

7. Hybridity

generates

Hybridity

The term *hybrid*—from the Greek *hybris*, meaning excess or transgression—referred initially to mixture and violation, and later came to mean combination or blending. In modern English, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, it describes “something that is a mixture of two very different things.” (Cambridge Dictionary 2025, “Hybrid”). This idea of mixture has made the term especially appealing across various fields, but it is also somewhat broad in meaning. In recent decades, the concept of Hybrid Space has emerged in multiple scholarly contexts, each emphasizing different forms of combination. In education, hybrid learning spaces (Omona and O’Dama 2024) refer to environments that integrate formal and informal modes of learning. In the social sciences, hybrid social spaces often highlight the intersection of cultural or religious identities (Gaillard 2023). Political geographers have used the term to describe protest sites, where communicative, organizational, and spatial elements converge (Karaliotas 2017). In postcolonial theory, Homi K. Bhabha (2004) famously recast hybridity as a condition of identity and negotiation within colonial relations (Bhabha 2004).

In architecture and urban studies—the primary disciplinary framework of this book—hybrid spaces often describe environments that blur functional, spatial, and social boundaries, such as those between public and private, cultural and commercial, and digital and physical (Cho et al. 2015; Dunlop et al. 2023). This multiplicity of meanings can appear confusing, but it is also productive. What makes hybrid compelling is precisely its openness: as the notion of virtual–physical hybridity has evolved, it has come to encompass additional layers of mixing among functions, institutions, publics, and temporalities (Tan 2022).

This chapter reclaims the term *hybrid* in an expanded sense: not simply as the overlap between online and offline, but as a dynamic and multi-scalar condition through which multiple systems—cultural, economic, spatial, and affective—intersect and co-produce visibility.

To explore this condition, the chapter analyses Twitter data mapping art-related activity in Singapore. The dataset, introduced in Chapter 5, was initially developed as a post-occupancy analysis of cultural planning—a way to evaluate how districts, grants, and infrastructures for the arts perform once inhabited by publics and media (Tomarchio 2020). Here, however, I use the same data differently. Rather than focusing on attendance or institutional performance, I examine how art venues are represented, circulated, and mediated within digital space.

Even if social media data are partial and algorithmically biased, they remain crucial for understanding the geography of visibility. If media representations influence how the public perceives, values, and eventually visits art spaces, then analyzing those representations becomes essential in itself. The maps that follow do not measure participation; they trace how hybrid art spaces are constructed discursively—how attention, affect, and algorithmic selection shape the existence of art in the city.

What emerges from this reading is a multiplicity of hybridizations. Hybridity between digital and physical spatial production is most evident in Singapore, precisely where other forms of hybridity coexist: between spatial logics (territory, network, and place), between functions (art and leisure) and between institutional roles (public and private). The following sections trace these intersecting layers, demonstrating how hybrid spaces multiply hybridity—creating new cultural formations in which representation, participation, and mediation blend.

7.1 Hybridity in the logics: Network, places, and territories

The multiplicity of hybridizations described above becomes visually understandable when mapped. The Twitter dataset shows how art-related communication in Singapore manifests through three interconnected spatial logics—territory, place, and network—that together form the city’s hybrid cultural landscape. These logics are not separate categories but overlapping conditions that continuously interact, creating and maintaining hybridity at various scales.

