

**“WHEN I’M DEAD, DEMOLISH IT”:
CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPROMISES IN PRESERVING VALUES AT
LEE KUAN YEW’S OXLEY ROAD HOME, SINGAPORE**

Cherie-Nicole Leo

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Abstract

Since the death of Singapore's founding prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, on March 23, 2015, the fate of his house at 38 Oxley Road remains in question. In spite of its association to this seminal political leader and the fact that historic meetings that led to Singapore's independence from British rule in 1959 were held in its basement dining room, heritage authorities and the Singaporean public are faced with a dilemma because Lee Kuan Yew had, on multiple occasions, expressed his wish to have the more-than-a-century-old colonial bungalow demolished after his passing—and he had included this wish in his last will and testament.

This thesis uses the ongoing debate surrounding 38 Oxley Road as a case study. It aims to address how decision-makers in the heritage conservation field might more effectively negotiate the multiplicity of competing values ascribed to heritage sites in working toward a future common good. Through a discourse analysis, the thesis examines how a values-based approach to heritage conservation can serve as a basis for exploring more robust tools for decision-making through the adoption of a more future-looking, scenario-focused framework. In this way, heritage decision-makers are challenged to look beyond some of the field's traditional paradigms, as reflective of the broad shift from more expert-driven materials-based approaches to more participatory and contextually aware values-based approaches. In line with a values-based approach that posits that the goal of heritage conservation is to preserve significance and not material for its own sake, this thesis shows how an assessment and prioritization of the broad range of values ascribed to a heritage site can expand the range of potential outcomes that may effectively transfer those values to future generations. Acknowledging and understanding this spectrum of possible outcomes and evaluating their trade-offs can help to enhance the field's capacity to creatively work out contradictions and reach compromises in its decisions. In doing so, heritage decision-makers can more effectively engage in dialogue with related planning and policy fields as they work toward shaping the collective future.

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1 Introduction

I further declare that it is my wish, and the wish of my late wife, KWA GEOK CHOO, that our house at 38 Oxley Road, Singapore 238629 (“the House”) be demolished immediately after my death or, if my daughter, Wei Ling, would prefer to continue living in the original house, immediately after she moves out of the House. I would ask each of my children to ensure our wishes with respect to the demolition of the House be carried out. If our children are unable to demolish the House as a result of any changes in the law, rules or regulations binding them, it is my wish that the House never be opened to others except my children, their families and descendants. My view on this has been made public before and remains unchanged. My statement of wishes in this paragraph 7 may be publicly disclosed notwithstanding that the rest of my Will is private.¹

Located in the city center on the fringe of Singapore’s premier commercial-retail district, the more-than-a-century-old colonial bungalow at 38 Oxley Road has become the focus of a current controversy and debate surrounding heritage conservation in the island city-state of Singapore. (Image 1A-1G).² 38 Oxley Road was the home of Singapore’s founding prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, the authoritative and pragmatic statesman who led the country through its tumultuous years to independence from the British in 1959 and the split with Malaysia in 1965. Under his more-than-three-decade-long rule as prime minister from 1959 to 1990, the small Southeast Asian island city-state was transformed from colonial backwater to thriving metropolis. Lee Kuan Yew moved into the bungalow soon after the Second World War, which he described as a “big, rambling house with five bedrooms, and three others at the back originally used as servants’ quarters.”³ Upon his official marriage to former Raffles Institution and University of Cambridge classmate, Kwa Geok Choo in 1950—they had been secretly married three years prior—Kwa moved in and it became the Lees’ marital home.⁴ Here, they raised their three children, Lee Wei Ling, Lee Hsien Yang, and current prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, who experienced his first taste of politics within its walls.⁵ (Image 1H-1I). Beyond its association to the Lee family, the house and grounds were graced by many figures who played a role in the birth and history of this young nation. Its basement dining room served as a meeting place for weekly political discussions, culminating in the one in 1954 that founded the People’s Action Party, the dominant political party that has governed the country since 1959. (Image 1J-1K).

Thus, the 38 Oxley Road house is rich in historic association, closely tied to the birth of the Singaporean nation and to its founding father. Taking this into consideration along with a whole range of other historic, architectural, economic, social, symbolic, and political values ascribed to it by various stakeholders, it would seem that its preservation for posterity would be an easy and uncontested

¹ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement on Calls to Honour Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on 13 April 2015,” *Prime Minister’s Office* (Singapore), Apr. 13, 2015.

² Images are in the appendix.

³ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 90-91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵ “History Comes to an End at Oxley Road,” *Business Times* (Singapore), Apr. 13, 2015; Chew Hui Min, “Mr. Lee Kuan Yew Wanted His House to be Demolished: Five Things About 38, Oxley Road,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 13, 2015.

decision. However, the fate of the bungalow remains in quandary since the death of Lee Kuan Yew on March 23, 2015. Why? Its late owner, the revered founding father, had clearly expressed on a number of occasions, both public and private, the desire to have it demolished after his death, and had included this wish in his last will and testament.

The reactions to this revelation are diverse. Bound by legal and filial duty, the executors and trustees of the will, Lee Kuan Yew's daughter and younger son, Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang, have expressed their intent to follow their father's wish to have the house demolished, and have appealed to the Singaporean public to respect that decision. Recusing himself from any government decision on the house, Lee Hsien Loong has echoed his siblings' statement in his personal capacity. The government authorities who possess the decision-making power, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and National Heritage Board (NHB) are in the process of reviewing the case. Although the house is private property, owned now by Lee Kuan Yew's children, the NHB has the power to recommend buildings that meet the criteria for significance to be gazetted as national monuments by the Minister of Culture, Community and Youth.⁶ Under the Planning Act, any owner who wishes to demolish, redevelop, or make additions and alterations to their property must get approval from the URA, which also has the power to recommend an area for conservation to the Minister of National Development.⁷ Other government officials and heritage experts, including the non-profit Singapore Heritage Society, have weighed in. Most interesting perhaps, is the outpouring of reactions from an increasingly vocal Singaporean public, who have taken to the press and online forums to express an array of views on the subject. While an overwhelmingly local national phenomenon, the case has also not escaped some international attention, owing to the stature and influence of Lee Kuan Yew in the regional and global political arena. These constitute the stakeholders involved in the case whose varied values and interests account for its complexity.

Far from being an open-and-shut case, then, 38 Oxley Road is emblematic of the difficult task facing heritage decision-makers, where there exists a multifaceted group of stakeholders who present competing, conflicting, or contradictory values, interests and positions. The need to take all these into account in decision-making in the heritage field has only been recognized and put into practice in more recent years, with the rise of a values-based approach to heritage conservation. This values-based approach is rooted in the premise that the primary aim of heritage conservation is to safeguard the cultural significance of a site, in other words, the values which are ascribed to the site by stakeholders.⁸ Hence, decisions regarding heritage are "complex negotiations to which diverse stakeholders bring their own values."⁹ These values are attributed rather than intrinsic, multiple, mutable, incommensurable,

⁶ Melody Zaccheus, "Law Allows Government to Preserve Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's House, Say Experts," *Straits Times*, Apr. 15, 2015.

⁷ Ler Seng Ann and Jean Wee, "Plans for Oxley Road House to Consider Mr. Lee's Wishes," *Urban Redevelopment Authority and National Heritage Board*, Apr. 30, 2015; Terence Chong and Yeo Kang Shua, "Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's House a Chance for Due Process," *Straits Times*, Apr. 24, 2015.

⁸ Erica Avrami, Randall Mason and Marta de la Torre, eds., *Values and Heritage Conservation: Research Report*. (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2000), 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

and often in conflict.¹⁰ The complexity of this task of negotiating values has encouraged heritage professionals to expand their toolbox to adopt and adapt methods of consensus building and conflict resolution as a means of achieving effective and inclusive management of heritage sites.¹¹

The contested case of 38 Oxley Road presents a compelling research opportunity to address how decision-makers in the heritage conservation field might more effectively negotiate the multiplicity of competing values ascribed to heritage sites in working toward a future common good. Through a discourse analysis, this thesis uses the 38 Oxley Road case study to examine how a values-based approach to heritage conservation can serve as a basis for exploring more robust tools for decision-making through the adoption of a more future-looking, scenario-focused framework. In this way, heritage decision-makers are challenged to look beyond some of the field's traditional paradigms, as reflective of the broad shift from more expert-driven materials-based approaches to more participatory and contextually aware values-based approaches. In line with a values-based approach that posits that the goal of heritage conservation is to preserve significance and not material for its own sake, this thesis shows how an assessment and prioritization of the broad range of values ascribed to a heritage site can expand the range of potential outcomes that may effectively transfer those values to future generations. Acknowledging and understanding this spectrum of possible outcomes and evaluating their trade-offs can help to enhance the field's capacity to creatively work out contradictions and reach compromises in its decisions. In doing so, heritage decision-makers can more effectively engage in dialogue with related planning and policy fields as they work toward shaping the collective future.

¹⁰ Marta de la Torre, "Values and Heritage Conservation," *Heritage and Society* 60, no. 2 (2013): 159-161.

¹¹ David, Stacie Myers, Nicole Smith and Gail Ostergren, Eds. *Consensus Building, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution for Heritage Place Management: Proceedings of a Workshop Organized by the Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles California, 1-3 December 2009*. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016.

2 Research Aims and Scope

This thesis seeks to further research on the role of values in heritage conservation by exploring how values-based decision-making may more effectively work toward serving a future collective good. The aim of this thesis is not to conduct a formal planning process to reach a decision on what to do with 38 Oxley Road, but rather it seeks to inform *how* such a planning process may be conducted in order to enhance values-based decision-making processes and their outcomes.

According to a values-based approach to heritage conservation, “the ultimate aim of conservation is not to conserve material for its own sake but, rather, to maintain (and shape) the values embodied by the heritage.”¹² This approach seeks to be more participatory and responsive to the social, political, economic, and cultural context in which management decisions occur. In this way, the methods employed by such approaches, such as stakeholder analysis and cultural significance assessment, are concerned with engaging a greater range of stakeholders in decision-making processes. Focused on building common ground by providing the means for negotiating competing interests and values among stakeholders, a values-based approach increases the potential for inclusivity and diversity in decision-making processes. However, in doing so, a values-based approach risks becoming too preoccupied with the present, losing sight of longer-term consequences that the decisions taken may have on future generations.

This thesis challenges the assumption that preserving a heritage site’s character defining features or significant physical attributes will always successfully ensure the passing on of these values to future generations. Instead, by proposing a scenario analysis as an extension of values-based heritage conservation, this thesis seeks to better understand how values can be leveraged to strengthen the decision-making in a field that has to look as much to the future as the present when seeking a common good.

The thesis uses the ongoing 38 Oxley Road case as a case study to answer the following overarching research questions:

- How can the strategic-planning method of scenario analysis build upon and contribute to a values-based decision-making in heritage conservation?
- How can heritage conservation more effectively respond to the cultural, social, political, and economic context in which it is situated? How can heritage conservation better plan for the future?
- How can heritage conservation more creatively and effectively negotiate between competing stakeholders, and their interests, positions, and values that they ascribe to heritage sites?

¹² Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 7.

Stakeholders are defined as individuals or groups who have an interest in, or value, a heritage site.¹³ They may have multiple values or interests in relation to the site.¹⁴ Interests are “stakeholders’ underlying needs or wants that they hoped to have fulfilled with respect to the site.”¹⁵ Positions are “statements of particular outcomes that are favored,” for example, turning the house into a museum to serve as a living history lesson or demolishing it to save maintenance costs. Thus, while there is only one specific outcome that may fulfill a position, interests and values are more flexible in that they can be fulfilled by a range of different outcomes.¹⁶ Values are perceived qualities or characteristics of a site that make it important to stakeholders.¹⁷ According to a values-based approach, heritage values are attributed or ascribed by stakeholders rather than intrinsic.¹⁸ They are also mutable, multiple, incommensurable, and in conflict.¹⁹ The combination of the multiple values that are ascribed to a site constitute its cultural significance.²⁰

Methodology

The thesis employs methods from values-based heritage conservation and scenario planning to conduct an analysis of the 38 Oxley Road case.

Chapter 3 outlines the emergence of a values-based approach in heritage conservation theory and practice and its key principles through a review of existing literature and policy to set a framework for the subsequent analysis.

Chapter 4 conducts a stakeholder analysis to identify who are the key players involved in the 38 Oxley Road case and what are their interests and positions. This is done through discourse analysis using existing data from secondary sources, rather than through direct dialogue with stakeholders. The stakeholder analysis serves as the first step in laying bare the nature of heritage decisions as “complex negotiations to which diverse stakeholders bring their own values.”²¹ The stakeholder analysis is also used as an organizational framework for outlining the development of the various perspectives that have shaped the case’s unfolding over time.

¹³ David Myers, Stacie Nicole Smith and May Shaer, *A Didactic Case Study of Jarash Archaeological Site, Jordan: Stakeholders and Heritage Values in Site Management* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Conservation Institute and Amman, Jordan: Department of Antiquities of Jordan, 2010). 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁷ Randall Mason, “Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices,” *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Values and Heritage Conservation*, ed. Marta de la Torre (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 7; Myers, Smith and Shaer, *A Didactic Case Study of Jarash Archaeological Site, Jordan*, 1-2.

¹⁸ de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 159-161.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 7-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

Chapter 5 employs the central method of values-based approaches to heritage conservation, a cultural significance assessment, to identify what values the stakeholders ascribe to 38 Oxley Road and which ones should be prioritized and why.

Chapter 6 introduces the strategic-planning method of scenario analysis as a means of understanding how and how effectively the prioritized values from the cultural significance assessment can be transferred to the future through different potential decisional outcomes, which are represented as interpretive and physical scenarios. The interpretive scenarios constitute groupings of values into key narratives that are deemed important stories to pass on to future generations. These value narratives are spatialized in physical scenarios which are spatial outcomes for the site. Through an evaluation of these physical scenarios for the future of the site, the analysis reveals what tradeoffs are incurred in prioritizing certain values over others.

In this thesis, “house” refers to the bungalow itself, including its interior furnishings unless otherwise specified. Land refers to the land that the house sits on. “Site,” used interchangeably with “property” and “38 Oxley Road” refers to the house including the land. “Setting” is the location and context of the property.

Assumptions and Limitations

Since the case is ongoing and a decision has not been made, the thesis approaches the subject open-endedly, without assuming an eventual outcome for the property. In addition, the thesis does not begin on the premise of advocating or prescribing a particular outcome, but is instead an analytical endeavor which is primarily concerned with enhancing the understanding of how values may be better integrated into the heritage decision-making toolbox. Thus, a broad range of potential outcomes based on the stakeholder analysis and cultural significance assessment may be equally presented and evaluated.

In line with a values-based approach to heritage conservation, the analysis seeks a broad representation of all the values that stakeholders have ascribed to 38 Oxley Road, including nontraditional values that have often been ignored in heritage decision-making under traditional paradigms.²² Only after all values are considered can a prioritization of these take place. While acknowledging that some stakeholders have a greater say in the decision-making process than others, a values-based approach nevertheless posits that this realization does not negate the validity of those less powerful stakeholders; in fact, it becomes the heritage decision-maker’s professional and ethical responsibility to especially pay attention to the voices of those less powerful stakeholders.

²² de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 161; Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter*, rev. 2013, Article 5.1; Andrew McClelland, Deborah Peel, Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes and Ian Montgomery. “A Values-Based Approach to Heritage Planning: Raising Awareness of the Dark Side of Destruction and Conservation.” *Town Planning Review* 84, no. 5 (2013): 583-601.

The thesis also recognizes that there may be parallel inquiries taking place within the Singaporean government agencies who have the power to make the decision and are currently reviewing the case. They may or may not be using methods similar to those employed in this thesis in order to arrive at an actual decision for the property. The reticence of Singaporean governmental and civil society representatives to provide information on this case for its sensitive and ongoing nature has resulted in the need to rely on existing secondary sources to obtain information on the case and the varying perspectives on it. The data sources for this thesis include books, newspaper articles, appended comments, online forums, polls, petitions, parliamentary statements, and social media posts. Owing to the lack of access to primary sources such as self-conducted interviews, direct quotations from these sources are included as essential elements that capture the voices of stakeholders. These enable the characterization of their positions on the case, and the interests and values which underlie these. Understandably, they do not necessarily represent all the stakeholders involved, but rather those whose perspectives have been articulated and made available on publicly accessible platforms. Thus, certain generalizations and inferences have had to be made. Nevertheless, there is sufficient diversity even within these voices to conduct a robust and interesting analysis.

3 Values in Heritage Conservation and the Emergence of a Values-Based Approach

A values-based approach to heritage conservation is based on the principle that “the ultimate aim of conservation is not to conserve material for its own sake but, rather, to maintain (and shape) the values embodied by the heritage.”²³ This approach has emerged in recent years as the favored approach to address the increasing complexity of conservation practice brought about by the “expansion of [the concept of] heritage, the multiplicity of values, and the variety of actors involved in conservation decisions.”²⁴ It represents an alternative to more traditional paradigms of heritage conservation, which tend toward more material-focused and expert-driven characterization of heritage and significance. In contrast, a values-based approach recognizes that heritage conservation is not simply a technical or scientific endeavor but a cultural practice that is fundamentally embedded within a social, economic, and political context.²⁵ Therefore cultural heritage itself “is a social construction; which is to say that it results from social processes specific to time and place.”²⁶ This concept of heritage thus challenges more traditional notions of universality, permanence, and objectivity, recognizing instead cultural specificity, change, and subjectivity or inter-subjectivity to use the words of Munoz Vinas, which arises from consensus among stakeholders through a negotiative conservation process.²⁷

Some of the scholarship on values-based approaches to heritage conservation has been spearheaded by the Getty Conservation Institute, which published a comprehensive research report on *Values and Heritage Conservation* in 2000.²⁸ On the policy side, the Burra Charter (1999, latest rev., 2013), the main policy document in Australia has become a model for values-based practice. It states the aim of conservation as retaining cultural significance, defined as “aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.”²⁹ Some of the key principles of values-based heritage conservation are upheld in this charter, including the recognition of the “co-existence” of multiple cultural values especially if they conflict with each other and participation of relevant stakeholders.

The recognition of the role that values play in heritage conservation is not new, going at least as far back to Riegl’s 1903 essay, “The Modern Cult of Monuments,” in which he outlines historical, age, intentional commemorative, use, and newness values.³⁰ Thus, values have had a long tradition in heritage conservation, but a key difference is that they were seen as inherent in the heritage site or

²³ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 7.

²⁴ de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 157, 161.

²⁵ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 6; Mason, “Assessing Values,” 5.

²⁶ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 6.

²⁷ Salvador Munoz Vinas, “Contemporary Theory of Conservation,” *Reviews in Conservation* 3 (2000): 25-34; de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 155-166.

²⁸ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*.

²⁹ Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter*.

³⁰ Alois Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origins,” *Oppositions* 25 (1982).

object which could only be discerned by experts, rather than ascribed by different stakeholders as per a values-based approach to heritage conservation. Traditional paradigms, as mandated by such documents as the Athens (1939) and Venice (1964) Charters, were primarily focused on historical and architectural values that were deemed scientific and objectively derived under expert scrutiny.³¹ With the rise of the values-based approach and its recognition of non-expert stakeholders and the social subjectivity of value determinations, other values, including social, economic, and political values, have become important components in evaluating significance.³² A values-based approach thus aims to respond more effectively to changing times, as Randall Mason describes, “The idea of a values-centered theory of preservation as an alternative to traditional, fabric-centered thinking has several sources. To some extent, values- or memory-centered theory has always been part of preservation—the idea of memorializing and shaping culture lies at the roots of preservation. But recently, the social complexities of globalization, migration, culture wars, economic shifts, armed conflict, and so on have provoked many of us associated with the preservation field to question the traditional fabric-centered approach and reconnect preservation with the pressing social issues of the day.”³³

Marta de la Torre identifies the five key characteristics of heritage values, that they are attributed, not intrinsic, mutable, multiple, incommensurable, and in conflict.³⁴ If heritage values are seen as ascribed rather than inherent, then the contextual and mutable nature of heritage is brought to light, whereupon the values ascribed to a heritage object are situated in a particular cultural or societal context and can be expected to evolve as that context evolves over time. As Randall Mason writes, “the essential nature of significance...is that as an expression of cultural meaning, it must be expected to change, involve multivalence and contention, and be contingent on time, place, and other factors.”³⁵ He continues, “Indeed, newer thinking about preservation recognizes that significance is made, not found. It is socially constructed and situational, and it recognizes that appraisals of significance may have as much to do with the people and society making them as with any actual site.”³⁶

This recognition reveals the mutability of heritage values, meaning that they change over time as the social context in which they are embedded evolve. In terms of incommensurability, all values are treated as having equal weight and that they cannot be measured against each other. As in Article 5.1 of the Burra Charter states, “Conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.”³⁷ With all these attributed, mutable, multiple, and incommensurable values ascribed to a heritage site, the potential for these to conflict with each other is highly likely.

³¹ *Athens Charter, 1931; International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter), 1964.*

³² Randall Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation: A Constructive Critique of Significance,” *Places* 16, no. 1 (2004): 67.

³³ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁴ de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 159-161.

³⁵ Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation,” 65.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁷ Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter*, rev. 2013.

Distinguishing between what he calls “commemorative” values and “present-day” values, Riegl was also one of the first to recognize that the values of heritage may be at odds with each other. Indeed, a values-based approach identifies conflict as a central characteristic of heritage values and decision-making, especially with the recognition of a greater range of values and stakeholders. In a values-based approach, this kind of conflict is not viewed in a negative way, but rather viewed as important in order to bring stakeholders to the table, revealing a broader range of values, many of which might otherwise be ignored, as under more traditional heritage paradigms that are material-focused and expert-dominated. It is through the recognition of conflict that negotiation and compromise can take place which might strengthen the outcome and public recognition of the decision.

