* of the space and walks away.³⁴²

Player experience, space utilization and the maximization of "real estate," as discussed earlier, are some of the most exchanged discussions within the industry from the 1980s to the 90s. The growth of the service industry and a consumer-based society in the US had also brought about an increasing awareness within business communities on the importance of selling "total experiences", rather than just products or goods.³⁴³ By the early 90s, slot technology companies were beginning to offer casino design services to maximize revenues based on the arrangement of slot machines on the casino floor (Fig. 3.3). A marketing brochure from IGT writes:

The designs provide guidance to the architect in determining electrical requirements and wiring for slot machine monitoring systems, security systems, lighting and floor treatment. Each computerized 2- and 3-dimensional plan shows exactly where each slot machine will be located on the casino floor. Every detail of each machine is specified including machine type, cabinet style, laminate, color, game theme and denomination. Also included in the design are locations of progressive jackpot machines, stools, special signs, interior design elements, and the location of entrances, change booths, cashiers, bars and restaurants.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Kranes, "Towards more adventurous playgrounds: casinos lost; casino regained", 335

³⁴³ Joseph B. Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 1999)

³⁴⁴ "IGT Casino Design Services", IGT Corporate Materials, UNLV Special Collections. This quote is from a company profile sheet dated 1994.

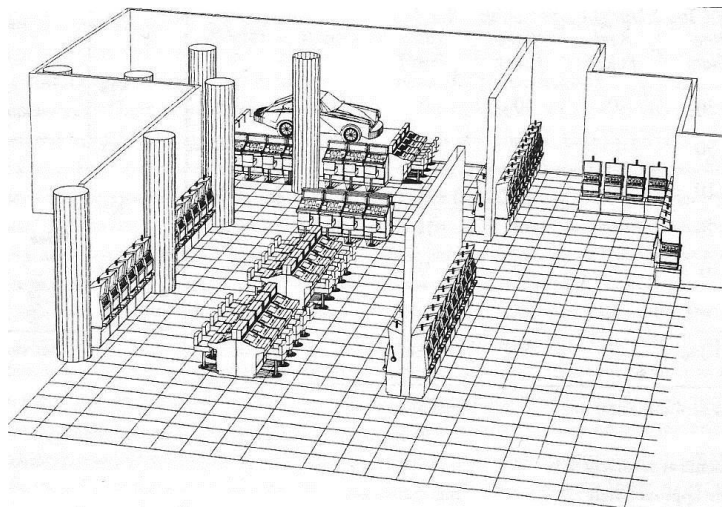


Fig 3.3: 3-D rendering casino design services offered by IGTSource: IGT, *Getting Started in Gaming*. 3rd ed.(1994), 25. IGT Corporate Materials, UNLV Special Collections

Architects, IGT's manual suggests, will be "guided" by these new sets of prescriptions, but one suspects architects might not accept this invitation to obedience too enthusiastically. In the context of inter-professional competition and shifting corporate culture, Kranes transformed these discussions from one cluster of interrelated problems into two conflicting problems. Using the rhetoric of phenomenology and psychology, the qualitative was forcibly extracted from the quantitative, and suddenly, a new expertise was needed to resolve the conflict and tame a new unknown. Concepts such as legibility and experience were not invented anew, but cast in a strict dichotomy such that IGT's 3-D renderings suddenly appeared rather deficient in articulating "human experience." But, this was a false alarm and a massive detour. Krane's paper was one of the five papers collected in the "Casino Design and Ambience" section of the 1999 volume. All asked the same question and sold the same promise as IGT's casino design department – how to design casinos so as to maximize gaming or non-gaming revenue? Although none would say it as such, all the authors appealed to the lust for certainty and objectivity, and silently agreed that the way to know *for sure* was through quantitative measure. There was no paradigm shift, but a new space for economic activity and professional intervention was certainly created.

Architectural plans and the "science" of casino design

Though Kranes' voice is shrill, it is by no means radical. Architects were clearly valued and turned to for their ability to rationalize, design and deliver the complex demands of building large casino-resorts. They were turned to for their ability to materialize themes into built form. Between 1950s and 1990, three building booms produced a series of fantastic structures that drew the attention of academics, tourists and investors worldwide. Kranes' arguments leveraged on the corporate culture of the mid 1990s, but they were also indicative of a longer history of exchange between architectural design and casino gambling in Las Vegas. The pursuit of objectivity and certainty was clearly not foreign to the business of designing and building casino-resorts. As commercial projects, they ran according to deadlines, fixed budgets, regulatory controls and contractual agreements. Between 1950s and 1990s, architects had already laid the groundwork for the production of a silent and abstract knowledge that would feed into Kranes' performance of professional distinction.

David Schwartz's history of the casino-resort on the Las Vegas Strip between 1950 and 1990 provides us with a contextualized overview of the evolution of the casino-resort as a building typology. One of his assertions resonates with this chapter – "Whereas Eugene Moehring and other historians posit that the casino resort created Las Vegas, it is equally true ... that Las Vegas created the casino resort."³⁴⁵ Relying on oral history records, public media and architectural plans, Schwartz argues that the architect's main contribution is in the creation of symbolic and insulated worlds that connect changing business practices with a changing national market. Innovations beyond facile theming are rare. Of the architects who designed the early 1950s resorts as "period replicas" of the frontier, he argues that "nothing intrinsic to the design or operation of casino resorts identifies them as products of the American West."³⁴⁶ Of the three mega-resorts designed by Martin Stern Jr. between 1965 and 1975, Schwartz argues that these would serve as the "paradigm" for casino developments for the next thirty years.³⁴⁷

The idea of a "type" or "paradigm" that can be discerned by comparing visual and planometric representations of the casino-resort guides Schwartz's analysis. Yet, while one may discern types and paradigms *through* plans, it is also necessary to analyze plans as a form of spatial knowledge with specific efficacy and legibility. Plans construct the object of manipulation of their authors. They legitimize a certain way of looking and intervening that is somehow more accurate, effective and objective than would otherwise be possible. As such, architecture's ability to visually represent and construct its object is crucial to its formation as a profession. As Magali Larson argues, a fundamental contradiction underscores the architectural profession.³⁴⁸ On the one hand, it preserves for itself an autonomous realm where symbolic distinction is conferred by peers based on an ideology of artistic transcendence. On the other hand, the architect is measured by his built works, and thus, he is caught in the "profane" realities of patronage, competition and commercialization. The plan, then, is also a form of mystification. It is one of the primary products of the architect, though it must pretend to be transparent to the building that is the source of the architect's symbolic and material success. It hides the heteronomous conditions of architectural practice - on this medium, the architect can pretend to work in splendid isolation.

As with slot machines, one can start with a moment of transition. The nine-storey Riviera that opened in 1955 was the first high-rise casino-hotel on the Strip. Though it did not fare well commercially, it did disprove the theory that the weak soil and high water table could not support such heavy buildings.³⁴⁹ When the Riviera opened, the general manager's speech constructs an insular world where a "long driveway" is the only connection between the Riviera and its outside:

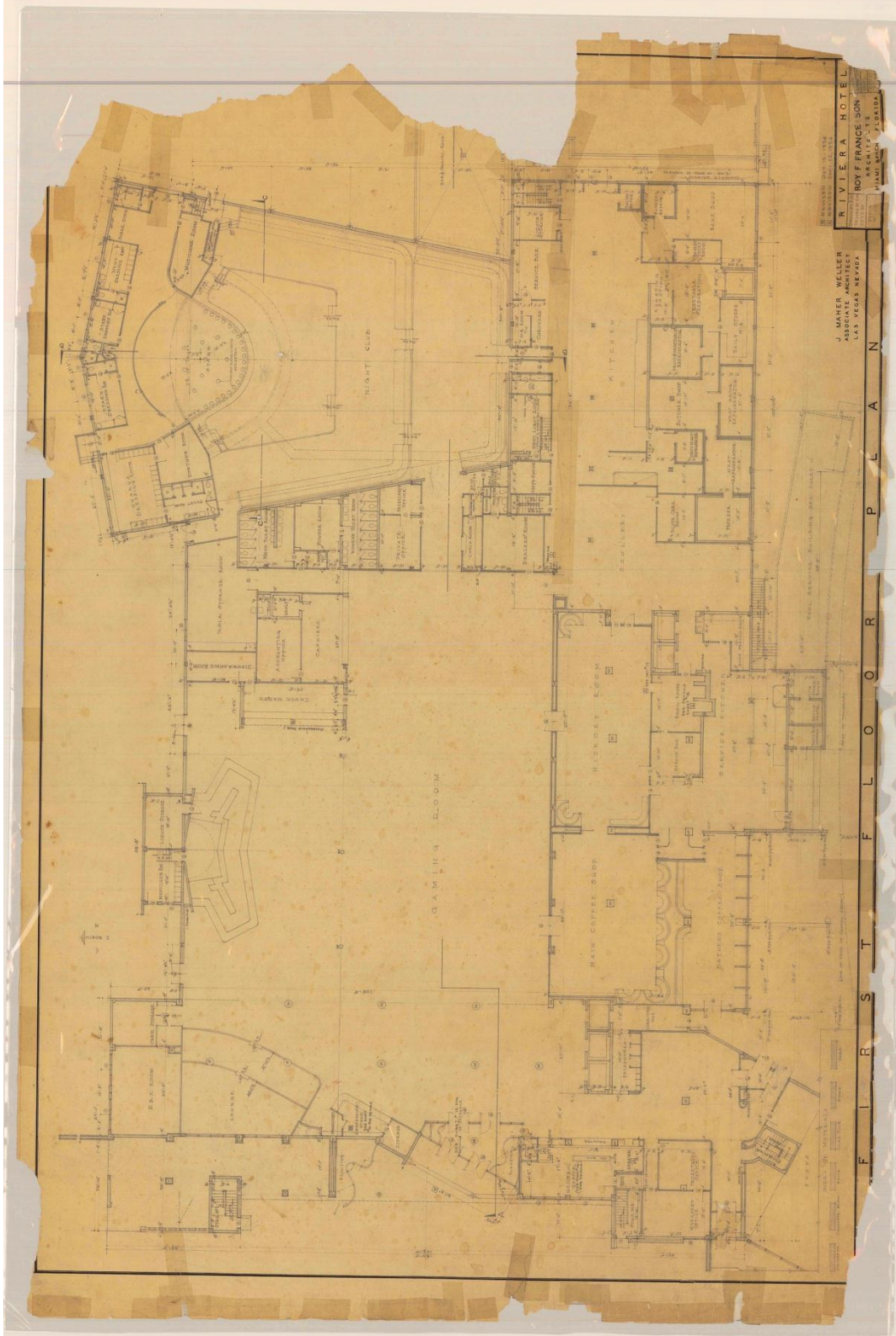
³⁴⁵ David Schwartz, *Suburban Xanadu: casino-resort on the Las Vegas Strip and beyond* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 29

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 51

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 151

³⁴⁸ Magali S. Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Façade: Architectural Change in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993)

³⁴⁹ Eugene Moehring, *Las Vegas: Resort City in the Sunbelt* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000[1989]),78. Some context is needed about the Riviera Hotel. As historians have shown, the earliest casino-resorts built in the 1950s on the Strip – Flamingo, El Rancho and Last Frontier – were located outside the Las Vegas county line both to avoid taxation and to secure large parcels of cheap land. Without the existing infrastructure of the downtown, it was necessary to provide car parking facilities, entertainment and accommodations within the casino-resort itself. Many of the initial investors and builders of the three resorts had experience running hotels and leisure businesses – Thomas Hull had several hotel ventures in California prior to Las Vegas, R.E Griffith's family ran a chain of movie theatres; and Billy Wilkerson, an associate of Benjamin Siegel, "dreamed of building a resort even greater than the Beverly Hills Hotel." Therefore, the idea of casino-resorts as insular worlds is as much a cultural model of leisure as a result of a competitive business environment, lack of urban planning, the inability of Las Vegas county to absorb the suburbs, and the desert conditions.



Plan 3.2: Floor plan of the Riviera by Roy F. France and Son, Miami, 1954. Note the columns of the hotel block near the entrance. Source: Martin Stern Jr Collections, in CGRSC, UNLV

A close analysis of these plans reveals two overlapping spatial strategies at work – one distributes and directs its force centrifugally, and the other accumulates and directs its force centripetally. Entering the door, gamblers proceed straight to the tables, while hotel guests turn left to register, before taking the elevators to their rooms. The strategy of distribution rationalizes gamblers and hotel guests as distinct groups whose circulation is to be separated at the moment of entry. The hotel block as a vertical extension is not just invisible in this plan - it is completely disarticulated from the spatial economy of the horizontal space. Hotel guests “appear” and “disappear” at the spot of the elevators. There are even finer levels of filtration - one of the elevators is double sided, allowing hotel guests to travel from their rooms to the outdoor pool area without having to pass through the gambling hall. Gamblers, on the other hand, cannot use this route easily. Similarly, the retail corridor is a horizontal distribution of functions that pulls shoppers, visitors and other non-gamblers away from the main lobby, and out into the outdoor lawn. These centrifugal arrangements must be located close to the entrance and before passing into the gambling hall in order to be effective.

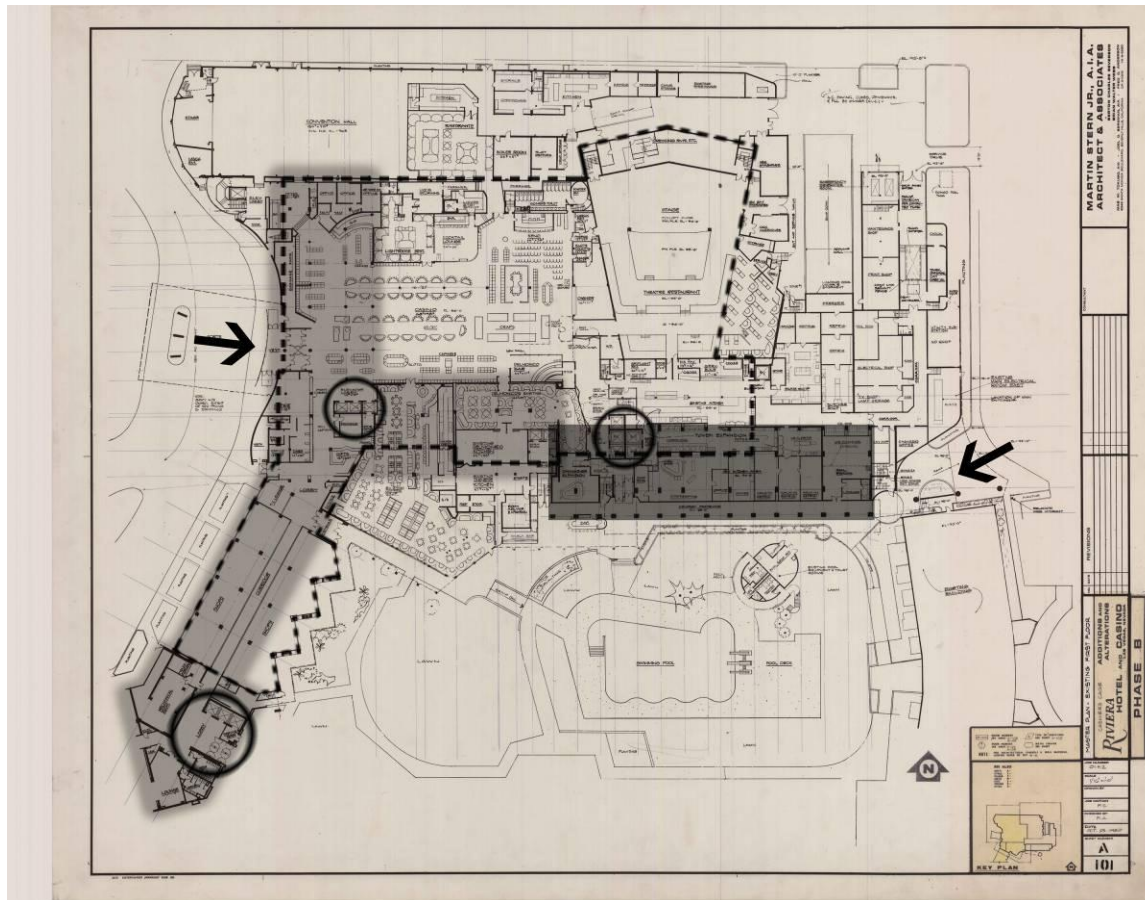
The second strategy accumulates, rather than distributes. Together with the first strategy, it produces a center through visual and spatial arrangements that directs attention and bodies along prescribed paths. If the elements of the first strategy are corridors, elevators and tangential angles that spin outwards and upwards, this strategy brings them back in the opposite direction with magnets, dead ends and single point perspectives. Upon entry, visual attention is directed onto the gambling area – “the most extensive guest facilities and gaming rooms in the West” - and beyond to the Starlight Lounge. There is no formal intervention, no registration, and no detour – only a permanent invitation to anyone who steps past the doors. The elevators return hotel guests as gamblers, who immediately become part of the gambling area. The placement of the Starlight Lounge forces visitors to travel through the gambling area in order to enter it.

This strategy of accumulation places a magnet at the deep end of the space that pulls traffic inwards, and doubles it back, for this depth is also a dead end. Service and resting areas, such as coffee shops, lounges, kitchens and buffets are distributed along the perimeter so as to remain close but unobtrusive to the central activity of gambling. They also act as a buffer between exits and the gambling area – the path to the lawn and pool, for example passes through the coffee shop. Similar to the magnet that pulls inwards, the effect of enclosing the gambling area with complementary functions rather than walls doubles attention and movement back and produces a centre. Thus, standing at the perimeter resting, eating or exchanging money, one is separate from the gambling table, but yet is always returned to it. Conversely, standing in the centre, the gambler seldom needs to move – he is physically close to all the amenities; his position is also the position of an audience in front of the stage; he is part of the spectacle where gamblers, theatre-goers, diners, hotel guests and staff gather momentarily in their separate paths.

The Riviera was renovated many times over the years.³⁵¹ A major renovation was carried out by Martin Stern between 1974 and 1982 and this included a 17-storey hotel block, two new

³⁵¹ Between 1955 and 1974, this plan was repeatedly circulated and redrawn with every new addition and renovation by architects and engineers from Las Vegas, Miami and Los Angeles. In 1959, an extra hotel wing was added by Welton Becket and Associates (Los Angeles), turning the original L-shaped configuration into a Y-shaped block. From 1962-5, a series of low-rise guest accommodation blocks enclosing the garden and pool were designed and built by Harold Levitt (Los Angeles), suggesting a reversion to the motel-style arrangement. He also added a 12 storey hotel wing in 1965, with meeting rooms on the ground floor and the various luxury facilities mentioned earlier on the topmost floor. During this time, convention halls were also added to the north side of the casino. See “Martin Stern Collections”, CGRSC, UNLV

entrances, enlargement of the casino and the relocation of the convention halls. This particular transformation gives us an opportunity to see how these two overlapping spatial strategies were refined even as the complex became larger and multi-functional (Plan 3.3).



Plan 3.3: Expansion of Riviera by Martin Stern Jr, 1974. These are added by the author: The dotted outline marks the profile of the original Riviera as built in 1955. Light grey marks the footprint of the hotel tower that was existing by 1974. Dark grey marks the footprint of the new hotel block proposed by Martin Stern. Circles highlight the locations of the elevators, existing and proposed. Arrows mark the two main entrances.
Source: Martin Stern Jr Collections, CGRSC, UNLV

Between 1955 and 1974, various additions grew outwards from the original building. Hotel wings were extended into longer and longer arms, accommodating more visitors, but also economizing on the amount of vertical access infrastructure; the complementary functions added after 1955 continued to wrap around the gambling hall – the restaurants, kitchens and theatres had all grown deeper while the convention hall completely covered the northern perimeter of the building. Machine rooms, substations, freezers and access ramps were located at the opposite side of the theatre – once designated as the “dead-end,” it merely expanded to become the service sector of the development. Thus, the basic narrative Wright produced in 1955 was still applicable – the porte cochere, casino and hotel lobby were still the opening sequence into the “Riviera” experience. More importantly, by wrapping the new functions around the building and extending the arms of the hotel wings, Stern maintained the basic strategy of producing a center where the casino is.

Stern's proposal in 1974 added a new hotel tower to the complex.³⁵² (See Plan 3: dark grey) As a result of the increase in scale and the introduction of new functions, he had to create another main entrance. Stern capitalized on the opportunities opened up by the introduction of this new hotel tower that cut across the entire depth of the building. This new tower bridged the two opposite sides of the development. It made it possible for Stern to create a new entrance (marked on the plan) that relieved human traffic from the original entrance and maintained the separation between gamblers and hotel guests. More importantly, Stern's intervention did not stack onto the existing system of distribution and accumulation – it mirrored it and made it symmetrical, thus intensifying the centrality of the gambling space.

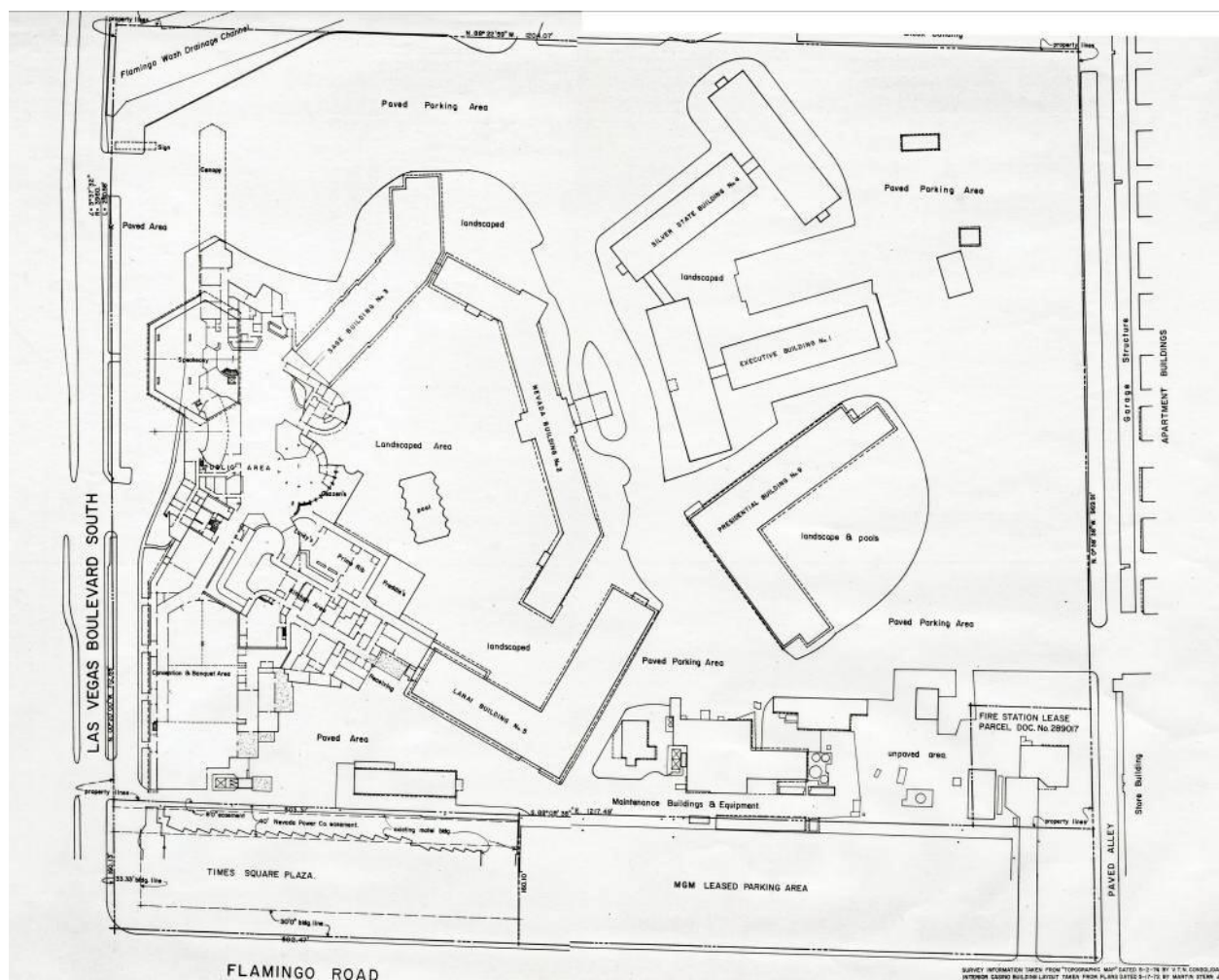
Stern did not just try to solve functional issues. His intervention replaced what were once the backs of kitchens with a covered “promenade” lined with plants. He thought of the way to bring guests from the new entrance into the hotel lobby and gambling space as a functional problem, but also as an architectural narrative that capitalized on existing features of the site. This promenade was not only the most direct path between the new entrance and the gambling space, but it was also the path that would provide the most visual interest for both hotel guests, conventioners and swimmers. At the end of this promenade, before guests turned into the hotel lobby, he placed on the plan a very inviting open pool-bar. Stern was already creating “story spaces” long before Kranes turned it into a “science”.

It is not the intention to raise the Riviera into a kind of “prototype” of the Las Vegas casino-resort. Rather, it suggests two things. First, Las Vegas architects in the 70s and 80s were already resolving both functional and experiential issues of designing such large multi-functional complexes. This mundane beginning was of course overshadowed by Kranes. Second, the basic spatial strategies found in Riviera that maintains the narrative of arrival, the organizing core of the porte cochere-hotel lobby-casino and the centrality of the casino in the overall spatial system can be found in many other casino-resorts after the Riviera. In a way, there was a clear convergence without any single architect or developer claiming authorship.

One can get a sense of this convergence by looking at Stern's chief competitor, Homer Rissman.³⁵³ While Stern was renovating the Riviera, Rissman was renovating the Flamingo. The Flamingo was one of the original three casino-resorts built immediately after the war, the other two being the Last Frontier and the El Rancho. They followed a similar spatial organization - a main complex fronting the road where entertainment, dining and gambling took place, and a series of motel wings or isolated bungalows spreading out behind the complex around private lawns and pools. The sequence of arrival from a long driveway into a porte cochere, into the casino and hotel lobby is repeated here (Plan 3.4). Like the Riviera, the casino is centered by its visual relationship to the entrance and other points of interest, such as the stage, and its physical proximity to other complementary functions. The magnet that draws traffic through the depth of the space is not the theatre like in the Riviera, but the convention halls, hotel rooms and restaurants that spin off like spokes from the main complex, and, perhaps, a glimpse of the swimming pool and lawn beyond.