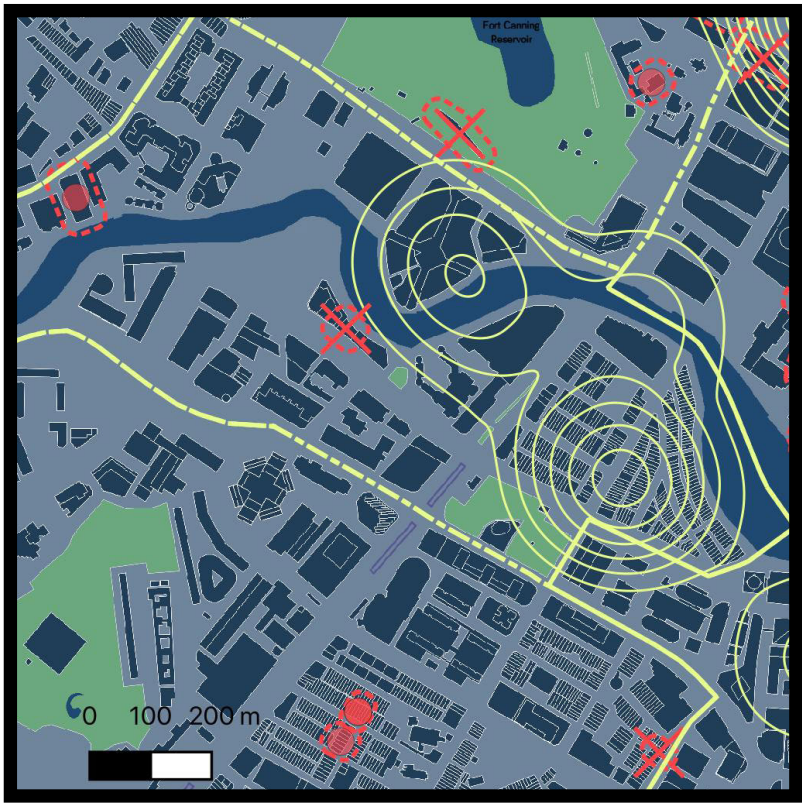


Figure 25. Mapping of the Singapore River area showing how networked, place-based, and territorial logics intersect in the production of hybrid art spaces. Diagram by the author. Originally published in Tomarchio (2021, 2023b).

Network and trajectories

Even when not drawn explicitly, a network of circulation underpins these formations. Images, mentions, and itineraries link distant venues across districts, generating cross-territorial pathways of cultural attention. The tweets not only track static locations but also movements—mobile subjects traveling through streets, sharing impressions, and connecting dispersed nodes of the art scene.

This underlying logic of trajectories constitutes the connective tissue of hybrid art space: a network that operates simultaneously in physical and digital realms. It enables the public to navigate culture through affective and algorithmic proximity rather than administrative borders.

Place

Individual art venues—museums, galleries, festivals, and pop-ups—emerge as places with distinctive media identities. They are sustained by recurring images, captions, and conversations that anchor them in the collective imagination. At some sites, the volume of posts increases with the number of visitors; elsewhere, the relationship is weak or even negative, indicating venues that are physically active yet digitally marginal.

Through these media narratives, places are not only represented but amplified. Their online presence extends their spatial agency—adding dimensions of affect, anticipation, and belonging. Mapping these interactions makes visible the performative dimension of place-making under hybrid conditions, where the physical and the discursive intertwine.

Territory

The logic pertaining to the territory is depicted as the most intriguing in Fig. 25, and it is the aspect to which I wish to dedicate greater attention.

In the dynamics of producing hybrid art spaces, several obvious boundaries or territories should be considered. Territorial logic

is most visible in the organization of Singapore's cultural districts. These zones matter not only because funding and recognition are allocated based on territorial designations that favor specific areas but also because they reveal how space itself serves as a tool of cultural policy. On the map, the boundaries of different districts (yellow dotted lines), art venues (red dotted lines), and, more broadly, Singapore's cultural infrastructure that typically receives institutional support are displayed alongside the distribution of art-related tweets.

The tweets themselves—represented as contour lines of intensity—mark where the original network of points condenses into visible clusters. These borders reveal where digital attention concentrates or fades, outlining what I describe as *mobile territories*: dynamic zones where publics gather, interact, and temporarily stabilize meaning. The fact that, while plotting the art-related tweets in Singapore, they naturally aggregate and cluster in specific zones or territories, demonstrates how online activities (algorithm and pre-selection) usually serve as non-institutional, personalized borders that stabilize or homogenize areas of interest. In the overlap between the two layers—the planned, official districts and venues, and the emergent, digital micro-territories—new configurations emerge. Digital publics often extend beyond institutional boundaries, illustrating how hybrid participation continually reshapes the city's cultural geography.