Rooted in a holistic consideration of all the values that these stakeholders ascribe to the object or site, a values-based approach is centered on participation and negotiation. In this approach, greater participation of non-experts in heritage decisions is advocated as essential to fully understand why sites are significant, and why they are or should be preserved (or not). Randall Mason warns of the danger when significance evaluations “stress the assessments of experts and ignore alternative and popular views; and when they fail to acknowledge change over time,” suggesting that the “corrective to this is greater transparency and participation in the decision-making and significance-defining processes—particularly, participation by non-experts and other outsider stakeholders.”³⁸ Andrew McClelland et al. thus note that “...a values-based approach is held to be more democratic and comprehensive as it facilitates a greater input from a broader range of stakeholders. Traditional heritage management approaches, by contrast are deemed to be the preserve of small groups of experts that are more concerned with the conservation of physical fabric, and issues related to question of material authenticity and integrity. A values-based approach is asserted to reflect the multivalent nature of heritage and the contingent manner with which it is judged by different people and organisations over time.”³⁹

The move toward greater participation or consideration of a wider range of stakeholders and values, especially of minorities or marginalized communities, has led to the rise of some rights-based approaches and ethics-centered approaches to heritage conservation as under the umbrella of critical heritage studies, which emerge from this values-based framework.⁴⁰ Another result has been the repositioning the expert role in heritage conservation to fit changing understandings of heritage- from the “iconic, the special, the outstanding” to the “everyday, the ordinary, the commonplace,”—especially through the concept of shared expertise with local communities.⁴¹ The challenge lies in that the recognition of the existence of a multivocal and multifaceted past, with an increasingly complex range, nature, and diversity of stakeholders, presents the difficulty of finding practical solutions for dealing

³⁸ Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation,” 66-67.

³⁹ McClelland et al., “A Values-Based Approach,” 593-594.

⁴⁰ See for instance: Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006); George S. Smith, Phyllis Mauch Messenger and Hilary A. Soderland, Eds., *Heritage Values in Contemporary Society* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010); Tracy Ireland and John Schofield, Eds., *The Ethics of Cultural Heritage* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2015).

⁴¹ John Schofield, ed., *Who Needs Experts? Counter-Mapping Cultural Heritage* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2014), Xv.

with competing claims to that past.⁴² Thus, heritage experts are called to take on additional responsibilities as negotiators and facilitators of stakeholder dialogue, in conjunction with their traditional expertise in history and architecture, relying on greater interdisciplinary cooperation or training, such as in methods of consensus-building and conflict-resolution.⁴³

The question of the practicality of such values-based approaches to heritage conservation is thus a pertinent one, especially since, despite gaining wider recognition, these approaches have not been employed or achieved their full potential in many contexts. The Getty Conservation Institute report in 2000 outlines and accounts for this issue, stating that a values-driven “assessment of cultural significance is often *not* undertaken when conservation interventions are planned, or when it is, it is frequently limited to the one-time composition of a statement of significance by an archaeologist, historian, or other expert. Why is it that assessment of cultural significance is not more meaningfully integrated in conservation practice? As mentioned previously, with a body of information and a research agenda focused primarily on issues of physical condition, conservation education rarely involves training in how to assess complex meanings and values, whom to involve in such an assessment, and how to negotiate the decision making that follows.”⁴⁴

Clearly, in many places, heritage professionals are still not equipped with the training and tools or are reluctant to take on the challenges of greater participation in decision-making. Furthermore, much of the existing research and scholarship on values-based decision-making has operated on a theoretical level, with little information on how they play out in addressing specific cases and assisting decision-making in practice. When case studies are brought into values-based studies, they tend to be analyzed retrospectively after a decision has already made for the conservation or management of a heritage site.⁴⁵ This thesis’ analysis of the ongoing case of 38 Oxley Road thus allows for a different understanding of the role that values play in heritage decision-making before an outcome is known or prescribed.

⁴² Sven Grabow, Daniel Hull and Emma Waterton, *Which Past, Whose Future?: Treatments of the Past at the Start of the 21st Century: An International Perspective: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of York, 20-21 May 2005* (Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2007).

⁴³ Myers, Smith and Shaer, *A Didactic Case Study of Jarash Archaeological Site, Jordan*.

⁴⁴ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 9.

⁴⁵ See for example, Marta de la Torre, Margaret G. H. McLean, Randall Mason and David Myers, *Heritage Values in Site Management: Four Case Studies* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2005).

4 Case History and Stakeholder Analysis

This section outlines the history of the 38 Oxley Road case and identifies the key players involved, –the stakeholders. Rather than recount a chronology of events, the history of the 38 Oxley Road dilemma is told through the lens of stakeholder perspectives, introducing some of their key interests and positions. As Myers, Smith, and Shaer write, “Positions are usually stated in terms of the one outcome sought rather than the underlying need that would be served by that specific outcome...it is important to go beyond stakeholders’ positions to articulate the actual interests and values underlying them. It is important to identify these interests because they help to determine the core needs and values held by stakeholders,” which may lead to more flexibility and determining appropriate outcomes to fulfill those interests and values.⁴⁶ Using this method of organization more effectively reveals how the development of this controversy is largely driven by the revelation and positioning over time of contested values and interests brought to the fore by these different stakeholders who display conflicting points of view as well as differing capacities with regard to decision-making power.

To begin, it is necessary to first outline how 38 Oxley Road became the property of Lee Kuan Yew. It is this association with Singapore’s founding prime minister that sits at the center of the controversy, given that much of the house’s cultural significance derives from that association, yet it is his will that calls for demolition. Lee Kuan Yew moved into the more-than-a-century-old colonial bungalow at the end of the Second World War Japanese occupation, and lived there until his death in 2015. He and his mother had acquired the property at a pre-war rental rate from the Custodian of Enemy Property office, which was a “fairly sizeable sum” of 80 Straits dollars per month.⁴⁷ The house was built by a Jewish merchant, with five bedrooms and an additional three for servants at the back, and its adjacent twin bungalow, No. 40, has since been demolished. No. 38 Oxley Road was located in what was then a middle-class area that had been vacated by Europeans and taken over by Japanese civilians in 1942. Now situated on the fringe of Singapore’s prime commercial-retail district of Orchard Road, the bungalow with its characteristic white walls and red roof can scarcely be seen because of a high wall flanked by sentry posts that were occupied, while Lee Kuan Yew was living, by members of Singapore’s elite military forces known as the Gurkhas.⁴⁸ (Image 4A).

The historic moment when the stories of this colonial bungalow and the nation’s founding father became intertwined is documented in Lee Kuan Yew’s first book of memoirs, *The Singapore Story*. Lee Kuan Yew writes,

With the Japanese out of the way, many houses became vacant, and my mother and I looked for a suitable place to move into, for we had to leave the China Building, and the Victoria Street shophouse was unsuitable. In Oxley Road, a middle-class area where Europeans had vacated their homes in 1942 and Japanese civilians had taken them over, we came across two identical houses- Numbers 38 and 40- built by a Jewish merchant,

⁴⁶ Myers, Smith and Shaer, *A Didactic Case Study of Jarash Archaeological Site, Jordan*, 40.

⁴⁷ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 90-91.

⁴⁸ Joseph Jones, “Should Lee Kuan Yew’s Home Be Demolished?” *iProperty*, Feb. 7, 2011.

who named them Castor and Pollux. They were empty except for some heavy furniture, and we decided to make a bid for the tenancy of Number 38. It was a big, rambling house with five bedrooms, and three others at the back originally used as servants' quarters. I saw George Gaw, a Java-born Chinese friend of the family who was in charge at the office of the Custodian of Enemy Property, and he was happy to let us have it at its pre-war rental. The rent had now to be paid in Straits dollars- some \$80 a month, a fairly sizeable sum – but we decided to take it.⁴⁹

Lee Kuan Yew continued to stay in the house for over seventy years even after becoming prime minister, despite the fact that there existed an official residence for the prime minister at Sri Temasek, a house located within the grounds of the Istana, the presidential palace and offices. Formerly the residence of the Chief Secretary in British colonial times, Sri Temasek has in fact never been used by any of the three Singaporean prime ministers so far. For all the time he resided at Oxley Road, there was only a brief period in 1965 following Singapore's independence that he and his family moved to the Istana due to security concerns. 38 Oxley Road was thus the center of not only Lee Kuan Yew's early political life but his family life as well.

After the official marriage of Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo in 1950, who had secretly married at Stratford-on-Avon three years prior, 38 Oxley Road became the couple's marital home.⁵⁰ Lee Kuan Yew wrote that Kwa's transition to life there was challenging, as "she had now to fit into the Lee family, consisting not only of my grandmother, father, mother, sister, and three brothers, but several relatives from Indonesia who were still boarding with us" to supplement his mother's income.⁵¹ The couple chose to raise their children on the grounds of 38 Oxley Road rather than at the Istana to avoid giving them "a false sense of life."⁵² Thus, Lee Hsien Loong, Lee Wei Ling, and Lee Hsien Yang grew up at 38 Oxley Road, learning Malay and Chinese and celebrating birthdays on the veranda, while their father worked on his computer in his bedroom late into the night.⁵³ It was on this site that Lee Hsien Loong, following in his father's footsteps to become Singapore's third prime minister, got his first taste of politics. In his eulogy at his father's state funeral, Lee Hsien Loong spoke of his early exposure to political life on the occasions when the house doubled as election headquarters, noting, "Of course, growing up as my father's son could not but mean being exposed to politics very early. I remember as a little boy... (I) was excited by the hubbub at Oxley Road whenever elections happened and our home became the election office."⁵⁴ *Men in White* describes some of this buzz, where during the lead-up to the 1955 election, postmen, engaged by their union leaders and now founding members of the fledgling People's Action Party, sat on the verandah addressing "Vote for PAP" election bills, and the variety of cars "streaming in and out of Lee's house" used to shuttle voters to polling stations on election day.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 90-91.

⁵⁰ Chew, "Lee Kuan Yew Wanted."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 135-137.

⁵² Robin Chan and Sumiko Tan, "Devoted Husband and Caring Father," *Straits Times*, Mar. 24, 2015.

⁵³ Judith Tan, "Pictures: The Oxley Road House," *New Paper*, Apr. 14, 2015.

⁵⁴ "History Comes to an End."

⁵⁵ Sonny Yap, Richard Lim and Weng Kam Leong, *Men in White: The Untold Story of Singapore's Ruling Political Party* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings, 2009), 69, 72.

The house continued to serve faithfully as a center of family life, playing host to Sunday lunches and Chinese New Year dinners, even after the children had grown up and the sons had moved away. Lee's grandson, Li Shengwu recalling in the eulogy, "Sunday lunch with Ye Ye [Grandfather] was an institution for our family. His voice and his hearty laugh would carry to the children's table, talking about matters of state, recounting meetings with foreign leaders whose names we neither recognised nor remembered..."⁵⁶ By this time, Lee Kuan Yew had created a study out of his son's old bedroom, where he "often sat with his wife...and read, classical music playing in the background."⁵⁷ Further adjustments had to be made after his wife suffered from a series of strokes, including the installation of a modern shower; the family had hitherto used earthenware jars for bathing.⁵⁸ In addition, in order to accommodate the required presence of nurses "round the clock," Lee Kuan Yew moved into his adjacent study room.⁵⁹

Aside from these changes, much of the house remained intact and unaltered, with many old pieces of furniture from when Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo first moved in. However, its fate is now in flux because of Lee Kuan Yew's will, which dictates his wish to demolish the house after his death. His wish, which is upheld by his three children, stands in direct conflict with those who instead seek to preserve the house because of its cultural significance—the historic, architectural, economic, social, symbolic, and political values—that they ascribe to the site. And yet, the picture is not so simple as a preservation-versus-demolition debate, but rather, there are values which intersect or contradict one another, and where motivations behind certain positions are diverse not only between but even within stakeholder groups such as the heritage expert community, the non-expert Singaporean public, and even the international community. All these considerations make the decision on what to do with 38 Oxley Road especially challenging for the government agencies charged with the evaluation of its significance, the National Heritage Board (NHB) and Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), who themselves have a stake in the case.

As these stakeholders aired their views through interviews, books, newspaper articles, appended comments, online forums, polls, petitions, parliamentary statements, and social media posts, the unfolding of the case as a dialogue of competing values and interests was made clear. Figure 4.1 illustrates the relative decision-making power of the stakeholders and their positions regarding whether the 38 Oxley Road house should be preserved or demolished. The stakeholders who have the most power or influence in the decision are first, the NHB and URA, who are the decision-making agencies, then Lee Kuan Yew and his wife and their children, who are the former and current owners of the house. The next tier of less powerful stakeholders includes the Singapore Tourism Board, the People's Action Party and government officials, and the heritage expert community. Their views may be taken into account through consultation. The least powerful and the largest stakeholder group is the non-expert

⁵⁶ Chew, "Lee Kuan Yew Wanted."

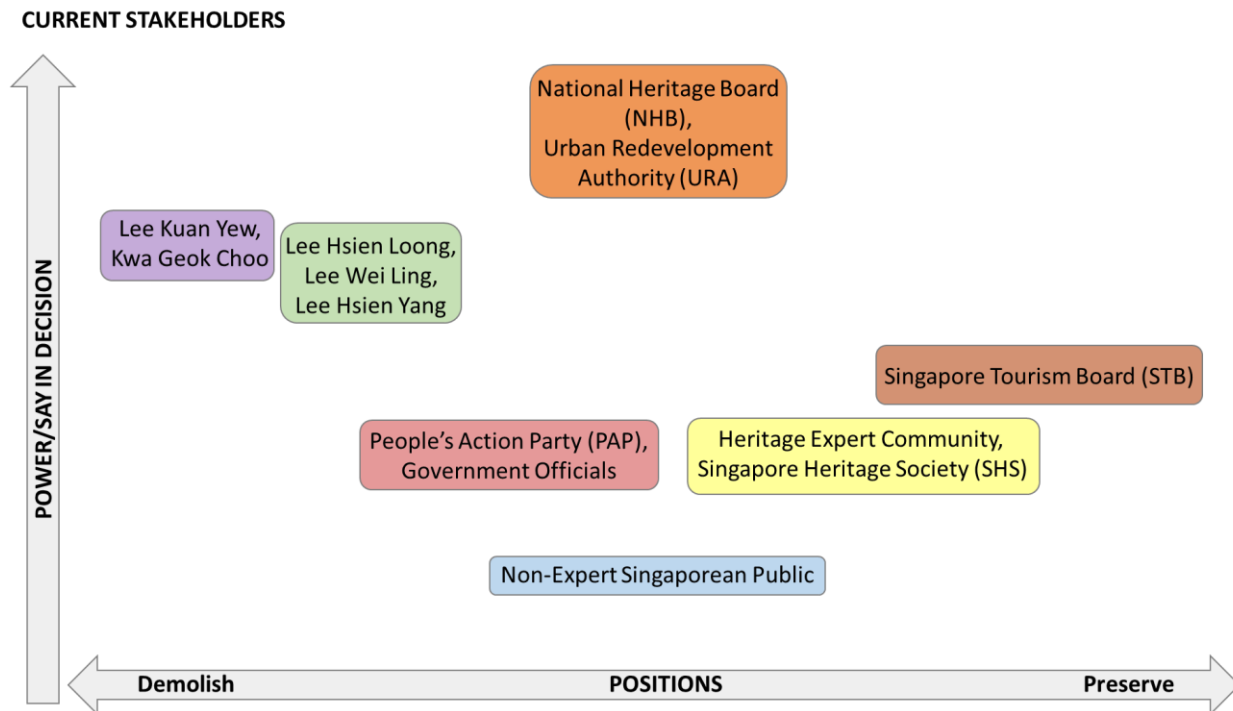
⁵⁷ Judith Tan, "A Mighty Man's Modest Home," *New Paper*, Mar. 26, 2015.

⁵⁸ Gladys Chung. "Singapore History on Display," *Straits Times*, Sep. 22, 2015.

⁵⁹ Han Fook Kwang, Zuraidah Ibrahim, Mui Hoong Chua, Lydia Lim, Ignatius Low, Rachel Lin and Robin Chan, *Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going* (Singapore: Straits Times Press, 2011), 403.

Singaporean public, whose views may only indirectly impact the decision if taken into consideration at all since there is no official public solicitation effort regarding the case. (Figure 4.1). A color-coded timeline summarizing the key events in the development of the 38 Oxley Road case and the stakeholders involved is presented at the end of this chapter. (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1



Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo

Lee Kuan Yew, the founding prime minister of Singapore, is a primary stakeholder in the case because he is the late owner of the property in question, and it was his will that caused this controversy in the first place. The relevant government authorities have indicated that they intend to “take into consideration very seriously the wishes of the late Mr Lee regarding the future plans for the house and site...”⁶⁰ Furthermore, much of the significance of the house derives precisely from its association with him, and the respect and admiration from the Singaporean public for their founding prime minister plays a central role in determining the positions they take on the case.

Lee Kuan Yew served as prime minister of Singapore from 1959 to 1990. He continued in the Public Service as Senior Mentor from 1990 to 2004 and Minister Mentor from 2004 to 2011, and was a

⁶⁰ Ler and Wee, “Plans”; “Lee Kuan Yew’s Home Unlikely to be Redeveloped ‘In a Way that Diminishes Historical Significance’: URA, NHB,” *Channel News Asia*, Apr. 29, 2015; “Mr. Lee’s Wishes for Oxley Home to be Seriously Considered: Gov’t,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 30, 2015.

Member of Parliament for the Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency (GRC) or electoral district from 1959 until his death on March 23, 2015. Leading the country to self-governance from the British in 1959, through the split with Malaysia and the creation of modern independent Singapore in 1965, and lifting the country from a poor colonial fishing village and port to one of the richest countries in the world has earned Lee Kuan Yew much reverence within and outside the small island city-state, which houses a population of approximately 5.5 million, with a GDP per capita that has grown from around 500 USD to more than 55,000 USD from 1965 to 2015.⁶¹ However, his pragmatic approach for rapid development, tight control over the press, limits on personal freedoms, and lack of tolerance of political dissent, are not without criticism, although more so from outsiders rather than Singaporeans, who turned up in masses to pay tribute to their founding father at his lying in state following his death.⁶² In the three-day period, 442,297 people visited the Singapore Parliament to pay their respects to the “architect” of the young nation, with an additional 1 million visiting eighteen community tribute centers.⁶³ The impact that Lee Kuan Yew had on Singapore is encapsulated in Neil Swidey’s article for the *Boston Globe*, in which he asserts, “it’s impossible to understand the history and character of this remarkable, outlier nation without first understanding Lee. Their stories are indivisible.”⁶⁴

Kwa Geok Choo was Lee Kuan Yew’s steadfast partner through it all, running their household and their law firm, Lee & Lee.⁶⁵ The couple were classmates at Raffles Institution in Singapore and then at Cambridge University. They secretly married in Stratford-on-Avon in 1947, and after their official marriage in 1950, she moved in to 38 Oxley Road.⁶⁶ According to their elder son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Kwa strongly agreed with her husband’s wish to demolish the house, noting in his parliamentary address that his mother “was most distressed at the thought of people coming through her private spaces after she and my father had passed away, to see how they had lived.”⁶⁷ In fact, her death in October, 2010 seemed to have influenced Lee Kuan Yew’s first letter to the Cabinet to put that wish on record, and Lee Kuan Yew’s will, dated December 17, 2013, makes clear that she shared in the wish to have the house be demolished or otherwise not be opened to the public. The portion of the will regarding the house was made disclosable to the public and released by Lee Hsien Yang and Lee Wei Ling, executors and trustees, on April 12, 2015, approximately three weeks after Lee Kuan Yew’s death on March 23. It reads:

I further declare that it is my wish, and the wish of my late wife, KWA GEOK CHOO, that our house at 38 Oxley Road, Singapore 238629 (“the House”) be demolished immediately

⁶¹ Singapore Department of Statistics. “Latest Data,” *Statistics Singapore*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest-data#16>; Joshua Kurlantzick, “How Singapore’s People’s Action Party Continued Its 50-Year Reign,” *The National* (UAE), Sep. 24, 2015.

⁶² “Lee Kuan Yew: Huge Queue to View Founder Lying in State,” *BBC News*, Mar. 25, 2015; Valerie Koh and Kelly Ng. “Peaceful Wind Down to Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s Lying in State.” *Today*, Mar. 28, 2016; Neil Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built, and the House He Wants Destroyed,” *Boston Globe*, Jun. 20, 2015.

⁶³ Koh and Ng. “Peaceful Wind Down.”

⁶⁴ Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

⁶⁵ “‘Without Her, I Would Be a Different Man’: Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s Love Affair.” *Channel News Asia*, Mar. 24, 2015.

⁶⁶ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 90-91.

⁶⁷ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement.”

after my death or, if my daughter, Wei Ling, would prefer to continue living in the original house, immediately after she moves out of the House. I would ask each of my children to ensure our wishes with respect to the demolition of the House be carried out. If our children are unable to demolish the House as a result of any changes in the law, rules or regulations binding them, it is my wish that the House never be opened to others except my children, their families and descendants. My view on this has been made public before and remains unchanged. My statement of wishes in this paragraph 7 may be publicly disclosed notwithstanding that the rest of my Will is private.⁶⁸

Adamancy about maintaining the house's privacy and shielding their private life from the public is thus one of the motivations behind Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo's wish to demolish the house, or failing that, to restrict its access solely to family members. In addition to privacy concerns, he clearly provides an economic argument to support demolition, while more implicitly, anxieties about monumentalization can be inferred from his own words and from those close to him.

Reasoning demolition based on economic values and costs features strongly in one of a series of interviews conducted by *Straits Times* reporters for a book and accompanying DVD set entitled *Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going*. Published on January, 21, 2011, this publication appears to be the first instance in which Lee Kuan Yew's desire for his Oxley Road home to be torn down after his death was made public.⁶⁹ The topic of the house was raised in an interview session surrounding the theme of Lee Kuan Yew's consumption habits, in which a reporter commented on Lee Kuan Yew's known frugality, referring to the old jacket the latter was wearing. After ascertaining that he had owned that jacket for "nearly two decades or 15 years," the focus transitioned to Lee Kuan Yew's lifestyle at his 38 Oxley Road bungalow, as it had been understood that the family had "not done much to renovate and to upgrade it."⁷⁰ Lee Kuan Yew's response was that he had told the Cabinet to demolish it after his death.