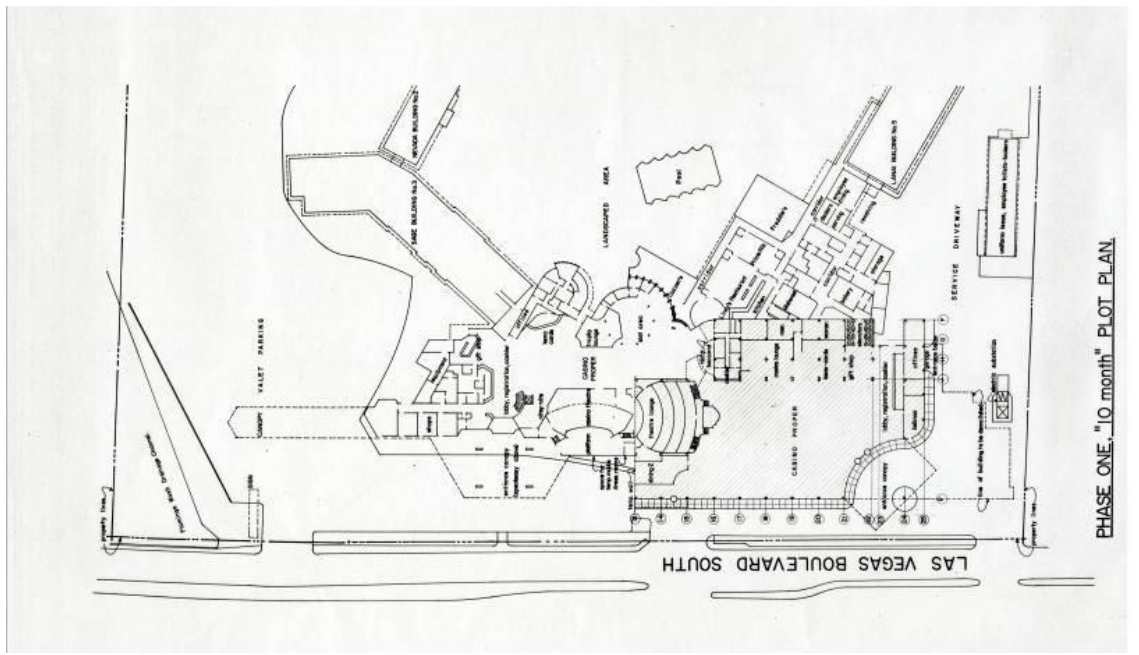
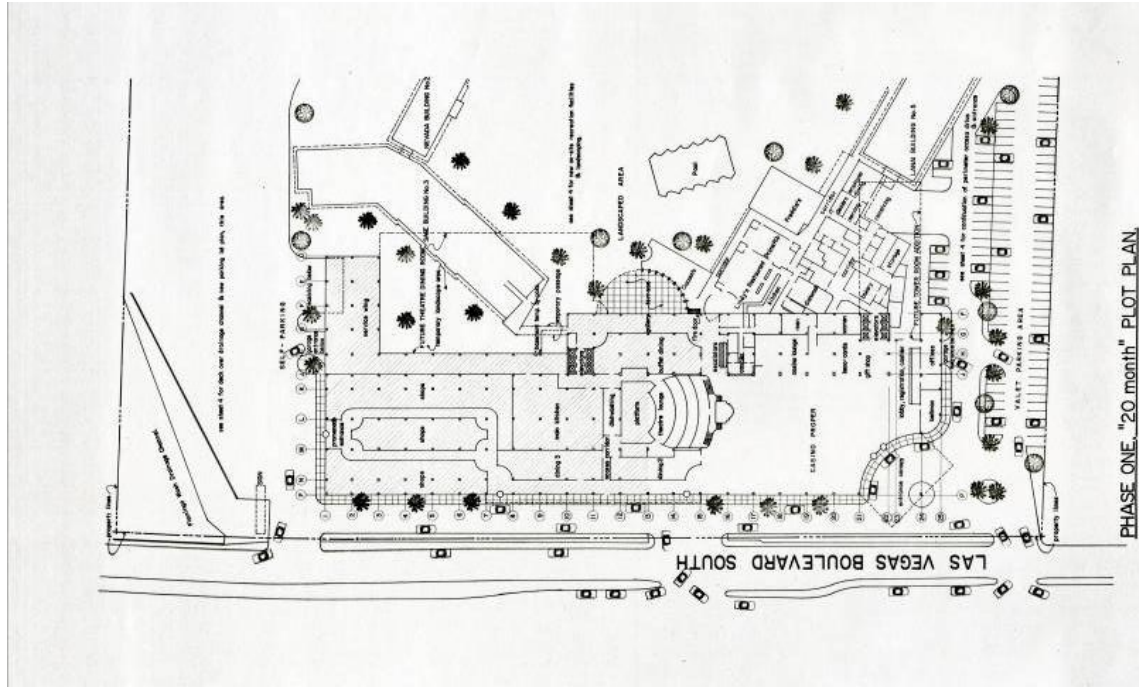
³⁵² I have calculated these figures based on the architectural plans. The 600 rooms refer to the hotel blocks, and do not include the suites in the low-rise perimeter buildings that surrounded the lawn and pool.

³⁵³ A Los Angeles architect, Homer Rissman was involved in more than 20 casino-resort projects between the 70s and 80s.



Plan 3.4: Plan of Flamingo before Rissman's intervention, 1977. Source: CGRSC, UNLV

Rissman's 1977 renovation was carried out after the hotel chain, Hilton, took over the casino-resort. He had to incorporate an enlarged casino and convention space, hotel towers and a theatre into the existing building. Despite the rather different briefs given to Rissman and Stern, and despite the fact that they had to work with existing buildings rather than an empty site, the final schemes are surprisingly similar in terms of spatial organization. In Rissman's scheme, the baroque geometry of the original casino resort where different functions (theatre, trophy stage, gift shop, restaurant) dissolved into the central amorphous space of the "casino proper," was replaced with a more unified and orthogonal layout that maintained the separation of different functions within one common grid space. Although the casino was dislocated towards the south and a whole new hotel tower was planned, the tight relationship between the hotel lobby, casino and the porte cochere was maintained – this core was simply moved towards the corner of the site where the new entrance, with the famous Flamingo neon sign, would give the building a new visibility along the increasingly urbanized Strip (Plan 3.5).



Plan 3.5: Plan of Rissman's 2-stage renovation of Flamingo, 1977. Source: CGRSC, UNLV

Rissman's design and construction scheme rationalized and rearranged the major components of the casino-resort into three distinct segments joined end-to-end within a grid system – the casino-hotel lobby-porte cochere as the core unit, the theater as a magnet in the center of the building, and the retail shops as a separate functional space at the other end. And although there was no mistake where the main entrance was, each segment had its individual secondary entrance – an evolution we also see in Stern's intervention to deal with the problem of the increased volume of traffic and the need to both distribute and concentrate it economically and strategically. In the original Flamingo layout, hotel guests needed to cut through the casino to reach the hotel blocks which were laid out horizontally as “arms” of the casino. In the new layout, vertical circulation rationalized the movement of guests as a separate but closely linked system that did not interfere with the internal traffic of the casino space. Like the Riviera, guests now could travel upwards to their rooms without passing through the casinos, though the casino was just as near, or even more so, to them than before.

Both Stern and Rissman's interventions rationalized the casino-resort into a set of spatial principles. There is a disaggregating of the casino-resort into a functional system of interrelated parts within a universal grid. In this system of parts, there is a clear hierarchy. The casino-hotel lobby-porte cochere functions as a single unit that forms the center of the system. Convention halls and theatres as standardized components that attract large volumes of traffic are placed strategically in the system as opposing magnets to produce this center. Hotel towers and vertical access infrastructure are influenced by the location of the hotel lobby, convention hall, theatre and casino – functions that required column-free space - and they in turn influence the locations of restaurants, shops and service areas. Space for car-parking is a direct translation of hotel rooms and visitor numbers, but it is also part of “grand approach” that carries the visitor from the driveway into the casino and hotel lobby. The complexity of designing and building increasingly large casino-resorts is tamed by an abstract knowledge of it as a system with stable rules and implicit conventions. By this process, what were once responses to the physical context of Las Vegas becomes absorbed into a formal system of spatial arrangement. In the 1980s, this formalization and decontextualization facilitated the reproduction of casino-resorts in Atlantic City.

In Margaret Crawford's study of shopping malls, she argues that mall design has turned into a “science”.³⁵⁴ Beneath the skin, there is a “generic type.” She argues that the malling process quickly became self-perpetuating formulas, citing mall architect, Victor Gruen, who produced a highly structured system to “minimize guesswork” and predict “potential dollar-per-square-foot-yield of any projected mall”. Using a syntactic approach, Kim Dovey also shows the basic logic of spatial organization of malls based on qualities of “ringiness” and “depth”. Together, they suggest that the endless variations in the theming of such spaces hide a structural monotony and a single message – “a repeated imperative to consume.”

The evolution of the casino observes a similar trend. James O'Brien shows that the accelerated design and construction process of such large complexes makes it imperative for architects to simply reproduce the given spatial formula. In his case study of Monte Carlo, he shows how designers began with a given “image” and worked from the outside in:

³⁵⁴ Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall”, 3-30

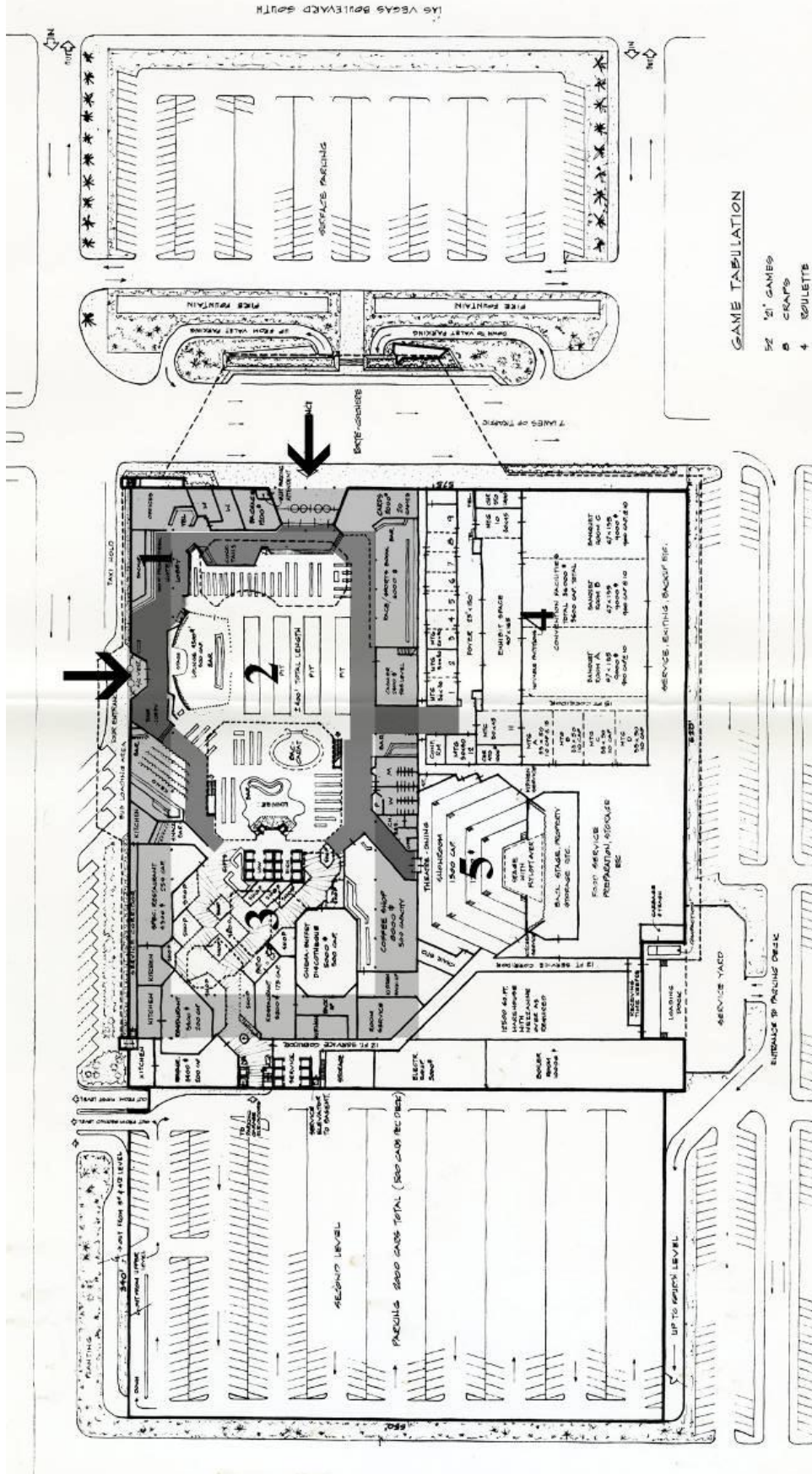
Las Vegas theme design, however, is not a system of designing from the structure to the skin—it is not done from the inside to the outside. Las Vegas theme designers work from a supply of precedents and interpret them through the visible surfaces and lighting of a facility that develops with their cooperation. In most cases, the approximate location of these surfaces and the configuration of space is already determined by the prevailing development paradigm. In fact, theme designers have internalized attitudes their corporate entertainment superstore clients hold about this development paradigm, in order to deal with them as they are.³⁵⁵

Yet, it is too hasty to lump the architect together with the developer and consultants into a single figure. There is perhaps no Victor Gruen in the casino industry, at least until the appearance of Marnell II. As noted earlier, architects were silent partners in the industry as late as 1989. Architect Marnell II was complaining how these “business-types” were taking over the designing of casinos, and car-parking was ranked higher than architecture. O’Brien’s case further illuminates how many of these designers were not even architects – the most effective ones were those with background in the fine arts and brief experience working in retail and hospitality interior design firms. Thus, architects like Martin Stern and Homer Rissman, though prolific, were as silent as these non-architectural trained designers. There is a separate strand of development that gave birth to a distinct and respected professional known as the casino designer. He is not the anonymous technician of images, nor is he the Victor Gruen of numbers and matrices. Those are in fact his competitors.

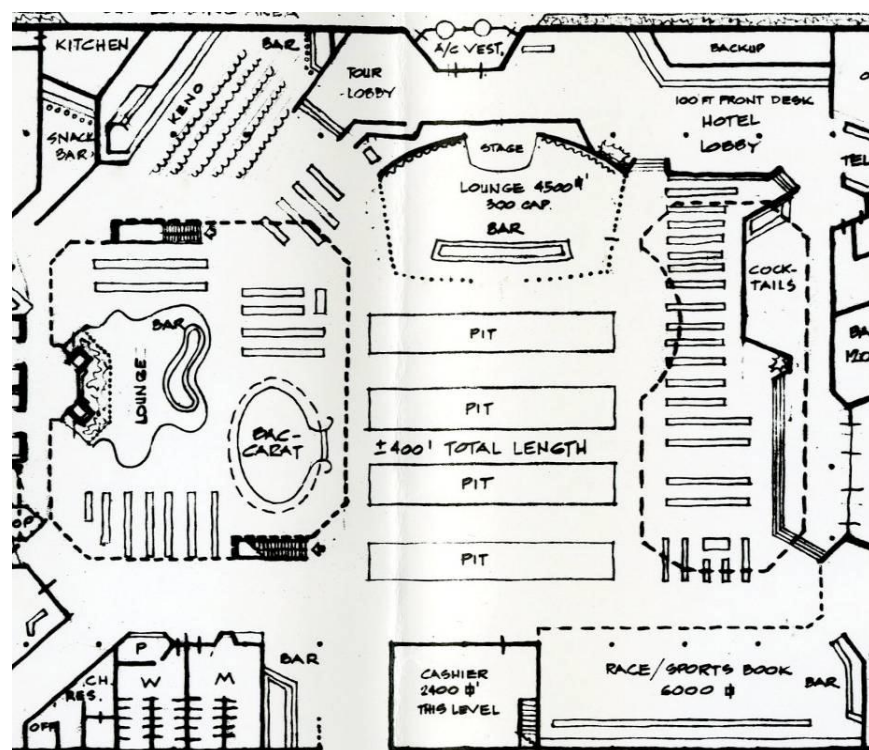
Emerging divides: The Xanadu Report

The appearance of the figure of the “casino designer” that Kranes seem to champion did not signal any radical break with the design and development of casino-resorts. Rather, this divide between the quantitative and the qualitative was already fermenting in the 70s, as designers tried to distance themselves from the “business degrees” while appealing to the dominant logic of the industry. To gain some insights into this historical development, one can examine the Xanadu Report. This report was commissioned by Xanadu Corporation, headed by millionaire Donald Trump, in 1975 to test the market feasibility of developing a large casino-resort on the Strip of Las Vegas. Martin Stern, who was the architect, produced a series of schematic drawings to show that the demands of the brief could be met and what the final product would look like (Plan 3.6). The drawings, though schematic, render a complete solution. Between a conceptual diagram and a fully rendered architectural plan, these drawings reveal the structural parameters used by and given to the architect to organize the casino-resort. They present a rare glimpse of the architect’s abstract knowledge at work.

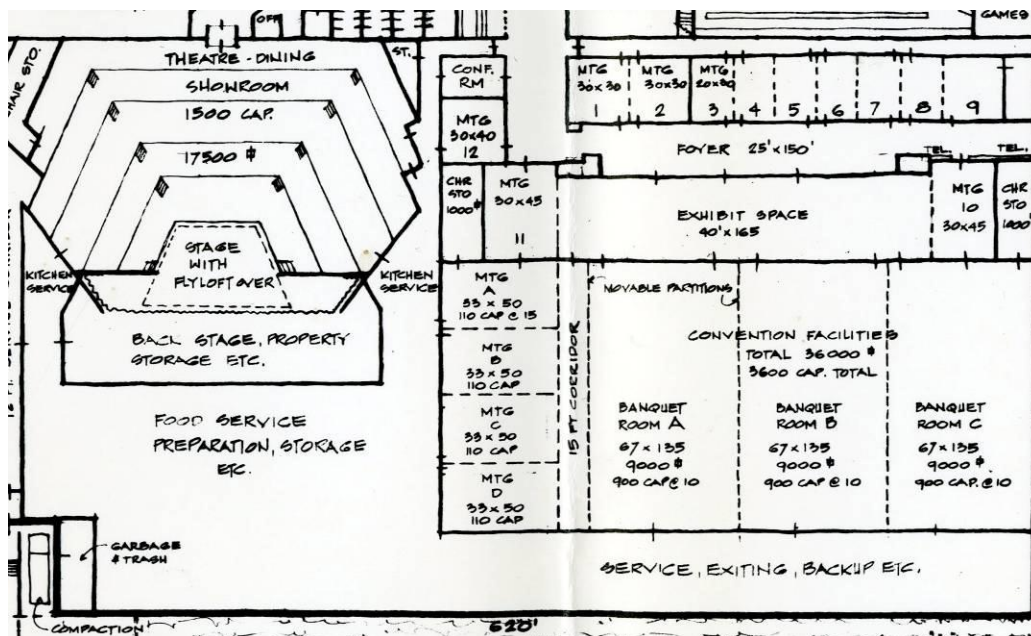
³⁵⁵ James O’Brien, “Las Vegas Today – Rome in a Day: Corporate Development Practices and the Role of Professional Designers” in *Journal of Architecture* 54/2 (2000), 68-79



Several telling details suggest themselves. A series of numbers are dotted all over the drawings – number of car-parking lots, first and foremost, tabulated in the first sheet of the report; the spatial dimensions and seating capacities of convention halls and theatres; the number of hotel rooms; length of counter space for the hotel lobby; the length of retail frontage; and the number of tables for each gambling game, keno counters, and slot machines. A chart tells us that there will be 800 slot machines, 52 “21” games, eight crap tables, four roulettes, one keno, two “Big 6”, three baccarat, two mini-baccarat, 20 poker tables and one sports/race book. On the plans, the spatial layout of tables and slot machines is designed in far greater detail than the other major functions of the casino-resort. Thus, the retail areas and convention halls are annotated as voids of specific dimensions, hotel rooms are designed as “typical floors,” service areas are vaguely specified, but the casino area shows the division of each type of game, how they are laid out in relation to each other and the bars and lounges (no matter how small) that surround it (Plans 3.7 and 3.8).



Plan 3.7: Comparison of details: casino area. Note also the black dots running horizontally along the hotel lobby at the top and the race/sports book at the bottom.



Plan 3.8: Comparison of details: convention halls, meeting rooms and theatre

Though the Xanadu plans are sketches, they are not imprecise. Stern had a clear picture of the building as an integrated functional system. The other interesting detail is the almost invisible grid of black dots on the floor plan (Plan 3.7). They denote the columns of the hotel block, but their function at this level extends far beyond that. For one, they are the only structural elements visible on the plan and they run around the casino as a separate legible layer on the plan itself. The convention halls and theatre, on the other hand, do not show any structural features. They are simple lines and shapes with internal areas specified. Structure is implied but not recorded as an important detail. This curious disparity is telling. Over and above their denotative function, this grid is a conceptual device that gives hierarchy and order to Stern's system of parts. The position of the hotel block is important in terms of functional accessibility and the grid integrates the vertical traffic system into the horizontal organization of the ground level. Of course, convention halls and theatres are also three dimensional spaces, but here, around the casino accentuated and framed by the grid, Stern had a more elaborate aesthetic vision for a different kind of interior experience.

A few important observations can be made before this vision is elucidated. The "overly" detailed layout of the casino space and the appearance of the grid give a sense of the focus of the architect's expertise and imagination. The site itself – in terms of its physical dimensions, orientation, surrounding context and regulations - does not pose any problems for the reproduction of this spatial knowledge. The general dimensions and profiles of key functions are standard and not open to drastic changes. Convention halls, restaurants, theatres, hotel rooms, car-parking and so on are all known types whose parameters are purely numerical for the architect. It is not clear if these components were ultimately outsourced to other designers and specialists, but it is likely that restaurants and retail spaces are designed by in-house architects, rather than Stern himself, in which case, the plan, with its uneven level of details, can also be read as this division of labor. The fragmentation of the architectural profession into specializations during the corporate era of the 1970s and 80s is a process well documented by

scholars such as Larson, Blau and Cuff.³⁵⁶ The uneven distribution of numbers and details suggest that Stern's professional distinction rests on designing the casino space itself and the overall aesthetic vision for the new development as one unified thematic experience. At this point, one begins to see the emergence of the "casino designer."

What is Stern's vision for this new kind of interior experience? The architect intends for this narrative to begin at the moment of arrival. It is absolutely dramatic. The promenade continues the grand experience of the long driveway from the Las Vegas desert into the development and extends the flanerie of the automobile indoors. In the report, Stern writes:

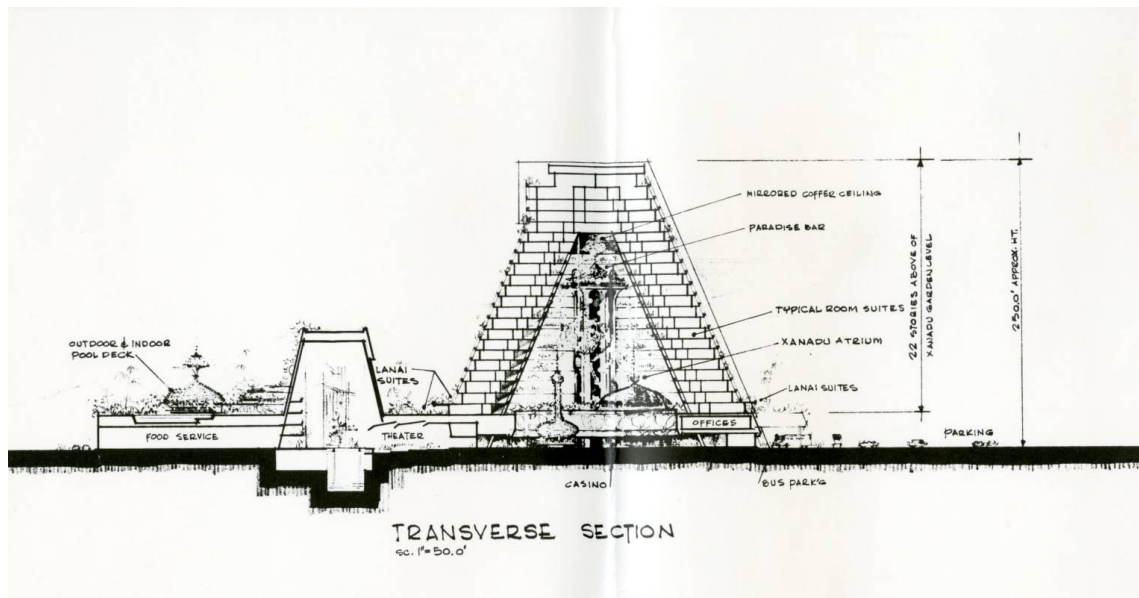
Approaching the overwhelming Porte Cochere, attention is immediately focused upon the "Firefalls," cascading waters which nearly stretch across the site, penetrated by the red-orange licks of dancing flames.

Upon entering the Xanadu, the soaring atrium some twenty stories in height, capped by the shimmering essence of mirror and crystal above, and down to the action and animation of the Casino below, dominates, and envelopes the viewer.

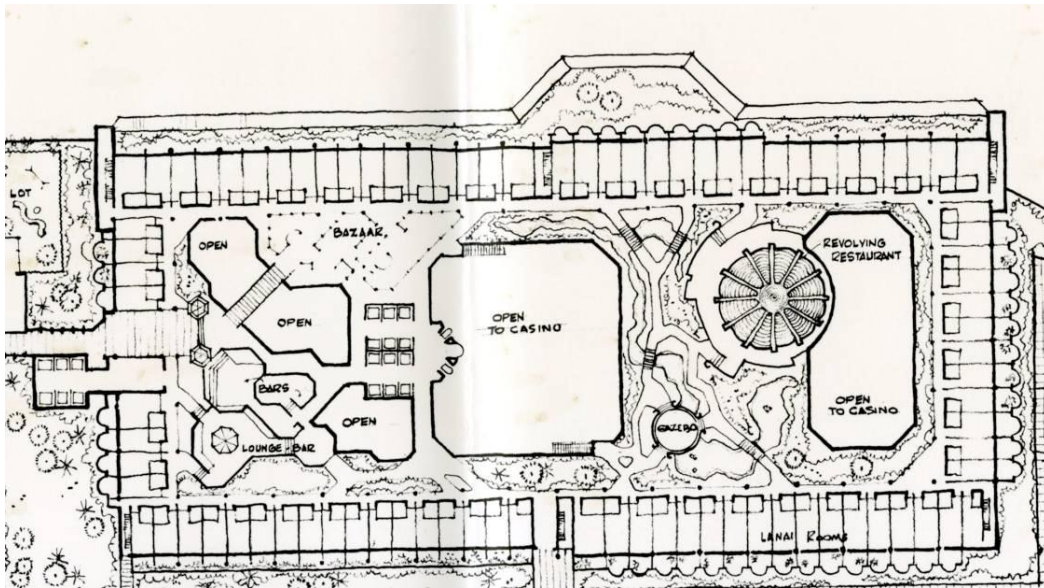
A lush garden fantasy of pergolas and gazebos located on the atrium deck overlooks the Casino, setting the tone for the Xanadu theme ... Themes and moods such as "Samarkand," "Shalimar," "Cashmere," "Shangri-La" are envisioned, with a special intimacy, utilizing such elements as magnificently gilded desert tents, soft cushions and exotically costumed waitresses.

By the time Stern designed the plans and wrote this narrative, the name of the casino-resort was already settled - the corporation that commissioned the report was, after all, Xanadu Corporation. Since this was a given, Stern did not come up with the idea of "Xanadu," but reacted to it and tried to incorporate the theme into his narrative and design. This vision of interiority can be described as a simultaneous movement between immersion and explosion. The section of Xanadu shows how Stern sloped the hotel towers inwards and enclosed the entire casino in an enormous pyramidal atrium (Plan 3.9). Then, he introduced a mezzanine level with large voids above the casino, so that this internal space is broken up into a theatre of intersecting sightlines of varying depths. The level of detail rendered for the garden on this mezzanine level is remarkable, considering that this space, larger than the casino space below it, has no direct commercial value. Yet, it should not be surprising - Stern's narrative sets this space as the main stage of the "Xanadu" theme (Plan 3.10). The promenade, utterly functional in one sense, is also part of this performance. It constitutes a moving subject who is carried around and into this total environment of fantasy, but who need never step out of this path if he/she so wishes. It is a continually revolving circuit of spectacles, literally and figuratively a mirror effect that doubled the "mirrored coffered ceiling" of the atrium onto the animation of the casino below. Hotel guests look from their corridors and the garden on the mezzanine, diners look down from their perch in the "Paradise Bar" at the top of a central tower, while gamblers and visitors return the gaze from below. This tower (also the elevator shaft) stands prominently in the middle of this atrium - its dramatic verticality punctures and heightens the interiority with the automated movement of machines and bodies. It is the vertical equivalent of the promenade that surrounds and defines the gambling space. All are performers, but the gamblers in the casino and the "exotically costumed waitresses" in the garden are the stars of this interior world.