In the interactions among these spatial figures—network, place, and territory—conflicts and tensions naturally emerge (Farías et al. 2025). Hybrid space is not a smooth combination of logics but a zone of negotiation, where the flexibility of networks meets the rigidity of territorial regimes. This tension becomes particularly evident in Singapore, where the territorial logic of cultural districts—closely tied to funding systems and institutional recognition—rarely aligns with the distributed logic of digital networks through which cultural attention and participation actually occur. The result is a persistent reality check between where culture is administratively located and

where it effectively happens. While the territorial infrastructure channels resources and visibility into designated zones, the network disperses cultural activity across less formal, peripheral, or mobile venues. These misalignments generate both tensions and opportunities: they reveal the limits of spatial planning but also the vitality of hybrid cultural production, which continually exceeds institutional borders.

7.2 Results in Singapore: Hybridity Between Art and Leisure

The following mappings go beyond merely representing activity; they expose the tensions and overlaps among the spatial figures described above. In Singapore, hybridity appears not as a single state but as a dynamic interaction of logics. When read together, the maps show how hybrid art spaces are created through these layered interactions of territory, place, and network. The maps capture *visibility*, not the full range of practice. Platform biases—toward positivity, shareability, and photogenicity—influence what appears; yet, for this reason, they also reveal how platform rules shape the spatial production of culture. When viewed through the lens of spatial logic, these maps demonstrate how spatial figures coexist and interact. To reclaim the term hybrid in its various meanings, hybridity here is expressed through a hybridity of spatial logics and figures, representing their coexistence and interaction. In Singapore, central territories dominate, while peripheral initiatives struggle for visibility; discovery zones thrive where planning is silent; and “platform-curated bubbles” outline micro-geographies of art-related attention that are pre-selected and reinforced online.

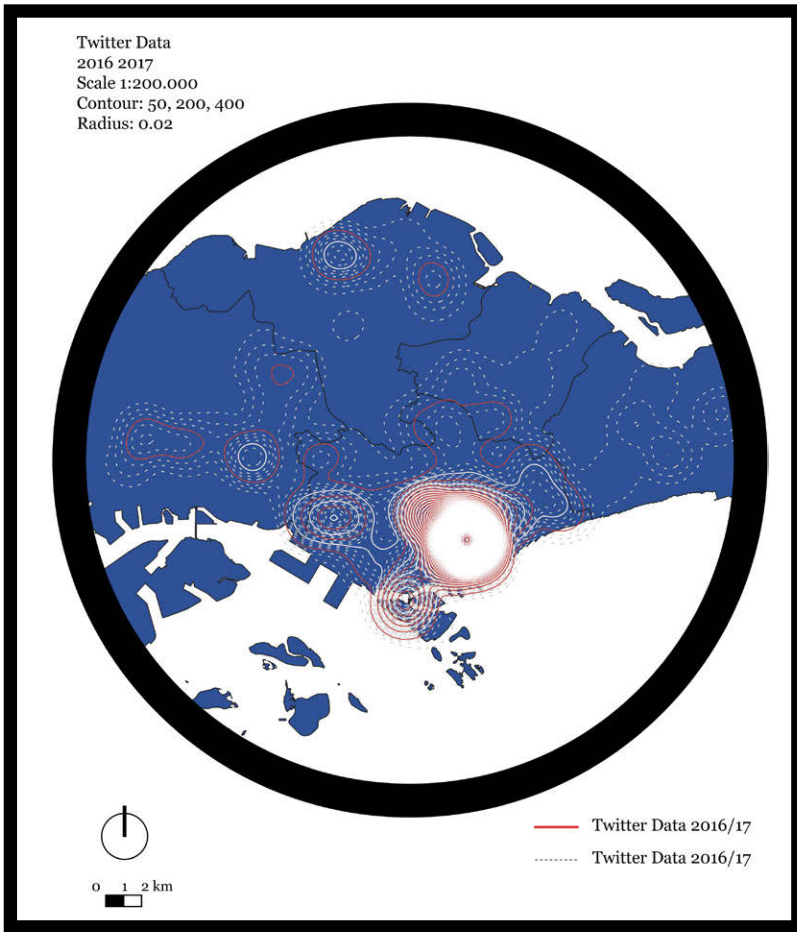


Figure 26. Map of Singapore displaying the spatial distribution of art-related Twitter activity during 2016–2017. The visualization shows several clusters of cultural communication: three major clusters in the southern part of the island—around HarbourFront/Sentosa (leisure and performance area), Marina Bay–Bras Basah (dense with art institutions such as the Esplanade, ArtScience Museum, and National Gallery), and One-North/NUS (innovation and research hub). Smaller clusters appear in Jurong East, Jurong West, Bukit Timah, Woodlands, and Yishun. The intensity of activity mirrors Singapore’s cultural planning, with the strongest concentration in the central civic district designated for museums. Diagram by the author. Originally published in Tomarchio (2021, 2023b).