He starts his reasoning by referring to other homes of famous figures he had seen, specifically to the houses of Nehru and Shakespeare, saying, "They become a shambles after a while. People trudge through." This may indicate an economic argument related to the cost of upkeep, which is made more explicit later on, or it may also point to a general fear or aversion to decay. The latter is partially related to Lee Kuan Yew's distrust in the intended permanence of physical monuments and their meaning or effect, providing the impetus for exploring questions surrounding age versus newness values, and for commenting on the evolution of cultural significance as understood under a values-based approach to heritage conservation, which also troubles the notion of permanence. Lee Kuan Yew's anti-monument impulse also goes hand-in-hand with pragmatism as well as his distaste and careful avoidance of engendering a personality cult around him. In his parliamentary statement on calls to honor his father, delivered on April 13, 2015, Lee Hsien Loong emphasized that "Mr Lee made it very clear throughout his

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 351-352. An audio clip on this portion of the interview was published on the *Straits Times* Soundcloud webpage in April, 2015, as interest in the topic was revived following Lee Kuan Yew's death in March. It can be heard at: "Mr Lee Kuan Yew on Demolishing His Oxley Home," *Straits Times Soundcloud*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <https://soundcloud.com/straitstimes/mr-lee-kuan-yew-on-demolishing-his-oxley-home>.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 351.

life that he did not need and did not want any monument. It was not monuments but ideals that were his chief concern, the ideals upon which he built Singapore: multi-racialism, equality, meritocracy, integrity, and the rule of law.” He continues,

Mr Lee was very careful when it came to lending his name to institutions and awards. When he consented, it was for causes that he was passionate about, and where using his name served a greater purpose...Mr Lee was very careful never to allow a personality cult to grow around him, much less to encourage one himself. He was exceptional in this respect among post-colonial leaders and founders of countries. They were larger-than-life figures, and often developed personality cults around themselves, especially if they lasted long in office. Hence, you will not find portraits or busts of Mr Lee Kuan Yew all over Singapore. He did have his portrait painted and his bust made in his lifetime, but he did not allow them to be displayed publicly and I know of only two exceptions to this...⁷¹

A more direct reference to help comprehend Lee Kuan Yew’s anti-monumentalizing impulse can be seen in his reference to Shelley’s sonnet, “Ozymandias.”⁷² In response to a former Member of Parliament’s suggestion to name a monument or public structure after him, Lee Kuan Yew said, “Remember Ozymandias,” the Greek name of the Egyptian pharaoh, Rameses II, speaks of the impermanence of self-aggrandizing monuments and statues, serving as a “sombre reminder of the futility of attempting to preserve one’s legacy in physical objects that cannot withstand corruption and decay.”⁷³ Lee Kuan Yew’s daughter, Lee Wei Ling, in particular, has been very vocal in criticizing any sort of memorializing or monumentalizing activity in honor of her father, whether within or outside the country. On April 19, 2015, referring to plans in villages in Tamil Nadu, India, to build a statue, construct a museum, and devote a memorial hall to honor Lee Kuan Yew, she chastises, “If Papa were not cremated, he would be turning in his grave in shock and distress.”⁷⁴ She explains that naming structures after her father or preserving his house “would most certainly go against what he wanted and what he stood for in life, such as service to Singapore and Singaporeans, because that was the right thing to do, without any ulterior motive, least of all self-promotion.”⁷⁵ More recently, she spoke out against commemorative events in Singapore that took place for the first anniversary of his passing, avowing that Lee Kuan Yew was “dead set against a personality cult and any hint of cronyism,” and “would have

⁷¹ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement.”

⁷² Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias,” *Miscellaneous and Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: W. Benbow, 1826), 100. Full text of poem: I met a traveller from an antique land / Who said: “Two vast and trunkless legs of stone / Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand, / Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, / Tell that its sculptor well those passions read / Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, / The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed; / And on the pedestal, these words appear: / “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!” / Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away.

⁷³ Lee Wei Ling, “Dr. Lee Wei Ling on Honouring the Late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew: “Honour the Spirit of What Papa Stood For,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 19, 2015; Carlton Tan, “One Last Wish: What Lee Kuan Yew Wants, Lee Kuan Yew Gets,” *Asian Correspondent*, Apr. 14, 2015.

⁷⁴ Lee Wei Ling, “Honour the Spirit.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

“cringed at the hero-worship” that was taking place.⁷⁶ In fact, Lee Wei Ling, sees the whole memorialization movement as counter to the unsentimental Singaporean spirit, which she characterizes as “not prone to expressive, unnatural displays of emotion,” and is frankly disturbed by any such displays, as perhaps illustrated by her own reticence of displaying her grief in public over her father’s passing.⁷⁷

The danger of 38 Oxley Road becoming a memorial, monument, or shrine to him would thus be counter to all that Lee Kuan Yew stood for and paradoxically become an act of dishonor rather than one of respect. In addition it would also focus too much attention and adulation on a single hero-figure, essentially a central element of the cult of personality phenomenon, while in contrast, Lee Kuan Yew was insistent that he never acted alone, but as the “first among equals” in a team of founding fathers, whom together should be honored in whatever memorial the nation would erect.⁷⁸ The house, so specifically tied to or even symbolic of the single figure of Lee Kuan Yew, would thus not be so appropriate for the purpose of a Founders’ Memorial, a project currently in the works, facilitated by a steering committee, founded on June 30, 2015, that answers to the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.⁷⁹

In his second letter to the Cabinet written soon after his retirement from the Cabinet in 2011, Lee Kuan Yew elaborated on his fear that the house would fall into “shambles,” stipulating that it “should not be kept as a kind of relic,” as he noticed that the preserved homes of other famous figures had inevitably “become shabby” because they were “kept frozen in time...as a monument with people tramping in and out.”⁸⁰ A third letter to the Cabinet after a special Cabinet meeting was called by his son in December 2011, where Lee Kuan Yew was invited to discuss the matter of 38 Oxley Road, the wish to demolish the house having caused quite a stir among the public, provides further insight into Lee Kuan Yew’s pragmatic and practical mindset that prescribes active use of buildings, which excludes monumental function or museum use, as per the examples of Nehru’s and Shakespeare’s houses he cites. He writes, “Cabinet members were unanimous that 38 Oxley Road should not be demolished as I wanted. I have reflected on this and decided that if 38 Oxley Road is to be preserved, it needs to have its foundations reinforced and the whole building refurbished. It must then be let out for people to live in. An empty building will soon decline and decay.”⁸¹

Turning the house into a shrine, a monument or museum, would thus not only violate his strong stance against personality cults, but it would also go against his pragmatic ideals. As his younger son,

⁷⁶ Kelly Ng, “Commemoration or Glorification? Question Raised Over Mr Lee’s Death Anniversary,” *Today*, Mar. 28, 2016; *Lee Wei Ling’s Facebook Page*, accessed Apr. 2, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/weiling.lee.980/posts/214054645616853>.

⁷⁷ *Lee Wei Ling’s Facebook Page*, accessed Apr. 2, 2016.

⁷⁸ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement.”

⁷⁹ “Committee Formed to Engage Singaporeans in Developing Concept for Founders’ Memorial,” *Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth* (Singapore), Jun. 30, 2015; “Founders’ Memorial,” *Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <https://www.foundersmemorial.sg/>.

⁸⁰ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Lee Hsien Yang, stressed, “I think for my father, he’s a pragmatic person and to him, it’s not about bricks and mortar and hanging on to belongings. It’s about his values and his work and his work was Singapore...Lee Kuan Yew did not see his legacy in bricks and mortar, but living on in the values and principles that make our nation work...His life’s work lives on in you and me, in every Singaporean and in Singapore.”⁸² Similarly, Lee Wei Ling reiterates the need for Singaporeans to move forward, writing that “to fuss over Papa’s personal objects or portrait defeats the purpose that he had strived for so diligently in life, which was the welfare of Singaporeans.”⁸³ Lee Kuan Yew, too, though he did not say so explicitly, may have also been against enshrinement in order to avoid too much reliance on his legacy, in order that the country and future government may move forward without him. However, his long and largely unchallenged reign in government, up to the day he died, and with his son now in power, does not seem to indicate a leader who is ready to relinquish power and trust in his successors, not even after death. Some of his most quoted words come from his National Day Rally speech of 1988, where two years before he stepped down from the prime minister’s office, he stated, “Even from my sickbed, even if you are going to lower me into the grave and I feel that something is wrong, I will get up. Those who believe that after I have left the government as prime minister, I will go into a permanent retirement really should have their heads examined.”⁸⁴ His statement is no better exemplified than with regard to the case of 38 Oxley Road, where he has as much influence over the politics of its preservation or demolition as if he were alive.

Equally telling may be his wariness of revisionism, that the interpretation of a historic figure’s legacy would change over the years, especially in the case of a powerful leader whose successes are numerous and who is revered by many today, but whose already methods and legacy in the eyes of some, already seen as controversial to a few, may become widely viewed in a different light with the passage of time and changing attitudes of society. In *Hard Truths*, he states, “I’m no longer in active politics. It’s irrelevant to me what young Singaporeans think of me. What they think of me after I’m dead and gone in one generation will be determined by researchers who do PhDs on me, right? So there will be a lot of revisionism. As people revised Stalin, Brezhnev and one day now Yeltsin, and later on Putin. I’ve lived long enough to know that you may be idealized in life and reviled after you’re dead.”⁸⁵ It is thus not only the slow natural decay of his house that Lee Kuan Yew feared, but also its potential violent and willful destruction or vandalism as his rule and legacy is reinterpreted in the future, perhaps with a change in regime. Relatedly, some stakeholders from the Singaporean public have speculated that a fear of enemies, present or future, may also account for Lee Kuan Yew’s resistance to preserving the house. One online commenter wrote, “...I can understand why the late Mr Lee did not want anyone other than family enter the house. Besides privacy reasons, he might also be concerned that vindictive individuals/long time enemies would enter the house and do something drastic, dangerous or disrespectful to vent their anger. All it takes is to read the comments in Yahoo!, especially during the GE

⁸² Alice Chia and Olivia Siong, “Historical Documents, Lee Kuan Yew’s Belongings on Display at National Museum,” *Channel News Asia*, Sep. 22, 2015; Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh, “Mr. Lee’s Values Not Rooted in Devotion to Objects,” *Straits Times*, Sep. 22, 2015.

⁸³ Lee Wei Ling, “Honour the Spirit”; *Lee Wei Ling’s Facebook Page*.

⁸⁴ “Lee Kuan Yew’s Most Memorable Quotes,” *CNBC*, Mar. 22, 2015.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Han et al., *Hard Truths*.

[General Election], to get a feel of that simmering anger. It doesn't really matter to me what they do with the property."⁸⁶ And another wrote, "Great man think very far, There is no guarantee our founding father will be perpetually respected, so why leave something for crazy one to vent their angle. [sic]"⁸⁷

The rest of Lee Kuan Yew's explanation for wanting to have the house demolished, as articulated to the interviewing team, follows an explicitly pragmatic and economic argument, related to the cost of preserving and maintaining the house and the depreciation of neighborhood land values. He asserts, "Because of my house the neighboring houses cannot build high. Now demolish my house and change the planning rules, go up, the land value will go up."⁸⁸ The area is currently zoned two-story mixed-landed and planned as a low-rise residential precinct.⁸⁹ There are claims that the presence of Lee's bungalow is somewhat responsible for this restriction on high-rise development in a prime real estate area located in the heart of the city, just off the vibrant commercial-retail street of Orchard Road. In response to protests from the interviewing team, "But isn't that part of Singapore's history?" Lee Kuan Yew dismissed the idea, interjecting, "No, no, no. You know the cost of preserving it? It's an old house built over a hundred years ago. No foundation. The cost of maintaining it, damp comes up the wall because there's no foundation. So the piling in the neighborhood has made cracks in my walls. But fortunately the pillars are sound."⁹⁰ These economic arguments are not surprising coming from this pragmatically minded leader, as deputy political editor of the *Straits Times* admits, "In some ways, the directive to demolish it would raise property values for all who lived in the area."⁹¹

Dissatisfied, however, the interviewing team pressed him further, asking, "By your comment then, you don't place great store on preserving old buildings? It's like the Old National Library, no architectural significance but when it was torn down I think a lot of people still bemoan its loss today."⁹² The National Library was a popular late-1950s red-brick library building located at Stamford Road that was demolished for the construction of the Fort Canning Tunnel in 2004 to much public outcry.⁹³ Lee Kuan Yew's response to the interviewers did not concern the value of preserving old buildings, but rather, not losing focus on 38 Oxley Road, his response left no doubt about who could claim ownership memory, and meaning in the house—that it was a private family matter, in contrast to the public status of the National Library in its community role. He stated slowly and firmly, "I don't think my daughter or

⁸⁶ P.N. Balji, "Comment: Let the Hard Truth About Lee Kuan Yew's House Prevail," *Yahoo Singapore News*, Dec. 7, 2015.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

⁸⁹ Ler and Wee, "Plans."

⁹⁰ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 351-352.

⁹¹ Fiona Chan, "Straddling Fine Line Between Public and Private Wishes: In Seeking to Honour Mr Lee's Wishes, Loss of Heritage Will Be Significant," *Straits Times*, Apr. 14, 2015.

⁹² Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

⁹³ Lily Kong, *Conserving the Past, Creating the Future*. (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2011), 189-197. The Fort Canning Tunnel was constructed to redirect traffic away from the Marina to Orchard Road to keep the "more peaceful ambience" of the city's museum precinct.

my wife or I, who lived in it, or my sons who grew up in it will bemoan its loss. They have old photos to remind them of the past.”⁹⁴

Here he introduces the idea of surrogates, or compensatory objects that may sufficiently represent or replace the house, thereby rendering the latter’s preservation less dire or altogether unnecessary. As Lee Hsien Loong said in an interview, “If you go on what Mr Lee has said publicly: ‘Whatever you want to do after I’m gone, take pictures, if you like, then demolish the building.’ That’s on the record. His will follows that. We have to go in accordance with his wishes. The building has been documented, photographs have been taken and published, especially the dining room where the important meetings took place...”⁹⁵ The theme of the surrogate gets picked up and leveraged forcefully by Lee Kuan Yew’s children, as will be seen in the following section. However, while the photos Lee Kuan Yew talks about are meant for the family’s remembrance, the children acknowledge that there is public interest in the house and propose surrogates that might placate that stakeholder group as well.

Lee Hsien Loong, Lee Wei Ling, Lee Hsien Yang

The three children of Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo are the current owners of 38 Oxley Road, following Lee Kuan Yew’s passing. His elder son, Lee Hsien Loong, is the third and current prime minister of Singapore. He assumed office in 2004, after serving as the country’s deputy prime minister under Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong from Lee Kuan Yew’s 1990 to 2004. Lee Kuan Yew’s daughter, Lee Wei Ling is a doctor and former director of the National Neuroscience Institute, and his younger son, Lee Hsien Yang, is currently the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS).

Lee Kuan Yew had appointed Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang as executors and trustees of his will, thus endowing them with a legal duty in addition to their filial duty to ensure the demolition of the house is carried out. An opposite circumstance regarding double duty has occurred for Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, where having recused himself from any decision regarding the house, he is now able to state his views in unofficial capacity, separate from his obligation to the government and the Singaporean people. All three siblings have thus now put forwarded a united front in the “hope the government will allow the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s wish for the demolition of the house to be honoured and that all Singaporeans will support their cause,”⁹⁶ as announced on Lee Hsien Loong’s Facebook page on December 4, 2015. To support their stance, the three have invoked the contradiction between preserving the house as a sign of respect and remembrance and demolishing the house as being consistent with his will and his principles and stated motivations for that wish, seeing the latter as the appropriate course of action, as discussed in the previous section. Thus, their involvement in the case on the public front primarily revolves around reiterating Lee Kuan Yew’s values and thoughts on the case that he had expressed either publicly or privately within the family, and proposing how these may be fulfilled through demolition. They also advocate for the creation or use of surrogates for the house, in

⁹⁴ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

⁹⁵ “Memorial to Founders Must be ‘Full of Meaning’, Says PM Lee,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 14, 2015.

⁹⁶ “Lee Kuan Yew’s Family to Donate the Value of Oxley Rd House to Charity,” *Channel News Asia*, Dec. 4, 2015; “Family to Donate Value of Late Singaporean PM Lee Kuan Yew’s Residence of Charity,” *Global Post*, Dec. 4, 2015.

the hope that these will serve as effective substitutes for the preservation and museumization of the house or that they might divert attention away from not only the house itself but the decision-making process or outcome regarding it. As the property owners and the executors and trustees of Lee Kuan Yew's will in the case of Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang, the siblings do have a measure of control over the fate of the house, not to mention their ability to sway public opinion as prominent public figures.

Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang issued a statement on April 12, 2015, which represents the first time that the public was made aware that Lee Kuan Yew had included a section in his will dealing with 38 Oxley Road. Their statement emphasized that Lee Kuan Yew had repeated this wish publicly and privately to his family on a number of occasions, showing how adamant he was on having it be carried out. They urge Singaporeans to respect their father's wish and their legal duty as executors and trustees and "moral obligation" as children to "ensure that his Lee Kuan Yew Will is administered strictly as stated."⁹⁷ They conclude, "Our father has given his life and service to the people of Singapore. We hope that the people of Singapore will honour and respect his stated wish in his last will and testament."⁹⁸ Their statement was likely issued in response to expressed interest in preserving the house soon after Lee Kuan Yew's passing, among the general public and some heritage experts and government officials. Indeed, their statement appears to have had an immediate effect on public opinion, influencing the closure of an online petition that had been started by Benedict Yuen on March 31, requesting gazetting the house as a national monument and converting it into a public museum.⁹⁹

Lee Hsien Loong, followed up on the subject in his parliamentary address on April 13, on "Calls to Honour Mr. Lee Kuan Yew." The Prime Minister quoted Lee Kuan Yew's will and earlier letters to the Cabinet and stated that "Mr. Lee's position on 38 Oxley Road was unwavering over the years, and fully consistent with his lifelong values. We should respect his wishes, as well as those of Mrs. Lee."¹⁰⁰ Those values, as discussed in the previous section, include Lee Kuan Yew's prioritization of ideals over monuments, his careful avoidance of a personality cult, and his insistence that he never acted alone, but as the "first among equals" in a team of founding fathers, that should be honored in whatever memorial the nation would erect. He then noted that Lee Wei Ling would continue to live in the house, so "there is no immediate issue of demolition of the house, and no need for the Government to make any decision now. If and when Dr Lee Wei Ling no longer lives in the house, Mr Lee has stated his wishes as to what then should be done. At that point, speaking as a son, I would like to see these wishes carried out. However, it will be up to the Government of the day to consider the matter."¹⁰¹ Here, he clearly acknowledges that the ultimate decision on the house's fate lies with the government, despite 38 Oxley Road being their private property. And in spite of his statement, some members of the public remain

⁹⁷ "Lee Hsien Yang, Wei Ling Urge Singaporeans to Respect Lee Kuan Yew's Wishes on Oxley Home," *Channel News Asia*, Apr. 12, 2015; "Mr. Lee Kuan Yew Wanted Oxley Road Home Demolished as Stated in Will; Children Ask Public to Respect Wishes," *Straits Times*, Apr. 12, 2015.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Benedict Yuen, "38, Oxley Road Should Be Officially Gazetted a National Heritage Site," *Change.org*, Mar. 31-Apr. 12, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Lee Hsien Loong, "Parliamentary Statement."

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

dissatisfied with or resistant to recognizing the government having the final say in what they view as a strictly private family matter. Equally important is the clause about Lee Wei Ling's decision to stay in the house, thus delaying the decision. Given that Lee Wei Ling is so vehemently opposed to preserving the house, her continued residence serves as an effective time-buying strategy, whether intended for this purpose or otherwise, allowing time for the case to diminish in public attention and emotion, and for them and other proponents of demolition to persuade the public and government to support their position. Nevertheless, the relevant government authorities are currently looking into the evaluation of the property, without the pressure of having to make a decision until Lee Wei Ling vacates.¹⁰²

It is also in this parliamentary statement that the first potential surrogate for the house is proposed, that being the creation of a founders' memorial. The creation of a founders' memorial would substitute the use of 38 Oxley Road for such a purpose as has been suggested by other stakeholders, notably from the Singaporean general public. In addition, the strikingly participatory approach for the creation of such a memorial by providing the public a platform to share their opinions may take the attention and pressure off 38 Oxley Road and re-emphasize the private nature of the home. While Lee Kuan Yew was strongly against personal hero-worship, he was not averse to the creation of a memorial that would honor the contributions of the team of founding figures and most importantly, the values upon which they built and governed the country. As Lee Hsien Loong said in the parliamentary statement, "One idea that has been suggested is to have a memorial for all of the founding fathers, perhaps coupled with an exhibition gallery to honour their legacy and educate future generations. Indeed, Mr Lee himself had thought that there was value in such a memorial. I agree that this concept merits further consideration. A founder's memorial need not be a grand structure, but it must stand for our ideals, our values, our hopes and aspirations. It must belong to all Singaporeans and mean something significant to us all. It should be a place where we and future generations can remember a key period in our history, reflect on the ideals of our founding fathers, and pledge to continue their work of nation building."¹⁰³ It is interesting that for several stakeholders, particularly from the Singaporean public, 38 Oxley Road seems such an obviously appropriate site for this memorializing purpose, but it has been made clear that the two issues will be dealt with separately and through different processes.

Lee Hsien Loong announced in his parliamentary statement the establishment of A Founders' Memorial Committee, which was eventually founded on June 30, 2015.¹⁰⁴ During a four-month public consultation period from October 2015 to January 2016, the fifteen-member committee held eight dialogue sessions with over 400 people, collected over 200 online responses, and conducted a door-to-door survey of 1300 people. Through these efforts, the Founders' Memorial Committee has since shortlisted two sites for the founders' memorial, the historic Fort Canning Park and the newer Bay East Garden, part of Gardens by the Bay, one of Singapore's latest icons, and in conjunction with the Urban Redevelopment Authority has proposed these to the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, which has in turn asked the committee to solicit public input on the two options before it makes a final

¹⁰² Lee and Wee, "Plans."

¹⁰³ Lee Hsien Loong, "Parliamentary Statement."