³⁵⁶ Magali S. Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Façade: architectural change in late twentieth century America* (California: University of California Press, 1993); Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); and Judith Blau, *Architects and Forms: A sociological perspective on architectural practice* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984)



Plan 3.9: Section of Xanadu. Note the detailed rendering and naming of the thematic elements in the atrium against the anonymous slabs of “typical room suites.”



Plan 3.10: Mezzanine level of Xanadu above the casino. Note the level of details of the landscaping and the strategic placement of the voids above the casino.

The idea that Stern had in mind is very similar to what cultural theorist Frederic Jameson tried to articulate in one of the most enduring Marxist critique of postmodernist space. His analysis of the Bonaventure Hotel by prominent American architect and developer, John Portman, in the 1970s, is worth recapitulating here, as much for his insights as the striking similarity between the design of Bonaventure and Xanadu. A postmodern building, he argues, does not just reject its urban context, something modernist buildings also do dramatically with

their elevated pilotis and grand plazas. It does so without any political statement – the entryways of the Bonaventure are “lateral and rather backdoor affairs.”³⁵⁷ In the lobby of the hotel, Jameson was drawn to the escalators and elevators. They cannot simply be seen as functional elements anymore, but a dramatic heightening of a spatial narrative that architecture is now tasked to create. Except that – here, Jameson turns to a Marxist critique – movement has been reified; the escalators and elevators are now auto-referential signs of an “old promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own.”³⁵⁸ But it is the quality and experience of the space itself that most taxed his theoretical apparatus. The tentativeness of his voice must be replayed here for us to appreciate this difficulty:

I am tempted to say that such space makes it impossible for us to use the language of volume or volumes any longer, since these are impossible to seize. Hanging streamers indeed suffuse this empty space in such a way as to distract systematically and deliberately from whatever form it might be supposed to have, while a constant busyness gives the feeling that emptiness is here absolutely packed, that it is an element within which you yourself are immersed, without any of that distance that formerly enabled the perception of perspective or volume. You are in this hyperspace up to your eyes and body; and if it seemed before that that suppression of depth I spoke of in postmodern painting or literature would necessarily be difficult to achieve in architecture itself, perhaps this bewildering immersion may now serve as the formal equivalent in the new medium.³⁵⁹

He worries that the depthlessness of this immersive world is symptomatic of what postmodernism as a cultural logic of late capitalism is about – a loosening up of the grounds of meaningful constructs into self-referential and free floating signs that can be appropriated and recombined in a montage fashion. John Portman was one of the earliest architects to build in the postmodern idiom in the corporate world.³⁶⁰ Multi-national corporations, like Xanadu Corporation led by Donald Trump, were key agents in this process of disarticulation. The radical abolishment of the interior and exterior world is not just, as Stern imagined, about stepping into Xanadu and leaving the desert behind. Rather, it is a more pervasive condition of interiority that brings one back to the screens of the slot machines. This world without an outside is, for Jameson and Baudrillard, a world that is completely transparent to capital. From this critical perspective, the Xanadu and the Bonaventure are emblems of the passivity of the atomized consumer whose entire being has been absorbed into the machinery of capitalist reproduction.

However, Jameson, like many of the critical Marxists who studied Las Vegas, does not seek to understand the internal practices and logics of the very people who designed Las Vegas. He trips over this strange indescribable sense of interiority, but feels compelled to reduce it to a “cultural logic of late capitalism”. Examining the Xanadu report further reveals a much more complex dynamic of forces involving new technologies, competition between professions and the quest for greater “objectivity” and profitability in the casino industry.

Some of these dynamics are marked on the plans. As the analysis has shown, the plan becomes “contaminated” by new demands to speak in a foreign tongue – it becomes slightly pictorial - those overly rendered domes and vegetation crawling up the tower; its details become uneven - the conventions of architectural drawing warped by the professional interests of the

³⁵⁷ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 39

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 43

³⁶⁰ Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Façade: Architectural Change in Late Twentieth-Century America*, 62

architect; it becomes overrun by numbers – the need to translate and incorporate the preferred language of the casino industry into a visual medium. What lies outside of these plans? Stern prepared a sketch perspective of the atrium to capture the imagination of his investors in a way plans could not. He took photographs of an architectural model and included them in the report.

The disorientation Jameson experienced in the vast atrium of Bonaventure could very well be the disorientation of Xanadu. Yet, disorientation has always been one of the key features of casino space. Thus, in their 1976 book “Learning from Las Vegas,” Venturi, Brown and Izenour tried to describe the old paradigm of casino design – it was a “twilight zone,” a low-ceiling, horizontal, labyrinthine space where edges were lost in shadows and time seemed to stand still. Perhaps, disorientations of one kind or another are common psychic effects in spaces dedicated to the hypercirculation of capital. Airports, stock markets, shopping centers, casinos – they are all spaces of a “gambler’s psychology,” designed or otherwise.³⁶¹ Besides the emphasis on disorientation, there is also a rational system for the organization of human traffic in terms of volume and function, and of this, the architectural plans record and produce a legibility that mediates the architect’s intervention. Stern was struggling between old templates and new opportunities opened up by technology and corporate practices. As a designer, the architect finds his contribution devalued. Numbers have become the language of the casino industry, and of governments and corporate worlds that govern this industry. It is in numbers that he must begin and end his task. Yet, he finds himself at the passive end of the production of numbers, for he can only use what is given to him, but rarely produces any new numbers. He asks: How many hotel rooms are you planning to build? How much convention space do you need? How many slot machines are you planning to have? He cannot offer this answer: You need x number of slot machines for your business to work. Ironically, the lack of site constraints and context makes his task even more dispensable, for he cannot say: “this site cannot allow this amount of convention space, unless we design it differently for you.”

This ambivalent relationship between images and numbers becomes especially stark if one examines the second part of the Xanadu report. It is an appraisal by a real estate analyst to ascertain the market value of the property and facilitate the acquisition of mortgage financing. The report defines market value as “the highest price estimated in terms of money which a property will bring if exposed for sale in the open market, allowing a reasonable time to find a purchaser who buys with knowledge of all the uses to which it is capable of being used.” High and best use is defined as that “legal use which will produce the greatest new return to land over a given period of time.” How is “market value” and “high and best use” arrived at? These are the numbers he analyzed:

... air travel into and out of Las Vegas, average daily ground vehicular traffic entering and leaving Las Vegas, gross gambling revenue for Clark County and for the Las Vegas “Strip”, total hotel and casino spending for the “Strip” and Las Vegas area, Clark County gaming revenue for the first 6 months of each year, Las Vegas hotel and national average hotel percentage of vacancies over 5 years, available hotel rooms in Las Vegas from 1970 to 1975, “Strip” hotel spending for food and beverage from 1968 through 1974, a summary of the existing “Strip” hotels and inter-hotel ratios and room rate comparisons, and charts

³⁶¹ For an analysis of traders at work on the trading floors of Chicago and London, see Caitlin Zaloom, *Out of the Pits: Traders and Technology from Chicago to London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). For a cultural reading of airports as non-places, see Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London, New York: Verso, 1995)

and graphs showing income per gaming device for the fiscal years 1970-1, 1971-2, 1972-3, and 1973-4, for the Las Vegas “Strip.”³⁶²

The whole display of objectivity is formidable. The world of the analyst is constructed out of the primary form of capital. There is complete transparency because translations are unnecessary. From numbers, he produces more numbers, and his final recommendation is churned out like the result of simple arithmetic. “The highest and best use of the subject,” he states dryly at the end of his analysis, “is a tourist commercial oriented type facility such as a hotel/casino project.” The “market value” is estimated at \$144,000,000. The project would be a “highly feasible venture if constructed.”³⁶³

Yet, its formidability is also a performance. There is strategic imprecision and implicit unpredictability of the sort slot managers both produce and denounce. The project will be “highly feasible” though he is not willing to stake his life on it. The highest and best use is a vague category. The market value is but an estimate, with an impossible scenario attached to its truthfulness – “if exposed for sale in the open market, allowing a reasonable time to find a purchaser who buys with knowledge of all the uses to which it is capable of being used.” In fact, the transparency of these numbers and the objectivity they construct hides a deep emptiness. If we follow his argument closely, we realize that nowhere in his report does he evaluate alternative uses for the site. How then can he claim that this “tourist commercial oriented type facility such as a hotel/casino project” is of the *highest* and *best* use, since both measures are comparative in nature? He does not need to. The question of highest and best use is unanswerable – it is, however, necessary for the fiction of capital and the professions that claim expertise over it.

As historian of science Theodore Porter argues, there is nothing natural about how numbers become so important in government and industry, as if it is the “natural” language of the social sciences.³⁶⁴ Rather, he argues, in many cases, quantification becomes important in order to make judgment impersonal, thus protecting the experts from charges of manipulation and arbitrariness. He shows that the political use of numbers must be contextualized historically and understood against the prevailing political culture and social structure. The elite bureaucracy of French engineers in the nineteenth century, for example, operated outside public scrutiny and they resisted attempts to replace numerical calculations and technical procedures for expert judgment. In contrast, in postwar America, bureaucratic conflict and external pressure forced governmental agencies to adopt quantification as a way to “give public evidence of fairness in the selection of water projects”.³⁶⁵

It is possible to see, in this report, that oscillation towards and away from quantification as a way to gain a foothold in the industry. Against the performance of the analyst, the architect finds himself in an ambivalent zone. Like the analyst and his trusty numbers, the architect has the formula worked out in advance, and he can meet the task of reproducing a workable solution for any geographical location. He can claim some degree of certainty by reproducing this model, and thus, claim that the model is transparent to reality. This reproducibility is evident in Atlantic City in the 1970s, and again in Las Vegas in the 1980s during the building boom. But it is precisely

³⁶² *Xanadu Report* (1975), Martin Stern Collections, CGRSC, UNLV, 51-52

³⁶³ *Ibid*

³⁶⁴ Porter, *Trust in Numbers*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 149

because it has become a form of abstract knowledge that attracts the danger of piracy and compromises that architect's aura as a creative designer. A plan for MGM Grand can easily be adapted for any other casino-resort elsewhere. As the project expands in scale, and as the parts become more complex entities in their own right, the system of abstraction manages them as detachable units that can be delegated to a widening circle of experts and then reinserted into the overall grid. The fragmentation and reproducibility of his professional work-content produces an internal crisis. In retaliation, the plans suggest both double coding and exaggeration at work. The architect exaggerates his value as a visionary, the creative genius who becomes indispensable by his ability to build imaginary worlds based on a single word. His reputation becomes decorated by the distinct hues of his imagination and the exclusive medium of renderings and built projects, rather than the mute inscriptions of authorless plans. He speaks a language that no one else can – “Shalimar,” “Shangri-La” and “Samarkand.” Perhaps these word-images are vivid, but they are also spoken as screens to protect the craft of the architect. On the other hand, it is through plans that he can show his proficiency in numbers. On these surfaces, he privately calculates every bit of space in terms of square feet and seating capacities. It is the technology of reproduction that mediates the figure of an artist with a multi-national corporation. The numbers return to valorize his artistic function – “this is how you design a casino to be profitable.” In a time of technological change, inter-professional competition created a specialization known as the “casino designer.”³⁶⁶

The casino designer is a product of interactions between corporations, gaming technologists, slot managers, marketing experts, architects and interior designers. He bears the scar of his birth – an artificial divide between the quantitative and the qualitative, between objective numbers and subjective experience – a divide he must always try to bridge to prove his value, but yet maintain for the sake of his existence.

Connections to the present

Today, the casino industry is a cauldron of hyperbole, pseudo-science and rigorous experimentation. It is difficult to distinguish the more soundly tested claims from the more dubious ones in the areas of environmental design, human psychology, market research, and spatial planning.³⁶⁷ Kranes might have opened the first salvo, but it has been amplified by many designers and consultants eager to find a legitimate route into the lucrative industry.³⁶⁸ None, perhaps, is as operatic as Friedman himself. In 2005, he responded with a massive 629-page tome, titled “*Designing casinos to dominate the competition: The Friedman International Standards of Casino Design™*.” He claims to have distilled casino design into a set of thirteen universal (and copyrighted) design principles. Attached to this claim is a “monumental implication”: “Among casinos located near each other and competing for the same marketplace, the one that most conforms to the Friedman Principles always produces the highest player counts

³⁶⁶ Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)

³⁶⁷ For a discussion of the rigorous experimentations conducted to connect human desire with machine design, see Natasha Schüll “Digital Design: The Coincidence of Desire and Design”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597 (2005): 65-81

³⁶⁸ See, for example, a long two-part article written by Barry Thalden of Thalden-Boyd-Emery Architects, an architectural firm based in Las Vegas. Published in *Casino Journal*, a magazine targeted at the casino industry, he generally advocates Kranes' principles of design. Accessed online, Oct 2011:

http://www.casinjournal.com/Articles/Focus_On/2011/08/05/INNOVATION-INSIGHT-Does-your-casino-floor-suck-generating-profit

and dominates the competition. This is true, without exception, in every locale and in every era of Nevada's history of legalized gambling."³⁶⁹

Lest one doubts his research, Friedman reminds his readers that by the 60s, he had read "tens of thousands of old newspapers ... [and] interviewed more than one-thousand people ...;" that when he was young, his parents took him on regular trips to Las Vegas, Reno and Tahoe where he would "stand at the lobbies by the hour, entranced by the activity;" and that his perfect memory could recall "the setting and atmosphere of each casino during every era." Lest one doubts this accumulated authority, he reminds his readers that as a consultant for casinos all over the world, he has never found an exception to his principles - "I never observed or heard of players anywhere in the world who do not share these same preferences."³⁷⁰ Speaking to potential developers and investors, he claims that the *Friedman International Standards of Casino Design*TM are the most accurate means to predict how successful a casino will be.

Friedman's principles for casino operators to dominate the competition are his own attempt at dominating the competition in the field of casino consultancy. The premise of "design principles" feeds into the industry's thirst for certainty, objectivity and reproducibility, and in this sense, both Kranes and Friedman are not too unlike each other. The battle between these "schools of thought" about casino design seems to be part of the industry's self-interested propensity to generate spectacles and speculations.³⁷¹ Casino designers are now rising into the echelons of respectability – the Sarno Awards for Lifetime Achievement began in 2003 to acknowledge those who contributed to the design of casino-resorts. Martin Stern was posthumously conferred the award in 2011.

Paul Steelman is the 2010 recipient. He began his career at Atlantic City in the 70s and worked for Steve Wynn in the 80s. In 1987, he moved to Las Vegas to set up his own practice.³⁷² Today, his practice handles more than 100 projects internationally at any one point in time, mostly specializing in theme parks, casinos and resort developments. He was directly involved in the development of the casino industry in both Macau and Singapore, and thus brings this genealogy covered over three chapters into the globalized present.

Steelman remembered a moment when casino design became "scientific." He was familiar with Martin Stern, and isolated him as one early instance when the planning of such large complexes became formalized. Echoing Anthony Marnell II and David Kranes, he thought that it was Steve Wynn's Mirage that changed the industry's perception of the value of casino design and transformed it into a highly specialized professional activity. Reflecting on his own involvement in this project, he talked about how the design team began to study the design and layout of casino spaces empirically:

The Mirage was an incredible planning and design coup that used the best of everything. We studied the Caesar Palace's entry and its relationship to the porte cochere; we studied the movements in the casino, the

³⁶⁹ Bill Friedman, *Designing casinos to dominate the competition: The Friedman International Standards of Casino Design*TM (Reno, Nevada: Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming), 11

³⁷⁰ Friedman, *Designing casinos to dominate the competition*, 4-5

³⁷¹ Witness, for example a new round of scholarly attention to Kranes and Friedman's claims in Karen Finlay, et al., "The Physical and Psychological Measurement of Gambling Environments" *Environment and Behavior*, 38/4(2008), 570-581

³⁷² This discussion of Paul Steelman is based on an interview with the author (8th Sept 2011) and two interviews conducted by David Schwartz from the Center for Gaming Research, UNLV (29th Nov and 20th Dec 2011).

physical bodies in the casino, the shaping of the space in the casino, the tandem based activities in the perimeter. All of these, if you go back to where design theory started, it really started in Mirage.³⁷³

Steve Wynn and Sheldon Adelson prepared and enshrined the 127 design principles that are still in operation today.³⁷⁴ The tremendous influence of Steve Wynn and Sheldon Adelson marks the casino industry as a client-driven complex that not only defines the terms and references of its own internal space, but also the permissible boundaries of professional discourses that surround it. In this relationship, the design of casino-resorts as a professional activity is already set apart from the larger discipline of architecture. In fact, it is in contrast to the loftiness and pretensions of “Architecture” that casino designers distinguish themselves: “Whereas Architects design for Architecture’s sake, [we] know what works and how to maximize value for money,” Steelman said, emphasizing the capitalized “A.”³⁷⁵ Whereas Architects look at buildings as isolated objects, the casino designer understands it as a “series of operating businesses.”³⁷⁶ Whereas Architecture appeals to a sense of timelessness, of being above “vulgar” concepts such as “fashion,” casino design is a fast moving profession that must always stay ahead of market trends and cycles. Steelman’s craft is in understanding the relationship between space, commerce and emotions so as to provide “architectural reasons to gamble.”³⁷⁷ As a profession, therefore, the casino designer’s autonomy is intricately linked to the client’s own discursive framework and material interests, and not detached from it. And it is not hidden in shame or coded in tongues, but presented as such.

Paul Steelman’s candour is refreshing. His firm observes a distilled and personalized version of these 127 principles. A quick analysis of these principles provides an interesting picture of how the profession has developed since the Xanadu Report. The principles can be generally divided into two categories – those that are concerned with the overall planning of the casino-resort; and those that govern the interior design of the casino itself. Thus, in the first category, there are those that state that one must always plan a casino-resort in such a way as to allow for future expansions; that parking garages should be stratified vertically so as to reserve the most convenient spots for the VIPs; that the overall theme must be cohesive and carefully maintained. In the latter category, there are those state that one should never surround a casino with retail shops, since they “suck” the life out of the casino when they close; that slot machines should not be placed in quantities more than five in a row; and to “wow” the customer, one must “take liberties with reality.” Rule 41 states, in capitalized characters, “DO NOT EXCEED THE BUILDING BUDGET FOR ANY REASON.” An admonishment from the client or the architect, one wonders.³⁷⁸

Whether these principles are translated from experience and commonsense, or from “scientifically” based studies, is not always clear. All of them, in one way or another, are concerned with the profitability of the business, measured in terms of how to reduce construction time and operating costs, encourage visitors to gamble more and to secure a high rate of return

³⁷³ Paul Steelman, interview with David Schwartz, 29th Nov 2011

³⁷⁴ Adelson Sheldon is another major player in Las Vegas since the 1980s. One of his key contributions was in changing the casino industry to take in more convention and exhibition facilities. According to Paul Steelman, one of Sheldon Adelson’s most memorable contributions was his concept of “power space.”

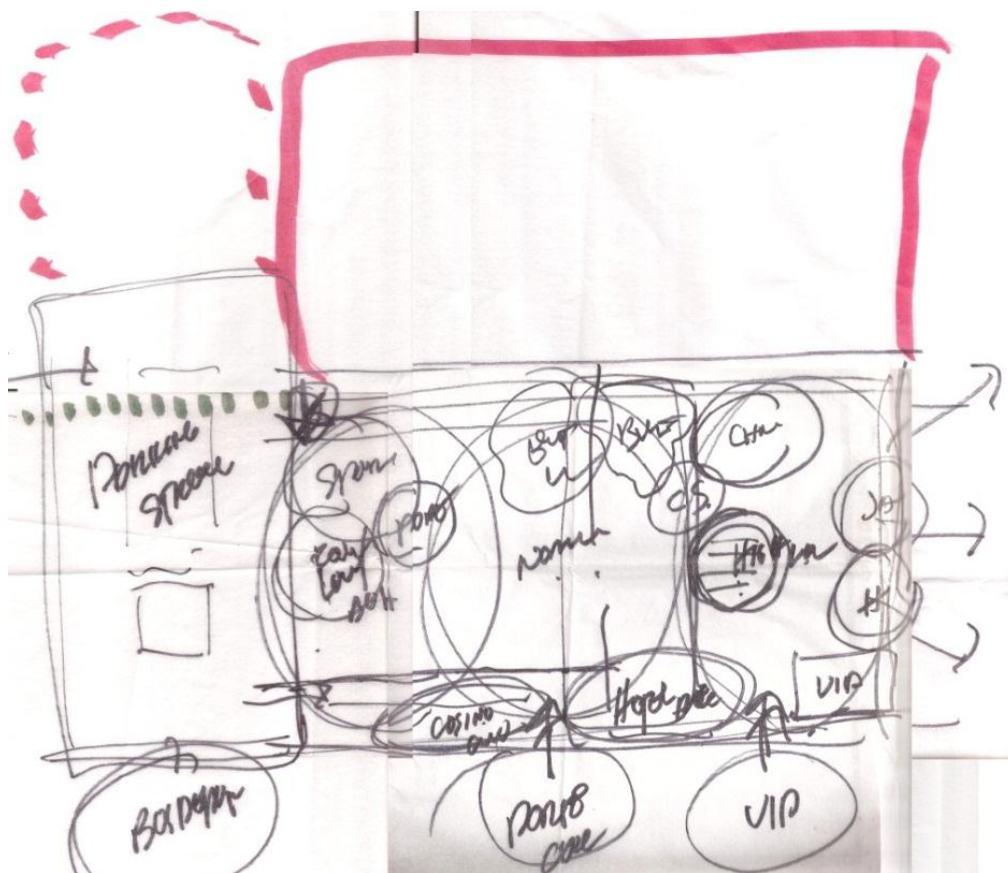
³⁷⁵ Paul Steelman, interview with author, 8th Sept 2011

³⁷⁶ Paul Steelman, interview with David Schwartz, 29th Nov 2011

³⁷⁷ Paul Steelman, interview with author, 8th Sept 2011

³⁷⁸ Paul Steelman, *The 70 Design Rules for Designing a Casino* (Las Vegas: Steelman Partners, 15 Nov 2009)

visitorship. When asked to provide a schematic of how to begin to plan and design a casino-resort, Paul Steelman began to sketch (Plan 3.11). “You start at the perimeter (of the site),” he began, “and work your way in.” The first mark that appeared on the sketch was a zone for a car-parking structure – “a speed ramp, no stopping,” he emphasized. Once the space and location of that was fixed, next to it, he drew a large rectangle. This is the casino hotel proper. Three entrances are marked, one for buses and coaches, one for the porte cochere and one for the VIPs. Corresponding to these three entrances are the three interior zones for the casino – the mass gambling “low limit” zone for those who enter from the bus entrance, the “normal limit” zone for those in the center, and the “high limit” zone for the VIPs. In each three zone – Steelman’s pen started to move into the large rectangle - are the kinds of facilities one would associate with each class of gamblers. Food courts and sports parlors in the low limit zone; buffets, entertainment lounge and cafes in the normal limit zone; and celebrity restaurants and the “center pit” in the high limit zone. Private gaming rooms would be located on the next level, where health spas, private pools and a great view are reserved for these VVIPs. Using a red marker, he stressed that one must always plan for expansion.



Plan 3.11: Paul Steelman’s sketch, drawn in the presence of the author, 9th Sept 2011

What he provides is an architectural diagram based on a strict hierarchy of customers and their worth, a stratification that begins from the moment they arrive to the moment they sit at the gambling table. This spatial division is surprisingly similar to the street economy of 1960s Singapore and its gambling houses. But, in this case, the casino designer has developed a confident assemblage of rules and associations that is thoroughly formalized and flexible, but also resistant to change. It is, in Latour's words, an immutable mobile.³⁷⁹ Paul Steelman's international practice reproduces many of these rules and associations, though he is certainly not blind to the different cultures of gambling in different parts of the world. Yet, in his brief contact with Singapore, a strange dissonance happened. His specialized expertise at creating "architectural reasons to gamble" pricks at the official veil of embarrassment that has settled in place since the 1980s. The shame attached to casino gambling demands that such formal and discursive candor be hidden. In its place, Architecture must return to sanitize the industry.

³⁷⁹ Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together." *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture and Present*, 6 (1986): 1-40

Chapter 4

Las Vegas in Singapore

Conjuring is always culturally specific, creating a magic show of peculiar meanings, symbols, and practices. The conjuring aspect of finance interrupts our expectations that finance can and has spread everywhere, for it can only spread as far as its own magic. In its dramatic performances, circulating finance reveals itself as both empowered and limited by its cultural specificity.

Anna Tsing, 2000, "Inside the Economy of Appearances"

In Singapore, the strange ritual of the public lottery draw is the culmination of a deep paradox in the project of modernity and nationalism. Gambling as vice undercuts the myth of progress because it belittles the heroism of transformation: not only did the Singaporean subject not become modern according to the script of nationalism, the State had to cater to his/her recalcitrance. And because this gesture had to be seen as one of reluctance, the public lottery draw becomes an embarrassed performance that substitutes discipline for the carnivalesque. Yet, by making it technical and invisible, legalized gambling eased into the everyday landscape of Singaporeans. Hiding in plain sight, the lottery stations are an ever suspicious stain in the moral puritanism of the state ideology.

The casino industry in Las Vegas, on the other hand, developed around the spectacle of numbers. Numbers were the common language shared between the financiers, developers, architects and regulators. They gave rise to highly rationalized ways of managing every aspect of the complex ecology of casinos - from machines to employees to gamblers. But numbers also fuelled irrational practices and hyperbolic claims. Extrapolating from Anna Tsing's argument, numbers are cultural and fulfill a "conjunction aspect" of fictitious capital. The casino designer emerged belatedly as that profession whose credentials rest on his/her ability to translate numbers into material culture and back. As Paul Steelman claims, the casino designer knows how to create "architectural reasons to gamble."³⁸⁰

Numbers, of course, were also key actors in the performance of Singapore's lottery draws. They were there in place of seductive ladies and bright posters. They referred only to themselves, and tried their very best to deny their complicity in creating reasons to gamble. Thus, numbers in Singapore and Las Vegas connected at the level of managerial and financial practices. But as spectacles, they could not be more different. The spectacle of gambling in Singapore is one of silence and sterility. The spectacle of gambling in Las Vegas is one of hyperbole and fantasies. In 2007, when these two spectacles collided, much work had to be done to reconcile the two.

This chapter focuses on this moment of collision. It examines how the Las Vegas model was transformed in order to blend into the spatial and aesthetic order of Singapore. Like the previous chapters, this moment of collision marks a critical juncture when many practices, logics and discourses come together to tame a new problem. If the previous chapters offer the benefit of historical hindsight, this chapter deals with a contemporary situation that is not only still in flux, but also highly guarded from public scrutiny. Much of the empirical material that forms the basis of this chapter is drawn from interactions with participants in the making of the Integrated Resort

³⁸⁰ Paul Steelman, interview with author, 8th Sept 2011

and its site, Marina Bay. These are mainly reflections of what they experienced 4 to 5 years ago. Through conversations, a thread can be drawn that pulls out the mechanics of change – little discursive and material modifications that slowly transformed the archetypal Las Vegas model into the Integrated Resort of Singapore.

A simple but effective way to describe what this chapter is trying to do is by way of a concept created by Bruno Latour. Latour describes black-boxing as “the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.”³⁸¹ I use his concept rather loosely outside the context of techno-science. However, it serves to capture how the casino-resort of Las Vegas enters Singapore as a contaminant and emerges as a sanitized object. The invisibility of this transformation is precisely what marks it as successful.

This chapter proceeds by isolating and analyzing the internal workings of several black-boxes. They are generally chronological, though they are more significant as interlocking spaces where a range of actors intervened in specific ways and with diverging interests. The Integrated Resort should therefore be understood as a composite object that has no single author. In the first black box, the key problem that had to be sorted out is that of history. How does the state justify the legalization of something it has stridently stigmatized and criminalized in the last 40 years? To do so, the present and the past had to be rearranged so as to give this moment the semblance of historical necessity. In this state-engineered narrative, the moral position of the state does not change. What has changed is the appearance of a new kind of casino gambling called the “Integrated Resort,” a business and architectural model that has developed elsewhere and is now suitable for importation into Singapore. The second black-box looks at the planning bureaucracy. It examines how planners conceptualize Marina Bay, and how they blend the Integrated Resort into their vision of the bay. The third and fourth black-boxes look at the competitive process through which casino developers bid for the license. It shows the petty politics between architects, planners, bureaucrats and developers that resulted in a winning proposal that is also the acceptable proposal. The final output is the Integrated Resort named “Marina Bay Sands” designed by international architect, Moshe Safdie, not “Venetian Singapore” designed by casino designer, Paul Steelman.