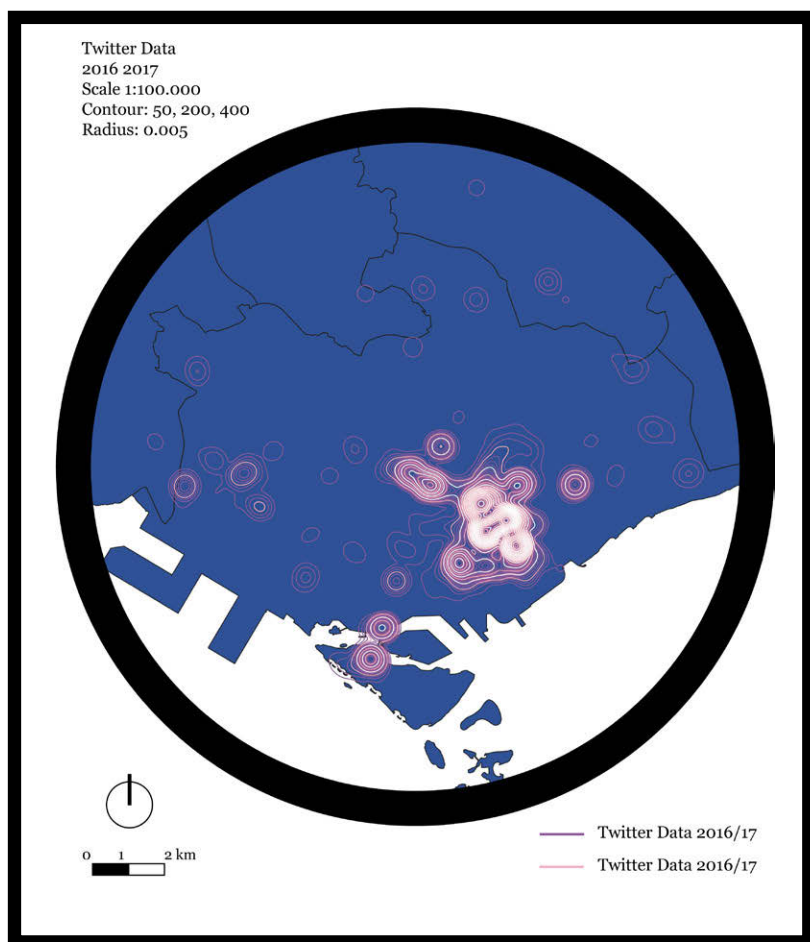


Figure 27. A detailed map of central Singapore showing clusters of art-related tweets. From east to west: a medium-intensity cluster over the Singapore Indoor Stadium, another over the Arab Quarter, a high-intensity cluster at Marina Bay Sands centered on the ArtScience Museum, another intense cluster along Raffles Boulevard, one over the National Gallery, a medium cluster in the Bras Basah area near the Singapore Art Museum. Diagram by the author. Originally published in Tomarchio (2021, 2023b).

What becomes visible in the maps is not a direct representation of artistic activity, but rather a spatial negotiation between institutional planning and digital participation. By comparing the aggregated mobile territories derived from art-related

tweets with Singapore's officially designated cultural districts—as well as with the locations of venues supported under the *Arts Housing Scheme* and the *Framework for Art Spaces*—the mappings reveal gaps, overlaps, and extensions between the planned and lived geographies of culture. Through this integration of datasets within a GIS environment, enriched with metadata on funding type, amount, and artistic field, hybridity becomes empirically legible: it materializes where the digital territories of attention coincide with, diverge from, or exceed institutional infrastructures. These cartographies thus do not merely visualize spatial data; they trace the frictions and convergences through which the hybrid cultural landscape of Singapore is continually produced and redefined. (For a detailed explanation of the attributes assigned to each venue and the categorisation criteria, see the Methodology chapter). Three patterns emerged from this comparison

Confirmation: where digital attention reinforced existing planning decisions, as art-related clusters aligned closely with state-supported institutions and districts.

