

Making futures? Technology start-ups in Singapore Kripe, Z.

Citation

Kripe, Z. (2025, November 13). *Making futures?: Technology start-ups in Singapore*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4283023

Version: Publisher's Version

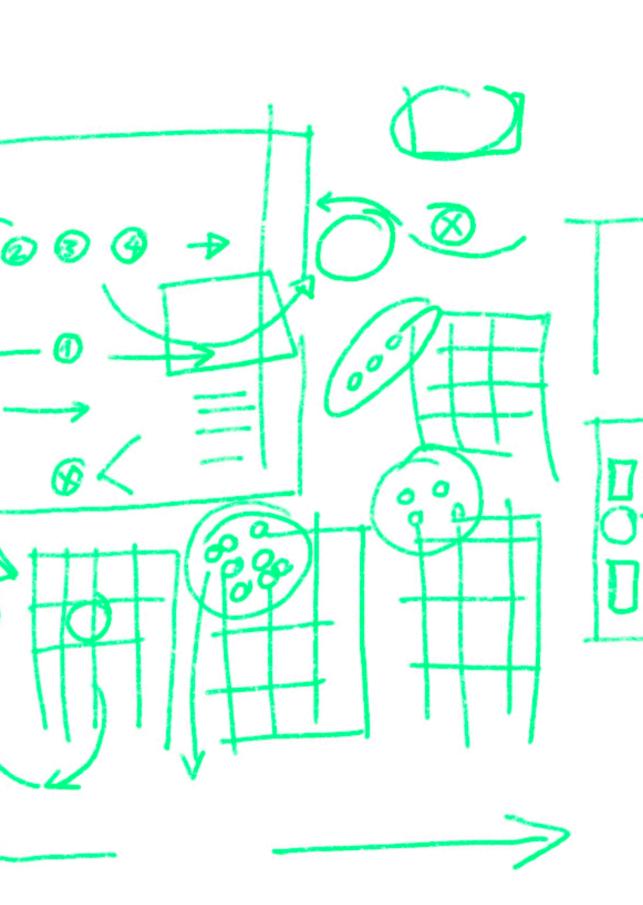
Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral

License: thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University

of Leiden

Downloaded from: https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4283023

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Making Futures?

Technology Start-ups in Singapore.

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 13 november 2025

klokke 11:30 uur

door

Zane Kripe

geboren te Valmiera

in 1985

Promotor:

Prof.dr. Peter J. Pels

Co-promotor:

Prof.dr. Bart A. Barendregt

Promotiecommissie:

Prof.dr. Marja J. Spierenburg (Wetenschappelijk Directeur Instituut Culturele Antropologie / voorzitter)

Prof.dr. Cristina Grasseni Prof.dr. Florian A. Schneider

Dr. Silvia M. Lindtner (University of Michigan)

Dr. Michiel Baas

Cover and layout design by Eva Abdulina

This research was part of "The Future is Elsewhere: Towards a Comparative History of the Futurities of the Digital (R)evolution," a project sponsored by the Dutch National Research Foundation (NWO) in its Cultural Dynamics program.

Making Futures?

Technology Start-ups in Singapore.

Zane Kripe

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	7
Introduction	4.0
1. Setting the Scene	13
Technology start-up futurities in Singapore	17
2. Anthropological Study of Futurities	18
Anthropological approaches to futurities	19
My approach to studying futurities ethnographically	20
3. Why Study Technology Start-ups in Singapore?	29
Anthropology of (digital) technology	29
The making of commercial web services	30
Studying technology entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia	32
4. Structure of the Thesis	34
5. This Project	38
Access and material	40
My position within the accelerator program	41
Position in the field	42
Other work	44
Chapter ONE	
"Come to Asia, Singapore is the Future!" Aspirations of Scale	
1. Introduction.	
Geographies of Technology Start-up Futurities	47
Imaginary geographies and scale-making	49
2. The Asia Opportunity	51
Moving to Singapore	54
Asian century and techno-orientalist futures	55
Linear time, pre-determined future & temporal incongruity	57
3. Singapore as a Global City and Regional Hub	59
Singapore as a Global City	60
The same but different: Singapore and the construction	
of the region	63
4. Balancing Between Silicon Valley and Asia	67
5. Don't Drink the Southeast Asia Kool-Aid	72
Visa runs and the boundaries	75
6. Conclusion	79
Chapter TWO	
Technopreneurship and Singapore's Future	
1. Introduction. Historicising Futurities	85
2. Knowledge Economy as the Future for Singapore	88
Unpromising beginnings - historicising future making	90
Naturalised vision of an inevitable future	93
3. Planning the Future and Urban Space	97
Urban planning	98
Urban change	99
Population White Paper	100
4. one-north	102