Analyzing the internal workings of these black boxes reveals how the so-called Integrated Resort was not merely discovered elsewhere and imported into Singapore. Rather, it had to be manufactured through a long and hidden process of negotiations, contestations and misrepresentations. Bureaucrats, architects and planners all had a hand in making sure that the final output is close to the original image of the Integrated Resort created in the first black-box. Paying attention to this process of imperceptible changes and hidden interventions, I argue that that what is at work here, from planning to public consultation to architectural design, is an art of “blending”, a way to obscure divergent interests and political contestations by working at the level of aesthetics. As this chapter will show, the Integrated Resort does just this – it is eminently visible as an architectural icon, but its casino space is nowhere to be seen. It blends into the

³⁸¹ Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 304

urban vision of Marina Bay, even though it is but one node in the network of other casino developments in the region.

Past and present

As with many stories about the legalization of casinos in other parts of the world, the economic argument is sovereign. This argument has been used in France and Germany in the 60s, Atlantic City in the 70s, and Sydney in the 80s.³⁸² Indeed, the casino industry has become global by tapping into the circuits of finance, tourism, entertainment and urban renewal. In Singapore, however, rehearsing these arguments is not sufficient. For the government to make a case for the casino, to undo its history of anti-gambling arguments, it must first rearrange the present and the past. The first black-box where this transformation is made is the Parliamentary Debates.

The genesis of the casino proposal can be traced to the Asian economic crisis in 1997. Although Singapore was spared the worst of the crisis, an increased sense of vulnerability had set in. With the geopolitical shift brought about by the rise of two Asian giants (China and India), and a globalised market dominated by transnational forces, it was felt that Singapore, with a mature economy, could no longer compete on low costs and high incomes. An Economic Review Committee was thus set up in 2001 and a report of its deliberations published in 2002. It advised the government to embrace strenuously the ‘knowledge economy’ as a new developmental strategy. In this strategy, the renewed rhetoric of the ‘global city’ and the emphasis on the creative industries took center stage. Furthermore, the report proposed licensing two casinos in Singapore for their perceived ability to invigorate the tourism industry to meet increasing regional competition.

The idea of licensing casinos has always floated around the margins of the possible. Previous economic reviews similarly recommended casinos as a solution to the weakening tourism industry. But, this goes much further back in history. In Chapter 2, casinos and tourism appeared briefly through the voice of then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who said in 1965:

We’ve got an island set aside for all this. We don’t want all this. We don’t want to go greyhound racing or in the Casino – that’s no good. But the American tourists like it. And all Malaysians can go there. Singaporeans will serve them. But, for Singaporeans, we will go to sleep early. We will wake up early. Tomorrow we work hard. If you go for a massage and tomorrow your bones are weaker, we will never succeed. Let the other fellow have a good time. Never mind. We will give the full red-carpet treatment. But, for Singaporeans, I say: “First thing in the morning, physical jerks – P.T. Those who want a real massage, we can beat them up properly”.³⁸³

The report therefore is a rehearsal of old visions. The old nationalist vision of an outpost catering to sinful foreigners is an inversion of the even older colonial gambling farm - an outpost catering to sinful natives. The assumption that such spaces need to be cordoned off in one way or another remains unchallenged. The anxiety that such spaces of concentrated vice might contaminate the economy and morality of general populace is still very much alive. The brief moment in 1965 when casinos almost appeared in Singapore has generally been forgotten. Yet, its moralizing tone remains intact throughout Singapore’s short history as an independent country. Thus, the

³⁸² See Jan McMillen “From Glamour to Grind: The Globalisation of Casinos” in *Gambling Cultures: Studies in history and interpretation*, ed. J. McMillen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 240-262

³⁸³ “Casino Isle off S’pore?”, ST, 25 Oct 1965, 1.

various moments when the State presented its case against casinos in spite of their perceived economic benefits are also strategic moments in renewing its moral authority. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong repeated in 2001:

There may be economic merits to setting up a casino in Singapore. But the social impact is not negligible. By making gaming *more accessible and even glamorous*, it could encourage more gambling and increase the risk of gaming addiction. A casino could also lead to undesirable activities like money laundering, illegal lending and organized crime. Although one can try to mitigate these effects, the long term impact on social mores and attitudes is more insidious and harder to prevent. (emphasis added)

The adverb “even” is telling. To make gambling “more accessible and *even glamorous*” is morally unacceptable. Legalized gambling through the national lottery is tolerable precisely because it made gambling accessible *but unglamorous*. This aesthetic consideration is central but often hidden behind a mechanical argument that tries to balance economic gain with social costs. Between 1965 and 2001, the same moral argument could legitimize completely opposite policies because one can, through appearances, obfuscate this contradiction.

Four years later in 2005, this balance between economic and social costs apparently tipped in favor of the former when the government decided to allow not just one, but two casinos in Singapore. This decision needed a comprehensive renovation of the self-propagated state ideology that has been as settled as the nondescript lottery stations around the island. How then does one explain this change? Official discourses, of course, have little time for deep historical awareness. To be aware of history repeating itself is to dilute the urgency and uniqueness of the contemporary moment. Yet, modernity demands both a sense of rupture and a sense of continuity. Like many of the debates that come before it, the arguments thrown up in the Parliamentary debates around the casino proposal do the work of rearranging the new and the old to fit contemporary political objectives.³⁸⁴ These arguments shall be briefly analyzed.³⁸⁵

According to the debates, the following elements have changed. First, the region and the world have changed. This accounts for the waning fortunes of Singapore’s tourism industry as other cities are able to offer more exotic experiences at lower prices than Singapore. A global hierarchy of cities exists in the minds of the ruling elites. There are unsurprising references to well-known centers of finance and tourism like New York, London, Dubai and Tokyo. Closer to home, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Guangdong and Hongkong are all “catching up” and displacing the staid image of Singapore’s clean and safe image. What is desired is an *affect* common to such cities, one of vitality and excitement. Secondly, “technology” has changed. It has created a global culture which Singaporeans are now a part of. As Singaporeans travel and expose themselves to global media, it is no longer possible to “shield” them from the less desirable elements in other parts of the world. Thirdly, as a consequence of the first two elements, Singaporeans have changed. Is it therefore necessary to continue the patriarchal role of the State given that Singaporeans are now more “mature” and able to decide for themselves how much and when to gamble? Last but not least, the casino business has changed. Referring

³⁸⁴ *SPD*, “Proposal to Develop Integrated Resorts”, 18 April 2005: 55-108; 19 April 2005: 136-248. This analysis summarizes final arguments of the two day long debate. Of course, between all the members of Parliament, there were different opinions. Nevertheless, these differences were only understandable in reference to these dominant perspectives on morality, economics and political culture.

³⁸⁵ da Cunha provides a review and analysis of these debates and subsequent policies around the casino using primarily official sources. His work may be taken to be a thoughtful summary of what Singaporeans read during this period of time, framed against the political economic changes in the last 20 years. I do not however entirely agree with his analysis which entrenches rather than questions these official representations. Derek da Cunha, *Singapore places its bets: Casinos, Foreign Talents and Re-making a City-State* (Singapore: Select Books, 2010)

primarily to Las Vegas, these businesses earn as much, if not more, from their entertainment, MICE³⁸⁶ and hospitality facilities than from the casino alone. Therefore, casino gambling is no longer the same as before – it is now a minor fraction of a larger complex called the “Integrated Resort.”

According to the debates, the following elements remain constant. First, gambling as vice has not changed. Singaporeans continue to gamble, and this is proven by the collections of legal and illegal gambling and by estimates of Singaporeans frequenting casinos around the region. Second, the official sanction against gambling has not changed. Thus, the government continues to espouse the values of hard work, thrift and family cohesion. Lastly, the political culture of rule has not changed. Calls for a referendum to allow the public to vote and the lifting of the Whip to allow members of the Parliament to express their opinions freely were rejected. Even though a long public consultation was conducted to canvas the views of the public and religious organizations, the final decision still rested on the government. In fact, such a public and extended display of “indecision” was done not to pass the power to decide to the public, but to educate them on why the government decided to move ahead with the casino proposal:

Usually we avoid agonizing over policies in public, wringing hands, wondering what to do, before we make up our minds. But in this case, it has been important for us to talk about how we got here in order to carry people along and understand our thinking.

Many of these arguments cannot be proven without a large degree of ambiguity. What is critical is the re-arrangement of the new and the old, which gives these arguments the effect of truth. This rearrangement is important because it legitimizes the reversal in policy without undermining the moral authority of the ruling party. In other words, it is a change in policy, not a change in ideology or the processes of government.

The stimuli of change are externalized to several “uncontrollable” and “new” factors. Technological processes, global competition and a transformed casino industry all point to the need to “keep up” with the times. This move is almost identical to how the debates in 1960s broke free from the encumbrances of the colonial legacy. If external factors impose change on the body politic, the machinery for “keeping up” remains the “proven” ideologies and administrative capabilities of the ruling party. In these debates, a new force appeared - it is none other than the past, present and future of Singapore condensed in the seductive trope of “success.” Why change the political structure and social contract that has brought Singapore so far and would, in all likelihood, continue to work? After only 40 years of independence, the trope of success and a concomitant sense of its fragility has become an extremely powerful ideological tool to forge consensus on issues threatening the norms of political rule.³⁸⁷ Even senior civil servants fear that a sense of complacency has set in, and that “we have started to believe in our own propaganda.”³⁸⁸ Nevertheless, references to “success” appear sporadically but strategically in the debates. They stand in for whatever unknowns the future holds. They restrict alternative

³⁸⁶ MICE is the industry acronym for a cluster of corporate-commercial activities, namely “Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions”.

³⁸⁷ See, for example, the two volumes dedicated to the Singapore model as “success”: Terence Chong, ed., *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited* (Singapore: Select Books, 2010); Kernial Singh Sandhu, Paul Wheatley, eds., *The Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2000). See also how this success narrative has become a way to market Singapore’s policies and development experiences overseas: Beng Huat, Chua, “Singapore as Model: Planning Innovations, Knowledge Experts,” *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy (eds.) (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2011), 29-54

³⁸⁸ Tong Dow, Ngiam, *A Mandarin and the Making of Public Policy: Reflections by Ngiam Tong Dow*, ed. S. Tay (Singapore: NUS Press, 2006), 24. Ngiam was the former head of the civil service

views by demanding unquestionable faith: “I am confident that the Government, with its well-oiled machinery at its disposal, will put in place the necessary filters to cushion the negative impact of gambling in our society”³⁸⁹; “Just like in the 60s, Singaporeans were not too sure then, whether we would make it, in the remaking. But we did”³⁹⁰; “I can judge from the Minister’s speeches that the social problems created by gambling will not have a very great impact on us. They are still within control of our social network.”³⁹¹

The artificial divide between the old and the new dramatizes and tames change at the same time. To understand its artificiality, one must return to specific moments both forgotten and distorted. The forgotten quote from Lee Kuan Yew points to how casino gambling was *not* always completely outside the possible. In 1965, using the same logic that legalized state lotteries and criminalized popular gambling, Singapore was already “ready” for a casino on one of its offshore islands. Then, the most vocal opponents to this vision were religious groups and respected politicians such as Dr Goh Keng Swee and David Marshall. Socialism was still a powerful ideology then and it was difficult to reconcile gambling as a form of regressive tax with the vision of social justice it advocated. This resistance can be felt in the political and popular debates around the legalization of state lotteries in the 1960s. It is therefore more accurate to say that strong opposing voices to the casino passed away or diminished in strength over the years, rather than that the ruling elites had consistently rejected the casino on “moral grounds.”

If there is one thing that cannot change, it is the moral consistency of the ruling elites. There was constant moral posturing amongst those who claimed to speak on behalf of the gambler. Many of the politicians opened their speeches by declaring themselves to be non-gamblers. Most stated that they were against gambling on moral and religious grounds. Whether through their capacity as grassroots leaders or professionals, they spoke of gambling collectively as potential problems or an unchanging constant. The stories they brought to share on the evils of gambling were colorful and thoughtful accounts of their interactions with this other half, but the two voices – the politician and the gambler - were always separate and distinct. In the Parliament, this act of self-cleansing was a necessary threshold into politics. It connected politics with the unchanging morality of the ruling ideology while, at the same time, transformed a moral question where each individual’s view was equal and distinct into a “rational” one where only the State can decide outside the influence of any interested party.

The idea that politics should be “rational” is not peculiar to Singapore – it runs deep in modern political thought from Mannheim to Habermas.³⁹² International development policies and practices continue to propagate expert knowledge as disinterested and neutral.³⁹³ What is tricky in this instance is how politics reached overtly for both economic rationality and moral authority at the same time. One can see how the Parliamentary debates marks simultaneously an end-point when all personal opinions have been transformed into discrete variables to be calculated through a cost-benefit analysis, as well as a threshold where those who can speak are

³⁸⁹ Cynthia Phua, “Proposal to Develop Integrated Resort,” *Singapore Parliamentary Debates*, 21 April 2005: 466

³⁹⁰ *SPD*, 21 April 2005, 429

³⁹¹ Ong Ah Heng, “Proposal to Develop Integrated Resort,” *SPD*, 21 April 2005: 462

³⁹² For a discussion of the intellectual tradition in planning theory, see John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 51-137

³⁹³ See for example, Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (California: University of California Press, 2002); James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) and James Scott, *Seeing like a State*, 1998

outside the problem to be solved. They are rational *and* moral. When the final decision to accept the casinos was presented, this dual performance was thoroughly woven into the speech. After balancing the economic benefits with the social costs, the Prime Minister ends his speech like this:

*This is a judgment, not a mathematical calculation. We see the trends, and feel the need to move. Whichever way we decide, there are risks. If we proceed, the IRs may not succeed, or the social fall out may be worse than we expect. If we do not proceed, we are at serious risk of being left behind by other cities. After weighing the matter carefully, the Cabinet has collectively concluded that we had no choice but to proceed with the IRs. As Prime Minister, I carry the ultimate responsibility for this decision.*³⁹⁴ (emphasis added)

As previous chapters have shown, this simultaneous movement between the economic and the moral surges to the fore every time gambling becomes a target of government intervention, whether it is about criminalization or legalization. In contemporary Singapore, such tensions take on new valences. As Singapore seeks to transform itself into a cosmopolitan hub, the state must renovate its relationship with civil society so as to be more acceptable to the global talent pool it is trying to attract. A related issue where such a contradiction emerged is the debates around homosexuality. Gay events that can attract the “creative class” and tourist dollars are generally tolerated. In 2003, the Prime Minister sparked controversy when he declared that the state would openly employ gay Singaporeans as civil servants. Yet, this is done against the backdrop of refusing to decriminalize gay sex, loosen homophobic regulations on mass media and register any kind of organization that proclaims to be for the gay cause.³⁹⁵ Indeed, what appears consistent in these controversies is how change is always justified on economic grounds but the limits of change begin when the moral and political hegemony of the ruling elites is challenged.³⁹⁶

Set against the unchanging moral stance of the government is the radically “new” creature called the “Integrated Resort.” In the Parliamentary Debates, many politicians expressed surprise at how different casinos are today compared to what they imagined them to be. Having seen the proposals made by interested casino developers, most were convinced that the “Integrated Resort” is a more accurate description of this assembly of activities of which the casino plays only a small part. Instead of dens of iniquity, they are serious and highly regulated businesses with deep connections to various sectors of the tourism industry. Thus, the Integrated Resort is a new creature that must be defined: it is a “large-scale development offering multiple world class attractions. ... an entire complex of classy hotels, luxury shops, fancy restaurants, spectacular shows, convention centres all found in one single destination. The gaming component will occupy not more than 3-5% of the total area of the IR development.... Casino gaming is an important part of the mix, but only a part.”³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ Hsien Loong, Lee “Proposal to Develop Integrated Resorts,” *Singapore Parliamentary Debates* (18 April 2005),74

³⁹⁵ See Russell Heng, “Tiptoe out of the Closet: The Before and After of the Increasingly Visible Gay Community in Singapore,” *Gay and Lesbian Asia: Culture, Identity, Community*. Eds. Gerard Sullivan and Peter A. Jackson (Binghamton: Harrington Park Press, 2001): 81-97; “”, Chris K.K. Tan, “But they are like You and Me”: Gay Civil Servants and Citizenship in a Cosmopolitanizing Singapore” in *City and Society* 21(1)(2009), 133-154

³⁹⁶ See similar discussions in Brenda S.A. Yeoh, “Cosmopolitanism and its Exclusions in Singapore,” in *Urban Studies* 41/12(2004),2431-2445; Kenneth Paul, Tan, 2003, “Sexing Up Singapore,” in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6/4(2003),403-423

³⁹⁷ Hng Kiang, Lim, *SPD*, 18 May 2005

On this claim alone, the very object of contention is negated. Many politicians feared that the people did not have the right image of the Integrated Resort in mind. Like themselves, the public needed to be educated so as to appreciate the newness of this creature. Thus, during the National Day Rally speech that year, a digital image of an imagined Integrated Resort was created by the planning authority and broadcasted to the entire populace.³⁹⁸ In this image, the Integrated Resort is a modern avant-garde glass-clad edifice that would sit comfortably in any financial or cultural district in the world, rather than a gaudy fire-spouting pyramid (Fig. 4.1). The contrast is aimed at kitschy Las Vegas theme parks and seedy Macau casinos. The Integrated Resort, the image assures its viewers, *fits in*. Not only is it the kind of architectural icon that aspiring global cities like Singapore aim for, it is something that fits in the specific context of Singapore's new downtown. Thus, the contextual information given in the image is vital. In the background, one can see faded renderings of future developments. They are simple blocks that step down in scale towards the waterfront. So does the Integrated Resort, though in a scaled up and more flamboyant way. The tree-lined promenade – the only other fully rendered urban element in the image – does not stop at the Integrated Resort. In fact, the Integrated Resort completes the circulation system by linking the promenade to the footbridge that crosses the Bay. An urban atmosphere is also generated by the building – three water-crafts skim the surface of the Bay, while fountains and light beams suggest some dramatic celebration underway.

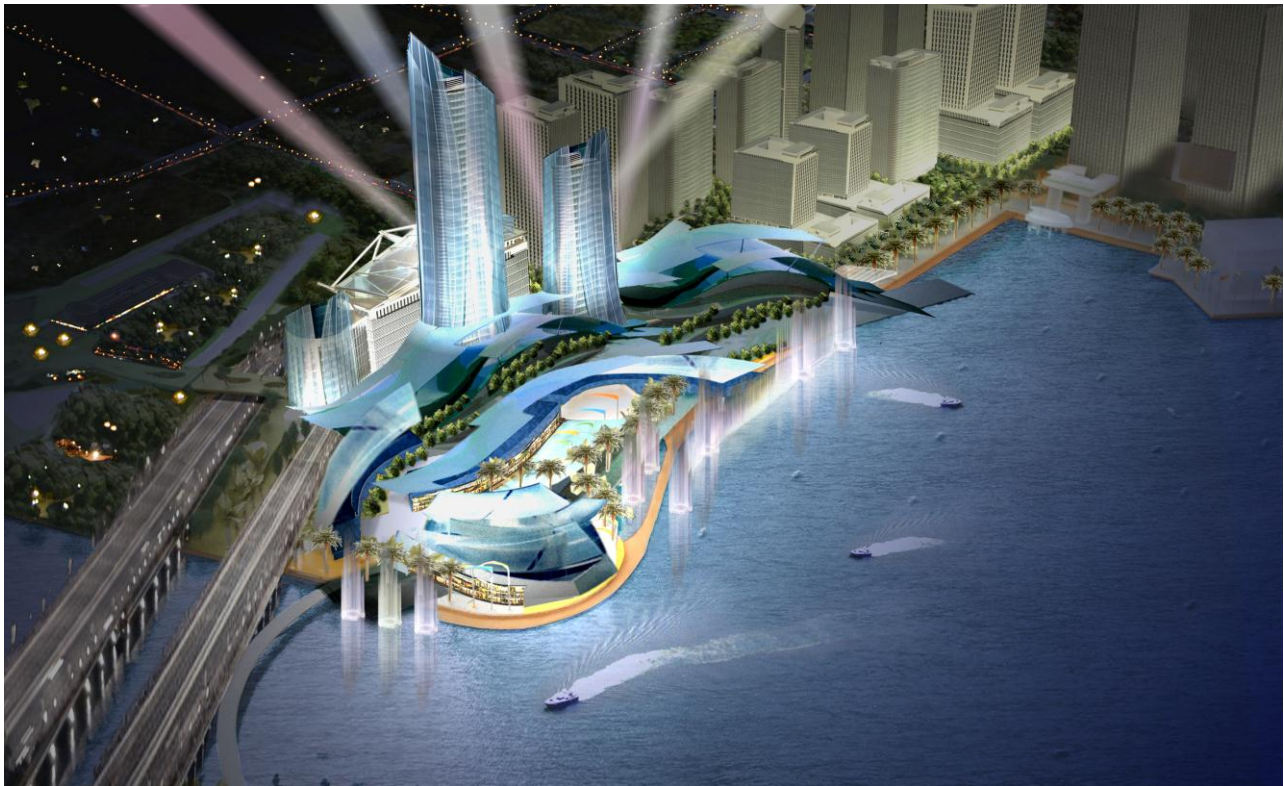


Fig. 4.1: A digital simulation of an “Integrated Resort.” This simulation was prepared by the government planners in the URA *before* the intervention by casino designers and developers. It represents the planner’s own ideas of what an Integrated Resort might look like at Marina Bay, as well as the government’s attempt to correct the public’s imagination of what an Integrated Resort is. Source: URA, 2005

³⁹⁸ The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is the national planning authority of Singapore. For the rest of this chapter, “planners” refers to the planners and architects working in the URA.

At this stage, architecture is used to sanitize the project so that its casino aspect is not just invisible, but always preceded by a more palatable image. By rendering the new building in a familiar urban context, the Integrated Resort transforms from an alien into a Singaporean. By its architectural qualities, it looks more like a cultural, recreational and financial institution, than a casino. Thus, the image serves the same function as the trope of success – it tames the unknown and corrects the imagination. In that sense, it is an *aesthetic contract* that binds the vision of the state to the vision of the people. As the next section will show, when the planners produced this image, they were not merely speculating. In negotiating with architects and developers, the aesthetic contract set the boundaries of an architecture-to-come.

But is the Integrated Resort as new as it is made out to be? The previous chapters and the large amount of scholarship on Las Vegas help us think critically about this. If we understand an Integrated Resort simply as a collection of complementary commercial activities of which one of them happens to be casino gambling, then Las Vegas casinos have always been “integrated resorts.” Cheap food, Hollywood glamor and a good holiday in the sun has always been the marketing ploy of Las Vegas since the 1970s. In fact, one can even argue that the general farms of colonial Malaya are early forms of Integrated Resorts since they offered, in addition to gambling, opium, drinking and other forms of entertainment. The idea that casinos are only casinos ignores the extended fabric connecting gambling to other supporting and complementary functions that construct this world of entertainment and finance. As Chapter 2 shows, even the street-economy of illegal gambling in Singapore in the 60s is a tapestry of supporting activities involving entertainment, hospitality and credit. These are the same key supporting activities one would find in a Las Vegas casino today.

If the newness of this Integrated Resort is the fact that the casino gambling now is *less* central to the business – only “3-5% of the floor area” - and thus as a whole lot less “sinful,” one must again ask what these numbers mean. On the Las Vegas Strip, it is true that the proportion of earnings from casino gambling to total revenue has been falling since the 1980s, from about half to one third. Yet, between 1996 and 2005, gaming revenue still constituted the largest of all profit centers (See Table 1). The first point, therefore, is that these developments depend on the casino in order to be financially viable. This is not lost on some of the politicians, who stated as much that the entire complex cannot run without a casino as its revenue generator. All the complementary activities are accoutrements to induce visitations to the casino. As casino analyst Bill Eadington already noted in 1983:

Another important marketing concept used by casinos is to provide the potential patron with a large number of reasons, or “excuses,” to visit the casinos. These range from offering a broad array of entertainment and sporting events to providing inexpensive “junkets” packages (i.e., round trip bus fare from Philadelphia to Atlantic City, plus a meal, a lounge show, free cocktails, and \$5.00 in quarters for \$15.00), to staging parties, complete with celebrities, for high rollers. Themes behind media advertising for casinos often center round the idea of excepting everyday problems into a pleasurable and hedonistic environment that casinos offer, or they imply interludes with luck and good fortune.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ William R. Eadington, *The Political Economy of the Legal Casino Gaming Industry in the United States*. Paper No. 84-1 (Reno: University of Reno, Nevada, 1984): 9

Secondly, one can look comparatively at Atlantic City. By 1983, about 10 years after the legalization of casinos in Atlantic City, the total gaming revenue from only nine casinos surpassed that earned by 137 large casino operators in Las Vegas.⁴⁰⁰ These Integrated Resorts earned a large portion of their revenue from casino gambling: between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of gaming revenue to total revenue is about 80%.⁴⁰¹ Yet, many of the casinos in Atlantic City were run by the same corporations from Las Vegas. Thus, the figures between Atlantic City and Las Vegas tell us something significant: the proportion of casino revenue to total revenue does not signal any substantial shift in the business model of these developments. It is an expression of a host of various factors, such as market conditions, competition amongst resort destinations, cultural values towards gambling and local jurisdiction. Atlantic City casinos were extremely profitable because they tapped into a new market of gamblers in the East Coast. Partly due to the carving of the national market, Las Vegas' gaming revenue dropped consistently, and the casinos responded by diversifying their products and rebranding themselves.

Table 4.1: Breakdown of revenue for casinos on the Las Vegas Strip, 1996-2005
Source: http://gaming.unlv.edu/reports/NV_departments_historic.pdf

Year	Casino	Rooms	Food	Beverage	Other
FY96	52.86%	20.26%	10.97%	4.72%	11.18%
FY97	51.51%	21.67%	10.93%	4.68%	11.21%
FY98	50.25%	21.88%	11.47%	4.80%	11.59%
FY99	48.08%	22.14%	11.97%	4.81%	12.99%
FY00	45.94%	23.35%	12.34%	4.91%	13.46%
FY01	43.67%	25.06%	12.81%	5.03%	13.43%
FY02	42.98%	24.19%	13.52%	5.35%	13.96%
FY03	42.98%	24.36%	13.68%	5.44%	13.55%
FY04	41.94%	25.37%	13.92%	5.45%	13.32%
FY05	40.94%	26.09%	14.08%	5.43%	13.46%

The argument therefore that there is a new creature known as an Integrated Resort that appeared recently and can now be imported into Singapore is misleading. It is far more accurate to say that the kind of business model which earns less from casino gambling already exists almost 20 years ago. Then, the casino industry was already becoming global. Chapter 3 shows that as a result of technological development and the assimilation of corporate and financial practices into the industry, Las Vegas casinos could be connected and replicated wherever an opening was made for its legalization. The mystery deepens if one considers that in 1985, after an economic recession, a similar proposition was made to introduce casinos into Singapore for the purpose of invigorating the tourism industry, and the government rejected this proposal on the familiar argument that the potential economic gains do not justify the social costs. Deconstructing the narratives of the Parliamentary Debates only leads us to one question that seems to be answered, but yet remains a mystery: if Singapore were not willing to accept the Integrated Resort in the

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid

⁴⁰¹ See tabulation of revenue for Atlantic City provided by the Center for Gaming Research, University of Nevada, Las Vegas: http://gaming.unlv.edu/abstract/ac_main.html (accessed: 30 April 2012)

1980s, why is it ready to accept the Integrated Resort now? What caused the balance of economic gain and social costs to tip in favor of the former?