Negation: where planned venues or subsidized areas produced little or no online activity, revealing the absence of public engagement despite institutional support.

Discovery (Emergence): where significant art-related communication occurred in unlisted or commercially driven sites, signaling the spontaneous formation of new cultural zones.

What stands out most is a pattern of convergence, specifically evident in the discoveries: in Singapore, art and leisure overlap both physically and conceptually. When mapped against the city's cultural infrastructure, the densest clusters of art-related tweets appear not only around museums or planned art districts but also within commercial and entertainment zones, such as shopping malls, hotel lobbies, and nightlife streets. In these areas, social media activity tied to art equals or even exceeds that of officially designated cultural venues. Orchard Road, Clarke Quay, VivoCity, and Marina Bay—well-known

Singapore shopping malls and districts—stand out as hybrid corridors where art events, brand installations, performances, and leisure activities blend into a continuous experiential landscape. This overlap exposes a broader trend of cultural hybridization through leisure. In Singapore's model of cultural urbanism, which is dense, curated, and commercially integrated, art visibility largely relies on spaces designed for consumption and display. Social media intensifies this trend: posts about art are often embedded within sequences of entertainment, shopping, or dining. As a result, what's circulated isn't just art as a standalone object but art-leisure experiences that are photogenic, shareable, and amplified by algorithms. The maps turn this dynamic into a visual form. The contours of digital density outlining the mobile areas of art almost perfectly match the geographies of leisure. In some cases, like the ArtScience Museum within Marina Bay Sands, the alignment is intentional, a result of government-led strategies to blend culture and tourism. In other instances, such as Clarke Quay or the atria of boutique hotels, the convergence happens naturally, as the public views commercial interiors as aesthetic and performative stages. More and more, private and commercial spaces use art as a way to gain exposure, turning cultural displays into entertainment and brand differentiation. This finding shifts our understanding of hybrid art spaces. Cultural experiences no longer reside primarily within museums or galleries, but extend into **commercial infrastructures that also serve as cultural ones**. Leisure becomes the dominant logic through which hybrid territories are constituted, providing both the temporal rhythm (evening and weekend peaks) and the spatial setting (malls, bars, waterfront promenades) that sustain cultural visibility. In this sense, Singapore exemplifies a broader transformation observable in many global cities, where the infrastructures of entertainment function as new cultural public spaces. What appears in the maps is not the erosion of art, but its migration into the everyday architectures of leisure, a process that redefines where and how culture takes place in the hybrid city.

Table9.Locationsoftheobservedemergences,thenumberofart-related tweetsfrom each, and theirtemporal development. Tomarchio (2021).