¹⁰⁴ "Committee Formed"; "Founders' Memorial."

decision and to ensure that Singaporeans continue to be “involved along the entire process- from the design to the construction of the Memorial.”¹⁰⁵

No similar public solicitation efforts have been made or proposed at an official level in the case of 38 Oxley Road. The founders’ memorial case thus serves as a surrogate for 38 Oxley Road case in two ways, through both process and outcome. It draws a clear line between the founders’ memorial case where public opinion is welcome and the 38 Oxley Road case where it is not. The raising of the founders’ memorial issue at the same time as that of 38 Oxley Road strategically diverts attention away from the latter, and provides the public an arena in which their voices are heard and matter, so they are less likely to complain about not having a say in the Oxley Road house, or even pay it much mind. Most obviously, the need to keep the house as a memorial to the Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues will be negated by the presence of a memorial created for that purpose. Crucially, the *Straits Times* indicated that “heritage experts have noted that as the memorial is not dedicated to any one individual but to ideals and values, the authorities are not constrained by physical locations such as a house or an office.”¹⁰⁶ Certainly, the 38 Oxley Road house’s strong connection with the singular individual of Lee Kuan Yew may stand in the way of the broader conception of whom should be memorialized in this instance, which according to suggestions from the public may include not only Lee Kuan Yew and his team, but “pre-independence, political leaders, unionists, philanthropists, educators, community leaders and businessmen,” as well.¹⁰⁷ The head of the Founders’ Memorial Committee, Lee Tzu Yang, is confident that the memorial would be built within the next ten years.¹⁰⁸ As Singapore ICOMOS president, Dr. Kevin Tan, indicated, “By the time the Lee family makes a decision on the house, a Founders’ Memorial would have been built. This would allow Singaporeans to commemorate Mr Lee and the first-generation leaders without the Oxley premises in focus.”¹⁰⁹

In lieu of preserving the house and making it into a museum, the donation of furniture and other artefacts from 38 Oxley Road to the National Heritage Board for public exhibition would serve as another surrogate. In June, 2015, Lee Hsien Yang and Lee Wei Ling donated items from the Lee Kuan Yew estate to the NHB through a Deed of Gift.¹¹⁰ Lee Hsien Yang acknowledged the sentimental value that the objects held for him and Wei Ling, who was provided with furniture replicas or replacements by the museum as she still continues to inhabit the bungalow.¹¹¹ As Lee Kuan Yew wished to have the house demolished and the children were firm that his will be followed, they believed that the donation

¹⁰⁵ Lim Yan Liang, “Govt Asks Founders’ Memorial Committee to Consult, Get Views on 2 Possible Sites for Memorial,” *Straits Times*, Mar. 17, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., “Most Singaporeans Want Memorial to Recognise Founders, Values: Poll,” *Straits Times*, Mar. 15, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Louisa Tang, “Eight in 10 People in Favour of Founders’ Memorial, Survey Shows,” *Today*, Mar. 14, 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Lim Yan Liang, “Govt Asks.”

¹⁰⁹ Zaccheus, “Law Allows.”

¹¹⁰ Rachel Au-Young, “Mr Lee’s Personal Items Donated to NHB: Artefacts will Enhance Upcoming Museum Gallery on Founding Fathers,” *Straits Times*, Jun. 12, 2015; “Mr. Lee’s Furniture, Personal Effects Gifted to the People of Singapore,” *Today*, Jun. 11, 2015.

¹¹¹ Siau Ming En. “From Revolvers to Secret Documents—A Glimpse into S’pore’s Early Years.” *Straits Times*, Sep. 22, 2015.

and planned exhibition of the artefacts would give the public a chance to get a glimpse of some of the historically important items in the house, without the need of actually visiting the house itself.¹¹²

These items were put on display as part of the *We Built A Nation* exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore, which opened on September 22, 2015, and would run for a year. (Image 4B). The exhibit was inspired by the huge turnout at the Lee Kuan Yew memorial exhibition that was put up after his death, which was extended twice due to the large crowds that it was extended twice. The aim of this exhibit, however, was to focus not solely on Lee Kuan Yew but also contributions of others who were instrumental figures in the first decade of the country's independence from 1965 to 1975. Yet, a significant portion of the exhibition was dedicated to the founding Prime Minister, constituting "the largest and most thorough showcase of the late Mr Lee's personal artefacts since he died," with "about half the 115 artefacts on show [being] from his estate."¹¹³ Among the artefacts is the basement dining table around which the founding figures of the People's Action Party gathered and the seminal political discussions took place. (Image 4C and 4D). Also on display is Lee Kuan Yew's writing desk that formerly been used for tuition lessons for the children, about which Lee Hsien Loong recollected, "I can still picture him in my mind's eye, regularly working into the wee hours of the morning at this desk- reading, writing, thinking."¹¹⁴ (Image 4E and 4F). In addition, the frugal and simple lifestyle the family led in the over-a-century-old bungalow was showcased by such items as the earthenware jars the family had used for bathing before the installation of a shower upon Kwa Geok Choo's illness.¹¹⁵ (Image 4G). A scale model of the house was also put on display. (Image 4H-4J). As Melody Zaccheus writes in the *Straits Times*, the model "might be the only way for the public to have a close look at the historic space," in light of Lee Kuan Yew's will.¹¹⁶ In accordance with the wishes of the Lee Kuan Yew estate, the portion of the will which states his wish to have the house demolished, appears frequently on signage throughout the galleries.¹¹⁷ (Image 4K and 4L).

The same stipulation on signage was put forward by Lee Hsien Yang with regard to yet another surrogate, this time a series of paintings of the house by renowned Singaporean artist, Ong Kim Seng. He was given Lee Hsien Yang's permission to borrow and exhibit one of the paintings, "house in the morning sun," as part of his solo show at a local gallery, starting on March 20, 2016, around the time of the one-year anniversary of Lee Kuan Yew's death, but only on the condition that the extract of the will specifying the founding figure's wish to have the house demolished was displayed alongside it.¹¹⁸ The painting was commissioned by Lee Hsien Yang and completed in September, 2015.¹¹⁹ In covering this

¹¹² Ibid., "Mr. Lee's Furniture"; Chia and Siong, "Historical Documents."

¹¹³ Melody Zaccheus, "Artefacts from Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's Oxley Road Home Now on Show at New Exhibition," *Straits Times*, Sep. 21, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Gladys Chung, "Singapore History on Display," *Straits Times*, Sep. 22, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Zaccheus, "Artefacts."

¹¹⁷ National Museum of Singapore, "A Special Exhibition on Singapore's Founding Leaders Opens at the National Museum of Singapore," press release, Sep. 21, 2015.

¹¹⁸ Leong Weng Kam, "Paintings of Late Mr Lee Kuan Yew's Oxley Road House in Art Show," *Straits Times*, Mar. 13, 2016.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

announcement, the *Straits Times* clearly illustrates how the paintings may act as surrogates for the house, glibly beginning the story with the line, “Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew’s house will be ‘preserved’- at least in watercolour- by top Singapore artist Ong Kim Seng,” while noting that the government had not yet made a decision on the fate of the actual house.¹²⁰ (Image 4M and 4N).

In addition to these surrogates and diversions, the siblings bolster their argument by showing the very direct social benefits that can arise from demolition of 38 Oxley Road. In the same Facebook post in which Lee Hsien Loong announced that he has “recused himself from all government decisions involving 38 Oxley Road, and, in his personal capacity, would also like to see his wish honoured...,” it is noted that he and his brother, Lee Hsien Yang, to honor their late father, would each donate half the value of the Oxley Road house to the eight charities mentioned in Lee Kuan Yew’s obituary notice. These represent a diverse collection, namely the Education Fund, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC-U) Care Fund, Garden City Fund, Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), Mendaki, Association of Muslim Professionals, Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA), and the Eurasian Association.¹²¹ In this way, the potential social value of preserving the house as an educational museum for teaching history and inculcating cultural values such as frugality is substituted by another equally enticing social value. While the announcement of the brothers’ charitable act has been favorably received by most Singaporeans, there are those who are not convinced. According to a poll conducted by market research firm, YouGov, 61% of their Singapore online registrants felt that “it is great for the Lee family to do this charity act,” while 17% thought that “the Lee family should donate all the proceeds to charity.”¹²² A further 10% do not care, 7% feel the donation is unnecessary, and 5% “don’t know anything about the matter.”¹²³ It seems that for some cynics who question why Lee Hsien Loong and Lee Hsien Yang did not choose to donate all the proceeds to charity and that Lee Wei Ling was not involved, there is always the question of the economic benefit the siblings might accrue from the demolition of the house and sale of the land, which “could fetch at least \$24 million at \$2000 per sq ft.”¹²⁴ These express that the siblings do not need the money from the sale of the property, and should either donate all to charity or allow the house to be preserved.¹²⁵

On top of visibly retaining control over the house through continued inhabitation and strategic public statements and actions, it is also worth mentioning that Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang have filed a lawsuit over the rights to Lee Kuan Yew’s interviews given to the Oral History Department between July 1981 and July 1982. Disputing the interpretation of a 1983 agreement, the case, “Lee Wei Ling, Lee Hsien Yang v Attorney-General, OS816/2015,” sees the sibling executors and trustees of the

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “Lee Kuan Yew’s Family to Donate”; “Family to Donate Value.”

¹²² “The Use of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew’s House,” *YouGov*, Dec. 22, 2015.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Pearl Lee and Joyce Lim, “Lee Family to Donate Value of 38, Oxley Rd to Eight Charities,” *Straits Times*, Dec. 5, 2015.

¹²⁵ Nicholas Yong, “Lee Siblings: Lee Kuan Yew’s Home Should be Demolished,” *Yahoo Singapore News*, Dec. 4, 2015; P.N. Balji, “Comment: Let the Hard Truth About Lee Kuan Yew’s House Prevail,” *Yahoo Singapore News*, Dec. 7, 2015.

Lee Kuan Yew estate not only claiming ownership rights over the interviews but “also seeking to restrict access to use or provide copies of the transcripts until five years after his death.”¹²⁶ As *Bloomberg* reports, this “dispute underlines the sensitivities over the legacy of Lee...” and the same may be said of the debate over the house’s preservation.¹²⁷ Given its historic associative and symbolic values, to control what happens to 38 Oxley Road is tantamount to controlling how Lee Kuan Yew is to be remembered. The passage of time is recognized as an essential factor in dealing with the memory and memorialization of a public figure, where “the passing of generations is needed for a person’s historical trace to become clear.”¹²⁸ Lee Hsien Loong recalls the controversy that arose in the United States over the Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorial in Washington DC, where the decision was made to portray him in a wheelchair.¹²⁹ Even though he had hidden his disability through his public career, this portrayal was deemed more significant and powerful in present society, given how the attitudes toward disabilities had so evolved in the just over fifty years that had passed since his death.¹³⁰ The evolution of societal values is a key realization of the values-based approach in its characterization of cultural significance as a relative concept, embedded in a society, evolving as what is deemed significant in the latter evolves.

Referencing another two American examples, the long debate over an Eisenhower memorial that has still not been resolved so long after his death in 1969, and the 9/11 Memorial, which engendered “tremendous argumentation and disagreement and bitterness and battles...including some significant sections of the families of the victims [being] very unhappy with the way it was run and the outcome,” Lee Hsien Loong insisted that conceptualizing a memorial to Lee Kuan Yew and other founding fathers “is a very difficult process.”¹³¹ He states, “For us to think we can settle this within the next few months or few years, that is being presumptuous. If we try do that, we’d make decisions which even if we didn’t regret, our children would regret it...We have to let time pass. We have to let perspective emerge gradually over the years and decades.”¹³² He had earlier underscored the same point in his parliamentary statement on “Calls to Honour Mr. Lee Kuan Yew,” cautioning, “...we should not rush into making decisions on this matter, especially so soon after Mr Lee has passed away. We should allow some time to pass, consider the ideas carefully, and make calm, considered decisions which will stand the test of time. We want to honour Mr Lee, but we must do so in the right way.”¹³³

The concept of buying time before deciding on the fate of 38 Oxley Road is thus critical in this regard, but it also raises the question of whether demolition of the house would be an irreversible act that Singaporeans now or in the future will regret. Certainly, some stakeholders believe so; an online commenter wrote, “The reason given by the Lee family to demolish the house is the same that could be made to demolish the Istana. But LKY apparently never had any qualms about using the Istana for his

¹²⁶ Andrea Tan, “Lee Kuan Yew’s Two Children Dispute Rights to Interviews,” *Bloomberg*, Sep. 22, 2015.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Rachel Chang, “No Hasty Decisions on Honouring Mr. Lee: PM,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 14, 2015.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ “Memorial to Founders.”

¹³² Chang, “No Hasty Decisions.”

¹³³ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement.”

official business. It just doesn't make sense to me. I should add that no-one would have heard of Franz Kafka if his executor had honoured Kafka's express wishes in his Will and destroyed all of Kafka's writings - instead of publishing it for the world to read. Maybe we will regret demolishing the house sometime in the future. Personally, history comes alive in such places. Visiting Thomas Jefferson's house (which I did many years ago) helps you understand him that little bit more."¹³⁴ More to the point, another commenter simply stated, "we will regret it if we don't."¹³⁵ It may be interesting to note that Jefferson's Monticello was only opened to the public as a house museum almost a century after his death, after much conflict with the subsequent private owners, again illustrating how delays and the passage of time may affect the outcome of such cases, to which both Lee Hsien Loong and Lee Wei Ling allude.¹³⁶

Lee Wei Ling also cites precedent memorials for public figures in order to illustrate how the fear of changing interpretations of one's leadership and legacy over time is one driver of her, and also her father's, anti-monumentalizing stance. She compares the way in which the death anniversaries of Winston Churchill and Mao Tse Tung were treated in their respected countries. She criticizes how China, rushed into Mao's tribute, his body "embalmed and placed in a crystal sarcophagus" in a newly constructed Memorial Hall for which "construction went on day and night" in time for a ceremony to commemorate the first anniversary of his passing, all in the midst of a "power struggle between Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four on the one hand, and Mao's designated successor Hua Guofeng," who arrested Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four within a month following Mao's death.¹³⁷ In contrast, she notes the poignancy of the United Kingdom's commemoration of Winston Churchill's funeral which occurred only fifty years after the event occurred, whereupon enough time had passed so that Prime Minister David Cameron could reflect on how 'Half a century after his death, Winston Churchill's legacy continues to inspire not only the nation whose liberty he saved, but the entire world. His words and his actions reverberate through our national life today.'¹³⁸ Lee Wei Ling's point was to condemn the commemorative activities taking place in Singapore for her father's death in March 2016, when his death had just occurred the prior year. She writes that, "I think Papa would have objected if he were able to convey his view," and "if he was forced to choose one form of commemoration, I think that Papa would have objected the less if the commemoration resembled that held for Winston Churchill," but noting that "Churchill unlike Papa cherished glory and a place in the history of his country."¹³⁹ From this, it is clear that Lee Wei Ling also shares her father's fear of the changeable interpretation of his legacy. Some of the motivation behind demolition may therefore still be very much tied to emotions, buried deep within a framework of non-sentimentality, pragmatism, and the straightforward fulfillment of duties.

¹³⁴ Balji, "Let the Hard Truth."

¹³⁵ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

¹³⁶ Charles Bridgham Hosmer, *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: Putnam, 1965), Ch. 8.

¹³⁷ *Lee Wei Ling's Facebook Page*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

National Heritage Board (NHB), Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)

The National Heritage Board (NHB) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) are the government authorities who are ultimately responsible for making a decision on the fate of 38 Oxley Road. The NHB and URA are bound by political duty to step in as outlined in the Preservation of Monuments Act (1971, rev. 2009, 2011) and the Planning Act (1998). These stakeholders' key interests rest in seeking legitimacy and public approval and confidence through making a sound decision that follows the rule of law and that sets a desired precedent for future cases. Ultimately, what happens to 38 Oxley Road can lead to political consequences for government authorities involved in heritage management. Both the decision's process and outcome can have an impact on shaping and legitimizing heritage actions in the future. Whether due process is carried out, how much the public should have a say in the decision, and whether heritage conservation trumps wills and other interests in seeking a collective good for Singapore's future, are related concerns with which heritage authorities have to wrestle, all the while keeping in mind that a decision on such a high-profile case as 38 Oxley Road has great potential to set a precedent for future heritage decisions.

The following provides a brief outline of the origins of the two agencies with regard to heritage conservation and their relevant decision-making powers in relation to the 38 Oxley Road case.

The origins of the conservation functions of these two agencies can be traced to the establishment of the Preservation of Monuments Board in 1971, which designated the first eight national monuments in 1973.¹⁴⁰ Beginning as a statutory board in the Ministry of National Development, and then in the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts in 2001, the PMB merged with the National Heritage Board through a revision of the 1971 Preservation of Monuments Act in 2009, and now serves as an advisory board known as the Preservation of Sites and Monuments division within the National Heritage Board, which was established in 1993.¹⁴¹ However, the city was still in the throes of extensive development, and while there was a slowly stirring heritage consciousness in civil society, no concerted government efforts were made to forward heritage conservation as an important public purpose, until the 1980s and 1990s. Tourism was the single most influential factor in encouraging the government to take concrete action. Lee Kuan Yew recognized this in 1995, stating, "We made our share of mistakes in Singapore. For example, in our rush to rebuild Singapore, we knocked down many old and quaint Singapore buildings. Then we realized we were destroying a valuable part of our cultural heritage, that we were demolishing what tourists found attractive and unique in Singapore..."¹⁴² He echoed the sentiments put forth by the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board who in the creation of a Tourism Product Development Plan in 1986 for the country in response to a slowing in tourism growth in the 1980s coupled with Singapore's first economic recession in 1985, argued,

¹⁴⁰ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 30.

¹⁴¹ "About Preservation of Sites and Monuments," *National Heritage Board*, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.nhb.gov.sg/places/sites-and-monuments/overview>.

¹⁴² Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 225.

...for the city to be truly great, it cannot rely only on modern architecture and it is inevitable that new developments suffer the fate of looking like the new buildings in other cities in the world. The only way that gives the city a distinct personality is its historic past through the selective conservation of old districts and buildings. It is therefore timely that you reassess its architectural heritage and commence action for the conservation of its historic areas. Singapore has a chance, with its historic conservation areas still in place and with growth space available in the filled lands, to create a future city of considerable character, charm, interest and liveability. The areas will not be lesser for being historic. They need not be ghettos. They can support attractive living and successful commerce. There will be problems but none compared to their potential value.¹⁴³

Established on August 1, 1993, the National Heritage Board operates as a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) with a mission to “preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding.”¹⁴⁴ They are in charge of the management of national museums and heritage institutions, including conducting programs and curating exhibitions such as the We Built A Nation exhibit displaying artefacts from 38 Oxley Road at the National Museum of Singapore that opened in September.

Under Section 4(a) of the Preservation Monuments Act, the NHB has the directive and power to identify monuments worthy of preservation for their national importance and their historic, cultural, traditional, archaeological, architectural, artistic, or symbolic significance.¹⁴⁵ The NHB can then recommend these to the Minister of Culture, Community and Youth for gazetting as national monuments, which would place them under the NHB’s protective policies.¹⁴⁶ Broadly, the burden of preservation, maintenance and repair of a preserved property in accordance with guidelines issued by the NHB, lies with the owner as per Section 13 of the Act. There is also the special case of a “dwelling-house,” which applies to 38 Oxley Road, under which an occupied dwelling-house may be appropriated by the government. Section 12 of the Preservation of Monuments Act reads, “Where a preservation order is made in respect of any structure that appears to the Board to be occupied as a dwelling-house and that structure has not been vested in the Board or the Government, as the case may be, then, if the structure is not acquired under the Land Acquisition Act (Cap. 152) within the period of one year from the date of the preservation order, the preservation order shall cease to have effect in relation to that structure.”¹⁴⁷ This time limit and the lack of an annual budget for property acquisition makes it difficult for the state to exercise this legal power, and so it has rarely been used.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41-42; Khoo Teng Chye, ed, *Planning for Tourism: Creating a Vibrant Singapore* (Singapore: Centre for Liveable Cities, 2015), 40-47.

¹⁴⁴ “About Us: Overview,” *National Heritage Board*, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.nhb.gov.sg/places/sites-and-monuments/overview>.

¹⁴⁵ Singapore Law Revision Commission, *Preservation of Monuments Act* (Chapter 239), rev. 2011, Section 4(a).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.; “About Us: Overview.”

¹⁴⁷ Singapore Law Revision Commission, *Preservation of Monuments Act* (Chapter 239), rev. 2011, Section 12.

¹⁴⁸ Zaccheus, “Law Allows.”

The Urban Redevelopment Authority began as the Urban Renewal Unit within the Housing Development Board (HDB) in 1964, later becoming the Urban Renewal Department in 1966. Their goal was to address “overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of proper housing,” tasked with “clear out the slums, provide public housing, and encourage economic growth by creating spaces for industries.”¹⁴⁹ As living conditions improved and the problems were slowly being solved, the... The Urban Renewal Department became a statutory board under the Ministry of National Development in 1974, and adopted its current name. In 1989, the URA was formally appointed as the national conservation authority by way of the Planning Act, so marking the official start of its heritage conservation mandate and the designation of heritage conservation as a planning function.¹⁵⁰ In reality, the URA had demonstrated heritage conservation consciousness a few years prior, 1986 being a watershed year where they acquired government approval for the conservation of seven historic districts, constituting of 3,200 buildings and 4% or 55 hectares of the city center’s total developable land area.¹⁵¹ In 2002, the URA adopted its current mission in line with the Government’s goal to increase Singapore’s global competitiveness, which is “to make Singapore a great city to live, work and play.”¹⁵² The amendment of the URA Act of 2003 formally recognized the URA’s role as the national land planning authority in adding land planning and development control to the agency’s functions.¹⁵³

Thus, unlike the NHB that was created for a solely heritage purpose, the Urban Redevelopment Authority’s is an agency which has to integrate heritage considerations within its broader planning and land-use mandate, having to strike a balance between heritage conservation and the (re)development pressures of a fast-paced, land-scarce city-state. One of its key tools to tackle this challenge is the master plan. Updated every five years, the URA master plan directs the country’s land use.¹⁵⁴ Under the current plan from 2014, the area in which 38 Oxley Road is situated is presently zoned for two-story mixed-landed properties and is planned as a low-rise residential precinct.¹⁵⁵ (Image 4O and 4P). Therefore, some of the potential scenarios for the future of the property such as changing its use from residential to a museum or redeveloping the land to a taller height may require changes in these zoning regulations. Outside of the five-year updates, “the competent authority may at any time also submit to the Minister proposals for amendment to the master plan,” including proposed rezoning, changes of plot ratios, changes of the written statement, and designation of conservation areas.¹⁵⁶ Conservation areas may consist of an entire area, a group of buildings, or just a single building like 38 Oxley Road.¹⁵⁷ The designation of conservation areas is thus another more targeted approach that may be taken to achieve preservation objectives related to 38 Oxley Road. Similar to the NHB’s authority to recommend sites to be gazetted as national monuments under Section 4(a) of the Preservation of Monuments Act,

¹⁴⁹ “About Us: Our Organisation: History of URA,” *Urban Redevelopment Authority*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <https://www.ura.gov.sg/uol/about-us/our-organisation/ura-history.aspx>.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Khoo, *Planning for Tourism*, 48.