The point is not to offer a definitive answer to this question. Rather, it is to show why this question *cannot* be left unanswered, and why it is answered that way it is. Thus, the public display of “wringing of hands” is not just an exercise to educate the public; it is also an exercise to shield the actual decision making processes through a massive display of transparency. It ameliorates the suspicion that this decision is somewhat irrational, based on the convictions of individuals rather than some objective metric of calculation; that there is no overarching logic or historical explanation to rest the reversal of policy on; that, when the balance of economic benefit to social costs is said to have changed, it is those doing the calculations who have changed; and that politics is perhaps also a form of gambling.

Reaching back into history also shows how the very way in which the question is framed is both historically conditioned and culturally specific. As such, the space for possible answers is highly restricted. As Anna Tsing argues, when trying to understand the “economy of appearances” that sustains the world of speculative finance, one must attend to the cultural specificities that make each performance meaningful for a certain group of audience. “Profit must be imagined before it can be extracted.”⁴⁰² In a similar vein, costs and benefits must be imagined before they can be balanced. And where uncertainty lurks, one must turn to figures of stability. Rearranging the past and the present is part of this exercise in maintaining this economy of appearances. So is the architectural image that is used to correct the public imagination.

If there is no such thing as an Integrated Resort that suddenly appeared, ready to be imported into Singapore, the reverse is true: in order for Las Vegas casinos to enter Singapore, it has to be transformed into an Integrated Resort. A fundamental aspect of this transformation is rhetorical spatial and aesthetic, as the image already portends. The aestheticization of vice, of course, is not a new exercise. Chapter 2 discusses the contradiction between the intensive criminalization and moralization of vice on the one hand, and the legalization of state-sponsored lottery on the other, and how this contradiction was made insensible by acting on the bodies of the gamblers and the spaces in which gambling occurred. Thus, the public ritual of drawing numbers became enclosed and highly disciplined affairs, while the lottery outlets became invisible by merging into the everyday landscape of Singaporeans. For the new casinos at Marina Bay and Sentosa, planners already had in mind a kind of aesthetic that could be spectacular and yet preserve this veil of invisibility. To trace the making of the Integrated Resort, we turn to the next black-box: the world of the planners.

The planning bureaucracy

The digital simulation of the Integrated Resort produced by the planners is a window into a world of professional expertise and bureaucracy. The image, as suggested earlier, is an aesthetic contract because it is not just a way to imagine the city in advance; it also visualizes legally binding formal prescriptions to ensure that the final product is close to what is already imagined. Of course, all planning activities attempt to do just that, but in this case, the stakes placed on a proper aesthetic is magnified, and this becomes a focus around which planning practices were reformulated. This section looks at how planners translate political-economic objectives into

⁴⁰² Anna Tsing, “Inside the Economy of Appearances” in *Public Culture* 12/1(2000), 118

aesthetic and material form, and how the relationship between subjective and objective judgment was negotiated within the bureaucracy. The next section continues this analysis by looking at the interactions between planners, bureaucrats, and the casino developers and their architects, focusing on the moment of the competition for the casino license.

“Do you *dare* to put it at Marina Bay?” A planner reflects on this daunting question posed within the bureaucracy before the decision was made to move ahead with the casino proposal. Of the two Integrated Resorts, the one at Marina Bay provoked the most anxiety. The initial idea proposed by the tourism board was to amalgamate the few small Southern Islands into a large island for a casino-resort development. Yet, planners disagreed with this proposal, as it would mean the loss of the last few natural reserves in Singapore. They offered some alternative sites. Sentosa was one clear option as it was an offshore island dedicated to tourism and recreation. To place a casino at Marina Bay was much more controversial. Planners involved directly in the project treat the Integrated Resort as an alien being that must be transformed to fit into *their* vision. One of the planners articulates this succinctly:

This is the waterfront, the financial district. The last thing we want is a Las Vegas type development: flashy lights, mock architecture with pyramids, huge sphinx etc., you know. We want a modern building that fits in. That was one of the key design statements. That was part of the agreement to locate it there. If it is there, then we must guide it ... It cannot be thematic, it cannot be an Atlantis. It cannot be a Palm Dubai kind of thing.⁴⁰³

If politicians weighed economic gain with social cost, planners had a different set of problems to work with. A key motivation was to fulfill the vision enshrined in the plan for Marina Bay. After talking to several planners, it becomes clear that this plan is the basis for calculating the merits and demerits of siting the Integrated Resort there. All the planners talked about how the Resort would speed up the development of the Bay. The scale of investment and the size of the Integrated Resort development are quite unprecedented in Singapore. A planner who was involved in the planning of Marina Bay explains this process of acceleration:

When I saw the proposal, my first reaction was ‘is this the right place for a casino? But, thinking about it, this [IR] is going to bring so much and catalyze the whole vision. Just to ring around the Bay, if you go on a regular procedure of selling site by site, it is going to take 10 to 15 years at least. And this guy just chewed up half a million GFA. Three to four years of growth, basically.’⁴⁰⁴

Many planners like him thought about development as a kind of consumption of space. At this level of conceptualization, Marina Bay represents a fictitious number, a kind of virtual market pending the “realization problem of capital.”⁴⁰⁵ By consuming half a million units of fictitious space, 10 to 15 years of development can be accomplished in an instance. This “big bang” effect does not stop here. It creates an aesthetic impact that is necessary to remake Singapore’s staid image in the global imaginary. “It is so difficult to change the image of Singapore!” a director of the Singapore Tourism Board laments. She reflects on how despite all the efforts to rebrand Singapore as an exciting and sexy place full of parties, cultural offerings and world-class events, tourists and industry players still tend to associate Singapore with being clean, safe and quite sterile. Echoing the tourism experts who recommended the casino proposals in the first place, she

⁴⁰³ Anonymous, interview with author, 6 June 2010

⁴⁰⁴ Anonymous, interview with author, 23 May 2010

⁴⁰⁵ Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: America Dreams, Media Fantasies, and Themed Environments* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2001), 41-72

argues that the Integrated Resort could be the game-changer that will finally replace an old image with a new one. This development, she says, has very high “media value.”⁴⁰⁶

“Media value,” as she proceeds to elaborate, has to do with the amount of exposure time this project could get on targeted channels of international media. By blasting the image of the Integrated Resort and its messages to these audiences, the casino developer would inadvertently help to change the image of Singapore. This is a form of public-private partnership that blurs the distinction between corporations and nation-states. It also raises a question of how capitalism reproduces itself: if one should apply the theory that the crises of capitalism resolve, however inadequately and temporarily, through a “spatial fix,” one should also consider this form of “image-fix.” Indeed, space and image are never distinct in the speculative world of finance. Another planner involved in the branding of Marina Bay imagines the Integrated Resort precisely as a kind of spatialized image. She conceives of Marina Bay the way a developer might plan out a shopping mall. The Integrated Resort is the “anchor tenant” and “catalyst” that will drive investor and media interest into the area. By its spectacular presence in a hollow shell of rentable lots, abstract space becomes much more imageable and marketable. It is not surprising that the Key Performance Indicators of her department mirror those used in the tourism and shopping industry: numbers of visitors, estimated expenditure at Marina Bay and media value.

When planners allude to acceleration and the “image-fix,” they point to a prominent trend in urbanism today. Scholars have pointed out that many Asian cities are resorting to mega-projects and cultural imagineering to compete for global capital. They offer multiple interpretations of how cultural meanings mediated through the built environment connect with the world of high finance, land speculations and nationalist sensibilities.⁴⁰⁷ Furthermore, such projects are often seen as instantiations of neoliberal globalization. There is an academic consensus that the injection of neoliberal ideologies and practices is highly uneven across Southeast Asia and the larger Asia-Pacific region in general.⁴⁰⁸ Such marked differences are attributed largely to the varying degrees with which such ideologies and practices are able to penetrate or forge alliance with existing political structures and local agents. Geographer Henry Yeung quotes Bello on this sentiment - “so dominant has free market ideology become in international elite discourse that even its opponents in government and business [in Asia] – with the singular exception of Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia – mouth its platitudes while opposing it in practice.”⁴⁰⁹ As he goes on to argue in his paper, the advent of neoliberal ethos did not blanket out the developmentalist approach. Rather, the Asian developmental states were “re-regulating their domestic economies to ride out the economic crisis,” and that the crisis had activated their institutional capacities to be more entrepreneurial in governance.

Singapore is often used as that paradigmatic example of how the state has become even more proactive and entrepreneurial in the aftermath of the crisis. The problem of the “image-fix”

⁴⁰⁶ Carrie Kwik, interview with author, 16 Sept 2010

⁴⁰⁷ See for example: Tim Bunnell, L Drummond, and Kong Chong, Ho, (eds) *Critical Reflections on Cities in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002); Kris Olds, “Globalization and the production of new urban spaces: Pacific Rim megaprojects in the late 20th century”, *Environment and Planning A*, 26, 1713-1743; Brenda S.A. Yeoh, “The Global Cultural City? Spatial Imaginaries and Politics in the (Multi)Cultural Marketplaces of Southeast Asia” in *Urban Studies* 42/5-6(2005), 945-958

⁴⁰⁸ See, for example, Aihwa, Ong. 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception : Mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham and London : Duke University Press; Rodan, G. “International capital, Singapore’s state companies, and security”. In *Critical Asian Studies*, 36:3 (2004): 479-499; Garry Rodan, “Asian Crisis, transparency and the international media in Singapore,” in *The Pacific Review*, 13:2 (2000),217-242

⁴⁰⁹ Yeung, H W C. “State Intervention and neoliberalism in the globalizing world economy : Lessons from Singapore’s regionalization programme”. In *The Pacific Review*, 13/1(2000), 133-162

partially explains why it is so important to get the correct architectural aesthetic for the building. Yet, how is this correct aesthetic defined and produced? No doubt much of the extant literature would point to an elite circuit of star-architects and transnational corporations, or the flow of images that pervade every aspect of the commodity chain beginning from advertising brochures to the completed iconic buildings, or state policies that intervene into processes of urban development. Few point to planners as agents in the process of creating value through the image. In the case of Singapore, where a centralized and insulated planning system has restricted access to how planning work is actually done, it seems to be assumed that planners are mere functionaries of their political masters, frictionless conduits that bring state visions into fruition. To unpack this assumption is not easy, but one small step is to listen carefully to how planners talk about the plans they produced and the kinds of images they conjure in these conversations. The conversations above already reveal some of the rationalities and values of planning that cannot be reduced to an economic logic or sovereign directive. To sharpen the analysis, one has to listen not just to those in the bureaucracy today, but also those who have left. Such a comparative analysis helps to navigate the highly guarded self-representations of the bureaucracy. Indeed, some of the most critical voices emanate from *within* the bureaucracy. The two groups of planners disagree on many issues around the planning of Marina Bay and the Integrated Resort. At the heart of their disagreement is the process and value of planning in the context of globalization. To tap into their professional and bureaucratic world, analyzing the way these two groups of planners produce and use the plan is vital.⁴¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, when talking about Marina Bay and the Integrated Resort, planners refer constantly to the vision enshrined in the plan. Yet, Marina Bay has been planned over and over again – at least three plans have been superseded before this current version is adopted. For the planners, each plan is not just a final product. It is also a program. In this current iteration of the vision for Marina Bay, the immediate task is to “ring” the bay. This would create a complete “face” composed of a water-body surrounded by buildings, activities and circulation systems. Though the plan might take 10 to 20 years to complete, there should be stages in this long process when what is built can be read as a complete product. This sense of “staged completeness” is critical in the evaluation of plans. Mr. Thai-Ker Liu, one of the most senior and respected planner in Singapore, does not agree with this version of the plan, but this is very much one of his criteria for a good plan. What is critically different, however, is the sense of speed. Referring to older visions of Marina Bay produced by Japanese architects Kenzo Tange and I M Pei, he contrasts the fan-shaped and gridiron geometry of their plans (Fig. 4.2):

I M Pei’s plan can be done in phases, and *you should not rush the CBD overnight. You should do it slowly. And you can do it slowly and at every stage, it looks complete ...* The beauty of Tange’s plan is its fan shape. It is a kind of a circular waterfront. Unless you complete the circle, you cannot see the intended result. But here [I M Pei’s plan], you don’t need to. You simply can just have a small nucleus and let it grow.⁴¹¹ [emphasis added]

⁴¹⁰ I learned from Michael Peter Smith who argues that one must locate and return agency to the study of globalization. In this context, planners are important agents who See Michael P. Smith, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001)

⁴¹¹ Thai Ker, Liu, interview with author, 20 July 2010

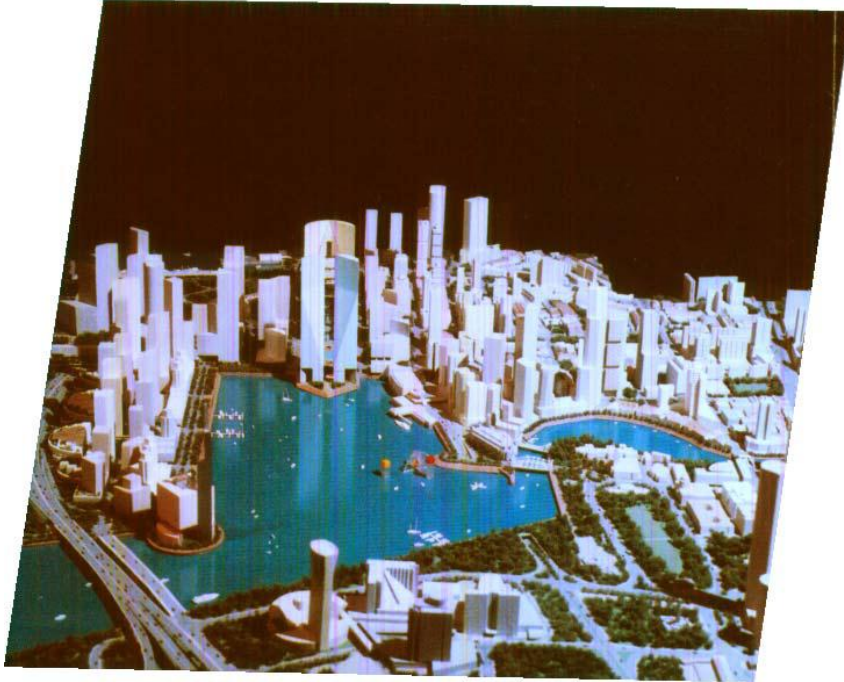


Fig. 4.2: Master Plans produced by I M Pei (top) and Kenzo Tange (bottom)
Source: URA, Annual Report, 1994/5

The plan does not reveal this programmatic dimension, but it comes across viscerally in the conversations. This dimension of the plan is both economic and aesthetic. It makes an economic judgment about how much and how fast the market can grow and directs this growth spatially. It also makes an aesthetic judgment about the look of the city as it grows. Understanding the city as process, planners shuttle between these two modes of assessment. Though both groups of planners make the same movement, they have a different conception of what is a beautiful and workable city. Another way to tease out these hidden differences is to examine the process of producing the plans.

Both groups of planners observe a rather similar schematic to produce a plan. The first step usually begins with numbers. A projection of population growth or market demands in the next few years translate into a certain quantum of space that must be produced and distributed. Economic and social policies shape these estimates at the national level. Planners enter the process at various scales. At a national scale, planners distribute these numbers in broad spatial zones to influence the direction of urban transformation. Working at a smaller scale, planners begin to identify opportunities and constraints for development in specific zones and use this exercise to simultaneously re-articulate the planning vision for that zone. The plan therefore is an algorithm that transforms numbers into space as well as a canvas that transforms numbers into an image. These two transformations are interconnected, but there is also a degree of separation. Therefore, although the aesthetic vision for Marina Bay has changed considerably between the 1980s and 2010s, the plan as an algorithm only changed superficially. A planner who was involved in the revising the old plans for Marina Bay describes this separation:

We set up an excel sheet, logging the final number. You can play with all the variables – the parcels, the uses. We basically created all the parcels and uses on Excel sheets. The uses are pretty much the same. Still pretty much ‘white’ peppered with residential. So we made sure that the residential quantum and the final total GFA is unchanged. Then, we distributed them around to play up these precinct ideas.⁴¹²

Planners move numbers around to satisfy quantitative projections and remake urban form, or as this planner says, “play up precinct ideas.” They take into consideration new market trends to facilitate development: for example, larger floor plates and “white” zones that give developers more flexibility. In this planner’s exercise, the total quantum of space is fixed even though the new vision for Marina Bay is very different. When asked about these differences, planners pick out all kinds of details from the plan – a ‘high point’ here, a ‘curve’ in the road there, a ‘growth axis’ here, a ‘view corridor’ there. It is through these defining features that planners identify one plan from the other. Thus, between the plans in 1998 and 2005, completely different kinds of words are used to elaborate on these features. In the earlier versions, “dignity” and “grandeur” are central concepts that justify a perimeter of high rise towers framing the waterfront. In the later plans, to “humanize” means that all buildings along the perimeter are suppressed in height to create a layered effect when seen from the waterfront. The central concepts are now “exciting” and “vibrant.”⁴¹³

⁴¹² Anonymous, interview with author, 23 May 2010

⁴¹³ One can also get a sense of this discursive shift by examining the various planning reports on Marina Bay between 1989 and 2005. See *Master Plan for the Urban Waterfronts at Marina Bay and Kallang Basin*, 1989 (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority); *Downtown Core and Portview: Development Guide Plans (Draft)*, 1992 (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority); *New Downtown: Ideas for the City of Tomorrow*, 1996 (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority); *Marina Bay Singapore*, c.2005 (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority)

As the planners contrast these two visions with these little inscriptions and choice of words, it becomes apparent that each plan contains a “signature” that gathers the vision, effort and identity of those who produced the plan. To the outsider, such signatures are almost invisible, but to the planner, they are extremely eloquent and even personal. The distribution of numbers produces and conforms to a certain aesthetic, and it is at this level that planners see completely different things that cannot be reduced to the words they choose to use. Therefore, it is hard to understand why a “humanized” plan cannot have a formal perimeter of buildings ringing the waterfront, or why grandeur cannot also be vibrant. These words cannot capture the *gestalt* that exists in the minds of these planners. Often, the closest one can get to this *gestalt* is when they refer to another place that serves as a model for emulation or association. For the earlier generation of planners, it is the “grandeur” of high modernism that guides their vision. Although Marina Bay was benchmarked against Baltimore and Sydney’s Circular Quay, the *gestalt* that Mr Liu and his co-workers see is that of Tiananmen Square of Beijing and Central Park of New York. For the younger generation, it is the postindustrial waterfronts of London, Rotterdam and Sydney.

The incompatibility of these *gestalts* is often explained away by appealing to fashion or trend. Mr. Liu argues that the current move to inject more residential population into the CBD is merely a trend. Urban planning should not be swayed from its commitment to “problem-solving,” he stresses. He uses the example of mass public housing in the 70s to argue that if he had followed trends then, Singapore’s housing problem would never have been solved. Mr. Alan Choe, another senior civil servant who led the urban renewal efforts in the 70s, uses the word “sustainable” and “timeless” to differentiate the kinds of “iconic architecture” he prefers from those that are mere fashion.⁴¹⁴ These dividing moves complicate the question of aesthetics in the planning process. On the one hand, it demeans aesthetics as something that can potentially derail the rational process of planning. On the other, it valorizes one set of aesthetics as something inherently better than another by virtue of its “timelessness.” In other words, aesthetic judgment is only valid when it is anonymous – good aesthetics is proven by time, not by individuals, no matter how authoritative they might be.

How does one interpret these maneuvers? Some theoretical insights about plans as a medium of representation can be useful here. According to Latour, mundane technologies of visualization, cognition and translation are not passive tools used in the scientific process of discovery, but actively structure the kinds of knowledge that are produced in the first place.⁴¹⁵ In an oblique development of Latour’s work, Söderström points out that urban planning, like science, depends heavily on technologies of visualization.⁴¹⁶ In his formulation, the rise of urban planning as a profession moved in parallel with the emergence of a standard and dominant mode of representing the city. The principle of the ‘ichnographic plan’ invented by Leon Battista Alberti in the 15th century replaced the perspective and the ‘bird’s eye view’, creating a mode of representation that was totalizing, homogenizing and yet easily reproducible by anyone with minimum training. From this basic device, Söderström argues, evolved other variants in the 19th century, particularly the master plan and the zoning plan which remain today the core equipment of the urban planning practice. The general historical momentum painted by him is one of the

⁴¹⁴ Alan Choe, interview with author,

⁴¹⁵ Latour, “Visualisation and Cognition: drawing things together”, 69-84

⁴¹⁶ Ola Söderström, “Paper Cities: Visual Thinking in Urban Planning” in *Cultural Geographies*, 3(1996), 249-281

gradual inability of planning practice to handle the emotional, subjective and situated, all modes of encounter which had to be discredited in order to assert its dominance as an expert knowledge.

The separation between the abstract and the situated, the objective and the subjective, is also at play when planners move between numbers and images. The momentum that Söderström paints, however, takes a different turn here. It is not that the plan becomes utterly unable to articulate the aesthetic qualities of the city. Rather, through the plan, aesthetics take on some of the quality of numbers. It draws sustenance from world of precise calculations and some of its associated benefits in a technocratic environment. Yet, aesthetics also demands its own exclusive space. In this space, key voices in the bureaucracy share a common imaginary about what is beautiful or not. This common imaginary is often hinted at through sparse references to education and professional experience, but more often than not, is veiled in an impenetrable aura of embodied authority. The disagreements between the two generations of planners are the result of a clash between internalized and socially constructed sense of taste.⁴¹⁷ The references to “timelessness” and “fashion” are reflexive strategies aimed at framing the question of power in impersonal and anonymous terms. They look at the same plan, but they see totally different pictures. Who can judge? Time can.

Söderström’s genealogy of the plan also connects to the general scholarship on bureaucracies. The Weberian ideal-type bureaucracy is a system of the division of labor that emphasizes impersonality, impartiality and the strict adherence to procedure. These constitute the “ethos of the office.”⁴¹⁸ The rise of experts who can claim to be rational and objective is tied to this rationalization of work. As du Gay, Rose and Donzelot have argued in their various capacities, this “ethos of the office” has come under attack in the last few decades as organizations reform themselves around a liberal entrepreneurial model.⁴¹⁹ In the case of Singapore, Gillian Koh provides an interesting empirical insight into the mindsets of the elites in the bureaucracy. Her 1991-2 survey of a small pool of elite civil servants shows that almost half of those surveyed perceived their roles as primarily to assist political leadership and implement policies.⁴²⁰ This form of unreflexive rationality has worked well in the past. But her survey was carried out at the beginning of the “managerialist reform,” when public servants were asked to “exercise more creative and sensitive policy-making, and to run their departments and ministries more cheaply, efficiently and flexibly, along the lines of a private sector company.”⁴²¹ This can be seen as a neoliberal project to inculcate market logic and corporate practices into the government.

Gillian’s survey suggests how planners today are a different breed of civil servants than before. Again, this sense of change can be detected through the voices of the older generation of planners. Mr. Hup-Chor Goh, a retired high ranking planner who worked with Mr. Liu, offers a critique not just of the current plan, but of the way planning is increasingly subject to short term market-driven concerns. He rejects the “big bang” effect. In his mind, such arguments only apply

⁴¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984)

⁴¹⁸ Stephen Kalberg, ed., *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 973-5

⁴¹⁹ Paul du Gay, “Making Managers: Bureaucracy, Enterprise and the Liberal Art of Separation” in *The British Journal of Sociology* 45/4(1994), 655-674; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 148-164; Jacques Donzelot, “Pleasure in Work” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991)

⁴²⁰ Gillian Koh, “Bureaucratic rationality in an Evolving Developmental State: Challenges to Governance in Singapore”, in *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 5:2 (1997): 114-141

⁴²¹ *Ibid*, 124

to urban renewal projects that require large amounts of capital to lift the depressed value of land. Why should prime land at Marina Bay be sold at such low prices to a single developer? The planner should follow the plan and not be “arm-twisted” into such compromises. He rejects the current predilection for “white sites,”⁴²² arguing that developers will always do what is most profitable for his own site without considering the impact on the rest of the city. He rejects the current emphasis on “architectural icons” and “branding,” arguing that the focus on the object is misplaced and that the planning authority should not play the role of a place manager.

Pointing again to the old plan which he helped to create, he sees it as something very real and precious. The sense of emotional attachment to the plan is an important component of bureaucratic and professional culture, something which might be referred to as the *pathos* of office:

When I left, I tell you, the greatest thing about - the thing URA has benefited is – all of us who worked there put our life and soul and set the structure very well for them ... They can spin it off for the next twenty years, and they still cannot go wrong ... We draw this [Plan] – *it has to be real before you can draw it!* Because this is what we expect to see! There is a row of trees here. There will be buildings here, you imagine.⁴²³ [emphasis added]

“It has to be real before you can draw it!” For planners, there is nothing virtual about plans. It is a legacy, a vision and a contract all at once. Of course, this is not to say that the current generation of planners is as guilty as Goh charged on all accounts, and in such clear-cut dramatic ways. The *pathos* of office continues to permeate the bureaucracy as if in a parallel universe next to the world of strict procedures and precise numbers. Planners defend their products almost as if it is a form of “sweat equity”, but rationalize them in ways that conform to an ethos of office – detached and impersonal. In practice, a plan might combine and discard elements from multiple sources, but always appeal to a sense of exception and ownership. To cement its status as an authoritative vision, its authors surround the plan with a family of supporters who can see the same gestalt behind the rather mundane arrangement of colours, shades and numbers. As Latour argues, mundane inscriptions are political tools to persuade skeptics and forge alliances. Referring back to the old plans for Marina Bay created by I M Pei and Kenzo Tange, Goh highlights how they were consulted as much due to their expertise as planner-architects as a sense of familiarity and cultural affinity:

I M Pei was always in town. It was quite convenient. And Kenzo Tange, as you said, was with the bankers ... The Minister was also, in that sense, familiar with these two architects. If you look at the character of these two people; being Asians, they respect Asian courtesy. It is not like they will ignore you. Or tell you to do exactly as I do. You don't change my plan. If you change my plan, I will go after you, I will sue you. They don't have that kind of hang-ups. Because these are Asian people. I do a plan as a concept for you. You take it. You want to modify it, we leave it to you. Just give you some ideas.

The gestalt that exists in the minds of the planners and the *pathos* of office are important because they influence in powerful but often inexplicable ways how certain decisions are made in the bureaucracy. They point to how plans create exclusive worlds through their selective communicability. They point to how long term planning – a virtue extolled by Singapore's

⁴²² “White sites,” in planning terminology, are sites whereby developers are given more flexibility to decide the kind and quantum of allowable uses. It is a way to be more “pro-business”.

⁴²³ Goh Hup Chor, interview with author, Jun 2010

model – does not automatically mean the seamless inheritance of professional values from one generation to the next. Sociologist Beng-Huat Chua, for example, suggests that the government has been able to mold the civil service so as “to capitalize on the stability provided by the unchanging regime to set and implement long-term plans without intermittent disruptions caused by changes in government.”⁴²⁴ Yet, by comparing the ways these planners talk about different plans, something obviously changed. More than institutional frameworks, bureaucratic procedures and products such as plans and policies, these shifts permeate the planning bureaucracy, and influence the creation of Marina Bay.

As mentioned earlier, the gestalt in the plans surfaces most vividly when planners refer to other cities. These invisible pictures are also reflections of the social and professional world of the interlocutor. *It is both a picture they see and a world they belong to.* Hence, the gestalt and the pathos of office are intimately connected. One can also see these as practices that “instantiate some vision of the world in formation ... [and] remap relationships of power at different scales and localities.”⁴²⁵ In the same chapter, Chua goes on to argue that the Singapore model is now being disaggregated, refined and packaged as “best practices” for other cities to emulate, often with unanticipated consequences. While this is certainly a significant development towards an inter-Asian network of referencing that is beginning to supplant standard Western exemplars, one should not take this to mean that Singaporean planners have stopped learning from and emulating other cities in the West. In fact, the practice of going for study trips to other cities continues in the planning authority. The selective field of vision informs and is informed by a preexisting hierarchy of distinction that circulates in professional circles. Table 4.2 shows a list of the cities planners visited between 1990s and 2000s. This list is probably not exhaustive and reflects a range of study agendas. Some are dedicated study trips while others are conference and business excursions. Where they go and what they see clearly reflect the specific problems they have to tackle at home. But, they are also heavily skewed towards cities in the Western world and those that belong to the league of “cultural capitals” and “global cities”.