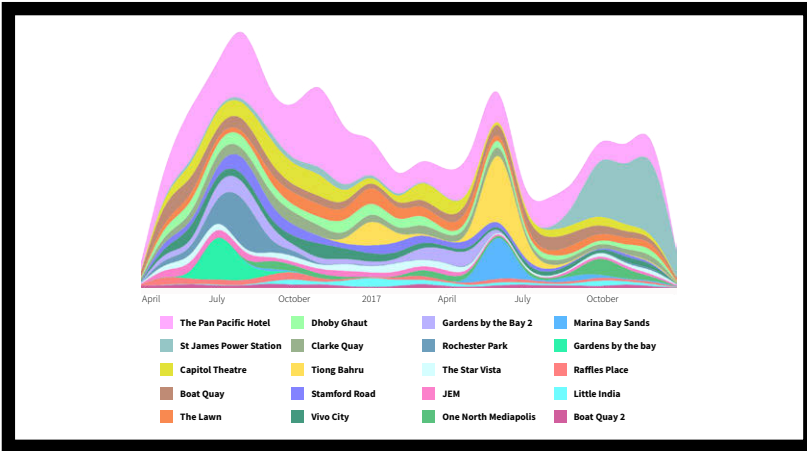
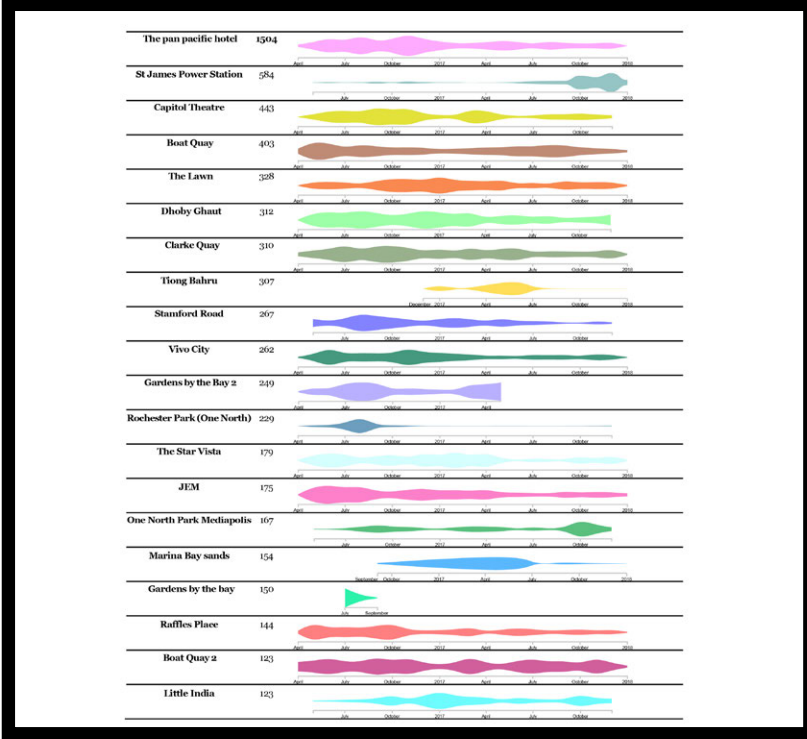


Figure 28. The image compares the distribution of art-related tweets over the year across the different Discoveries.Tomarchio (2021).

In Table 9, each line marks an emergent site, a discovery, or a location not yet officially recognized as an art venue that generates a significant number of art-related tweets. The colored waves show the activity levels over time across the 21 months of data collection. A clear pattern appears: leisure infrastructures dominate. Hotels (Pan Pacific), entertainment complexes (St James Power Station), nightlife and shopping districts (Clarke Quay, Orchard Road, VivoCity, Boat Quay) record the highest and most sustained levels of cultural visibility. Their peaks coincide with weekends and holidays, confirming that art-related communication in Singapore is rhythmically tied to consumption and recreation. Instead of museums or galleries, the Pan Pacific Hotel—a commercial hospitality site—stands out as the strongest node of art-related discourse, followed by entertainment and nightlife venues. What these sites share is not curatorial programming but hybrid exposure: the convergence of atmosphere, aesthetics, and digital shareability. The image also illustrates the temporal fragility of these territories. Many pulse into visibility only briefly—during festivals, installations, or branded events—before fading. However, collectively, they form a persistent pattern: the collapse of art and leisure into a single, algorithmically amplified field.

7.3 Hyper Hybrid: The Densification of Hybridity

The empirical results clarify what sets apart the **hyper-hybrid art places** introduced earlier in this book. Their remarkable visibility isn't just due to digital amplification; it reflects a deeper layering of hybridity across programmatic, institutional, and economic levels. Hyper-hybrid places are those where multiple forms of mixing—between art and leisure, public and private, culture and commerce—intertwine, creating both increased visibility and greater participation. Quantitatively, the dataset confirms this trend. The venues that reach *hyper* levels of online attention are those that combine multiple logics within the same space.

Table 10. Distribution of Confirmations, Negations, and Hyper among the different art venue features. Tomarchio Tomarchio (2021, 2023b).