	one-north as a global and local project Local meaning of one-north	105 106
	Singapore as a hotel	107
_	Spatial segregation Blk 71	109 112
э.	Should you be here?	114
	Contingent and overlapping future-making projects	114
6.	Conclusion	119
	pter THREE	
	lding a Start-up Ecosystem	
1.	Introduction. Organising Sociality for Future Production Eat cheese and change the world	125 127
2.	Genealogy of the 'Start-up Ecosystem' Concept	130
	Ecological and economics metaphor	131
	Business and start-up ecosystems	133
	Globally circulating concept	137
3.	Start-up Sociality in 'Ecosystem'	139
	Openness and sharing	140
	Sharing of business proposal	142
	Facilitating 'serendipitous encounters'	143
	The rising tide lifts all boats	145
4.	The Costs of the Ecosystem	146
	Open Houses and compulsory sociality	147
	The Accelerator's Café and 'monetising the community' Secret Office, gift giving, money, and reciprocity	149
_	at peri-capitalist sites	151
5.	Social Hierarchies and Shifting Notions of Entrepreneurship	154
	Start-up conferences and social hierarchies	155
,	Changing notions of entrepreneurship	159
ο.	Social Context for Turning Ideas into Businesses	163 163
	A Great idea! The beginnings of Wonderings 'Authentic connection' and personal futures	166
	Venture capital as the proof of value	168
7.	Conclusion	173
Cha	pter FOUR	
Cr	ating value	
1.	Introduction. Start-ups Creating Value Case of Wonderings	177 179
2	How to Study Value in Technology Start-up Space?	179
	Value as embedded in moments of exchange	180
	Dematerialisation of value	181
	Focus on materialisation and 'commodity potential'	183
	Speculative labour and performance of potential value	184
3.	The Malleability of the Product	185
	Wonderings joins The Accelerator	185
	Ideation - embracing extreme malleability	187
	The power of 'daydreaming' and the 'capacity to aspire'	189
4.	"Make Something People Want!" Lean Start-up at The Accelerato:	
	Invention vs innovation	196

	Lean Start-up and understanding 'the market'	198
5.	"Entrepreneurs Build Companies, Companies Build Products"	200
	Start-up first, product second	203
	The empty futures of venture capital probabilities	204
6.	Shifting Notions of Value	207
7.	Pitching Potential Value	210
	Wonderings pitch on Demo Day	212
	Construction of social reality	216
	'Black Boxing' and photoshopping	218
8.	What Makes Business Worth Pursuing	219
	Changing the Wonderings	219
	When storytelling falls short - the end of Wonderings	221
	The endings of Wonderings and new beginnings	223
9.	Conclusion	224
Cha	apter FIVE	
	e Entrepreneurial Ideal	
	Introduction. Endless Malleability	229
2.	The Entrepreneurial Self and Human Capital	232
	It's Not About Money: Doing More Meaningful Work	236
	More meaningful work - open future	
	and the corporate 'Other'	237
	Experiencing the results of one's labour	240
	Speculating futures	243
4.	Commodifying One's Human Capital	246
	Love, self-awareness and intensification of work	247
	Acceleration sccore	250
	Planning and accounting	252
	Cultural style of control over time and speculative futures	253
	Lifetime management	256
5.	What Enabled the Pursuit of the Entrepreneurial Dream	258
	Conclusion	262
Cha	apter SIX	
Eml	bodying the Entrepreneur	
1.	Introduction. Managing one's capitalability	267
2.	Transforming the Asian subject - The Shithole State of Mind	269
	'Asianness' as a problem	270
	Asian values and the new national subjects	271
	Contesting the notions of creativity	274
	Risk-taking and fear of failure	277
3.	Transforming and Controlling One's Body - Business Pitch	280
	Control over one's body	281
	Pitching the 'Asian way'	285
4.	Masculinity & Entrepreneurship	289
-	Unproblematic masculinity and the problem of 'women in tech'	
	Fitting the masculine ideal	291
	Breadwinner and family life	293
	Military service	296
5.	Femininity: Professionalism Before Gender	298
	"I'm not a woman in tech."	298

Strategies of managing femininity	305	
Girls in Tech and Geek Girls - fostering the		
neoliberal feminist subject?	309	
6. Conclusion	312	
CONCLUSION		
1. Ethnography of Start-up Futurities	317	
Open but hard to reach	318	
On the un-attainability of start-up futurities	320	
Studying futurities ethnographically	322	
2. Anthropology of Capitalism and Future	323	
Labour of speculation	325	
On potential value	327	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	331	
DIDLIUGRAFHI	221	
Samenvatting	361	
Summary		
Acknowledgements		
Curriculum Vitae		