⁴²⁴ Beng Huat, Chua “Singapore as Model: Planning, Models, Knowledge Experts” in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy (London and NY: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), 30

⁴²⁵ Aihwa, Ong “Introduction” in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy (London and NY: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), 12

Table 4.2: Study Trips conducted by planners, 1990s – 2000s
Source: URA Resource Center

1990	Japan: <i>Intelligent Buildings</i>
1992	Europe: <i>Public Lighting</i>
1993	Suzhou, China
1994	USA: <i>Study trip on Leisure Industry</i>
1994	Japan
1994	Australia
1995	Japan and Hong Kong
1995	Australia: <i>Community Title Schemes</i>
1995	Netherlands and Germany: <i>Noise Study</i>
1995	Japan and Korea: <i>Urban Riverine</i>
1996	Munich and Amsterdam, Germany
1996	Suzhou, China
1996	Bank Niaga, Jakarta
1996	Seattle, USA
1996	Rotterdam, Netherlands
1996	Portland, Oregon, USA
1996	Liverpool, UK
1996	Pittsburg, USA: <i>Golden Triangle District: An Innovative Program for Urban Renewal</i>
1996	Houston, Texas
1996	Glasgow, UK
1996	Frankfurt, Germany
1996	Denver, Colorado
1996	Cleveland, Ohio
1996	Berlin, Germany
1996	Amsterdam, Netherlands
1996	Europe: <i>Pedestrianization of Historic Areas</i>
1997	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1997	Miami, Florida
1997	Las Vegas, Nevada
1997	Edinburgh, Scotland
1997	Copenhagen, Denmark
1997	Cologne, Germany
1997	Basel, Switzerland
1998	Omaha, Nebraska
1999	Milan, Italy
1999	Tokyo, Fukuoka, Seoul and Hong Kong
1999	Dublin, Ireland
1999	Paris and London
1999	Brisbane, Australia
1999	Adelaide, Australia
1999	New York and Boston
2000	Tokyo and Toronto: <i>Garden City Action Committee Study Trip on Rooftop Greenery</i>
2000	Washington DC, Salt Lake City, West Palm Beach: <i>2nd Annual Competitive Cities Congress</i>
2001	Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong
2001	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2001	Paris, Bilbao, Madrid and London: <i>Study Trip on Contemporary Art Museums</i>
2002	Manchester and London, UK
2002	Sydney and Melbourne, Australia: <i>Retail Study</i>
2002	Salzburg, Austria: <i>Global Entrepreneurial City</i>
2002	Osaka, Japan
2002	Bilbao, Spain
2003	Kumamoto City, Japan: <i>Asia-Pacific City Summit</i>
2004	Las Vegas, Bahamas and Macau: <i>Casino development</i>
2005	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2006	Roppongi Hills, Tokyo, Los Angeles and Orlando, USA: <i>Disney Resorts</i>

As Ong argues, in making references to these cities, planners draw both specific technical lessons and aspirational direction.⁴²⁶ Thus, one references Sydney's Circular Quay because the scale of the harbor is about the same as Marina Bay and one can approximate the urban form of one by analyzing the other. Yet, it is also a form of emulation at a more atmospheric level - a sense of vibrancy and waterfront culture that one is trying to recreate in Singapore. One references Jane Jacobs for her specific lessons on how to create and protect urban diversity. Yet, at the same time, one can ignore her political agenda for grassroots activism against big planning. This selective field of vision mirrors the selective communicability of the plan. When a planner makes categorical distinctions that define Marina Bay as a "waterfront" and "financial district," it is to delete from the space of possibilities objects like "sphinxes," "pyramids" and "Palm Dubai." He maps his own private world onto the public order of the plan.

These practices also reveal something about how power works through aesthetic associations. In his analysis of mapping practices, Mitchell argues that it is not in the claims of accuracy that maps become integral to the project of economic development. Rather, it is in its ability to relocate the "site of control and calculation from the field to the office." Hence, it is no longer the farmer who works every day in the fields but the officer who consults the map in the office who decides how much tax each household has to pay.⁴²⁷ When planners make targeted gestures elsewhere, he brings the world to the office. The advantage is, again, not because these gestures are precise - no one knows *exactly* what he means when he talks about the vibrancy of New York City. Rather it is because it objectifies vague aesthetic associations by collecting images in one space and arranging them to reveal and justify some kind of order. It fits Singapore into a given global hierarchy of distinction and creates a family where Singapore belongs. If "time" is the anonymous arbiter of aesthetics, then, collecting and ranking serves a similar function - it makes a show of relocating expertise from the individual and the subjective to a self-evident and exclusive space of judgment.

The plan masks and encodes all these visions and values on its surface, and its political efficacy lies in its ability to communicate selectively to different audiences; to be objective and neutral at one moment, and persuasive and political at another. In a way, the image shown on National Day of the simulated Integrated Resort is one strategic decoding of what is already invested in the plan. So are these gestures that collect and rank the worlds in the office. Other forms of decoding must be done to further transform the arbitrary, the erroneous and the artificial into opposite qualities that sustain the rationality of planning and meet the objectives of getting the right architecture for the Integrated Resort. In the next black-box, one encounters a strange hybrid of management science and aesthetic judgment. Through this process, the *right* architecture becomes indistinguishable from the *best* architecture.

The best and the right

To evaluate the competing proposals for the casino license, the government set up a hierarchy of decision making committees. A technical committee composed of three teams examined separately planning and architectural design, tourism appeal and financial-legal issues; an evaluation committee composed of high ranking bureaucrats received and evaluated the recommendations of these teams; and a committee of ministers made the final decision. Experts

⁴²⁶ *ibid*

⁴²⁷ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity*

in the technical committee comprised of foreign consultants, local experts and bureaucrats. To reflect the objectives of the project, the proposals were judged according to four weighted criteria: tourism appeal (40%), architectural concept and design (30%), development investment (20%) and track record of the operator (10%).⁴²⁸

The set-up is informed by a commonly used decision-making process called the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) which was developed and popularized by mathematician Thomas Saaty in the 1970s. Rather than reviewing the copious amount of literature on the AHP, it might be more instructive to hear it from the very person who overviewed the process.⁴²⁹ Mr. Neo-Chian Lim was the Chairman of the technical committee. He explains how this decision-making process tames complex problems, disciplines the individual and ensures transparency:

The way it works is like this. We used a process which is called Analytic Hierarchy Process. You know I was in the army, so I used this quite a lot to buy aircrafts, weapons, guns that sort of thing. Essentially, it requires to you breakdown your problem into different parameters and give a weight to it. The two projects have different weightages. In the case of Marina Bay Sands, we gave greater weight to the architecture, because it is in the city. Whereas in Sentosa, it is really about tourism, and we didn't think architecture was so critical. So the weight for tourism appeal was higher and this (architecture) lower.

So the weight changes a little for the two projects. We basically "subcontracted" architecture to Koon Hean⁴³⁰ to evaluate with her panel. And when the numbers come back – when we did all these, it is completely opaque. I do not know what Koon Hean was doing. So we don't end up having to, you know, play the system. I can't play the system because I don't know what scores she is going to come up with. And when everyone is finished, we come together and, on the spot, start the presentation. So we will be seeing each other's numbers for the first time.

[Author: Ok. That is very interesting. Can you tell me more about the AHP that you used? What do you see are its key advantages? What is it supposed to do? Why do we use this process?]

The main advantage is that it forces people who are selecting the system to be transparent. Now, if I don't use the AHP, then you say you want to buy the equipment. But on what basis do you choose A and B? You can, on the spot, after you have seen what people proposed, that I like this one. Then you can always come up with ways and means to say that that one is better. But that is changing the parameters to suit the gun! The AHP requires you, at that time when you say you want to equipment, to say how you evaluate. And that is exactly what we did. Even before we looked at the submitted proposals, we have to say what are the factors, what are the weights.

[Author: So everything is established beforehand and transparent.]

Yes, beforehand. You can't play the system! Ok, it is not a perfect system. There are times when you may find that for a factor which you give 10%, that particular point is so bad you are not even prepared to accept it (even if it is just 10%). So there are some weaknesses in this process. But I think, on balance, it is still a good system, because it forces people to be transparent. You cannot play the system.

⁴²⁸ This weightage applies to the competition for the casino license at Marina Bay. It is slightly different for that at Sentosa, as will be explained later.

⁴²⁹ For those interested, a lively exchange of debates between Saaty and his allies and detractors can be found in the journal "Management Science." See Thomas Saaty, 1990, "An exposition of the AHP in reply to the paper 'Remarks on the analytic hierarchy process.'" *Management Science* 36(3), 259-268; Thomas Saaty, 1986, "Axiomatic foundation of the analytic hierarchy process," in *Management Science* 32(7), 841-855; Harker and Vargas, 1989, "The Analytic Hierarchy Process: Applications and Studies" in *Management Science* 33(11), 1383-1403; Harker and Vargas, 1990, "Reply to 'Remarks on the analytic hierarchy process' by J.S. Dyer", in *Management Science* 36(3), 269-273; James S. Dyer 1990, "Remarks on the analytic hierarchy process" in *Management Science* 36(3), 249-258

⁴³⁰ Ms Cheong Koon Hean was the CEO of the national planning authority of Singapore.

[Author: Right. There is no space for personal discretion because the system forces them to conduct themselves in a certain way.]

Yes, right. And you have to think beforehand and say beforehand what you are looking for. If I buy a tank – this is a good example – you want a heavy tank or light tank? A heavy tank has a lot of protection, because it has a lot of metal. A light tank is very fast, but poor protection. What are you looking for? Heavy or light tank? You cannot just say that I want to buy a tank!

[Author: That is very interesting. Ok, so after all the committees have done their work, and there is a presentation where everybody shows the scores, at that point in time, was it very apparent immediately who was the winner?]

Sometimes yes, sometimes no! [laughs] I don't want to go into too much detail on this one, because this would have been confidential.

[Author: Ok!] [laughs]

But it all depends on how the score adds up! Do you agree?

[Author: Sure!]

There are times when you add them up, and they are very close. When it is very close, you should by all intent and purposes say that they are about the same. Then you, because when you come to this kind of scoring, when they are like plus or minus a few percentage point difference – very small difference – then, you should be looking for other factors. Because sometimes when you put this down, you find that there are other factors. But you have chosen not to include them because you do not want to make your evaluation too complicated. And typically, there is a guide saying that there shouldn't be more than so many factors. You know, in order not to make it too complex. So when they are very very close, you have to ask yourself, are there other things? So that may influence the choice. So it really all depends on the tool. I can't tell you more than that! [laughs]⁴³¹

Some key points can be picked up from Lim's representation of the AHP. First, and this is one that is already encountered, the conception of what is "architecture" is very specific. Of course architectural design is extremely important in resorts and theme parks, but from the perspective of the planners, it is the architecture of the global city that needs to be more carefully managed. Second, the system requires the problem to be defined before it can begin. This is partly why it is important for the planners to be so clear about what exactly is the Integrated Resort they want. Third, the process strives to be apolitical. Not only does it require the problem to be defined, it must be quantified into a series of discrete independent variables. This separation further blinds all the judges and participants so that no one can see outside their immediate problem-space. Hence, "you cannot play the system." Fourth, the process leaves a space of discretion for the final decision-makers. Thus, in the black-box, there is another black-box about which Lim cannot speak. No one other than the decision makers knows and can be allowed to know the final score of these proposals.

The AHP has much in common with "systems analysis" – a way to "solve problems of planning in a rational, straightforward, systematic way, characterized by a number of attitudes which a systems analyst and designer should have."⁴³² Speaking in the context of the US, Horst Rittel provides a sensitive critique of this form of practice. He connects this approach which rose

⁴³¹ Neo Chian, Lim, 2 Sept 2010, interview with author

⁴³² Horst Rittel "On the Planning Crisis: Systems Analysis of the 'First and Second Generations.'" In *Bedrifts Okonmen*, Oct 1972, 390-396

into ascendancy in the 1950s to large scale Federal funded projects, such as NASA missions, urban renewal and law enforcement. By the 70s, it is also precisely the loss of confidence in such approaches that contributed to the crisis of planning in the US. At the crux of his argument is the distinction between wicked and tame problems. In contrast to tame problems, wicked problems can neither be comprehensively formulated beforehand nor be contained within an “enumerable list of permissible operations.” Attempts to define a wicked problem with limits and criteria are never logical or technical – they are politically and materially interested, an “implicit indication of resignation.”⁴³³ Thus, wicked problems complicate the clean separation between the definition of the problem and the search for solutions.

Lim is not blind to such flaws. He is aware of the complexity of the problem and the limits of the process. His military analogies are telling in that they overlay onto the process a market logic where the search for solutions is akin to buying the right product. When he points to a black-box within the black-box, it shows how the AHP is also a political tool to distribute power strategically. Rittel’s critique is useful here not because the AHP that Lim describes expresses all the flaws of systems analysis, but because it reflexively deals with these flaws, in order to meet a political-economic agenda. Thus, the end is only marginally about *finding* the optimal solution, as the AHP should do. It is about *producing* the acceptable solution; in this case, the Integrated Resort. This agenda is so demanding and pervasive that the AHP itself plays a relatively small role in the final decision. Following Rittel’s critique of systems analysis, one can show how the Integrated Resort was produced as the “optimal” solution.

As Rittel’s critique of systems thinking suggests, defining the Integrated Resort already prefigures the solution. Lim’s AHP is not the beginning of the search for a solution. In fact, it is rather downstream in the decision-making process. Before the AHP began, planners and bureaucrats conducted study trips and interacted with interested developers. They tried to understand how the industry works, its different business models in different cities, and whether or not developers are interested in Singapore. Between May and July 2004, a study group visited Las Vegas, Bahamas and Macau. In their report, they identified that casino-resorts leverage on complementary facilities to differentiate themselves from each other, attract more visitors and maximize investment returns. They further argued that it is necessary to move quickly to undercut the growing competition in the region (notably Macau and Batam, but also Taiwan and Japan), and that the prize is not the tax revenue from the casino, but the convention/entertainment complex that will increase Singapore’s attractiveness as a tourist destination.

At this stage, planners were already constructing the Integrated Resort in their plans, identifying suitable sites and understanding its components in terms of spatial requirement and relationships. They already impressed upon the developers the principle of “zero visibility” for the casinos, the type of architecture acceptable at Marina Bay, and the business model they want. This process of filtering was stringent enough that out of the 19 interested developers, only four eventually submitted bids.⁴³⁴ It is not hard to imagine how much pressure was placed upon the planners and bureaucrats to ensure that these four bidders understood and submitted proposals the government was willing to accept. To get a sense of how much work had to be done before and after the

⁴³³ Ibid, 372

⁴³⁴ Contrast this to the case of Macau, where 21 casino developers bid for 3 licenses.

AHP, one can look at the initial proposal of Sheldon Adelson, the CEO of Las Vegas Sands. Though he eventually won the competition with architect Moshe Safdie, his initial idea was dramatically different from the winning entry. Paul Steelman helped to prepare the initial proposal which shows a complex designed around a “tropical garden” theme:

Las Vegas Sands has collaborated with its design team to pattern the organization and architecture of the resort component after floral and botanical forms found in nature. Rather than the historical reference made by the design of the Venetian Macau, the Garden City Resort’s design thesis draws inspiration from tropical leaf and orchid floral shapes interpreted in a modern and timeless design that is conceived specifically for Singapore.⁴³⁵

Adelson wanted to extend his global empire by recreating a version of the “Venetian” brand name at Marina Bay. The complex is a series of leaf-shaped objects organized around a single hotel tower. The lean streamlined glass tower sits on a ring of decorative lotus-like petals (Fig. 4.3). As with the standard Las Vegas practice, the complex is designed to accommodate more hotel towers in the future (Fig. 4.4). Along the side of the waterfront, retail outlets, theatres and a museum dot the promenade, as well as a secondary entrance into the casino and the hotel. On the opposite side is the porte cochere designed like a rose in bloom. Internally, the complex follows the standard layout perfected in Las Vegas – the porte cochere, the hotel lobby and the casino are grouped tightly together so as to provide a seamless transition from the car or coach to the hotel and the casino. Flanking this organizing core are the retail areas to the left, and the convention centers to the right. Steelman’s design proposes to redirect the road that cuts the site into half, so as to create a single large plot that facilitates the replication of this formula. Furthermore, following the strategy used in Las Vegas and Macau where casino developers redirect infrastructure to capture potential customers and marginalize competitors, this proposal considers a monorail that links the Integrated Resort directly to the International Cruise Terminal.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ *Venetian Singapore* (Paul Steelman Partners, 2011)

⁴³⁶ It seems from the report that Las Vegas Sands was offering to run the International Cruise Terminal and the monorail system, in addition to paying for dredging the harbor. This “generous offer” is understandable when we consider that one of the biggest regional competitors in the gaming industry are the six floating casinos operating on international waters just outside of Singapore. This is similar to how Stanley Ho in Macau has for many years financed the dredging of the Inner Harbor – one of the key entry points for Chinese gamblers and workers into Macau.

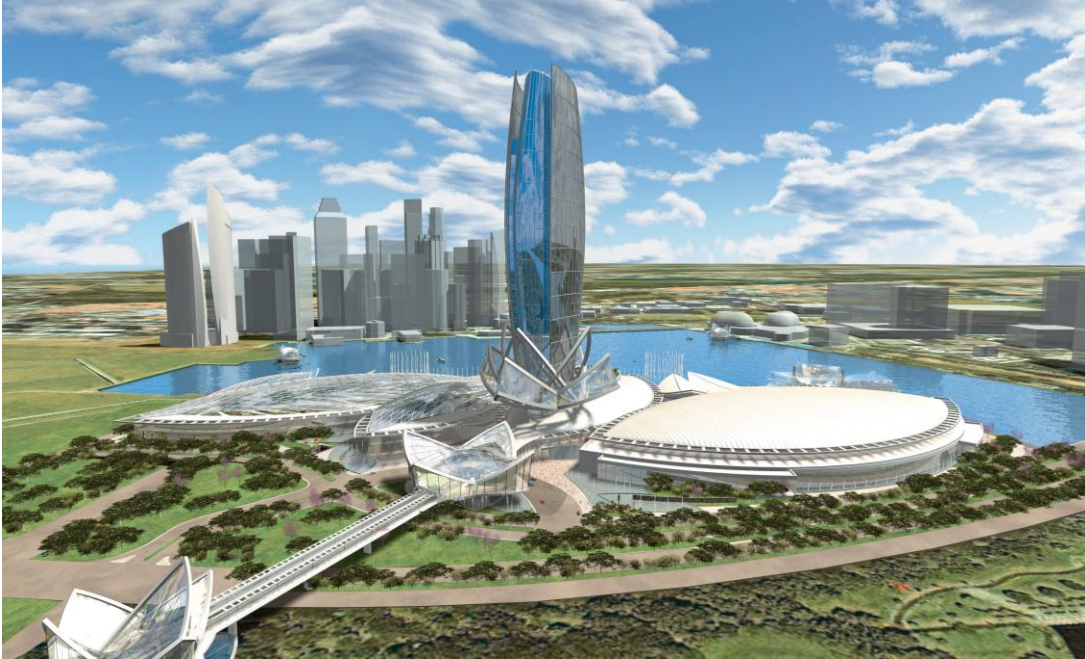


Fig 4.3. Venetian Singapore
Source: Paul Steelman Partners, 2011



Fig 4.4. Venetian Singapore, with extra hotel towers
Source: Paul Steelman Partners, 2011

By looking at this initial proposal, it is abundantly clear how much the planners had to intervene in order to get what they want. From their perspective, this design is likely to be too kitsch and direct in its appropriation of floral motifs. Though it is certainly less thematic than the Venetians of other cities and more modern as per the requirements stated in the brief, its symbolic content is still closer to that of themed resorts than a financial and cultural institution. The casino is also too visible. Steelman has tried to hide the casino from the outside: “Nestled between the botanical garden concourse and the convention and expo centre, the casino is visible from the bay but sits quietly behind the pointed forms of the theatres and appears understated next to the iconic Guggenheim Museum Singapore.”⁴³⁷ Yet, following the Las Vegas model, the casino is the first thing one encounter when entering the complex, either from the porte cochere or the waterfront promenade (Fig. 4.5). Along this promenade where the planners envisage a series of vibrant activities, the proposal instead has mini shopping malls and green buffers separating the promenade from the inward-looking casino and theatres. The idea that this complex would, in the future, grow another lotus tower is anathema to the idea of an architectural icon as an art object – perfect upon birth and immune to the vagaries of time. The proposal to alter the infrastructure of the city – either by diverting the road or building a monorail – places too much emphasis on this development and ignores the larger vision the planners cherish for the city as a whole. As Goh stressed earlier, everything drawn on the plan is very *real*, and that includes the grid-pattern of the infrastructure. Steelman’s perspective also suggests that the new resort is seen as something separate from the city, recalling one of his own principles that casino-resorts work best as a ‘suburban’ enclave where people can escape to. This, of course, cannot be further from the planners’ vision of a resort that is part of the overall urban form and life of the city. The proposed Guggenheim Museum on the waterfront is likely the only cultural and architectural element that connects with what the planners want. In this clash between the Las Vegas model and the vision of the planners, such disjunctions become painfully obvious.

⁴³⁷Paul Steelman, *Venetian Singapore*, 57

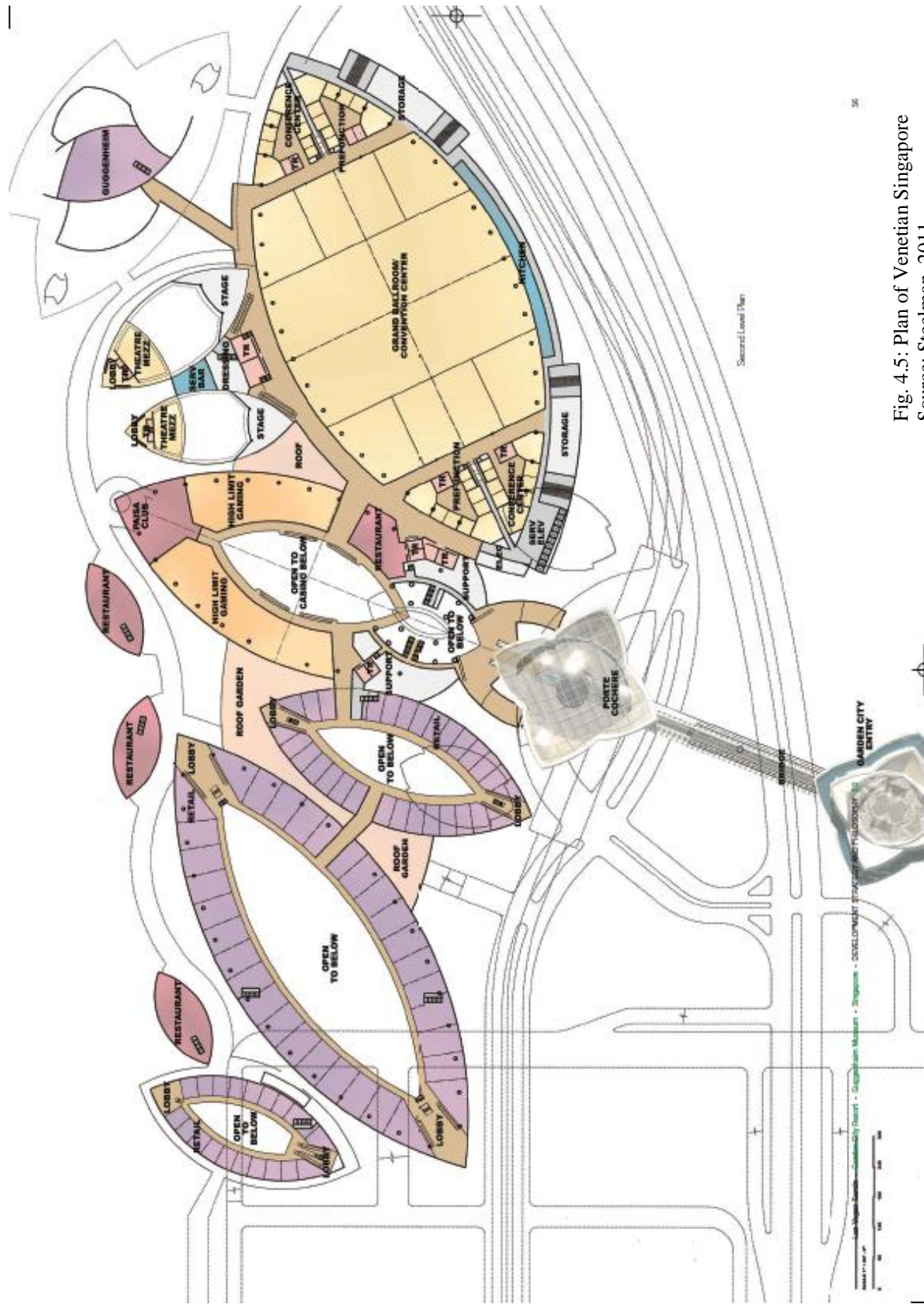


Fig. 4.5: Plan of Venetian Singapore
Source: Steelman, 2011

And it is not just the architecture that is problematic. In this report, numbers also become evidence of divergent interests. They disturb the carefully crafted narrative of the state. Based on the projected financial performance of the complex, all the cultural activities like theaters and museums are loss-leaders and will be subsidized by revenue from hotel, retail and gaming. That in itself is not surprising. What is problematic is how the expected revenue from the casino is drastically disproportionate to the space it occupies. Thus, the casino occupies 3% of the floor area and 4% of the construction budget, but represents 81% of the total revenue and 40% of the jobs generated by the complex.⁴³⁸ (Table 4.2) These numbers potentially undercut the entire argument that the Integrated Resort is less a casino and more everything else. They contaminate its “global city” aura with the vulgar realization that it is nothing more than a money-making machine.

Furthermore, the unfiltered market logic of financial analysts runs counter to the moral and political sensitivity around the issue of casino gambling. Thus, when the official assurance is that the casino will target overseas gamblers, and that local gamblers will be shielded from the seductions of casino gambling, the report treats the region as different classes of potential gamblers carved out by existing casino competitors. The only difference between a Singaporean gambling overseas and a Singaporean gambling in the casino in Singapore is a loss of revenue to the operator and the state. The local gambler who returns to gamble in Singapore is, from the perspective of these analysts, a foreign source of revenue. Contrary to the foreign-local distinction so carefully drawn in official discourse, the gambler’s nationality becomes almost irrelevant:

The Singaporean Government, like most governments, seeks to ensure that resorts on its territory attract an international customer base. This is to maximize the potential economic benefits to the jurisdiction by generating new spending and economic activity rather than just shifting expenditures from one activity to another. While usually a quite reasonable approach, we would suggest that care be taken in this particular instance. *Given that Singaporeans spend on the order of SGD 1.8 billion on casino gaming outside of Singapore (and a significant amount in non-gaming spending), it is likely that much if not most of the spending by locals in the casino portion of the Integrated Resort will be spending that is shifted to inside Singapore from outside Singapore. Such expenditure should really be treated the same as spending by foreign visitors because it too represents spending that would not take place in Singapore without the Integrated Resort.* We break down the potential customer base into three major groups: foreign visitors to Singapore, Singaporeans that engage in gaming in other locations that shift to Singapore, and Singaporeans that do not engage in casino gaming at present but who may at the Integrated Resort. [emphasis added]

Table 4.2: Numerical breakdown of proposed Integrated Resort

Source: Steelman, 167-171

	Car Parking	Hotel	Casino	Retail	Theaters	Convention	Museum	Cruise Terminal
Floor Area by component	34	23	3	13	2	19	4	2
Construction Cost by component	18	22	4	9	2	20	22	3
Revenue by component	-	6	81	10	(loss item)	6	1	(loss item)
Job creation by component		14	40	41	1	2	2	1

⁴³⁸ Ibid, 169

Such numbers and statements are clearly jarring to the official discourse. The initial proposal made by Las Vegas Sands shows again that the Integrated Resort is not something that appeared somewhere else ready to be imported into Singapore. In fact, it is eminently incompatible - aesthetically as an architectural object and financially as a business model - to what the government and the planners have in mind. Based on Adelson's experience in Macau and the large untapped market of gamblers in the Asian region, he knows that a model that maximizes the gaming component will be the most profitable. He sees the government's attempt to suppress gaming profits as economically irrational. Contrary to the official discourse, the most suitable model for Singapore is not the Integrated Resort in the planner's minds, but a reversion to the Las Vegas casino-hotel of the 60s and 70s - a model that earns about 80% of its revenue from casino gambling alone.