Type of Process	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
consumption	40	60	8
education	46	54	0
mixed	54	46	4
production	13	87	0
Type of Art	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
All	50	50	9
Design	43	57	0
Society	25	75	0
Theatre/dance	41	59	9
Traditional art	24	76	6
Visual art	37	63	5
Type of Venue	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
Art services	20	80	0
Gallery	30	70	3
Multipurpose	42	58	5
Museum	59	41	16
Organisation/institution	39	61	4
Stage	55	45	15
Studio	23	77	0
Permanent/Temporary	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
Permanent	38	62	6
Temporary	42	58	5
Art venues within 500m	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
1-15	29	71	5
16-30	37	63	5
31-46	66	34	10
Heritage Building	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
FALSO	35	65	3
VERO	49	51	15
Subsidy plan	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
Plan	46	54	10
No-Plan	32	68	3

Spatial cluster	Confirmation %	Confirmation %	Confirmation %
Belonging to a spatial cluster	49	51	6
No	33	67	6
Outdoor/Indoor	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
Indoor	36	64	6
Outdoor	86	14	0
Sentiment Analysis	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
Negative	0	100	0
Neutral	36	64	0
Positive	44	56	7
Topic Diversity	Confirmation %	Negation %	% of Hyper in Confirmations
Low	33	67	17
Average low	56	44	12
Average high	37	63	4
High	9	91	0

Observing the Table, it is possible to see different trends: First, **consumption-oriented venues**—such as museums, galleries, and theaters—host almost all hyper cases. Around eight percent of confirmed venues in this category achieve exceptional visibility, far higher than production or education sites, which show nearly none.

Second, **interdisciplinary and mixed programs** strongly correlate with high presence. Venues classified as *all-arts* or *mixed* register the highest concentration of hypers, followed by theatre and dance, which naturally blend scenography, performance, and audience participation. These formats are inherently relational, blurring the distinctions between artwork, event, and atmosphere and speaking to multiple publics simultaneously. Their digital prominence stems not only from popularity but also from their ability to sustain various forms of engagement simultaneously.

By contrast, **production and educational spaces**—such as studios, residencies, and schools—remain nearly invisible online. Their activities are vital to the cultural ecosystem but unfold in professional or closed circuits, generating expertise rather than spectacle. Their absence from the hyper layer does not signal failure but reveals a structural asymmetry: **visibility follows hybridity**. The more dimensions a venue connects—cultural, social, economic—the denser its digital footprint becomes.

Insights from the Social Media Art Model (SMAM)

To explore these dynamics further, the Social Media Art Model (SMAM) identifies which features of art venues most strongly predict media production, aligning with an AI model (see Chapter 5). Three variables consistently stand out as decisive:

- + Topic diversity.** The curatorial strategy of changing or diversifying exhibitions strongly predicts media output. This aligns with platform logics privileging novelty and content refreshment, ensuring a continuous supply of shareable images.
- + Spatial clustering.** Venues located within walking distance of other art institutions generate more media content. This reflects traditional cultural planning strategies, but in the hybrid context, clustering creates algorithmic spillovers: users often tag or co-post neighboring venues, increasing the media visibility of the entire cluster.
- + Sentiment.** Posts with a strongly positive emotional tone tend to be more visible. Algorithms reward emotionally engaging content, meaning that venues capable of creating affectively charged experiences—through immersive spectacle or monumental awe—are structurally favored.

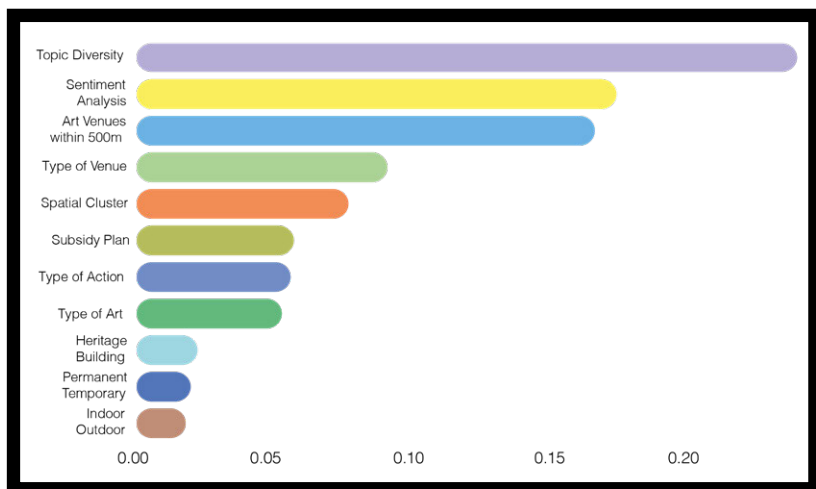


Figure 29. Importance of art venue features correlated with social media production. Tomarchio (2023, 2021b).