¹⁵¹ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 39-41.

¹⁵² “About Us: Our Organisation: History of URA.”

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Ler and Wee, “Plans”; Singapore Law Revision Commission. *Planning Act* (Chapter 232), 1998, Section 8.

¹⁵⁵ Ler and Wee, “Plans.”

¹⁵⁶ Singapore Law Revision Commission. *Planning Act* (Chapter 232), 1998, Section 8.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Section 9.

under Section 9(1) of the Planning Act, the URA has the power to recommend an area it deems worthy of conservation because of special architectural, historic, traditional or aesthetic interest to the Minister of National Development, whereupon he or she may approve the proposal to amend the master plan and designate the area as a conservation area.¹⁵⁸ The Planning Act also rules that any demolition, redevelopment, addition, or alteration to a property must be approved by the URA.¹⁵⁹

The NHB and the URA are in the process of reviewing the 38 Oxley Road case. They released a joint statement on April 30, 2015, in response to an article in the *Straits Times* by two executive committee members of the Singapore Heritage Society who wanted assurance of due process in decision-making regarding the fate of the house and mindfulness of the consequences of that decision.¹⁶⁰ In their reply, the NHB and URA clarified their regulatory duties and jurisdiction over the case, but stressed that because Lee Wei Ling was still living in the house, the government is not required to make an immediate decision. They stressed that when the time came to make such a decision, the government “will take into consideration very seriously the wishes of the late Mr Lee regarding the future plans for the house and site...In view of the historical significance of the property, if a decision is made to allow for the demolition of the house, the Government is likely to not allow the site to be redeveloped in a way that would diminish its historical significance, for example, for commercial or intensive residential development.”¹⁶¹

Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

As international interest in the case of 38 Oxley Road is framed primarily in terms of tourism, in other words, people overseas who may be interested in visiting the site, the Singapore Tourism Board is included as a stakeholder in this case. The STB is the statutory board under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, who may capitalize on this interest by utilizing and promoting the house as a tourist attraction or more broadly, as a part of their mission to “shape a dynamic tourism landscape for Singapore in partnership with industry and community.”¹⁶² The indirect role that tourism plays in the case has already been discussed in relation to the NHB and URA stakeholder group, for acting as a catalyst and driver for heritage conservation activity at the government level. Unlike the NHB and URA, however, the STB does not have the same legal powers to dictate and control the use of the property, but as a government agency, its goal to make Singapore a global tourist destination may have some influence in the decision.

International interest in the house derives from Lee Kuan Yew’s status as an influential political leader who is known worldwide, and especially regionally in Asia. Evidence of existing or potential interest from non-Singaporeans in the figure of Lee Kuan Yew are international press coverage of his death and state funeral were covered by non-local press, including at least one non-local article about

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., Section 8.

¹⁵⁹ Ler Seng Ann Ler and Wee, “Plans”; Chong and Yeo, “Due Process.”

¹⁶⁰ Chong and Yeo, “Due Process.”

¹⁶¹ Ler and Wee, “Plans”; “Unlikely to be Redeveloped”; “Mr. Lee’s Wishes Considered.”

¹⁶² “About STB,” *Singapore Tourism Board*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <https://www.stb.gov.sg/about-stb/>.

the issue of 38 Oxley Road.¹⁶³ In addition, there are the memorialization efforts outside Singapore, of which Lee Wei Ling was so critical, such as in the Tamil Nadu villages in India and at Lee Kuan Yew's ancestral home in Dabu County in China, which the Chinese government is turning into a tourist attraction.¹⁶⁴ (Image 4Q and 4R). However, the international community is characterized as only a minor stakeholder in the 38 Oxley Road case, because the house's significance remains chiefly national, finding value in its historic and symbolic associations with the nation's leader, birth, and history. Local Singaporeans are more likely to find and ascribed these meanings and values in the house and are thus more invested in the site, and in the process and outcome of the decision on its fate. Nevertheless, recognition of international interest and the heritage tourism potential of the site is essential in characterizing its economic value.

People's Action Party (PAP), Government Officials

The People's Action Party has been the largely uncontested ruling political party of Singapore since the country gained self-autonomy from British colonial rule in 1959. They have managed this owing to "overwhelming majorities" which "have allowed it to plan orderly succession thanks to its nearly total control of parliament."¹⁶⁵

Founded as a socialist-democratic party in 1954 with Lee Kuan Yew as secretary general and Toh Chin Chye as chairman, the PAP is now characterized as a center-right party, whose core values are honesty, multiracialism, meritocracy, and self-reliance.¹⁶⁶ In the most recent election on September 11, 2015, the PAP won an overwhelming majority of 83 out of 89 seats, representing nearly 70% of all ballots cast.¹⁶⁷ Political analyst and associate professor at Singapore Management University, Eugene Tan, characterizes the victory as a "swing back to safety" and stability in the current uncertain economic climate, despite increasing "popular resentment over a widening wealth gap, high prices and immigration," that seemed to signal the election as an opportunity for the opposition to gain some ground.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, the timing of the election worked in favor for the PAP, who could capitalize

¹⁶³ Swidey, "The Singapore Lee Built."

¹⁶⁴ Lee Wei Ling, "Honour the Spirit"; "Mr Lee Kuan Yew's Ancestral Home to be Turned into Tourist Spot," *Straits Times*, Mar. 26, 2015. The release of this news on the *Straits Times* Facebook page resulted in a flurry of comments regarding the effort made by Chinese authorities to turn Lee Kuan Yew's ancestral home, built by his great-grandfather in rural Dabu County, Guangdong province, into a tourist destination. Interestingly, the two comments that have received the most "likes" both decry the Chinese act as a form of exploitation but they sit on different sides of the Oxley Road debate. The first comment states, "Trying to capitalize on his fame for selfish gain. I doubt our beloved father have even step foot in a house built by his great grandfather. So how can preserving it be in his honor? We should seek the government to preserve his Oxley house even when this is against his living wishes." And the second comment reads, "Mr Lee doesn't even want his Oxley house to be conserved and turned into a monument as I believe he doesn't want others to capitalize on his legacy. Yet at a faraway land, this is happening." (*Straits Times' Facebook Page*, accessed Apr. 2, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/TheStraitsTimes/posts/10152655388672115>.)

¹⁶⁵ "Singapore's Lee Wants Home Demolished," *AsiaOne News*, Jan. 22, 2011.

¹⁶⁶ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 160; "Our Party," *People's Action Party*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <https://www.pap.org.sg/ABOUT/Our-Party/Content>.

¹⁶⁷ "Singapore Election: Governing Party Secures Decisive Win." *BBC*, Sep. 12, 2015.

¹⁶⁸ "Resounding Election Victory Signals Confidence in Singapore's Future: PM." *Asia Times*, Sep. 12, 2015.

on “lingering feel-good vibes” from the previous month’s jubilee celebrations, with Singaporeans caught up in patriotic spirit and a “renewed sense of gratitude” to the party and its founder, as the nation celebrated its fiftieth year of independence and mourned the passing of Lee Kuan Yew, who led Singapore to its economic miracle.¹⁶⁹

The PAP’s connection to 38 Oxley Road is not simply by association with Lee Kuan Yew; even more significantly, the Party was founded in the house’s basement dining room. The PAP was founded in November, 1954, after seminal discussions of what would be its symbol and manifesto occurred around the wood and formica basement dining table. The fourteen pioneering members of the PAP formed a diverse group, representing a true “cross-section of society,” racially (seven Chinese, three Malays, four Indians) and occupationally (two layers, two journalists, two teachers, two postmen, a former detainee, an academic, a clerk, a hospital attendant, a foreman, and a bus conductor.)¹⁷⁰

Thus, there is certainly political interest in what happens to the house and especially basement dining room, as this was their birthplace, a symbol by which they can draw legitimacy and power, especially as they continue to base their mission, legitimacy, and public image on those foundational years, by reaffirming “the founding ideals that enabled it to successfully govern and transform Singapore into a modern miracle.”¹⁷¹ This will be further discussed in the section outlining the political significance of 38 Oxley Road. However, the PAP has not presented an official position regarding what they wish for the house. Members of Parliament who have individually spoken out offer varied opinions. While the connection to the place and moment of the Party’s founding and to one of its key founding members, Lee Kuan Yew, are important political motivations to preserve the house, that very connection with Lee Kuan Yew simultaneously results in the need to respect their past leader’s wish to demolish the house, which has also now been echoed by their current leader, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Those who see heritage value in the house are also cognizant of respecting Lee Kuan Yew’s wish. MP Lim Blow Chuan, for instance, “felt the house carries huge historical significance but like the other observers, he stressed it was up to Mr Lee’s family to decide what to do with the property.”¹⁷² Others, including MPs Irene Ng and Ang Wei Neng and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, attempt to seek a compromise, by proposing ways to compensate for the loss of the house. For example, MP Irene Ng proposes possible surrogates for the house, wondering, “if there is a case to be made for a greater effort to preserve its heritage value for future generations while respecting his wishes to demolish the house...To document the home using paper, photos, film and digital media formats and perhaps the furniture in the basement can be considered historical artefacts which can be donated to the museum for a replica of the basement to be put up.”¹⁷³ Lee Hsien Loong responded that the house had already been documented, and while an exact replica of the basement was not created, furniture and other

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., “Singapore Election”; Kurlantzick, “People’s Action Party.”

¹⁷⁰ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 54.

¹⁷¹ “Our Party.”

¹⁷² Amanda Lee, “Upholding Mr. Lee’s Principles the Best Way to Honour Him: Observers,” *Today*, Mar. 31, 2015.

¹⁷³ Hetty Musfirah Abdul Khamid, “MPs Suggest Ways to Pay Tribute to Mr. Lee Kuan Yew,” *Channel News Asia*, Apr. 13, 2015.

artefacts from the house, including the historic basement dining room table, did indeed go on display in the National Museum of Singapore for the *We Built A Nation* exhibit. Irene Ng approved of the Lee estate's donation of the items to the NHB, stating, "This will ensure these historical items can be properly preserved for generations."¹⁷⁴

The removal of such key historical items that heavily contribute to the significance of 38 Oxley Road may make the demolition of the house itself less difficult to swallow. Her view was shared by MP Ang Wei Neng, also noting that thorough documentation of the house would also provide an opportunity for those interested to tour the house virtually, which may compensate for public access to the physical property. These options would "help keep the memory of the house alive in some way," while allowing for the house to be demolished according to Lee Kuan Yew's will.¹⁷⁵ However, *Straits Times* deputy political editor, Fiona Chan, worries that such surrogates as the museum exhibit or the virtual tour, would not effectively compensate for the loss of preserving the house and allowing public access, stressing that "they would not create the same immersive and participatory experience future generations could have walking through the rooms where history was made, and seeing the simple furniture and fittings that embodied Mr Lee's lifelong ideals of pragmatism and thrift."¹⁷⁶ She suggests instead the potential for a compromise between these differing stakeholder interests through the controlled opening of significant common spaces such as the basement dining room while erecting barriers to maintain the privacy of the rest of the home.¹⁷⁷

Another member of the PAP who has expressed an opinion on the case is Emeritus Senior Minister, Goh Chok Tong, Singapore's second prime minister. Similar to MP Irene Ng, he recognized the value of the house as national heritage but also Lee Kuan Yew's wish not to preserve it. Instead of worrying about the house, then, he, like Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, recommended diverting one's attention to the creation of a founders' memorial, writing, "I, too, thought we should preserve Mr Lee Kuan Yew's house as a national heritage. But he was totally against it and had his wish recorded in Cabinet. He could not be persuaded. He was a rational man. PM Lee explained Mr Lee's thinking in Parliament yesterday, one which I was familiar with. I think the idea of a Founders Memorial Park to mark the making of a nation, its trials and tribulations, is more meaningful...Let us contribute our ideas to this concept."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Au-Young, "Mr Lee's Personal Items."

¹⁷⁵ Fiona Chan, "Straddling Fine Line."

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ "Leave Oxley Road House Be, Build Founder's Memorial Park Instead: GCT," *Online Citizen*, Apr. 14, 2015. It seems that Goh Chok Tong's idea of a park memorial gained some traction in the Founders' Memorial Committee in their proposal of the two shortlisted locations, which are a park and a garden site. Perhaps more significant to call out is that while remaining divided on the 38 Oxley Road case and not putting forward a unified official position, an interest group of the People's Action Party, PAP Seniors Group¹⁷⁸, has expressed their preference for the park site, Fort Canning Park, for the founders' memorial. Interestingly, the reasons they give for choosing that site seem almost parallel to reasons they might give for preserving 38 Oxley Road and even having the house's site be the founders' memorial in their party's interest. Fort Canning Park is favored over the Bay East Gardens site because it "served as the seat of power for many of Singapore's rulers during pre-colonial and colonial period" including housing 14th century Majapahit kings and Sir Stamford Raffles in the 19th century, and where historic

Other MPs also emphasize shifting focus away from the physical presence of the house, subscribing to Lee Kuan Yew's anti-monument principles. They champion of ideals over monuments, and believe that the latter are not important or necessary for transmitting the former to future generations, which may be better accomplished through education or living by example, upholding "the principles and values that Mr Lee stood for."¹⁷⁹ For instance, with regard to the practice of memorializing as a whole, Nominated MP Chia Yong Yong "suggested that memorials have little impact on citizens' lives and national identity, and proposed focusing instead on how to pass down Mr Lee's ideals to the next generation, such as by teaching them in school."¹⁸⁰ More specific to the use of 38 Oxley Road as a memorial to Lee Kuan Yew, MP Alex Yam underscored that Lee Kuan Yew's "legacy lies beyond the confines of 38, Oxley Road...We find it in the streets of a peaceful, stable and united Singapore. His memory will be better served in our collective efforts to carry Singapore forward to the next 50 years."¹⁸¹ Similarly, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen agreed that building or naming existing monuments after the founding prime minister "would not be the best way to preserve Mr. Lee's legacy" or to honor him, as Lee Kuan Yew himself "never believed that physical monuments or towering edifices sustained greatness."¹⁸²

Heritage Expert Community, Singapore Heritage Society (SHS)

This stakeholder group comprises heritage "experts," or those who have specialized knowledge or work in heritage-related fields, some of whom are also members of the Singapore Heritage Society, civil society for heritage causes. There is no strict definition of who can fall in this category of "heritage experts," so the thesis adopts what seems to emerge as the general understanding of such professionals in the Singaporean context, identified primarily as "historians, architects, and social scientists" by the April 24 article by SHS executive committee members.¹⁸³ This heritage expert community, drawn from the professional world and academia, is thus not a homogenous entity but rather a multifarious group

events occurred, such as the creation of Singapore's first botanical garden in 1822 and the surrender of Singapore to the Japanese by Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival in 1942. There is a lineage of pre-colonial rulers here, as there is a lineage of post-independence leaders at 38 Oxley Road, including the first and third prime ministers of modern Singapore. Speaker of Parliament, Halimah Yacob expressed doubt that "the Bay East Garden will be able to create the same effect or conjure the same feelings as Fort Canning Park because you will be starting from zero base, rather devoid of a context."¹⁷⁸ Yet, the Bay East Garden is the committee's unanimously favored choice for that very reason, that it affords greater flexibility because it has not yet been fully developed or interpreted.¹⁷⁸ Thus, according to the views expressed by the PAP Seniors Group and Speaker of Parliament Halimah Yacob, 38 Oxley Road, already endowed with rich historic associations would be equally in line with the PAP Seniors Group's vision as Fort Canning Park for a founders' memorial site. It would also provide a more direct connection to the "founders" who actually made their names and careers in the house's basement dining room. However, the Party has steered clear of 38 Oxley Road in proposing a founders' memorial, which further diverts public attention away from the debate over its preservation or demolition toward the other, or surrogate, debate between the two founders' memorial sites.

¹⁷⁹ Fiona Chan, "Straddling Fine Line"; "Memorial to Founders."

¹⁸⁰ Amanda Lee, "Upholding Mr. Lee's Principles."

¹⁸¹ "Mr. Lee Kuan Yew Wanted Oxley Road Home Demolished as Stated in Will."

¹⁸² Amanda Lee, "Upholding Mr. Lee's Principles."

¹⁸³ Chong and Yeo, "Due Process."

who have put forth varied opinions regarding the 38 Oxley Road case. They are bound by their status and perceived credibility as experts, so their opinions may tend to carry more weight than those of the general public as they may be consulted by journalists or the government.

While some members of this stakeholder group, like the SHS, value heritage conservation as a legitimate activity with public purpose, others may not see preservation as a priority or appropriate for the particular context vis-à-vis other societal goals or values. Thus, while some are more likely to advocate that physical objects or monuments, which are understood as heritage for their significance, play an important, meaningful, and necessary role in society, others put greater emphasis on privacy and ownership rights to private property and the mantra of ideals over monuments. From a long tradition of expert knowledge and training in heritage conservation, members of this group who uphold the importance of heritage conservation may tend to prioritize historic and architectural values in assessing and advocating for the significance of a particular site. However, taken with the other stakeholders in this group, the heritage expert community may also be aware of other values, especially since the spread of a values-based approach to heritage conservation and greater critical self-reflection regarding the field's theory and practice. These values may include the social values of education and the transmission of cultural values, the political values of nation-building and upholding the rule of law, and symbolic intentional commemorative value, where 38 Oxley Road has the potential to serve as a memorial site, a possibility which remains contested even within this stakeholder group.

The views of individual experts are gleaned from newspaper articles in which they were consulted or interviewed by journalists to provide expert opinion on the matter. These will be presented as pertaining to the values discussion in the upcoming section on values and debates. The rest of this section will focus on the position expressed by SHS executive committee members.

As mentioned previously, the NHB and URA issued a statement in response to a *Straits Times* article written by executive committee members of the SHS. The SHS was formed in 1987 as a “non-profit, non-governmental organization and registered charity, dedicated to the preservation, transmission and promotion of Singapore’s history, heritage and identity.”¹⁸⁴ The article, “Mr. Lee Kuan Yew’s House a Chance for Due Process,” was written by sociologist Terence Chong and architect and conservator, Yeo Kang Shua, vice president and honorary secretary of the Singapore Heritage Society, and published on April 24, 2015. In it, Chong and Yeo highlighted the duties of the NHB and URA to determine the significance of the property in order to “trigger legal protection” for it. While acknowledging the architectural value of this more-than-a-century-old house as a “rare and unique type of bungalow,” the pair do not wish to argue for whether the house should be preserved or not. Rather, they see the case of 38 Oxley Road as an opportunity to “strengthen our state heritage institutions and due process,” emphasizing that the NHB and URA have the “legal tools and institutional capacity” to ensure that due process is carried out in making a decision on the fate of the site. Furthermore, while acknowledging the “emotional dilemma” facing the children, Chong and Yeo believe that the case also offers an opportunity to “consider the ramifications of carrying out the wishes of the owner of a

¹⁸⁴ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 52-53.

potentially important building at the expense of national heritage,” warning of the potential for this decision to serve as a precedent for future contested cases. Thus, they hope that NHB and URA will use their “legal tools” to ensure that due process will be carried out. As part of this, they advocate for the creation of expert panels of historians, architects, and social scientists to evaluate the property’s significance, and that their findings and “actual verdict of such panels would be of less importance than the demonstration of institutional due diligence, adherence to heritage best practices, and abidance by transparent decision-making processes.”¹⁸⁵

Non-Expert Singaporean Public

The non-expert Singaporean public is the largest and most diverse stakeholder group. Although there has been no official effort to solicit public opinion on the 38 Oxley Road case as had been done with regard to the creation of a founders’ memorial, this has not stopped the Singaporean general public from airing their views through newspapers, polls, online forums, social media, and a petition to gazette the house as a national monument and convert it into a museum. In terms of having official public consultation or participation in the decision-making process, some members of this group believe that the public should indeed have a say, while others insist that decision-making power ultimately belongs to the children, and still others, that it is up to the government. The myriad views expressed by this multifarious stakeholder group will be discussed in their relevant subsections in the values and debates analysis. The current section looks at the broad trends in public opinion, captured by two polls that were conducted and the creation and closure of the petition against the demolition of the house.

Soon after Lee Kuan Yew’s death on March 23, 2015, an online petition was started on *Change.org* on March 31, 2015, by Benedict Yuen. Based on an earlier letter written by Teo Kok Seah to the *Straits Times* on March 26, 2015, calling for the 38 Oxley Road house to be officially gazetted a national heritage site, preserved “for as long as is practical,” and converted into a public museum.¹⁸⁶ The petition, addressed the National Heritage Board and the Singapore Government, quickly gained ground, reaching 1,000 supporters in three days, and 1,500 in a week.¹⁸⁷ However, Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang’s announcement of their father’s will on April 12 brought an end to petition efforts, with a link to their statement posted on the webpage under the heading, “Respect and Closed,” that same day.¹⁸⁸ The petition reached a total of 1,714 supporters before closing, falling far short of its goal of 10,000.¹⁸⁹ The variety of comments that petitioners left on the webpage describe their motivations and reasons for signing, which form the basis of some interesting discussions and debates around values, as will be analyzed in the next section. Perhaps Teo, Yuen, and some petitioners may have forgotten or been unaware of Lee Kuan Yew’s wish for the house to be demolished as he first made public in 2011, perhaps afflicted by temporary amnesia in the wave of emotion brought up by Lee Kuan Yew’s passing,

¹⁸⁵ Chong and Yeo, “Due Process.”

¹⁸⁶ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road”; Teo Kok Seah, “Preserve Home Where History was in the Making,” *Straits Times*, Mar. 26, 2015.