At this early stage, key contestations are already obvious. In order to force casino developers to reduce their revenue from gambling, the government tried to impose a "gaming surcharge," a kind of super tax which kicks in if the casino earns above a given sum after a few years of operation. This condition was eventually removed after much resistance from all the casino operators. To prevent the complex from opening its casino before all its other components are finished, as is common practice in both Las Vegas and Macau, the government stipulated that at least 50% of its other functions must be operational before the casino can open. After all, it is supposed to be an *Integrated* Resort! This only emphasizes how the entire complex is really not quite as "integrated" as imagined - stripped to its core, the casino, hotel and car-parking are all that is necessary to make a large profit at Marina Bay. Everything else is superfluous.

"Venetian Singapore" never went public. According to an insider, the planners at one point in time simply told Adelson that this design was not going to work. None of these contestations were allowed to disrupt the careful orchestration of images and numbers that played in step with the logical constructions of the Parliamentary Debates. It is precisely the fragility of such constructions that at every step from the Parliamentary debates to the public consultation to the AHP, the virtue of transparency and engagement is communicated through an opaque display of confidence. Black-boxes have to be constructed where meanings and truths are not yet stabilized and ready for public consumption. A senior journalist summarizes how this process is the "norm" and how such "confidence" belies a naïve understanding of what the casino industry is all about:

Reporters were not privy to anything the government did with the operators, which was unfortunate because to this date, many Singaporeans don't know what the whole IR idea is about. STB,⁴³⁹ which led the process, took their typical top-down approach with the media. Whatever you read in the news came from the operators who, of course, were keen to only praise the bid process when they spoke on-the-record. The only bidder who criticized the process, Steve Wynn, dropped out. For those of us covering the stories, it was an eye opener when we met the operators. It was the first time many of us saw celebrity restaurants, private jets, top-class shows, famous theme parks, marine park, famous people and for some reporters, it was the first time they entered a casino. We were that infant in our knowledge of what Singapore wanted to achieve. To this day, I think the final IR products surprised Singaporeans and many civil servants.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ STB: Singapore Tourism Board

⁴⁴⁰ Anonymous, email correspondence with author, Feb 2011

Petty politics

Another one of Rittel's critique of systems analysis is that it instills a certain ethic on the analyst – he must attempt to see the whole picture, and with this knowledge, he seeks to optimize. The act of optimization is objective and rational. In Lim's representation of the AHP, this whole picture is reserved for the decision-makers. Experts are kept isolated in their specific committees so that they only see a part of the overall picture. Lim argues that this is a defense mechanism to prevent any individual from "playing the system." Its rationality must be protected. In a way, this suspicious attitude towards the AHP and its experts only highlights its ineluctably political nature. It is precisely because experts are also political creatures that one must defend against this undesirable human quality. It is precisely because the project is politically invested that a safety valve must be created at the end to short circuit the system in case the solution is unacceptable. The AHP in this instance is therefore not a system of optimization, but a political tool to concentrate power and hide its potential arbitrariness from public scrutiny: politics is also a form of gamble.

This distribution of power during the AHP mirrors that of the public consultation process: "feedback" and "expert knowledge" were submitted to the decision-makers unilaterally and unconditionally. Furthermore, the defense mechanism to discipline and depoliticize experts only produced "petty" politics that infiltrated the AHP, and subjected it to other kinds of considerations. Acting in their own narrow interests, participants focused on winning the highest score, which often meant guessing and giving what the government wanted, while bureaucrats used this opportunity to find those who are reliable and trustworthy – all the kinds of attributes not listed in the criteria. To say that these politics are petty is not to say that they are insignificant. Just as the lack of deep engagement with the public during the consultation process generated rumors and speculations about how the government arrived at the decision, petty politics during the AHP introduce guesswork, suspicion and anxiety into the equation. The pettiness of such politics can only be uncovered in bits and pieces, given how guarded the process is, but some general indications can be gleaned from conversations with various participants.

Local architects who partnered with the casino developers knew what the government wanted. They helped to craft the final proposals to be more in line with the government's vision so as to maximize the chances of winning the competition. Thus, one consultant revealed how his team tried to persuade Sheldon Adelson to give up the "Venetian Singapore" idea. Another local architect advised the casino developer to use foreign architects since "we are unfortunately still in the mindset that foreign architects do much better work than local architects." Studying the tender documents carefully, these participants tried to use their local knowledge to their advantage. This is not about understanding the substance of the design conditions, but about the bureaucratic culture and the mindset of these civil servants. A participant explains how the team presented in front of the judges:

[Author: When you made your presentation to the committee, can you give me an idea of how you strategized the presentation? How did you sell the idea?]

We know that the committees and the government bodies will be extremely meticulous people, *the Singapore way*. You know marks will be allocated to architecture, everything. We basically followed that extremely closely; meaning making sure that every topic in that list is addressed and represented. So, if you

look at the list, and I can't remember what it has, but it has everything from architecture to finance. It even has M&E.⁴⁴¹ It has everything! So that was how we tackled it: to make sure that every topic that was listed was presented.

Second thing is that we were only given 1hr 15 minutes with 45 minutes of Q&A. Knowing that we only had 1hr 15 minutes, we allocated time to every topic. And we made sure that if we were to talk about architecture, it doesn't take any longer than 10 minutes because every topic has to be addressed.

There is a lot of things to be discussed. So we rehearsed for three days. Everybody flew in, locked ourselves in a hotel, and we rehearsed for three days, down to that 10 minutes.

[It is a very rigorous ...]

But I think everybody did that too right?

[Right, right!]

We were rigorous because we knew that the government bodies will be. *Having been through other competitions, you know they are so specific on marks. Basically they will tick you off and give you points for this and that. So to score maximum points is to basically answer everything in the list.*

...

I think for architecture, we gave ourselves ½ hour. I know that within that ½ hour, I have to deal with the Master Plan, the museum, the benefits in that, and I have to deal with X. So, we broke it down ourselves, knowing that architecture was going to earn us 30 or 40 points. Let's say finance. We did not do finance, of course. Finance is done by the client. But, what is important in finance, they will break it down. *This is what I mean. Making sure that in the topic of finance, in the topic of architecture, every question that could possibly be asked and could score us points is answered.* When we talk about the museum, it is not to say "I have a museum." It is to make sure the consultant is also there to tell them what is inside the museum. We have the X collections, we are going to do this, we are going to do that. To prove to them that we have not just thought about the structure of the building, but everything inside has also been planned for. And there is a consultant of international caliber to design and deliver it.

So it is giving them the confidence that, yes, we are producing this. We are credible in what we are saying. The consultant is here. But it is also because he has only 2 minutes to talk – it is a very quick thing ... *So at the end of the day, it is about confidence in the team. Giving the government confidence in this team who is credible in whatever they say.*⁴⁴² [emphasis added]

Knowing the mentality of these bureaucrats, participants narrow and itemize their proposals according to what they think will score the most points. They read between the lines and try to extrapolate all possible questions and problems. In addition to this strict itemization – “down to 10 minutes” – participants accrue symbolic value by their physical presence. After all, it is not just a show of expertise. It is also a show of credibility. What is credible? Brands and credentials certainly, but also a similar attitude towards design; a conscientiousness and meticulousness to show the bureaucrats that they can connect with the gestalt behind the list of design conditions, to show that they are partners, not just service-providers.

Like the pathos and gestalt, these extra-numerical qualities suffuse judgment. There is no score for “credibility”, but it certainly affects every score on the list. If there were only three

⁴⁴¹M&E: Mechanical and Engineering

⁴⁴² Anonymous, interview with author, 13 January 2011. Certain words are replaced with 'X' to protect the identity of the interviewee.

minutes to canvas each point, it is not hard to imagine that the performance becomes just as important as the substance. There simply is no time or opportunity to appeal to anything outside the immediate scope of the criteria. One must immediately connect with the world of the bureaucrats, either through familiar concepts, or architectural models and drawings or the physical body itself. Thus, a participant points out that during the presentation, they built a large architectural model in addition to the required 1:1000 model. Since the drawings and the 1:1000 model were all shown in a separate room, they wanted this large model to be in front of the judges at all times during the verbal presentation. A model of such scale is a confident display of how much they have resolved every detail of the architectural design. Lucia Costa, the architect of Brasilia, and Jörn Utzon, the architect of the Sydney Opera House, will never win this competition; not because their designs are not good, but because their drawings will simply not be legible and convincing in this black-box.

Convincing and legible objects are therefore important actors. When the participant emphasizes how this meticulousness is the “Singapore way,” it points to how the AHP as competitive process engenders a certain conduct amongst the participants and legitimizes what is good design. One may argue that to be strategic about the criteria of evaluation is to be nothing less than rational. Yet, in being rational, participants engage in petty politics that try to “play the system” in small ways. Participants themselves subvert the very promise of competitions which is to find the best proposal.

These conundrums strike at the heart of debates around the architectural competition. In his historical study, Barry Bergdoll points to the struggle between democratic impulse and old academic privilege that competitions promise.⁴⁴³ Promoters of the competition highlight its ability to level the playing field and open opportunities for young unknown architects to land prestigious commissions. This is, of course, a modern conundrum in that change is a positive value to be pursued, not emulation as in the Beaux-Arts tradition. Lipstadt argues that experimentation is the “nature of the institution of the architectural competition”. She suggests that competitions are like ‘carnivals’ – moments and spaces of ‘symbolic inversion’ where ‘unreason rules, and frenzy and excess are normal’.⁴⁴⁴ It is in this carnivalesque zone that canons are dismantled and new talents discovered. Yet, this has never been taken for granted by its detractors. Larson insists that “the ‘anti-establishment’ potential of competitions is more ideology than fact”.⁴⁴⁵ Rather, it reflects and reinforces the structural bifurcation of the architectural profession into the small number of design-oriented brand-names who tend to win prestigious competitions and the anonymous bulk which cater to more mundane forms of professional service. With sociologist Robert Gutkind, she argues that the competition contributes to the myth of what economic theory calls the “perfect competition” when in fact it perpetuates the “bourgeois ideology of art”. Andrew Shanken further highlights a critical juncture between 1934 and 1945 when American architectural practice was transformed as a result of inroads made by private corporations and government agencies in the building industry through the use of architectural competitions as publicity tools.⁴⁴⁶ The implication is that

⁴⁴³ Barry Bergdoll “Competing in the Academy and the Marketplace: European Architecture Competitions, 1401-1927” in *The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competitions in Architecture*, ed. Helene Lipstadt (New York: The Architectural League of New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1994)

⁴⁴⁴ Hélène Lipstadt, ed., *The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competition in Architecture* (New York: The Architectural League of New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1994)

⁴⁴⁵ Magali S. Larson, “Architectural Competitions as Discursive Events” in *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), 469-504

⁴⁴⁶ Andrew Shanken “Architectural Competitions and Bureaucracy, 1934-1945” in *Architectural Research Quarterly* 3/1 (1999), 43-56

architectural competitions do not necessarily preserve the autonomy of architecture as art or create carnivalesque zones where canons are subverted. Rather, it is precisely because of architectural competitions that architects need to reform themselves as salesmen and businessmen, not wild artists or bourgeois gentlemen.

Reflecting on research in the US context highlights how the competitive mode in Singapore, or the “Singapore way,” plays a critical but ambivalent function in architectural practice and culture. No doubt, given how “architectural design” is treated as a separate criterion, there is a sense of the autonomy of architecture. Yet, as the participant’s recollection shows, the architect must be a salesman and businessman in order to win the competition: rehearsing 3 days for 10 minutes of presentation hardly sounds like a moment of symbolic inversion. More than this, the architect must be politically attuned to the desires of the planners. He can only win by tapping into the gestalt behind the plan, and displaying all the cache of an international architect.

As a result of this ambivalent function, unlikely alliances were forged. During the presentation by the Las Vegas Sands team, Moshe Safdie elaborated on the urban qualities of the sky-park, a large public space on top of and connecting the three hotel towers. It was an amplification of something the planners hoped for in the design. Yet, Sheldon Adelson was not keen on this architectural feature. He interjected and told the judges that this feature was not necessary. The judges jumped on the side of the architect and insisted on it. Like the simulated image shown on National Day, the presentation drawings and models became an aesthetic contract that protects the planners’ vision. In this case, the architect Moshe Safdie and the planners stood on the same side opposite the casino developer, Sheldon Adelson.

This political divide continued to shape the rest of the project. Unlike the long list of design conditions provided by the planners, Sheldon Adelson’s only instructions to the architect were to maximize the floor area for the hotel, retail, convention halls and casino – apparently this was delivered verbally and through a hand-written note passed under the table. He was not interested in the museum or the theatre. In fact, it seems that he told the architect to spend as little time on these components as possible. He had no time for the kinds of waterfront views one can get by designing the complex so that it opens up to the Bay. An architect who worked with Adelson in Macau highlights how he thinks purely in terms of numbers. When he presented a project to Adelson, he made the mistake of beginning, in his typical fashion, by talking about design concepts. Halfway through the presentation, Adelson told him to “shut the fuck up.” All he wanted to know was the amount of GFA, how many tables there are and the rate of return. This architect confides that it is really difficult to be a consultant to these 60 year-old millionaires telling you that there is only one way to do it. Casino design has been reduced to a handful of principles, and Adelson is the archetypal “casino designer” described in Chapter 3.

Adelson’s right-wing politics, global ambitions and abrasive personality has been covered in several articles.⁴⁴⁷ His bullishness has earned him many enemies and critics in Las Vegas and Macau. In Macau, for example, where Las Vegas Sands is developing the Cotai Strip, allegations of land-grabbing, flaunting of planning policies as well as stalled construction projects and high level corruption plague the development process. Various litigations revealed how casino

⁴⁴⁷ See, for example, Gary Rivlin, “When 3rd Place on the Rich List Just Isn’t Enough”, 17 January 2008, New York Times; Connie Bruck, “The Brass Ring: A multi-millionaire’s relentless quest for global influence”, 30 June 2008, The New Yorker

developers tried to block each other's access into the Chinese market by funding anti-corruption lobbies, and how casino licenses were won through connections between the White House and Beijing government. In Singapore, what the public was treated to was a seamless process where the original simulation presented on National Day blended into the winning proposal of Moshe Safdie, and finally, in 2007, the completed building itself. Politics is not a gamble; everything went as planned.

Blending defines the politics of aesthetics in Singapore. In this sense, the Integrated Resort is a magnification of the lottery stations that dot the landscape of Singapore. Unlike the stations, it is spectacular, but like the stations, it blends in. Gambling is made tolerable because it takes on a different aesthetic. Blending as a politics of aesthetics defuses the risk of politics. The depoliticization process has been discussed by scholars who show how technical rationality and bureaucratic processes transform ideological debates into mundane sets of calculations. They expose the hidden assumptions and motivations of what seems to be objective decisions and proven formulas. What is interesting in this case is how images and buildings are also part of the process of depoliticization. It challenges us to think about depoliticization as a performance, rather than as a retreat away from public engagement. Architectural and urban form become actors of good governance and their rehearsal – from simulation to the built object – becomes part of the script of success. In Singapore, this performance of success depoliticizes.

It is not surprising that the architect, Moshe Safdie and his building, not Adelson Sheldon or Las Vegas Sands, were the preferred spokesperson for this politically defused development. The planners defended and protected his design as if it were their own. As one of the architects involved in the project revealed, the building could only be what it is because, on one side, the government made sure everything shown in the drawings was committed to, and on the other side, Adelson was not interested in all the items that did not “rake in the profits.” Without the clout of the government behind the architect, the sky-park, museum, public plaza and the art objects could have died an early death. Such slashing of promises seems to be a repetitive motif in what planners in Macau encountered – public spaces, infrastructure and workers' housing are the first to disappear once the license is given. In Singapore, it is also because such items were outside Adelson's radar that the Moshe Safdie's team had more artistic freedom to work on them.

The blending of interests between the planner and the architect is forcefully articulated by a planner. He sees the building as a materialization of the principles and values of good planning embraced by the authority. He emphasized how though the guidelines were written to be flexible, the architect understood the spirit and gave the planners more than what was minimally stipulated. He enjoyed working with Safdie's team, emphasizing how they collaborated closely to make sure the development fit into its urban context at the level of small architectural details:

There were a lot of interfaces; with our bridge and with our promenade as well. A lot of integration. So the guidelines provided to them helped to guide this process. You know, the materials are seamless. So if you down to the waterfront promenade, you can't tell where it starts and where it ends ... We took a picture that day from the promenade. And then I looked at the picture. It's like 'Wow!' I saw this in the report! It is really kind of spooky. Like a premonition. The perspective looks exactly like what is built on site!⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ Anonymous, interview with author, 6 June 2010

For him, Safdie was the perfect architect because he saw the same gestalt in the plans as the planners. Planners learned a simple lesson: To get what they want, to intervene and yet not intervene, one must find the right architect who knows what they want, not the best design. Considering the state's moral allergy towards any association with gambling, the privatization of the casino industry is not inconsistent with the control over its aesthetics. When the planner says that "you can't tell where it starts and where it ends" and how "the perspective looks exactly like what is built on site," he alludes to a politics of aesthetics that is most effective when public and private interests cannot be differentiated. All appears to be the same.

The Integrated Resort and the art of blending

With the building complete, one can see how this blurring of boundaries assumes material and aesthetic form. Most observers would not cast an extra glance at the name of the development – "Marina Bay Sands". Yet, a quick survey of the other casino properties owned by Las Vegas Sands would show how unusual it is: Sands Macau, Sands Bethlehem, Venetian Las Vegas, Venetian Macau, and so on. The fact that in Singapore, the name of the place comes *before* the name of the corporation is extremely telling. In all other names, one single proprietary font is used. In Singapore, "Marina Bay" and "Sands" use their separate proprietary fonts. Only in Singapore does the brand have a silhouette of the building as part of the logo. These surely reflect the power dynamic between the state and the corporation: a blending of interests, but also a clear separation of positions.

The complex has three hotel towers, linked at the top by a large surf-like sky park. The towers appear to be simple rectangular slabs with slightly asymmetrical and slanted edges, but from the side, one can see that they flare out at the base like a skirt. This flaring of the base encloses the lobby of the hotel - a high-volume atrium not entirely different from those of John Portman's in the 70s. In front of the hotel towers, and separated by a road, are three large pavilions containing convention halls, the casino and theatres. The circulation corridors linking the three pavilions together are simultaneously strips of retail outlets. Separate from the main complex on the waterfront is a museum designed like an open palm. (Figs. 4.6 and 4.7)

The casino is located in the central pavilion. A taxi-stand services this pavilion, but the coach stations are below the hotel block across the road. This means that hotel guests and those arriving by coaches do not have direct access to the casino. Entrances into the casino are elaborately designed but appear as part of the row of retail outlets along the circulation corridors. At the main entrance into the casino next to the taxi-stands, a heavy curtain of shimmering grey blocks any view of the casino from the outside. None of these conform to the principles of the Las Vegas model. Some vestiges of the old order, however, are discernible. The canal is the last surviving connection to its Venetian past. Except that instead of gondolas, sampans ferry visitors up and down its length. In the casino, a similar spatial hierarchy based on customer value can be seen. In this case, it is a vertical stratification – mass gamblers gather on the lowest floor, higher value gamblers on the second and third floors (these levels are directly connected to the hotel via a bridge) and an invisible top floor is reserved for the VVIPs.

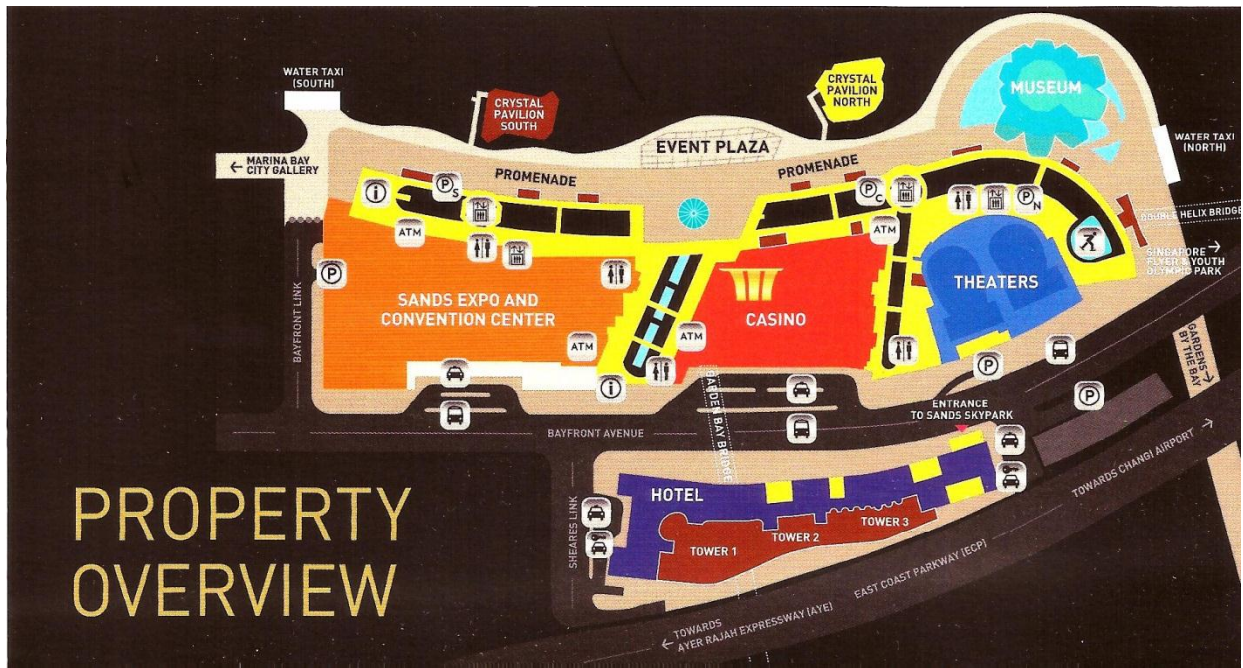


Fig. 4.6: “Property Overview” of Marina Bay Sands.
 Source: Marina Bay Sands brochure, 2010



Fig 4.7: Marina Bay Sands “Destination Guide”. Notations cropped from this image: (1): Skypark, (2) Hotel
 Source: Marina Bay Sands brochure, 2010

The building has become a stage for the transmission of the planning vision for Marina Bay. At this building, one learns to “see like a state,” to use James Scott’s critique in a perverse way. On a typical day, one would find groups of gamblers queuing up to enter the casino – one line for Singaporeans who have to pay \$100 to enter, and another line for foreigners who enter for free. Across the road, at the hotel block, one forgets that this complex is heavily financed by the casino. It is not just the separation of functions, but also the incessant valorization of Architecture as Art and Art as Architecture. Artworks are “integrated” into the building - the wall mural, ceiling installation, “oculus”, and “art path” are as much individual pieces as architectural features. This is a key difference in the kinds of art displayed here and those in many other casino-resorts – as architectural features, they are not consumable pieces. They are not bought from a catalogue, but commissioned for a unique project by the Master Architect. Chihuly’s glass pieces that decorate the most ostentatious of casino-hotels in Las Vegas are also products on sale – one would often find around the corner in the hotel lobby a gallery that sells Chihuly glassware. At Marina Bay Sands, art and architecture preserve their purity the same way planners and architects distance themselves from the casino developer and the casino designer. Planner and architect, art and architecture, building and city: they blend and become indistinguishable from each other.

As a pedagogical space to train visitors to see like the state, this building reproduces and communicates the gestalt of the planners. At the lobby, a model of the building is displayed. Visitors see the very building they are in (Fig. 4.8). If architecture is often encountered in a state of distraction, this display reverses the process. Visitors become aware of the enclosure as architecture, a perfect and complete object to be appreciated from afar, the same way an architect might appreciate works of architecture. This might be especially consoling when the building is huge (and thus cannot be appreciated as an object) and only half-complete (but the casino is already operating). Again, this is a reversal of the Las Vegas model, which as Martin Stern’s Xanadu project and Jameson’s reflection shows, is one that loses its reference to the outside world once the person enters through the porte cochere. The interiority of the casino-resort is regularly disrupted at Marina Bay Sands by views and references to the outside.



Fig. 4.8: Architectural model at the hotel lobby
Source: Author, 2010

These disruptions are in fact a form of blending - the blurring of the architectural object as art and the context as art. It is the gestalt of the planners within which Marina Bay Sands becomes at home. Thus, one of the key functions of the building is to invert the point of reference such that it becomes not an object but infrastructure, a magical platform to see the city like a planner would. On the sky-park, one is treated to a synoptic view of the city. As far as the eye can see on the 57th story, the city becomes an open-air museum. An audio guide tells one to stand at 11 specified points of the sky-park, look out and identify landmarks. The narrative presents the city as full of history, always contrasting the old and the new so as to project a natural process of development. Thus, there are the colonial legacies such as the Padang (pronounced with an exaggerated American accent) and the shop-houses along Singapore River; the skyscrapers of Singapore's first wave of modernization; the cultural institutions that signal a second wave of transformation; and, in the distance, the bedrock of Singaporean identity and success – the public housing blocks that shelter 80% of the population. Casino-resorts were developed in the context of deserts to avoid regulatory and municipal control. Only in Singapore would one find a casino-resort wax lyrical about its urban and national context (Fig. 4.9).



Fig. 4.9. Sky-park at Marina Bay Sands
Source: Author, 2010

In this narrative, there is nothing by accident. Politics is never a gamble. Everything is of interest and in order. Here, Kevin Lynch is turned upside down: instead of planners learning from users how they navigate the city in their little meaningful ways, users learn from planners to fit their individual worlds into a coherent worldview. The building is not just a stage. It is also an actor. On 9 August 2010, five years after the first simulation of the Integrated Resort was shown, Marina Bay was once again the site of celebration for National Day. It is evocative to describe this spectacle since it brings one back to the embarrassed ritual of the public lottery draw. By 5:00pm, the waterfront was already packed with people. Rows of cameras had already been set up at the choicest spots to capture the new Integrated Resort against the backdrop of the city. But this magical appearance is not jarring. The new aesthetic updates the aesthetic of the old CBD, rather than rejects it. The space of the new is a seamless extension of the old, and voids

appear only as anticipations of more to come, not as absolute unknowns. The future is already scripted in the present, a set of probable outcomes prepared for us by planners through images that preempt the future. There is excitement, but there are little surprises. After all, as the planner said, the simulation looks exactly like the actual building (Fig. 4.10).

With the commencement of the fireworks, beams of light shot out from the sky-park of the Integrated Resort, while an image of the Singapore flag was projected onto the building (Fig. 4.11). The building performs for its spectators. It is not an alien, but a Singaporean. The space of dubious morality – the casino - is invisible, tucked deep in the core of the complex. In this hidden space, its allegiance changes – Singaporeans are discouraged to enter, but like what Lee Kuan Yew said 40 years ago, let the American tourists and all the Malaysians go there. National Day has become a duplicitous spectacle – something is not quite right, but everything is still very proper.