These findings confirm that hyper-hybridity arises from a dual mechanism. On the material side, it is fostered by curatorial and planning decisions, including immersive exhibition design, architectural spectacle, and venue clustering. On the digital side, it is accelerated by platform logics privileging novelty, diversity, and affect. When these two dimensions converge, they produce an accelerated feedback loop: immersive and clustered venues generate more shareable posts, algorithms reward this activity, visibility attracts more visitors, and the cycle reinforces itself.

Seen this way, *hyper* does not mean “better” or “bigger.” It denotes a **densification of hybridity**: an intensified condition where multiple systems of value, attention, and circulation reinforce one another. Hyper Hybrid Art Spaces are not exceptions to the cultural landscape but its most condensed nodes—points where the logics of art, commerce, and communication converge most visibly.

The SMAM results underscore this structural condition. The highest-performing hyper-hybrids operate at the intersection:

- + **Institutional hybridity**, combining public funding with private investment.
- + **Programmatic hybridity**, continually refreshing topics and formats to sustain visibility;
- + **Spatial hybridity**, arising from the proximity of venues that amplify one another through algorithmic and social spillovers;
- + **Socio-economic hybridity**, connecting diverse publics through shared forms of aesthetic consumption.

It is this **multi-dimensional hybridity**, rather than any single variable, that maintains their visibility over time. The convergence between art and leisure identified earlier reaches its most concentrated form in the hyper-hybrid. What begins as a spatial overlap—between cultural infrastructures and entertainment zones—solidifies in specific venues, where hybridity becomes the organizing principle rather than a mere side effect. In these spaces, the logics of art display, commercial consumption, and social mediation no longer coexist; they are close and actively support and enhance one another. The hyper-hybrid thus marks a turning point: it is where visibility becomes self-sustaining, where participation, branding, and emotional experience come together to create a continuous cycle of cultural attention.

7.4 Conclusion: The Ecology of Hybrid Visibility

This chapter has shown how hybridity operates. The maps of Singapore reveal that visibility is shaped more by ongoing interactions among publics, institutions, and media, crystallized in distinct spatial logics. What becomes clear is a geography defined by attention and circulation rather than

by physical boundaries alone. Hybrid (digital-physical) spaces are evident when other forms of hybridity occur: first, spatial hybridity, where territories, places, and networks overlap. Second, functional hybridity, where art intersects with leisure, commerce, and hospitality, extending cultural experience into everyday infrastructures.

These forms converge most clearly in the hyper-hybrid places. Here, hybridity is no longer a relation between distinct domains but a condition of operation in itself. The hyper-hybrid space demonstrates how visibility, participation, and mediation reinforce one another, sustaining continuous cycles of attention across physical and digital contexts. Within these sites, different dimensions of hybridity intersect: institutional hybridity, where public and private systems of value coexist; programmatic hybridity, where venues sustain attention through the continual renewal of topics and formats; spatial hybridity, where proximity and clustering amplify visibility through social and algorithmic spillovers; and socio-economic hybridity, where diverse publics converge through shared forms of cultural and affective consumption. Together, these interdependent layers form the operational infrastructure of contemporary hybrid culture—a self-reinforcing ecology in which art, communication, and leisure no longer overlap but mutually generate one another. Understanding culture through this lens means viewing it as an ecology of relations—dynamic, uneven, and shaped by multiple systems of value. The Singapore case suggests that hybrid art spaces are not simply by-products of digital mediation or cultural policy, but key sites where these systems intersect.

Hybridity, in this sense, generates further hybridity: each new intersection between art, media, and everyday life produces additional layers of entanglement. The hybrid city is therefore best understood not as a fixed structure but as a process of ongoing reconfiguration, where visibility itself becomes a central mechanism in the formation of cultural space.

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