¹⁸⁷ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road”; Romesh Navaratnarajah, “Call to Preserve LKYs Home,” *Yahoo Singapore News*, Apr. 2, 2015; *Ibid.*, “Over 1,450 Sign Petition to Save LKYs Home,” *Yahoo Singapore News*, Apr. 6, 2015.

¹⁸⁸ “Urge Singaporeans to Respect”; Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

¹⁸⁹ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

it is also likely that learning that Lee Kuan Yew had formally stated his wish in his will may have served as a turning point in public perception. At least for some members of the public, what may have been viewed as passing comment became reframed as a dying wish, which now held greater weight and meaning. This can be seen in the difference between the results of the two polls, one in January, 2011, after the disclosure of Lee Kuan Yew's *Hard Truths* interview, and the other in 2015, after his death and the revelation of his will.

As Lee Hsien Loong noted in his parliamentary statement on April 13, the publication of Lee Kuan Yew's desire to have the house demolished in *Hard Truths* in 2011 caused such a "public reaction, as some people wanted the house preserved," that he called a special Cabinet meeting to bring his father in to discuss the matter. The *Straits Times* had launched an online poll through their website, Facebook, and Twitter and concluded that 62% of the 2,154 respondents were in favor of preserving the house, while 35% were against, and 3% were neutral.¹⁹⁰ In contrast, another poll, this time launched by international market research firm, YouGov, in response to Lee Hsien Loong's Facebook post on December 4, 2015, that re-emphasized the Lee siblings' intent to fulfill their father's wish to demolish the house, with Lee Hsien Loong's recusal and the brothers' pledge to donate half the property's value to charity. The Asia Pacific branch of YouGov, an internet-based international market research that polls its registrants on topics such as politics, public affairs, products and brands, issued the poll to "investigate how Singaporeans feel about the use of Mr. Lee's house," in light of the Lee siblings' statement.¹⁹¹ The poll was conducted from December 9 to 11, and the result were weighted to be representative of the online population, with a sample size of 1000, 49% male and 51% female, and an average age of 35 years. It asked Singaporeans how they felt about the Lee brothers' donation, as already discussed, and whether they supported the Lee family's decision to demolish the house. On the second question, in contrast to the *Straits Times* poll conducted almost five years earlier, results indicate that 77% of Singaporeans support demolition, in order to respect Lee's wish (61%) and the family's privacy (39%). 15% do not support demolition. Out of these, "75% think the house has high historical and cultural value that the Lee family should open the house for public visit" and "25% think the house belongs to all Singaporeans and they should have a say" in the decision.¹⁹²

Reacting to these results, Dennis Chan wrote a letter to the *Straits Times*, calling the high percentage of Singaporeans in favor of demolition, "disheartening," and drawing comparisons with the ways in which the "private residences of great statesmen around the world," such as that of Sun Yat Sen, Mahatma Gandhi, and Tunku Abdul Rahman, had been preserved. In response, an online commenter argued, "Do note that none of the great men mentioned in the above letter did, in as explicit and unequivocal a fashion, express their wishes to the public in relation to their residences. The

¹⁹⁰ Hannah Koh, "62% of ST Readers Want MM Lee's Home Conserved," *Straits Times*, Jan. 22, 2011.

¹⁹¹ "The Use of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's House," *YouGov*, Dec. 22, 2015; "FAQ: Introduction," *YouGov*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016. <https://ap.yougov.com/en/faq/#A1>.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*; Deborah Wong, "56 Percent of Singaporeans Think Memorials for Founding Fathers are Necessary," *AsiaOne*, Dec. 22, 2015; "Most Singaporeans Support Decision to Demolish the Late Mr Lee's House: Poll," *Today*, Dec. 23, 2015; Yuen-C Tham, "Poll: Most People Back Demolition of 38, Oxley Road," *Straits Times*, Dec. 23, 2015.

wishes of the person who made that very residence historic should carry some weight...”¹⁹³ This comment thus exposes the contradictions in arguing for the preservation of the house based on its significant association to the founding father.

To other members of the Singaporean public, however, the historic association to Lee Kuan Yew has less relevance when they make their case against its preservation. Rather, it is the sheer fact that Lee Kuan Yew put his wish for the house’s demolition in his last will and testament that is enough to convince these stakeholders that the house must be demolished accordingly. As one online commenter wrote, “Let’s put [aside] what late LKY was & take him as an old man who pass away with a will, can’t we just respect the will of a late person? If he has not made any will before he [passed] away, such a topic might still be [justified], but he has a will written [before] he left, I mean...c’mon, what’s happening to everyone? Just respect his will, as simple as that! [sic]”¹⁹⁴ Other commenters expressed a similar belief in the importance of following a person’s will, writing, “Lee Kuan Yew has made it very very clear. I don’t think anyone has a right to override his wishes. It’s his home, his will, and his decision and it has to be respected and adhered, to the last comma and dot,” and “Most importantly is for us to respect and honour the wishes of the departed, especially when it has been explicitly and publicly made known. Spare a thought for the family who had to deal with the loss and ensure the wishes be carried out. It is heartening that the [YouGov] poll has aligned views of the majority with that of the family. For those who dispute such views, it is a shame and a selfish act.”¹⁹⁵

Chapter Summary

While this stakeholder analysis reveals some very strong unilateral positions taken by the primary stakeholders, Lee Kuan Yew and his children, other stakeholder groups display a more heterogeneous set of opinions. As expected in a values-based approach to heritage conservation, the stakeholder analysis has revealed conflicts and contradictions not only between, but within these groups. At the same time, consensus between different stakeholders’ interests and positions can also be gleaned. For example, there are many members of the non-expert Singaporean public who form

¹⁹³ Dennis Hoi Yim Chan, “Don’t Demolish Historically Significant House,” *Straits Times*, Dec. 30, 2015.

¹⁹⁴ P Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

¹⁹⁵ “Mr. Lee Kuan Yew Stated in Will that He Wanted Oxley Rd Home Demolished,” *Today*, Apr. 12, 2015; Dennis Chan, “Don’t Demolish.” It is also worth noting that the poll also included a question on whether respondents felt that a founders’ memorial, the process to create one was launched in six months prior in June, was necessary. Only around half of the respondents (56%) felt that this memorial was a necessary project, for reminding them of those who built the modern nation or for tying the nation together. Of the 34% who felt it was unnecessary, most thought that there were already monuments or buildings dedicated for memorial purposes already (54%), while smaller proportions saw it as a “vanity project” (27%) or a way for the government to gain more votes (19%). The fact that the two issues were brought together in a single questionnaire demonstrates the perception or potential for the two cases to be interrelated at the level of the citizenry, despite the insistence on being treated separately at the government level. In contrast to the YouGov poll, however, the Founders’ Memorial Committee’s survey found that 80% of those interviewed in the door-to-door survey were in favor of the initiative.¹⁹⁵ Among detractors, the reasons for not supporting the notion were also different from those offered by YouGov, and were that money would be better spent otherwise and that memorials were not effective in capturing or communicating values; these views are not dissimilar to those brought up against the preservation of Lee Kuan Yew’s house.

their positions on the case based on those of the primary stakeholders. The decision will ultimately fall on the shoulders of the NHB and URA, the other primary stakeholder, who has already indicated that Lee Kuan Yew's wishes will be taken into serious consideration, and will need to consult with his children as the current owners. Even still, there are calls from the non-Singaporean expert public for greater say or participation in the decision-making process. While public opinion has not been officially solicited, it would be difficult for the NHB and URA to completely ignore the positions on the case that have been unofficially expressed by this stakeholder group because of the immense public attention it has garnered, especially if they seek to remain legitimate and relevant to society at large.

In analyzing the case of 38 Oxley Road as a build-up of these different stakeholder perspectives, it becomes clear that there are multiple stakeholder positions on the case, and even those who advocate the same position have different motivations or underlying interests for doing so. As Myers, Smith, and Shaer note, "Interests are usually more flexible than positions—there is only one outcome that can fulfill a position, but there may be different outcomes that can fulfill the underlying interests."¹⁹⁶ Thus, identifying stakeholders' underlying interests is key to understanding the reasons or motivations behind their push for certain positions, which in effect, broadens the spectrum of possible outcomes for the case decision, beyond a narrow set of positions that tend along the lines of a preserve-versus-demolish position dichotomy. Adding to this stakeholder analysis, the next chapter's assessment on the values that these stakeholders ascribe to the site will contribute to furthering the understanding of stakeholder motivations. After all, interests "correspond to broader value categories," as will be seen in the subsequent cultural significance assessment.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Myers, Smith and Shaer, *A Didactic Case Study of Jarash Archaeological Site, Jordan*, 40.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

Figure 4.2

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

COLOR-CODED BY STAKEHOLDER(S) INVOLVED (see Figure 4.1. Current Stakeholders)



5 Cultural Significance Assessment

Cultural significance is defined as “the importance of a site as determined by the aggregate of values attributed to it.”¹⁹⁸ Traditional approaches to identifying significance have relied primarily or solely on what heritage experts value in a site.¹⁹⁹ In contrast, a values-based approach to heritage conservation promotes cultural significance assessment as a key method for increasing public input and participation in decision-making, where the “values considered in this process should include those held by experts—the art historians, archaeologists, architects, and others—as well as other values brought forth by new stakeholders or constituents, such as social and economic values.”²⁰⁰ As Avrami, de la Torre, and Mason emphasize in the Getty Conservation Institute’s report on Values and Heritage Conservation, “Cultural significance for the purposes of conservation decision making can no longer be a purely scholarly construction but, rather, an issue negotiated among the many professionals, academics, and community members who value the object or place—the “stakeholders.”²⁰¹ Clearly, if heritage professionals seek to make decisions that are more relevant to a wider audience and society at large, and not just to preservationists or those who share similar values, the task of understanding why particular sites are valued by all who have a stake in them—the stakeholders—becomes imperative.

Employing the central method of a values-based approach to heritage conservation, this chapter conducts a cultural significance assessment of 38 Oxley Road to reveal the range of values that stakeholders currently ascribe to the site. Randall Mason outlines the goal of this method, writing, “For purposes of planning and management, value assessment presents a threefold challenge: identifying all the values of heritage in question; describing them and integrating and ranking the different, something conflicting values, so they can inform the resolution of different, often conflicting stakeholder interests.”²⁰² Accordingly, the assessment of the significance of 38 Oxley Road starts from a broad-base identification of all the values present in the case then moves to a prioritization of those which emerge as most prominent among the stakeholders or as most pertinent to the case’s specific cultural context. The prioritized values are taken up in the next chapter where they form particular narratives that are deemed important to transfer to future generations. First, a discussion of how cultural significance is understood in the Singapore heritage context as situated within the broader heritage discourse will be presented in order to set up an applicable typological framework for discussing the values attributed to 38 Oxley Road.

¹⁹⁸ Marta de la Torre and Randall Mason, “Introduction.” *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Research Report*, ed., Marta de la Torre (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 3.

¹⁹⁹ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 9.

²⁰⁰ de la Torre and Mason, “Introduction,” 3.

²⁰¹ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 9.

²⁰² Mason, “Assessing Values,” 5.

Values in the Singapore Heritage Context and Their Applicability to the 38 Oxley Road Case

In the Singaporean heritage management context, a property is deemed eligible and worthy for national monument listing and associated protections if it fulfills two conditions under the Preservation of Monuments Act.²⁰³ It must meet the criteria of significance and be of national importance. Regarding the latter, as the home of the founding prime minister and the current one, and the place where political discussions were held to form the first governing party and to achieve Singapore's independence from British colonial rule, the house can be readily comprehended as having national importance. In terms of the significance criteria, the types of significance provided by the Act are historic, cultural, traditional, archaeological, architectural, artistic, and symbolic. Of these, historic, architectural, and symbolic significance most appropriately apply to the values that stakeholders ascribe to 38 Oxley Road. However, there are other values that fall outside these categories that also need to be taken into consideration, especially with a wider recognition of whose opinions may be counted as credible and significant in heritage decision-making processes.

Thus, in reflecting the shift from more traditional materials-based, expert-driven thinking of the preservation field in general, at the time of the Act's legislation in 1971 to an approach centered on a broader consideration of a range of stakeholders and values, it is appropriate and beneficial to pay attention, too, to additional value categories that have gained greater prominence, legitimacy, and importance, which in turn legitimize heritage decisions in the eyes of the general public and crystallizes heritage conservation's role as serving a public purpose. A values-based approach recognizes that heritage objects and the conservation of their cultural significance exist in a web of social, political, and economic processes and relations. Embedded in their particular contexts, then, cultural heritage and cultural significance are socially constructed entities.²⁰⁴ Hence, types of significance or value categories are flexible; they evolve as the context in which they are created, practiced, and interpreted, evolves.

Clearly, some of the values that stakeholders ascribe to 38 Oxley Road and wish to transfer to future generations by way of a decision on the case could not have been encapsulated in or predicted by the Preservation of Monuments Act that was enacted back in 1971. Yet, similar to other longstanding legislation, the Act remains broad enough to capture this evolution, particularly since it does not even provide definitions of what is meant by historic, cultural, traditional, archaeological, artistic, or symbolic, thus allowing for flexible interpretation and application over time. For instance, in a publication by the URA and PMB in 1993, entitled "Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation," the criteria for significance for the identification of national monuments rely on four factors, which are not the same as those categories listed in the 1971 Act. Rather, the 1993 publication looks for aesthetic, historic, social, and technological values.²⁰⁵ This publication's aesthetic value relates to the Act's artistic and

²⁰³ Singapore Law Revision Commission, *Preservation of Monuments Act* (Chapter 239), rev. 2011, Section 4(a).

²⁰⁴ Avrami, Mason and de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 6; Mason, "Fixing Historic Preservation," 66.

²⁰⁵ Michael Yu, "Built Heritage Conservation Policy in Singapore," *Information Note, IN27/07-08* (Hong Kong: Legislative Council Secretariat, Research and Library Services Division, 2008), 7-8.

architectural categories, while historic value may align with both historic and symbolic significance because it encompasses both the more traditionally conceived associative value as well as those “works representing rare contribution by Singapore’s pioneers.” Social value arises when a building becomes “a focus for spiritual, political or national cultural sentiment for the nation as whole or for a social group,” capturing what may be cultural and traditional values under the Act. Finally, technological value is found in the way a building reflects a certain period of construction technology, most typically linked to the Act’s archaeological value.²⁰⁶ Thus, it is shown that after twenty years, the same values may be conceptualized and organized in a different way, without necessitating a change in the Act, which despite an even more recent revision in 2009 to enact the merger between the PMB and NHB, prescribes the same criteria for significance.

Understanding this fluidity means that it may be reasonable and beneficial to look beyond a single values typology in order to reach as robust, comprehensive, and nuanced characterization of a property’s cultural significance as possible, in alignment with the specificities of each case. For 38 Oxley Road, then, the thesis draws from a variety of scholarly and policy frameworks in characterizing the values present in the case, from Singapore’s Preservation of Monuments Act to Alois Riegl, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Burra Charter. By incorporating ideas from all these different values typologies, which are effectively different ways to understand the significance of a heritage site, the analysis can then be more tailored to the case at hand, revealing the broad range of values that stakeholders ascribe to 38 Oxley Road that might otherwise be overlooked or not well-articulated if constrained by a single typology. While historic, architectural, aesthetic, and symbolic values have dominated traditional heritage discourse, as revealed in the Singaporean context with the 1971 Preservation of Monuments Act, a consideration of those values that emerge from paying greater attention to societal context, such as social, political, and economic values, is beneficial. Such values have risen to prominence as a result of changing conceptions of what is important in contemporary society, as McClelland et al. write, “In addition to opening up heritage planning and management to a broader range of stakeholders, a values-based approach is also considered to facilitate an appreciation of a greater diversity of values, particularly contemporary values reflecting sustainability agendas and embracing economic, social and environmental attributes.”²⁰⁷ Thus, incorporating such contemporary values allows for not only a more complete understanding of why heritage sites or objects might be significant, but one that is also more broadly applicable and relevant to society as a whole.

The following seeks to outline the many different values that stakeholders have ascribed to 38 Oxley Road. (Figure 5.1). While they are placed under the general typological headings discussed above, it is clear that many of these values cross categories. A primary example is the value of nation-building, which has social dimensions in affirming shared identity and building social cohesion, symbolic dimensions where the site may be seen as a representation of the nation or its inception, and political dimensions as a tool that a government can use to foster patriotism and unity. In addition, some values are closely linked to, or feed into, other values, because they are tied to the same physical attributes of

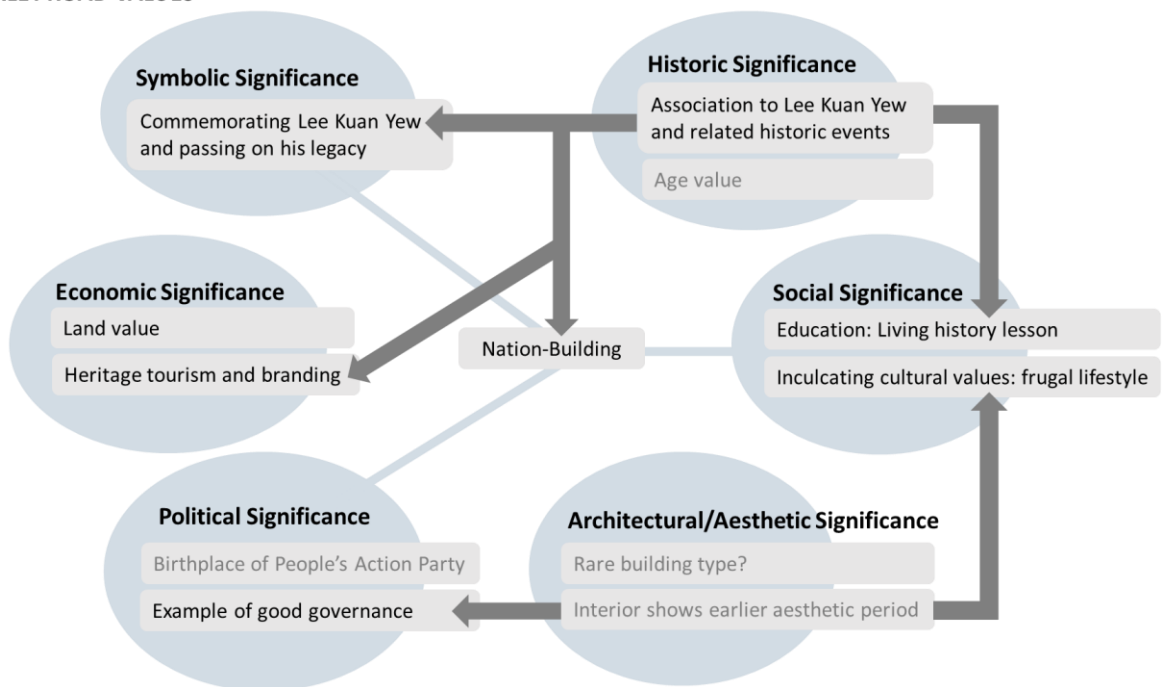
²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ McClelland et al., “A Values-Based Approach,” 594.

the house or decisional outcomes for the case. For the 38 Oxley Road case, there are multiple values that derive from the house’s period interior, from the social value of inculcating the cultural value of a frugal lifestyle to the political value of inspiring non-corrupt government, and the less touted aesthetic value of appreciation for an interior representing an earlier aesthetic period. Similarly, the historically significant association of the house to Lee Kuan Yew and related historic events serves as a basis for social educational value, heritage tourism value, symbolic value tied to commemorating Lee Kuan Yew, and the social-symbolic-political value of nation-building. Thus, when thinking of transmitting certain values to future generations, it is important to keep in mind that closely related values may be transmitted in conjunction with one another; similarly, the loss of one value in forwarding a particular narrative to future generations may entail the loss of those other values which are closely linked to it. This realization creates the impetus for using the concept of value narratives as a means of grouping together the values which tend toward similar goals or decisional outcomes, as presented in the following chapter.

Figure 5.1.

38 OXLEY ROAD VALUES



Before teasing out the key narratives surrounding 38 Oxley Road, in accordance with a values-based approach, it is first necessary to lay bare and consider all values. Randall Mason writes, “The challenge of preservation planning and policy, therefore, is to strike and sustain a reasonable balance of values. Preservationists do not have to advocate all the values of a heritage site, but they should have to understand them, and this requires not only collaboration among professionals and laypeople but familiarity with the evaluation methods of many disciplines (economics, anthropology, architecture,

history). Without this broad understanding, preservationists will only act on what is valuable to them, not why the environment does or does not have meaning for society at large.”²⁰⁸

After laying out all the values brought to the case by the various stakeholders, the next step in a cultural significance assessment is to then narrow in on preserving those values that will benefit collective society for the foreseeable future, at which point, certain values are prioritized over others. In preparation this thesis’ scenario analysis, in the next chapter, the prioritized values will be organized to constitute key value narratives which are deemed as important to transfer to future generations and as working toward a common good. The values that are not prioritized are those which may only represent niche interests of a small group of stakeholders but are not relevant or do not benefit society at large. This is the case with the potential political value of the house to serve as a legitimizing tool for the ruling People’s Action Party. The preservation and transmission of this value to the future will only benefit a small group of people with a particular political agenda, and may otherwise have no benefits or perhaps even negative consequences for society at large. Somewhat similarly, the age value of the house is acknowledged by only a few stakeholders, and is overridden by an overall societal consciousness that leans toward newness and use values which directly challenge age value. Age value is thus not a broadly adhered-to cultural value, as with frugality or pragmatism, or even newness and use values, which would be the values that Singaporean collective society would aim to transfer to the next generation. As the architectural and aesthetic values of 38 Oxley Road as a rare and representative building type of stylistic interest are infrequently cited, highly questioned or doubted, and downplayed in relation to other values, architectural and aesthetic values are also deprioritized in the formation of collective value narratives.

Below is an outline of the range of values that stakeholders have ascribed to 38 Oxley Road, as loosely sorted into the categories of historic, architectural/aesthetic, symbolic, social, political, and economic significance. These together constitute the site’s overall cultural significance. The prioritized values will be more fully discussed in relation to how they fit into the key value narratives in the following chapter.