Fig. 4.10: National Day at Marina Bay
Source: Author, 2010

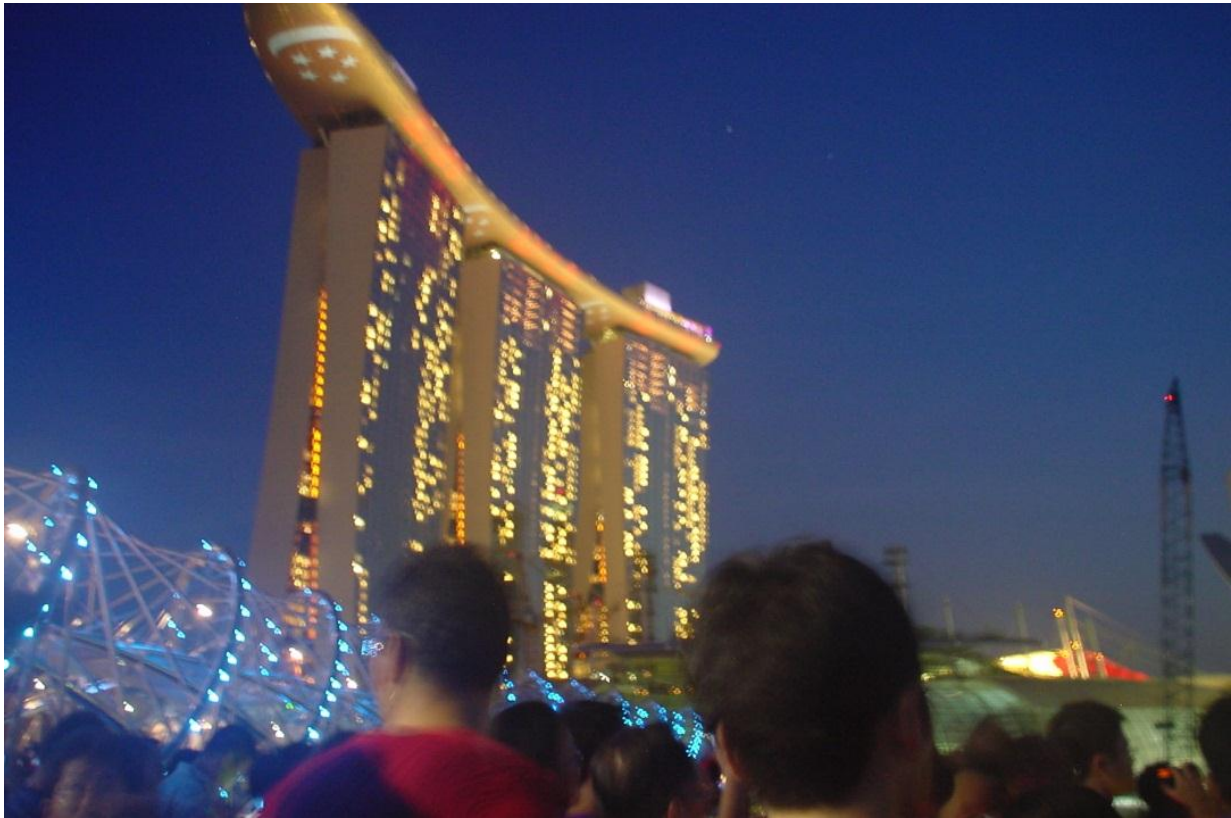


Fig. 4.11: National Day at Marina Bay. Note image of flag projected onto the sky-park.
Source: Author, 2010

Conclusion: Reflections, Limitations and Future Directions

To conclude this dissertation, I will recollect the key arguments which show how specific technologies and rationalities have served in various ways to materialize moral-legal divisions, thus changing the ways vice is understood historically and today. In the process, I will reflect on my methodology and theoretical framework and point to the areas where more can be done.

Several arguments are made in this dissertation that are connected by a common concern of how dividing practices shape subjectivity and produce social order. Though the casino is the principal object of analysis, the dissertation has shown how this strategy of spatial containment is always paired with a series of practices that seeks to breach and destroy the other forms of gambling that cannot be contained or regulated. These range from cock-fighting of the Balinese to the Wai Seng lotteries of Canton and Singapore to the slot machines criminalized in New York during the Prohibition Era. They are both spatially concentrated and dispersed. The historical development of the casino is therefore a violent process of monopolization carried out in the name of social order and political stability. The casino and the anti-casino are provocations of each other – the fortified gambling dens are a defense against police breach, while the Common Gaming House ordinance which criminalizes architectural fortifications is law’s response to that. These series of provocations continue today into the virtual realm of internet gambling. Understanding this fractious history, the project of taming vice through the casino should be seen as a simultaneous process of containment and breach, display and hiding. The spatial and aesthetic alternations inform and are in turn informed by a range of authoritative claims about morality, economics and modernity.

The first two chapters explore the nexus of power/knowledge created to destroy the anti-casinos of colonial and national Singapore. The central political technology encountered in the colonial period is that of the Common Gaming House. Understood not just as a piece of legislation, it couples a set of knowledge about native criminality with a set of practices to identify and criminalize vice through material traces. This is not meant as an “original” moment when vice becomes spatial in order that it can be criminalized in the colonies. Rather, it highlights how existing strategies of criminalization from metropolitan London and theories of evolution had to be reformulated and adapted in order to govern effectively. Of course, dividing practices were always exercised in the making and remaking of society. What the Common Gaming House exemplifies is a certain way to criminalize selectively without limiting the power to punish everyone. There is an inbuilt flexibility and impunity to the mechanism that assumes everyone is *potentially* a criminal: from the automatic confession of heavy doors to the meticulous compilation of finger-prints and black books, the ability to defend oneself from law is removed from the individual and placed within the internal mechanism of law itself. Thus, what is criminal or not becomes pre-established according to expert opinion about gambling and its supposed evils. Of course, this excess of power cannot be exercised indiscriminately. Emanating from this political technology are a series of reforms to the institution and art of policing to tame this punitive mechanism. Thus, internally, police work had to be redistributed to create a tighter and more hierarchical system of racialized surveillance, while externally, new kinds of knowledge had to be built from groundwork carried out by detectives and Sinologists.

In nationalist Singapore, what appears starkly is how the threshold of criminality was recalibrated according to the practical limits and political costs of criminalization in a new

political regime. I first examine distinct but interlocking fields of discourses around nation-building, crime/delinquency and modernity. These are not just unilaterally projected as state discourses, but represent different expert and political perspectives emerging from various centers in the police, academia and parliament. Like the last chapter, such discourses do not flow directly into practical schemes. Rather, in translating these theories and claims into practice, a contradiction became painfully obvious: how can one criminalize harder and yet build a nation that assimilates everyone as citizens? My approach to answering this question is similar to the previous chapter – I begin in the very arena where vice and crime is produced and encountered, a heterogeneous field I have termed the juridical-police complex. Here, I make two arguments that reflect the contradiction faced by these experts. On the one hand, the spatial registers of crime defined by the Common Gaming House were expanded to produce more crime. On the other, the entire edifice of justice became threatened by the need to criminalize more and punish harder. The result is not just a more punitive political technology with looser definitions of crime, but also a more focused attention on the public display of such state-sanctioned violence. Though justice and police work has always had an aesthetic dimension, this chapter provides a rough schematic of the range of representations projected through mass media that try to ameliorate the contradictions of nation-building that is heroic and punitive at the same time.

One contribution of this dissertation to the literature on governmentality and how we analyze power is its attempt to study space and performance simultaneously. This approach combines the visible and invisible effects of power in a productive bind. The dictum that justice must be seen to be done is only the public half of its hidden double – that justice must also be sequestered in order that its authority is preserved. Working with Bennett and Rancière, I show how the technologies of the prison and the museum are actualized in the juridical-police complex. Thus, there were endless alternations and contestations about what can and cannot be shown – the criminals-on-parade versus the criminals-amongst-us, the uniformed patrols versus the plain-clothes detective, the orderly arrangement of gambling farms versus the nondescript lottery stations. Bringing this visual, formal and performative dimension to the analysis enlivens a strictly spatial treatment in understanding how subjects are constructed in history. It connects the stability of spatial technologies with the rigidity of institutionalized rituals, such that both become necessary to the successful reformation of a target subject.

This has some common ground with scholars who try to interpret the cultural and political messages of built form, and how they shape lived experience. However, my analysis has less to do with specific buildings as carriers and disseminators of dominant ideologies and more to do with the total environment in which individuals and the masses become seen as spectators and participants of a loose script. Thus, the elements to be considered are much more varied, and operate at multiple scales. At various moments of these two chapters, I have foregrounded a series of rituals in their settings and tried to analyze their political rationalities. I have considered, for example, how the public lottery draw was carried out in Singapore between 1960s and 1980s, arguing that changing systems of trust and play have been inscribed in the bodily rituals of the participants, the integrated performance of humans and machines, and the forms of spatial enclosure. At another moment, I considered the general spectacle of violence and justice on the streets, turning our attention not to the design of courthouses or public institutions, but to the ways police work is performed in front of both citizens and potential criminals.

The theoretical and methodological framework which I have adopted privileges a certain set of questions and informs how I interpret my empirical materials. My study of these projects to tame vice follows closely the approach of Foucault, and this forces me to adopt what Nikolas Rose calls the “empiricism of the surface.” Thus, I have desisted trying to decode class interest or hidden motives or ideologies in favor of analyzing each historical project in its own terms. I read closely how vice was constructed in the different moments when it arose as a problem to be solved while tracing the limitations, objectives and elements of the political technologies devised for that purpose. Rather than looking past these technologies so as to frame my interpretation according to pre-existing sets of social relations, power is understood to be generated through and in these technologies. Thus, though each chapter is framed within a general political order – colonial, national and corporate – I do not import a certain logic or priori status to these meta-categories. I feel that the joys and frustrations of this empiricism of the surface is how it forces me to stay close to my materials and allow the concepts and patterns to emerge from there. This has made my work much more tedious, and perhaps less satisfying to those attempting to make linkages outside, say, the particular interests of gambling. This insularity is one area this dissertation can improve on.

I wish to elaborate by reflecting on the first two chapters. In Chapter 1, I do not interpret the Common Gaming House as an expression of colonial power, one that is no doubt as dynamic as colonies are in terms of class, race and gender, and which many scholars have analyzed and provided succinct summaries of. Rather, I have tried to understand how this particular Ordinance works, the kinds of practices and logics that come together in its organization, and show how it attempts to produce a certain social and political order both as an idealized scheme and an imperfect instrument. Similarly, in Chapter 2, I treat the mass media and its representations of crime and justice loosely as a kind of institution of display, almost as if it were a museum. The rituals of public lottery draws and the built spaces associated with legalized gambling are analyzed as reflections of what was happening in these schemes of criminalization, as a parallel institution of display that ameliorates and justifies the violence of nationalism. By corroborating the two sets of performances, I abstain from slotting the entire process of nation-building into a pre-existing narrative about the formation of an authoritarian or developmental state. Rather, I try to show in detail the translations between one logic to another, from one practice to another, and how this alchemical process has multiple fractures, contingencies and patterns which have to be masked and/or performed through such public institutions of display. This attention to the techniques and logics of government – understood simply as a collection of practical schemes – gives thickness and nuance to our understanding of power.

In Chapter Two, I faced another meta-category that seems inescapable - the centrality of the “state” in the making of modern Singapore. Again, I tried not to attribute an a priori status to it and resisted interpreting all forms of social control as expressions of a ruling ideology, even one that appears as hegemonic as Singapore’s. Having worked in the national archives and reviewed many of the key social science texts about Singapore, the figure of the state appears so dominant that almost nothing can be written that does not situate it at an organizing center, whether it is to understand historical development or to explain changing socio-political arrangements. Thus, scholars have generally placed the key phases of Singapore’s transformation as one moving from a politics of survival and pragmatism, to an ideology of communitarianism and model of developmentalism, to the current one that selectively adopts neoliberal logic while retaining aspects of developmentalism and authoritarian rule. I am oversimplifying the complexities of a

large body of scholarship, and I certainly do not suggest that such phases are clean and rigid separations. There is much current research that deconstructs monolithic constructions of the state and shows its various forms and influences in different spaces of government. But there is a strong correlation between the presence of the state in the everyday lives of Singaporeans, and the presence of the state in scholarship about Singapore. Combined with a rather anemic archive that refuses to divulge anything that might run counter to the representations of the present political regime, it is too comfortable to resolve the complexities of history by returning to and building on such stable categories and narratives.

The question thus is to what extent are our analysis foreclosed by theoretical constructs and abetted by the silences of the archives? Can there be a critique of power that does not assume the priority of the state; one that does not give it a historical force and singular status simply because it is so prominent in our present condition and so overbearing in the archives? I have tried to do so by decentralizing and multiplying my sites of interrogation, treating each site (police, academia and parliament) in its own terms before analyzing the relations and transactions between them. The looseness between these sites is a result of this analytical approach as well as an acknowledgment (and revelation) of the sparseness of empirical materials. I am sure future work can help to illuminate on the dark zones that surround my sites of interrogation.

Such a critical posture continues in my discussion of Las Vegas. Like Singapore, Las Vegas is another truth-spot for a whole range of theoretical questions and contemporary phenomenon. For social scientists, it is a classic site for a Marxian analysis of late capitalism and its cultural/symbolic forms. For cultural theorists, it is the reference point for the theorization of architectural postmodernism. For historians, it is a vision of what American cities are becoming or what American culture is really like, a model of normality that only appears exceptional if we focus on its surfaces and fixate over its excesses. One major turning point in both Las Vegas' history and the history of the casino industry, as told in these studies, is the advent of corporatization. Like the "state" that dominates discourses about Singapore, the "corporate" serves as an organizing center from which one can draw inferences from multiple fields of scholarship and arrange them in a coherent fashion. Yet, this coherence is done at the expense of actually entering into the industry and trying to understand it from the inside. Marxist critiques of late capitalism and cultural theories of architectural postmodernism, for example, are not interested in how the casino industry actually works. They interpret these spectacular buildings from an external position - in the case of Venturi and Scott Brown, quite literally by taking photographs while driving down the Strip - that connect them to established concepts of spectacle, consumerism and the everyday. As my chapter points out, "Learning from Las Vegas" is an exercise in semiotics. It is never about learning from Las Vegas architects.

The task here is to focus on the formation of the dominant casino model today under a corporate regime. Like the first two chapters where I try not to fit my analysis within a metanarrative around the "state", here, I do not take the "corporate" as a self-evident and pre-given category. Rather, I have chosen to focus on two parallel sets of transformations - the confluence between virtual technology and scientific management that effectively defeated the geographical injunctions designed to keep gambling from other spheres of life and the abstraction of the casino-resort into a set of rational and reproducible spatial principles. In this analysis, I have tried to show, like the previous two chapters, the coming together of a set of power/knowledge that made it possible to make truth-claims about a range of issues that

ultimately fed into the profitability of gambling as business. If the Common Gaming House was constructed with knowledge produced by geographers, lawyers, sinologists, sociologists and detectives – all of which were inflected by the general political and epistemological fields where they were situated – so was the casino and its sciences. It was a laboratory for emerging professionals such as slot managers and casino designers, whose professional foundations were highly unstable and dynamic.

Entering the casino industry through trade journals, professional conferences, technical manuals and vendor advertisements therefore tells quite a different story from how social scientists frame Las Vegas as a truth-spot of late capitalism. The key threads that I have identified are drawn from these internal discourses and they do not automatically leap to the level of theorization one is familiar with. Rather, they are concerned with professionalism, objectivity, security and virtualization. The way the casino industry was transforming is tied closely to the internal processes of the corporate world, from the ways slot machines were arranged to the management of gamblers to the design of casino resorts. This rationalization process did not end in the confines of the casinos, but reverberated across all aspects of how developers, managers and designers thought about entertainment, hospitality and marketing. In this discussion, I borrow insights from science and technology studies, particularly scholars like Theodore Porter and Bruno Latour, who show me how to approach such mundane technical processes and study their politics. Through the specific histories of slot technology and casino design, I try to show the reciprocity between casino industry and the corporate world of finance and management. As a critique, I argue that much of what passes off as science and mathematics in the casino industry is as spectacular as the buildings themselves. Intense competition, overriding focus on profitability, and the lust for objectivity underlie their “scientific” claims in many ways. Like the finance industry, predictive models and numerical calculations stand in for what we do not know about the world. Fictitious capital is generated and circulated through what Anna Tsing calls an “economy of appearances”. My approach to examining this economy is to enter the innards of the industry and look in detail at how numbers, plans and images are generated at the conjunction between professionalization and technology.

In the last chapter, I plunge into the processes of how the Integrated Resort first emerged in the imagination and subsequently, as a built object. The focus is on how truth-claims are produced in an amalgam of morality, economics and aesthetics. Moving through a series of “black boxes” – from public consultations to architectural competitions - I try to show how such claims are as much about substance as form. That is, the process of arriving at truth and how this process is presented are highly strategic moves that determine and give political weight to these claims. In each of these boxes, different forms of authority are called into service – from history to management science to architectural aesthetics.

In this chapter, therefore, I repeat my method of identifying and framing specific sites and analyzing them in their own terms. These “black boxes” again, are not simple manifestations of state ideology or authoritarian power. Rather, they express composite sets of logics, values and interests. Entering into the black box, as Latour argues, is to enter into a moment *before* things are stabilized, convincing and self-evident. Given how guarded such spaces are, my analyses are not as in depth as Latour’s studies of science-in-action are. Here, I try to do three things: First, I juxtapose parts of the histories I have discussed with what is happening in the present to show how some of the authoritative claims are founded on a pre-given script that preserves the self-

image of the government or stands in for what is unknown. The most glaring juxtapositions are seen in how Singapore's own history is being represented in the present, and how the Las Vegas model is being represented in Singapore. Second, I deconstruct my informants' own representations of their participation in these boxes, and show how these highly rationalized spaces are also shot through with affective and political forces. Thus, in my conversations with government planners, I point to the gestalt and pathos of office that permeate the very culture of making plans. In my conversations with bureaucrats and architects, I show how, despite the rigidity of the competition process, there are politics ranging from the petty kinds where participants try to double guess what the jurors want, to the unspeakable kinds which must be hidden from the public and bureaucrats themselves. Third, I perform a formal and cultural analysis of the Integrated Resort, paying attention to how the building becomes part of the narrative generated by the state and materialized through urban planning. I characterized this as an art of blending.

On reflection, I have kept out many relevant contextual materials in order to restrict my frame of analysis. For a project that skips across three distinct worlds, I have tried to focus on how gambling becomes an object of government, and show the significance of space, architecture and aesthetics in these projects. The success of this is uneven, and very often predicated on the kinds of materials I could collect in the archives. As a result, there are dramatic breaks between chapters, which I hope to frame as discrete projects in their own right. Still, more thinking can be done to bridge these empirical and conceptual gaps. For example, in my discussion of Las Vegas, I could have discussed the criminalization process of the slot machines before they entered the casinos. This would have given me an opportunity to link this analysis to the first two chapters and show how the very socio-cultural script of play was transformed once the slot machines moved from bar tops to the casinos. This would have deepened my general observation about how legalization abets and transforms crime, rather than eliminating it. This is related to the two key arguments in these chapters: first, that a space of tolerated illegality is not the result of a lack of control, but a strategy to control economically and criminalize justly; and that crime is not something external to the juridical-police complex, but is produced within it. In the casino, it is possible to see how the diffused network of slot machine operations, when concentrated and moved into the casinos, provokes a series of attempts to securitize and change gambling practices. After all, the casino is one of the most heavily surveyed spaces, and this surveillance extends from invisible networks of cameras and virtual technologies to visible patrols of security guards to bodily injunctions that make sure one gambles in a certain way. Like the Common Gaming House which treats all spaces as potentially a crime scene, everyone is potentially a criminal in the casino. Just because gambling is legal in the casino does not mean that such criminalizing logics are no longer in play in the casino. I have kept much of these out of the discussion in order to make stronger linkages to the present, where so much of the discourse is about the architecture and the profitability of the casino industry.

One key thread in this dissertation is the significance of numbers and its role in modern culture, government and industry. This thread becomes important in parts of the dissertation when I try to show how the industry, profession and the government attempt to discipline gambling and transform it into a ritual that has very specific relationships between humans, space and machines. A completely different way of organizing the dissertation might be necessary to pull these threads together. As the historians of science I cited in my introduction suggest, there is a deep connection between numbers and gambling, and I have made several in-

roads into this complex relationship by looking at the politics and aesthetics of numbers; for example, how slot managers use them to secure their professional relevance, how Las Vegas casino designers and Singaporean planners begin with numbers but end with images; and how numbers communicate different meanings in public lottery draws. There is much at work here that connects with the processes of financialization, where the production of fictitious capital is premised on ways of imagining, calculating and securitizing profits in advance. Very often, this involves the production of numbers and images.

I have also hinted at, but left undeveloped, cross-cultural comparisons between how vice was criminalized or legalized in Singapore and other parts of the world. I have made several references to some of the differences in the ways gambling was criminalized in colonial Singapore and metropolitan London, and how local urban and social conditions stymied police action differently in both contexts. A more thorough investigation of how the racial construction of vice in the colony resonates with a class-based construction of vice in the metropole will add nuance to the claims made in this dissertation. Indeed, this technique of criminalizing vice by attaching it to material traces and architectural elements is not peculiar, and it will be productive to show how it belongs to a larger class of injunctions that attempts to break down a popular activity - and to some, a form of livelihood - into legal and illegal halves. I have in mind the range of vice industries, such as prostitution, drugs and even smoking, but one can extend this inquiry to other kinds of social activities that are less commercialized but just as spatially defined, such as the control of public display through sumptuary laws that regulate conspicuous consumption and cultural status. Elsewhere, I made some connections between how the public lottery draw was conducted in Singapore in the 1980s, and how it was done in 16th century London. Such juxtapositions help me refine my analytical perspectives, but they can be further developed to show how the balance between the disciplined and the carnivalesque that I have identified in these rituals is practiced with subtle but important differences in various parts of the world. I have in mind the fascinating book by Marie Coleman about the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes between 1930 and 1987, which shows quite a different kind of ritual when such forms of gambling are popularly accepted as a public good during a time of great economic stress.⁴⁴⁹ The case of Singapore is merely one manifestation of this balance that expresses the political culture of its time.

Finally, much more can be done to foreground the materiality of architecture in this dissertation. I will highlight some parts where such a reorientation can be especially productive. In my discussion of how vice was criminalized in colonial and nationalist Singapore, I have stayed in the world of the lawyers and policemen. More can be done to present the materiality of the “architectural fortifications” or the subletting conditions that made law ineffective, or the urban fabric that allowed housewives to leap from roof to roof to escape from the police. In my analysis of Las Vegas, I focused on the abstract knowledge of the plan, and ignored the materiality of the actual building. I do so in order to confine my focus on that intermediate zone of practice and knowledge, something which I see as being occupied by the lawyers, police and Sinologists in prior chapters. As I have shown, it is through the circulation of the plan, and the marks made on it, that architects formalize a certain spatial knowledge that is subsequently abstracted into “design principles”. Yet, it is just as likely that casino designers learn from images and photographs, and indeed, many of Paul Steelman’s principles are communicated

⁴⁴⁹ Marie Coleman, *The Irish Sweep: A History of the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes 1930-87*. Dublin, Ireland: University College Dublin Press, 2009.

through images, numbers and words, rather than plans. Furthermore, the formalization of building types that is reproduced through the technology of the plan is a general phenomenon occurring in the 1960s as large scale multi-functional complexes were designed and built in the US and around the world. I mentioned the shopping mall briefly, but a broader reflection on other complex types such as the hotel-resort, the company towns and science parks will be useful.

Much of this omission is also because of the lack of materials about Martin Stern and the rising cast of casino designers. This is an effect and symptom of their lack of presence in the industry between 1960 and 1990. Similarly, a large part of the problem of writing about post-1960 Singapore is the dearth of archival materials and the general reluctance of official channels to supply the kinds of materials that are necessary to conduct a thorough investigation. This is a problem historians have raised, as noted in my chapter, and a dialogue has been held between the “keepers” and “makers” of history. On the subject of gambling and police action, officials are even more sensitive to researchers. Thus, the Totalisator Board, police departments and legal departments have all declined to assist in this research. Though I have managed to talk to the employees of Singapore Pools and obtained interesting anecdotes about their roles in the staging of public lottery draws, there is no information available to tell us how the company designed their lottery stations, their distribution across the island between 1960s and 1980s, and how they tried to market their products without being seen as encouraging people to gamble. Limited materials forced me to be critical and creative with what is available. In Chapter 2, I have used images from the mainstream media and official representations from the police departments to construct a general schematic of how justice was performed in order to be convincing and situated it in a larger context of the political culture around vice and nationalism at that moment. For the last chapter, it was primarily through my history as an employee of the planning authority that I could gain access to several of the planners involved in the planning of Marina Bay.

I also worry constantly about how this project contributes to the disciplines of architecture and urban studies. At times, this project seems to head off into a direction that has little bearing on my home disciplines, which are already rather heterogeneous institutions. I will reflect what I think are my contributions. First, I think I have contributed to our understanding of the built environment by grappling with a range of different empirical materials, both familiar and foreign to my disciplines. Architectural plans, renderings, models and master plans are important and familiar empirical materials in the last two chapters of this dissertation. In addition to analyzing their spatial logic, I unpack the politics of their construction in different institutional contexts. In other words, I try to show how such forms of representation are always partial and motivated, but their politics must be contextualized. Thus, in the last chapter, the Master Plan has symbolic and personal values in addition to their calculative qualities, and this has to be understood in the context of the bureaucratic culture of Singaporean planners. Similarly, in the architectural competition, the larger-than-necessary model becomes a show of credibility, not of design excellence. I also use rather non-traditional materials. There is clearly “architecture” in the “Common Gaming House” Ordinance, though it is not one that we are familiar in the disciplines of architecture or urban studies. “Architecture” exists as fragments whose value is to serve as evidence of crime. It also exists as a potentiality; as a range of spatial registers that can be revised in order to produce crime. Similarly, there is “architecture” in the databases of the slot manager. It also exists as a potentiality; a series of numbers that can be arranged in new ways to

visualize and organize space. The casino designer helps to translate these numbers into a form more familiar to us as students of the built environment. Yet, this is not to dismiss these databases as an important moment in the legibility of the built environment.

Second, I adopt a rather unfocused lens that is constantly scanning across multiple sets of actors and discourses. Though I will argue that the “built environment” is always part of the assemblage, it is not necessary the key actor or the primary analytical object at each given moment. Rather, it takes on different forms, functions and significance in the various schemes to tame vice. Though I take it upon myself as a student of the built environment to foreground its relevance, I feel also the need to resist making it the center of all my discussions, since that runs the risk of over-shaping my empirical materials to fit into the boundaries of my disciplinary institution. Part of this lack of focus is due to my attempt to analyze the casino as a dividing practice, which requires me to reconstruct that productive combination of knowledge, practice and institutional setting. In this combination, “architecture” or “built environment” or “architect” is but one of the many actors involved. This uneasy balance between what I can offer as a student of the built environment, what my empirical materials tell me and what my methodology requires of me is imprinted in this work.

In writing the last chapter, I often asked myself “so what”? I wondered if the dissertation does the job of destabilizing the truth-claims in which we are governed as modern subjects. For Singaporeans, can we still see the Integrated Resort as another chapter of the “success story”, or can we see the “success story” for what it is? For governments, activists and industry experts, can we still trust the equation that pits economic gain against social costs, or should we not acknowledge the moral judgment hidden in these arguments and try to reframe it in a non-dogmatic way? For planners and architects, can we still think of and practice professionalism within the narrow terms we are caught in today once we recognize that these terms are not as objective or neutral or progressive as they seem to be? This dissertation does not answer these questions directly, since I believe they have to be answered by those who find themselves in specific situations under specific constraints to make such evaluations and decisions. Hopefully, this dissertation can expand the repertoire of options and arguments other than those given to us.

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