Historic Significance

38 Oxley Road’s association to Lee Kuan Yew and related historic events in Singapore’s history is the most cited, and perhaps most intuitive heritage value ascribed to 38 Oxley Road.²⁰⁹ In fact, this is the only type of significance that is readily recognized by the NHB and URA in the early stages of their decision, writing in their official statement on the case on April that “In view of the historical significance of the property, if a decision is made to allow for the demolition of the house, the Government is likely to not allow the [land] to be redeveloped in a way that would diminish its historical significance, for

²⁰⁸Mason. “Fixing Historic Preservation,” 70.

²⁰⁹ In this thesis, the terms, “historic value” or “historic significance” when referring to that value category shall be treated as synonymous with “historical value” or “historical significance,” which are used and preferred in other scholarly and policy documents. The thesis opts to use “historic” rather than “historical,” in order to be consistent with the language of the Preservation of Monuments Act in the Singaporean context.

example, for commercial or intensive residential development.”²¹⁰ Historic value arises from 38 Oxley Road’s association with Lee Kuan Yew, from which stem formative events in Singapore’s history. This kind of historic value is therefore sometimes known as associative value. The connection to Lee Kuan Yew and related historic events, which form the basis for most other values, including educational value through providing future generations with a “living history lesson,” setting an example for future generations to imitate his frugal lifestyle and principles of good governance, and the activating the site for nation-building or memorializing purposes, can be understood as comprising key narratives bearing the prioritized values to be transferred to future generations. These values constitute key narratives which are ultimately rooted in this historic associative value, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

A less prominent value that falls into this historic significance category is age value. Age value was first comprehensively defined by theorist Alois Riegl in his 1903 essay, “The Modern Cult of Monuments.” He writes that age value stems from an appreciation of an object’s traces of age denote its life cycle or time that has elapsed; it “manifests itself immediately through visual perception and appeals directly to our emotions” and the artifact is deemed significant irrespective of its original value or intention, but simply because it “reveals the passage of a considerable period of time.”²¹¹ A few stakeholders have acknowledged that 38 Oxley Road embodies age value as a more-than-a-century-old bungalow, marking and marked by the passage of time by way of a lack of interventions to upgrade or renovate it, which has resulted in visual signs of its age.

In this case, however, it can be seen that age value does not stem so much from emotional appreciation as Riegl posits, but rather through an evaluation of the house in relation to the particular Singaporean context. Since becoming a separate nation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore has gone through years of urban renewal, rapid growth, and modern development, and continues to be driven by a pragmatic sense of economic progress, which Neil Swidey describes in his article for the *Boston Globe* as an “unmistakable aura of if-you’re-not-moving-forward-you’re-falling-behind.”²¹² Thus, given the razing of many “old and quaint” buildings as Lee Kuan Yew once described, the age of the house as a pre-war colonial structure over a century old that is still standing and has not been extensively renovated or altered even as “neighboring houses made way for swanky multi-storey condominium projects,” can be readily recognized as a remarkable and noteworthy characteristic in itself.²¹³ As fondly described by Lee Kuan Yew’s grandson, Li Shengwu, “In a city of continual renewal, my grandparent’s house never changed. Always the same white walls, the same wooden furniture, the same high windows letting in sunlight...”²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Ler and Wee, “Plans.”

²¹¹ Riegl, “Modern Cult,” 33.

²¹² Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

²¹³ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 225; Zuraidah Ibrahim, “Decision on Preserving Lee Kuan Yew’s House Deferred,” *South China Morning Post*, Apr. 14, 2015.

²¹⁴ Chew, “Lee Kuan Yew Wanted.”

Age value, however, is contested by newness and use values, which appear to have more traction in Singaporean society at large. Lee Kuan Yew himself very apparently upheld these two values in his letters, interviews, and will regarding his desired fate for the house. Newness and use values are defined by Riegl as the greatest opponents of age value, as they militate against the premise of letting buildings age and decay. Regarding newness value, Riegl writes, “The new, in its integrity and purity, can be appreciated by anyone, regardless of education. Newness-value has always been identified with art in the eyes of the masses...The masses have always enjoyed new things and have always wanted to see the hand of man exert its creative power rather than the destructive effects of nature. Generally, only new and whole things tend to be considered beautiful; the old, fragmentary, and faded are thought to be ugly.”²¹⁵ This sentiment of championing new over old is apparent in Lee Kuan Yew’s fear that his house would fall to shambles or “become shabby” like those preserved houses of Nehru and Shakespeare that he visited.²¹⁶ As for use value, Riegl writes, “The need to maintain buildings in use is as compelling a demand as is the counterclaim of respect for age-value wherein the monument would be abandoned to its natural fate; the latter could only be entertained if equivalent works came to replace all monuments retired from use. Practical considerations allow age-value to prevail only in a few exceptional cases.”²¹⁷ Recall that Lee Kuan Yew in his third letter to the Cabinet indicated that the house should be renovated for continued use should it not be demolished, writing, “...if 38 Oxley Road is to be preserved, it needs to have its foundations reinforced and the whole building refurbished. It must then be let out for people to live in. An empty building will soon decline and decay.”²¹⁸ In his will, he adds a more stringent requirement on who can live there, wanting it to be open only to his family and descendants.

Thus, despite the fact that Lee Kuan Yew had not upgraded his house, he stipulates that if it is not demolished, the house should be restored and refurbished for future use, clearly upholding newness and use values over age value. Owing to the prohibitive costs of such acts of maintenance to prevent and rectify decay of this old house, he puts forward demolition as his preferred course of action. Thus, while through the lens of age value, the cracks in the walls of 38 Oxley Road are seen as the source of its emotional effect on visitors, serving to “testify to the fact that a monument was not created recently but at some point in the past,” they are, through a more practical perspective, construed as an economic deterrent in preserving the house.²¹⁹ As Lee Kuan Yew stated in *Hard Truths*, “You know the cost of preserving it? It’s an old house built over a hundred years ago. No foundation. The cost of maintaining it, damp comes up the wall because there’s no foundation. So the piling in the neighborhood has made cracks in my walls. But fortunately the pillars are sound.”²²⁰ Some members of the public have thus cited Lee Kuan Yew’s economic argument in voicing their concern that the burden of the purported high cost of maintenance, reinforcement, and refurbishment of 38 Oxley Road would fall on taxpayers if it

²¹⁵ Riegl, “Modern Cult,” 42.

²¹⁶ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement”; Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

²¹⁷ Riegl, “Modern Cult,” 39.

²¹⁸ Lee Hsien Loong, “Parliamentary Statement.”

²¹⁹ Riegl, “Modern Cult,” 32.

²²⁰ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

were to be preserved.²²¹ This idea that public funds could be put to better use is related to land value, and the consideration that the limited amount of land that Singapore has could be put to more productive or profitable use than preserving the house in this prime area for posterity. Money from demolition and sale of the land could also be more directly put toward the collective social good through the Lee brothers' donation of half of the property's value to charity. These all form an alternative value narrative that may be transferred through the decision on what should be done with the property.

Architectural/Aesthetic Significance

Architectural or aesthetic value is the least cited type of significance with regard to 38 Oxley Road. In fact, whether the house has any architectural value at all remains highly debatable for some. Even the *Hard Truths* interviewer prefaced his final question on house with a dismissal of any architectural significance, saying, "...It's like the Old National Library, no architectural significance but when it was torn down I think a lot of people still bemoan its loss today."²²² At the same time, there are those who claim that the house may be a unique bungalow that represents a fast-disappearing typology in Singapore, as with Singapore Heritage Society experts, Terence Chong and Yeo Kang Shua. They wrote in the *Straits Times*, "The house is over a hundred years old and, architecturally speaking, is a rare and unique type of bungalow. It used to have a "twin" bungalow (No. 40) which was, unfortunately, demolished, leaving No. 38 the only type of its kind left along Oxley Road."²²³ Furthermore, they write that a "a case may be made that it is worth preserving because there have been very little, if any, renovations or alterations made to 38, Oxley Road, thus leaving it largely in its original state."²²⁴ It may be the only one left on this particular road, but other stakeholders uphold that the building is type is not so rare after all, especially since several remaining bungalows that are more representative of the style are already protected through the URA's Good Class Bungalows scheme and conservation areas.²²⁵

Thus while a small minority of online commenters have agreed with Chong and Yeo, describing the bungalow as a "beautiful house, a piece of architectural heritage," and an "interesting building type" on its accord, more commonly found are comments that echo the *Hard Truths* interviewer in denying any notable architectural character and is significant only for its association with Lee Kuan Yew.²²⁶ As one comment on the online *Dialectic* forum reads, "The house is only significant because [Lee Kuan Yew] lived in it; there is little architectural value that cannot be found in other similar structures."²²⁷ Similarly, while Yeo Toon Joo's article in the *Online Citizen* talks much of historic significance, he does not advocate for preservation of the house based on any architectural significance, writing, "The home at

²²¹ Chan Yeow Chuan, "Mr. Lee's Wishes on House Not Unreasonable," *Straits Times*, Apr. 15, 2015; Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home"; *Ibid.*, "Over 1,450 Sign Petition."

²²² Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352. For a detailed outline of the events surrounding the demolition of the Old National Library as told from the URA perspective, see: Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 189-197

²²³ Chong and Yeo, "Due Process."

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ For more information on the protections for designated bungalows, see "Guidelines and Procedures: Landed Housing Area Plan," *Urban Redevelopment Authority*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016.

²²⁶ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

²²⁷ "Should We Preserve or Demolish Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's House at 38 Oxley Road?" *Dialectic Forum*, n.d.

Oxley Rise of independent Singapore's first prime minister is not remarkable architecturally. Many like it, even better, had been pulverized long ago by the wrecking ball –for national progress and expediency.²²⁸ Thus, citing historical trends of urban development and heritage conservation which saw the demolition of many exemplary buildings provides a basis for arguing that if other buildings of greater architectural merit have already been demolished in the past, then it would be inconsistent and insensible to preserve 38 Oxley Road, which is generally not understood as the most representative example of its type. The push back for the few proponents of 38 Oxley Road's architectural value is that because so much has been lost already and continues to be lost, the significance of this pre-war colonial bungalow is all the more elevated as a rare survivor and its value would likely increase over time as economic development and population growth brings even more turnover in the country's built environment. However, it remains that such proponents often use historic or other types of significance as their primary justification for preserving the house, and any potential architectural merit is only brought in as a supplementary reason to bolster their argument.

More often cited is potential value of the interior of the house, with furnishings from the early decades following the Second World War when Lee Kuan Yew moved in, that had not since been replaced. This has created some aesthetic interest among the Singaporean public, curious to behold the "furniture from an earlier era."²²⁹ For example, a supporter of the petition to gazette the house as a national monument and to open it to the public as a museum, writes, "There are many unique furniture [sic] from the 70s and 80s and maybe even the 60s which may give our young people a taste of the designs of the era back then." Another supporter emphasized aesthetic value in that the interior was a rare representative of the stylistic tastes of a bygone time, stating, "It's not just the fact that PM LKY stayed in this house, it's also the fact that very few houses look like that anymore. The furniture, interior deco are all worth preserving."²³⁰ However, this aesthetic value is not as popularly subscribed to as when it is activated as social and political values, upon which proponents characterize the modest furnishings and lack of renovation of 38 Oxley Road as a means to transmit to and inculcate in younger and future generations of Singaporeans the value of frugality and inspire good governance. The consideration of only the interior furnishings as the primary physical attribute or bearer of the values at hand, opens up greater possibilities for potential outcomes for transferring the aesthetic, social, and political values, where the interpretation of these values may occur *ex situ* or without necessitating the preservation of the whole house, such as with the *We Built A Nation* exhibit, which extracts some of the furniture from the house and displays them in the National Museum of Singapore, some in semi-recreations of the rooms they once occupied.

Economic Significance

Economic significance is essential in the analysis of this case since the economic argument is so prominent in the statements made by Lee Kuan Yew, and in considering the character of Singaporean

²²⁸ Yeo Toon Joo, "When National Interest Be Allowed To Rise Above Personal Ones," *Online Citizen*, Apr. 23, 2015.

²²⁹ Chan and Tan. "Devoted Husband."

²³⁰ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

society and previous heritage conservation decisions often lost to redevelopment potential or directed toward the purpose of economic gain. The consideration of economic value has only more recently entered the heritage discourse. As Randall Mason notes, it is becoming more pressing for preservationists to define the value of their goods and work on economic terms, especially with “the reality of globalization and the increasing dominance of market-based approaches to social concerns.”²³¹ However, as Marta de la Torre notes, economic value, given its practical and philosophical challenges, continues to be “seldom considered a true heritage value to be taken into consideration when establishing the significance of a place, and yet is often used as a justification for conservation.” The recognition of economic value in heritage decisions is crucial, because as she writes, “Without doubt, it is often the value best understood by political authorities. Economic value continues to be problematic: it cannot be ignored, and even when it is, it can trump all other value considerations.”²³²

In such a pragmatic and land-scarce society, the consideration of economic value is no stranger to Singaporean heritage management. Already it has been recognized that the fall of tourism revenue was a key catalyst for government interest and involvement in heritage conservation. To date, many heritage wins, losses, compromises, and compensations have been worked out on or justified along economic lines, especially in terms of determining what may be the best, in other words, economically profitable use of land. As geographers Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang note that despite the current ethos and government efforts to evaluate and promote heritage conservation as an “economically viable and sustainable activity which does not conflict in principle with economic development but serves to realise the full potential of an area,” that “even with the incorporation of urban conservation into economic and urban plans, there are specific instances where buildings and areas with claims to historical and/or architectural significance had to give way to what the state views as a more pragmatic or rational use of land.”²³³

For instance, both the Old National Library and more recently, the Bukit Brown cemetery, despite being frequented and treasured by the community, became victims of highway construction.²³⁴ Another demonstration of the importance of economics in Singapore's heritage decisions is the commercialization of heritage sites, such as with the controversial conversion of the downtown Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus school site into a complex of restaurants, bars, event spaces, and even a nightclub.²³⁵ Perhaps a more appropriate new use for the space may have been found, but making it into a museum, for instance, would likely not be as profitable or economically self-sustainable, and so it

²³¹ Randall Mason, “Economics and Heritage Conservation: Concepts, Values, and Agendas for Research,” *Economics and Heritage Conservation: A Meeting Organized by the Getty Conservation Institute, December 1998*, Getty Center, Los Angeles, ed. Randall Mason (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1999), 2.

²³² de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 161.

²³³ Brenda S. A. Yeoh and Shirlena Huang, “The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore: The Case of the Kampong Glam Historic District.” *Cities* 13.6 (1996): 416.

²³⁴ For the Old National Library case, see Lily Kong, *Conserving the Past, Creating the Future* (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2011), 189-197; For Bukit Brown, see Mayo Martin, “SIFA 2015: Drama Box’s Poignant Tribute to Bukit Brown Cemetery,” *Today*, Sep. 21, 2015; Linda Lim, “Preserving a Shared Heritage,” *Business Times*, Mar. 1, 2014.

²³⁵ For more information on the CHIJMES case, see Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 199-204.

could be argued that commercialization at least saved the physical building, if in sacrificing some of its character and values, than demolition for redevelopment into another mall for that downtown core. The argument thus goes that heritage sites can only be saved if they find economically viable uses, in the same way that in Singapore and elsewhere, convincing private owners to conserve their significant buildings relies often on the provision of financial and tax incentives. An example in Singapore is the URA's "Conservation Initiated by Private Owners' Scheme," which grants owners bonus gross floor area if they volunteer their historically or architecturally significant buildings for conservation.²³⁶ This scheme has, for example, enabled the preservation for commercial use of seven art-deco buildings at Loke Yew Street and Armenian Street, and two bungalows that were turned into clubhouses for condominiums.²³⁷

The economic values of 38 Oxley Road are land value and heritage tourism and branding value. The house sits on prime land as located near the city's downtown commercial retail corridor of Orchard Road. While the current master plan designates the area as a "low-rise residential precinct," Lee Kuan Yew predicted a growth of this area, perhaps a necessary one with Singapore's growing economy, population, and scarcity of land. In his *Hard Truths* interview, he suggested that changes to the planning rules would allow further development of the neighborhood, benefiting not just the owner of the eventual building that could replace the old bungalow, but owners of neighboring properties as well, who now have the ability to build higher. In Lee Kuan Yew's words, "go up, [and] the land value will go up."²³⁸ Another way in which the decision on 38 Oxley Road may incur economic benefits is if the site serves as a tourist attraction or as a branding tool to promote the nation in the international arena.

Thus, in considering the 38 Oxley Road case, there emerges the question of whether the potential economic benefits from the use of the house for branding and heritage tourism purposes outweigh those from demolition and redevelopment of the \$24 million plot, and the accompanying donation by the Lee brothers. Both these outcomes transmit different narratives, the first of Lee Kuan Yew and related history at 38 Oxley Road and the second, of development and progress in a pragmatic society. Both therefore work toward achieving different collective goals and benefits for future generations. At the same time, it is clear that there are many other heritage values or aspects of these economic values that elude straightforward economic measurement. Certainly, as will be apparent in the next chapter's key value narratives, heritage tourism and branding value is not necessarily always motivated by the prospects for economic gain, and could, for instance, be instead driven by patriotic sentiment. Furthermore, the benefits (and costs) of heritage tourism are also not just economic, but may be social, in fostering cultural exchange or symbolic, in strengthening identity, among others. Therefore, as Randall Mason concludes that even as economics enter the discussion, current economic valuation methods are "unable to account for some of the most salient values and virtues of heritage—namely, historical meaning, symbolic and spiritual values, political functions, aesthetic qualities, and the capacity of heritage to help communities negotiate and form their identity. In short, heritage cannot be

²³⁶ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 59.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

²³⁸ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

valued simply in terms of price.”²³⁹ Even within the generalized economically driven and pragmatically minded Singaporean societal context, there are some commenters advocating for the house’s preservation who agree with Mason’s conclusion, declaring,

“it may be sitting on a piece of high value land, but you can’t put a price on history”²⁴⁰;

“...[its] History is priceless and can never be replicated”;²⁴¹ and

“I am signing because I respect Mr Lee Kuan Yew for what he has done for us. He is a great man whom had geared the entire Singapore from a 3rd class to a 1st class country. Preserving his house as a museum serves good history for our descendants, for them to feel and get to know Mr Lee Kuan Yew better so they can be proud and patriotic Singaporeans. I view this importance more [than] land worth as that is only a piece of paper and land. But once this [is] demolished, we can never get it back.”²⁴²

Such nuances in the consideration of economic value as a valid heritage value can be revealed when the two economic values of land value and heritage tourism and branding value are construed as forming part of larger value narratives, whereupon they interact with non-economic values and are traded off against these through different scenarios for potential decisional outcomes.

Social Significance

The consideration of social significance is increasingly evident and important in values-based approaches that seek to be more participatory and community- rather than expert-driven in their practice. First recognized as its own class of values in policy and practice in the Australian Burra Charter (1979), and gaining more elaboration and prominence in subsequent versions, social value stems from societal or community perceptions of meaning, rather than more “scientific” expert-discerned values such as historic and architectural values that were prioritized in the Athens (1939) and Venice (1964) Charters.²⁴³ While a values-based approach subscribes to a principle of incommensurability, or the idea that all values should be considered with equal weight²⁴⁴, there are some theorists who elevate the category of social value above all others, particularly those who see the potential of using heritage to achieve goals of social justice and human rights within what has become known as the rights-based approach to heritage conservation. To quote Keith Emerick,

While there is growing recognition internationally from the heritage sector that conservation and heritage need to be made relevant and inclusive...and to accept that

²³⁹ Mason, “Economics and Heritage Conservation,” 2.

²⁴⁰ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

²⁴¹ Navaratnarajah, “Call to Preserve LKYs Home.”

²⁴² Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

²⁴³ de la Torre, “Values and Heritage Conservation,” 158.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 161; Article 5.1 of the Burra Charter states, “Conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.”

heritage has a political dimension, practitioners are still reticent to see beyond evidential, aesthetic and art-historical values to social value, even though examination of past practice...illustrates that conservation practice could be socially aware. We should aim for a situation where social value can happily outrank evidential and aesthetic value because the gains in the enhancement of significance, story, meaning and change are recognized by heritage practitioners as worthwhile. In time, heritage practitioners may be able to see that such qualities are in reality the continuation of a developing and living cultural heritage.²⁴⁵

Similarly, Ian Hodder in his theory of a heritage right that seeks well-being, lays out the way in which subsuming other kinds of values into social value or reframing them as such, is essential in understanding and ensuring the societal relevance and importance of heritage and its conservation. He writes,

It seems to me that, in the long run, heritage that has no social value will not continue to be funded and preserved. Indeed, it will probably cease to be defined as heritage. But the very fact that we identify an object or monument as of high quality, implies that it has meaning for people at some level. Artifacts of great aesthetic value contribute to cultural life and, thus, under the various UN declarations and conventions, they matter and they enhance well-being. But, under the formulation presented here, they are not protected because they are of aesthetic value. They are protected because our valuation of them as aesthetic entangles them in a particular social context in which they are of consequence to well-being.²⁴⁶

In the case of 38 Oxley Road, many arguments to preserve the house and open it as a museum to the public, especially those coming from the Singaporean public at large, stem from recognizing its social significance. In line with Hodder's idea, the social values attached to 38 Oxley Road have emerged when other types of values, such as historic and aesthetic values deriving from the house's ties to Singapore's history, its moment of independence, and its founding father, and its modest interior, are re-conceptualized as directly having the potential to serve a social purpose, specifically as a tool for educating future generations on the nation's history, inculcating cultural values, and building national identity and social cohesion. The last nation-building value crosses political and symbolic significance categories, and will be discussed as part of a key value narrative in the next section. Providing a persuasive summary of these social values deputy political editor of the *Straits Times*, Fiona Chan, champions "the power that physical symbols hold in education and nation building." She writes, "A country's history and values are difficult to absorb from even the best textbooks. They are better imbibed when brought to life, such as through museums or conserved buildings," whereupon future generations can indulge in an "immersive and participatory experience" by "walking through the rooms where history was made, and seeing the simple furniture and fittings that embodied Lee's lifelong ideals of pragmatism and thrift." She concludes that "such real-life history lessons are especially key for a

²⁴⁵ Keith Emerick, *Conserving and Managing Ancient Monuments: Heritage, Democracy, and Inclusion* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2014), 219.

²⁴⁶ Ian Hodder, "Cultural Heritage Rights: From Ownership and Descent to Justice and Well-Being," *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no. 4 (2010): 877.

young country that has always looked forward, sometimes at the expense of remembering the past, and tends to prize progress over sentiment.”²⁴⁷

As with nation-building value, the other two values that fall into the category of social significance feed into different value narratives. Their focus is on educating future generations, and it is worth noting that promoting educational value is one of the stated goals in the National Heritage Board’s mission. First, 38 Oxley Road has educational value in providing a first-hand learning experience, a living history lesson, where the history of Singapore and the figure who was a vital part of that history, first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, can be displayed and taught to current and future generations. As with associative value, there are thus two aspects of this educational value, one related to teaching future generations about Lee Kuan Yew himself, and the other more broadly about the historic events that occurred in the house as understood within a larger narrative of the history of the nation and its founding. As one petitioner highlighted, “It is here that our founding father had lived till his last day. And it is here that all the major decisions of the nation [were] made. It will be good that Singaporeans and tourist [sic] can visit and reminisce the lifestyle of a great leader. In addition to lessons in the history book about our founding father, a visit here will add reality to what they’ve studied.”²⁴⁸ Similarly, the power of a full spatial experience in historical education is sought by this commenter who wrote, “Human Beings are embodied creatures. While we interact with abstract ideas or emotions, embodiments can reach, touch and transform us on a much deeper level. Indeed, it is concrete embodiments that establish a continuity with the past, if only in a limited fashion. Sure, we can tell the next generation about LKY in abstract, but nothing will communicate more powerfully to them than a ‘space’ where our children can engage with the past in the fullness of their bodily experience.”²⁴⁹

Beyond a history lesson, stakeholders believe that the house can serve as an effective tool for teaching important cultural values to future generations, especially that of frugality, which is captured vividly in the pragmatic leader’s “Spartan” home.²⁵⁰ A petitioner, for instance, wrote, “38 Oxley Road should be preserved for us to teach history to our children beyond textbooks and it is also the foundation site of showing his values and principles in his life of committing to Singapore.”²⁵¹

As earlier mentioned, social value became explicitly recognized as a factor in evaluating the significance of a potential heritage site in the 1993 publication by the URA and NHB, even though it is absent from the criteria for significance in the Preservation of Monuments Act. According to the 1993 publication, a site with social value serves as “a focus for spiritual, political or national cultural sentiment for the nation as whole or for a social group.”²⁵² Heritage decision-makers have the opportunity to work toward a collective good, to distribute the benefits (and costs) of their work as broadly and fairly as possible, broad range of present, but more importantly, future stakeholders too. Thus, benefitting the

²⁴⁷ Fiona Chan, “Straddling Fine Line.”

²⁴⁸ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 349; Judith Tan, “Mighty Man’s Modest Home.”; Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

²⁵¹ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

²⁵² Yu, “Built Heritage Conservation Policy,” 7-8.

“nation as a whole” should be prioritized over exclusively satisfying particular social groups, a principle which is in line with not only a values-based approach but also contextually relevant as it is one of the five national values of Singapore, codified in a white paper in 1991. This white paper was initiated by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong to “forge a national identity in the face of a changing society with evolving values” that marked a feared shift away from Confucian-rooted communitarian values as Singapore became more exposed to more Western individualistic values. As explained on the National Library of Singapore’s webpage, this shared national value has two components: “The first component, “nation before community” signifies that national interests should supersede community interests. Various communities should not pursue their own interests to the detriment of the nation – for example, pertaining to Singapore’s racial and religious harmony [which is the fifth shared value]. The second component, “society before self”, emphasises that society’s interests should take precedence over the individual’s; the latter should always be willing to compromise by giving up his or her personal prerogative for the betterment of society at large.”²⁵³

This shared national value of “nation before community and society above self” is particularly relevant in the consideration of the political value tied to potential future interests of the People’s Action Party, a particular social group with a specific political agenda. It also comes into play when considering the tensions between public access and privacy concerns of individual stakeholders in the decisional outcome, and regarding whether public participation is warranted in the decision-making process.

Of all value categories, it might be argued that social values are most directly tied to the need for public access because it is “the public-space, shared-space qualities” that allow for the values to be transmitted to future generations. In this case, it may be worth considering how partial preservation outcomes that may remove the furniture onto a different site, for instance, affect the transmission of the different social values, as will be discussed in the scenario analysis. Furthermore, while opening the house will disregard the privacy concerns of Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo, primary stakeholders in this case, it may be argued that the social benefits derived from opening the house to the public for the purposes of education, inculcating cultural values, and nation-building, trump these private interests of individuals who are already deceased. The matter of Lee Kuan Yew’s will complicates the situation with the children representing his and Kwa’s wishes and there are also stakeholders who believe that the family’s privacy should be respected. In fact, of the 77% who supported the family’s decision to demolish the house according to the YouGov poll conducted in December, 2015, 39% gave as the reason that they “should respect the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew and his family’s privacy.”²⁵⁴ Thus, while some argue that the same rules of privacy do not apply for figures in public service, even after they retire, there are others who believe these public figures need to be afforded at least the privacy of their home, if nothing else, especially since they have already had to sacrifice many of their “personal freedoms.”²⁵⁵ A few

²⁵³ Lim Tin Seng, “Shared Values,” *National Library Board: Singapore Infopedia*, accessed May 5, 2016. http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_542_2004-12-18.html.

²⁵⁴ “The Use of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew’s House.”

²⁵⁵ “Should We Preserve.”

comments to the latter point are included below, the last of which also features aspects of the adoring or idolizing mindset that permeates that of symbolic commemorative value, later discussed.

“As much as I like to preserve Mr Lee’s House as it is, it is right that it isn’t for public viewing though I’d like to take a peek myself too. It’s an invasion into his private personal life. Imagine people trampling all over the place to scrutinize where he bathes, sleeps, writes, reads...etc. NO NO...I understand why Mrs Lee didn’t like the idea of people invading the house. Many people feel the same way of our own personal lives and of busybodies”²⁵⁶;

“Do you know why LKY wanted his 38 Oxley Rise [sic] house to be demolished and not preserved after his death? He was doing it to honour his wife’s wishes to protect the family’s privacy after they were gone. She did not want strangers trudging into her home – bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, the living room and the hall where she and her husband brought up the three children. Don’t intrude into other’s [sic] private lives if they let you know beforehand you are not welcome. There are so many other ways to honour LKY and his wife, if you really want to...”²⁵⁷;

“Personally, I believe it is because the house was, to him and his family, a *private home*. It was a place for his family to reside away from the prying eye of the public. By opening up the house to the public, it would be akin to allowing people to enter your own private residence, reversing all the years of effort in maintaining his family’s privacy. The best way to ensure that the sanctity of his *home* is not intruded upon is to make the building unavailable to the public, i.e. demolish it. I don’t believe that there is any ulterior motive for demolishing it”²⁵⁸; and

“We should respect the wishes of the owner. Would you like it if someone comes and take away your house that is your [ancestral] house and say they want it for heritage. Just because Mr Lee is a historical giant does not mean Singapore owns him and all that belongs to him. He has already sacrificed his entire life to this country and donating millions to the causes of Singapore. We have no right to rob him of his ancestral home in the name of heritage preservation. [Its] daylight robbery and shame of Singaporeans of even thinking to do so!!! [sic]”²⁵⁹

In the end, however, the insistence of privacy nevertheless represents a past or present stakeholder interest that would bear little significance many generations down the road. This point is acknowledged in Chia Boon Teck’s letter to the *Straits Times* in 2011, which acknowledges the family’s concerns about privacy but is hopeful for a workaround for the future collective good. He writes that an “important consideration for not preserving MM Lee’s home would be if he or his family should be kept private, but if “the authorities could preserve MM lee’s home while addressing policy issues to the

²⁵⁶ Navaratnarajah, “Call to Preserve LKYs Home.”

²⁵⁷ Nicholas Yong, “Lee Siblings.”

²⁵⁸ “Why was Lee Kuan Yew So Insistent on Demolishing the Oxley Road House Quickly?” *Quora Forum*, Apr. 2015.

²⁵⁹ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

satisfaction of his family members, the preservation of his home might turn out to be one of the best things for future generations.”²⁶⁰

Political Significance

38 Oxley Road is inextricably tied to the political history and politics of Singapore. This house was where the first prime minister lived for the greater part of his life, where the third prime minister grew up, where Singapore was founded as an independent nation, and where the political party that - was to govern it from that moment since was formed. As with social values, the political values ascribed to 38 Oxley Road are closely linked to or rooted in other kinds of values. The comprehension of Lee Kuan Yew’s frugal lifestyle that is visible in the house’s lack of modern luxuries which acts as the basis of social educational value, also forms the foundation for the political value of demonstrating the non-corrupt nature of Lee’s governance to serve as an example for current and future Singaporean politicians. While this political value is thus broadly applicable and beneficial for the nation as a whole, the other political value which arises from the house’s historic association and symbolic power as the birthplace of the People’s Action Party is only applicable and beneficial to that particular group of the PAP. The transmission of this value to future generations is thus highly controversial, especially since it represents a particular stakeholder group with a particular political agenda.

As the party’s creation in November, 1954, is tied to the house, its basement dining room in particular, the house can be perceived as a symbol of the party, and can be one of its sources of legitimacy and power. Crucially, the house provides a concrete connection between the current political party and its pioneer members, and especially Lee Kuan Yew, whose house it is, whom continue to be widely admired and revered for all their great historical deeds, in fighting for Singapore’s autonomy from the British and then, Malaysia, and raising the country from squalor to one of the richest economies, not just in Asia, but in the world. “After all,” as the authors of *Men in White* write, “PAP was incubated in the bosom of his home.”²⁶¹ Some of this respect and admiration is captured in the words of Minister of Culture, Community, and Youth, Lawrence Wong. Launching the *We Built A Nation* exhibit in September, 2015, he notes,

The exhibition should honour not just one man, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, but our founding generation of leaders. Mr Lee himself was always conscious that he did not act alone, but as a member of a team....As he put it, ‘running a Government is not unlike conducting an orchestra.’ No prime minister can achieve much without an able team...The single decisive factor that made for Singapore’s development was the ability of its ministers and the high quality of the civil servants who supported them...Our old guard were men of honour and moral courage. He said that they were ‘an extinct breed of men who went into politics because of the passion of their convictions.’ So this was a rare and unique team, a team that was multi-racial, who complemented one another’s strengths, trusted

²⁶⁰ Chia Boon Teck. “Preserve MM’s Home for Future Generations,” *Straits Times*, Jan. 22, 2011.

²⁶¹ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 184.

one another implicitly, and through their joint efforts, they created a fair and just society in Singapore.²⁶²

However, the generalization of the “old guard” does not indicate that the house’s association with the PAP’s founding members is not without complications and controversy; in reality, some of its founding members ended up falling out of favor with Lee Kuan Yew and the Party, ending up as political prisoners.²⁶³ The continued existence and dominance of the PAP means it has the power and ability to craft a strong national story, eschewing any of its defectors and adversaries or portraying them in a negative light, and so does not preclude the contentious political use of Lee Kuan Yew’s house as a platform to tell the beginnings of a partisan national story, which is essentially the PAP story. In the words of one of the founding members who was imprisoned and exiled, Fong Swee Suan, “Modern Singapore and PAP are inseparable.”²⁶⁴ 38 Oxley Road thus has the potential to serve as a place where they can clearly link the birth of the PAP with the birth of Singapore and portray history in a way which feeds into their political goals and image. The current and future PAP can thus capitalize on this link as a means to win legitimacy, approval, and votes, by reminding citizens of their inherited legacy, which would become even more crucial in a post-Lee Kuan Yew era. After all, the PAP sells itself on adhering to the “founding ideals” that Lee Kuan Yew and other founding members had put in place to “successfully govern and transform Singapore into a modern miracle,” and the house can be a symbolic locus of those ideals and values upon which the party continues to operate and obtain public support, including honesty, multiracialism, meritocracy, self-reliance, reliability, pragmatism, unity, far-sightedness, decisiveness, compassion, and resiliency.²⁶⁵ More cynical or critical members of the public, however, caution against the tendency to rest on one’s laurels, arguing that the use of the house as a symbol of the PAP may provide a false sense of political reality. This may especially arise as a critique of the September, 2015, elections, whereupon many acknowledge that the PAP’s victory was helped along by the concurrence of the nation’s fiftieth birthday, which provided grounds for celebration and reflection on how far the country had come under the Party’s rule, made especially more poignant with the passing of its highly respected leader, founding prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew.²⁶⁶

There is thus a worry that preserving 38 Oxley Road would lead to an “elevation” or “abuse” of Lee Kuan Yew’s persona to “garner some sort of cult-like following, with the use of his home at 38 Oxley Road as some sort of symbolic locus of his persona.” He writes, “Yes, the late Mr Lee is highly revered by many, but the future is and has always been uncertain; certainly, the current generation of the PAP does not trade heavily upon his name and reputation to garner support – but if/when the party, or some emergent party begins to use his name to hearken to better times, instead of proving their worth and positions based on their own merit, then the fewer symbols of the late Mr Lee, the better.”²⁶⁷ In this

²⁶² Chia and Siong, “Historical Documents.”

²⁶³ National Library Board, “People’s Action Party is Formed,” *HistorySG*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/741da0eb-518a-49b9-9902-06fd499bd5ba>.

²⁶⁴ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*.

²⁶⁵ “Our Party.”

²⁶⁶ “Singapore Election”; Kurlantzick, “People’s Action Party”; “Resounding Election Victory.”

²⁶⁷ “Should We Preserve.”

comment, the writer is not referring specifically to the PAP but to the Lee Kuan Yew association, and the concern about using this house as a symbol of power and good governance for political gain, is well-marked.

Symbolic Significance

Given that seminal events in the founding of the Singaporean nation took place in the basement dining room of 38 Oxley Road, it is not surprising that the property may be seen as a symbol of the nation and its birth. This symbolic value can be activated for social and political ends, including nation-building or legitimizing the People's Action Party's rule. Also deriving from historic associative value, some stakeholders also see the property as symbolic of Lee Kuan Yew and his legacy, and so propose that the site may be used to commemorate the founding father in some way.

In the wave of grief brought about by his passing, some of those who signed the petition for gazetting the house as a national monument expressed the need to keep the memory of Lee Kuan Yew alive by preserving anything related to him, including his house. They write,

“Why would the [government] even think about abolishing his house?????? [sic] The [man] is and was a legend, and any memory of him should be kept alive, be it a house or a painting,”;

“A legend has passed on and we should preserve what he has left behinds. Memories of him...” [sic]; and

“I feel for the voice of the people to cherish every bit of what's left of a great Singapore founder.”²⁶⁸

Thus, 38 Oxley Road gains symbolic value when it is seen as a medium of Lee Kuan Yew's memory, and as one way to pass on his memory and legacy to future generations. For instance, one commenter thought the house would serve just as well or better than other forms of memorialization, writing, “MM is a big big part of Singapore history. This house as a National Heritage allows us to remember this Great Man, in the years to come. No need to erect a statue or name a road or building after him- this is a good reminder.”²⁶⁹ Similarly, another commenter agreed that the already existing house could serve as the best monument, writing, “It is a part of our young nation's history. And a more authentic way to remember LKY than to erect statues or any other monuments.”²⁷⁰

Something as personal as a person's living space, his home, is also the best way to feel “close” to a man who will be missed by many Singaporeans even though known publicly rather than personally because his actions and policies have shaped their lives, especially since there is no grave to visit. The

²⁶⁸ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

house is perceived as constituting a part of Lee Kuan Yew that should be held on to for remembrance. Petitioner comments that illustrate these points include:

“We really love and missed [sic] Mr Lee Kuan Yew and we need to preserve our founding father’s house as part of Singapore history and heritage. We want our descendants to live, [breathe], remember his humble living and how he build the nation Singapore. We do not want him to be forgotten and have a closer touch and feel of him”;

“We should not erase any fond memory of him or his belongings. these are the only things that we have left that can help to feel closeness with him. please consider before removing irreversible memories [sic]”;

“this is something very private & personal to Mr LKY and his family and [I] would like to keep everything untouched in memory to feel him. He's forever in our hearts”;

“This is everything that is part of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, we should definitely keep it to remind ourselves of the effort, determination and strength that he has put in to Singapore!”; and

“Demolishing it will mean that a part of him has disappeared. We relish whatever bit of memory that we have of him that is left.”²⁷¹

In promoting a memorialization purpose for the site, there is a tendency among many commenters from the Singaporean public toward hero-worship and enshrinement, which is very much against what Lee Kuan Yew wanted. These characterize him as an unquestionably as a “great man” to be nationally or universally venerated and “remembered forever,” without much mind paid to any shortcomings or controversies in his leadership.²⁷² As one supporter to gazette the house as a national monument simply put as his reason for signing the petition, “A GREAT MAN” should be remembered.”²⁷³ These adulations, making Lee Kuan Yew into more of a larger-than-life figure than even when he was alive, oversteps his determination never to generate a personality cult around himself. These kind of sentiments have been so prevalent that Lee Hsien Loong had to remind the Parliament as they reflected on how best to honor his father, “We are not canonising a person, we are honouring a human being.”²⁷⁴

Indeed, the death of Lee Kuan Yew and the issue of 38 Oxley Road has sparked much debate over how to appropriately honor the founding father and whether preserving his house as a memorial should be part of this. After all, Lee Kuan Yew’s wish was to demolish the house and should not an act of commemoration respect his wish? This is essentially the crux of the dilemma regarding the symbolic value of commemorating Lee Kuan Yew and his legacy, which presents an important consideration in

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Chang, “No Hasty Decisions.”

debating the different value narratives that will be told through a decision on this case and its outcome. The dilemma is well-illustrated in online dialogue. As one exchange of comments to an article went, one Singaporean wrote, “I really hope they don’t tear down the house that our great leader lived,” to which another replied, “If you think he was a great leader, [then] you shouldn’t deny his last wish.”²⁷⁵ Another conversation on the comment page of another article followed a similar pattern, where the response to one commenter’s question, “Why are some people so ready to destroy the house even as they profess admiration for the owner?” was “It is because we respected and admired this great man that we want to see his wishes carried out.”²⁷⁶

As Lee Hsien Yang stated in an interview at opening of the *We Built A Nation* exhibit in September 2015, regarding what he thought about the calls from some Singaporeans to preserve the 38 Oxley Road house, he replied, “I suppose the question is if we respect Mr Lee’s wishes, and how do you express that we want to honour the man when we can’t respect his wishes?...He did not ask many things of Singaporeans. This is the one thing that mattered to him. Surely, we can find it in our hearts.”²⁷⁷ His statement drives home the preservation conundrum, which has led to the consideration that perhaps the demolition of the house may be the more appropriate and effective way to honor Lee Kuan Yew as it will honor his wish, put so unambiguously in his will. As seen through the YouGov poll results published in December 2015, in line with Lee Hsien Yang’s appeal, 77% Singaporeans supported the demolition of the house, the majority (61%) of these giving the reason that this should be done in order to respect Lee Kuan Yew’s wish. Written comments also show a similar reaction, with some members of the Singaporean public going as far as to characterize any effort to preserve 38 Oxley Road an act of disrespect because it goes against the founding father’s explicit wishes. Such comments include:

“This is the private wish of a great man... We should have the graciousness to respect it period.....To go against his wish, tantamount to blatant disrespect for our most beloved and greatest leader of our time”²⁷⁸;

“Shouldn’t we respect his wish? Isn’t that the least Singaporeans could do?”²⁷⁹;

“hey! let's respect the old man shall we? when he said tear it down, just demolish it. After all, He is the one who built up our country, show Him some respect shall we?”²⁸⁰;

“LKY was no ordinary man and I am sure the majority of Singaporeans will want to see his last wishes respected”²⁸¹;

²⁷⁵ Nicholas Yong, “Lee Siblings.”

²⁷⁶ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

²⁷⁷ Salleh, “Lee’s Values Not Rooted.”

²⁷⁸ Navaratnarajah, “Call to Preserve LKYs Home.”

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

²⁸¹ Ibid.

“...we should respect the deep-seated wishes of LKY and Mrs LKY who have subordinated their entire lives to serve Singapore and the wishes of the immediate family as well. I think this is the least we can do for LKY. I'm completely befuddled for the call to preserve LKY's home despite his expressed wishes. How can we possibly say that we respect the man, that we are grateful for all he has done, that we owe a debt that cannot be repaid when we callously and completely disregard and disrespect his very last wish?”²⁸²;

“Singaporeans should respect the wish of our founding father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, to demolish his house. To attempt to keep the house at 38, Oxley Road is to ignore and disregard his wish, and the wishes of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his siblings. This is not the way to repay them for their excellent service in leading the country”²⁸³;

“Personally, I hope that the house will be demolished. Although I'm all for preservation of national heritage, I feel that honouring and respecting our founding father's wish is more important. This wasn't a wish that he made in a casual conversation; he had reiterated it multiple times and for us to claim that we want to honour him and yet go against his wish is blatant hypocrisy”²⁸⁴; and

“Respect LKY, respect his last wish.... period.”²⁸⁵

Furthermore, the placement of Lee Kuan Yew's wish in his last will and testament has also been of special significance to some, elevating, in their eyes, the imperative for the house to be demolished as he wanted. The following comments illustrate this viewpoint:

“We should follow the dead man's will rather than to go against it and especially that dead man is once a great man. His last wish should be followed”²⁸⁶;

“I am sure many of us would want to see this part of Singapore history to remain. However, my feeling is that Mr. Lee KY wanted it to be demolished as this is a very sacred personal space which he protected from the public's eyes. Let the family decide and I would think a man's last wish is very important and should be respected”²⁸⁷;

“Would you go against the deceased of your utmost beloved? I am sure if it is something attainable you will not. It's also a form of respect. I am [a little taken] aback that even a deceased wish

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Liew Eng Leng, “Replica of House in Museum the Best Option,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 17, 2015.

²⁸⁴ Crystal Ang, “Demolishing 38 Oxley Road: The Case For, And Against,” *Must Share News*, Apr. 15, 2015.

²⁸⁵ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

²⁸⁶ Navaratnarajah, “Over 1,450 Sign Petition.”

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

has to be contended. Least his wish is causing some 'inconveniences' then it should not be [honoured]. Therefore, I hope they can honour founding father of Singapore his 1 puny wish...[sic]²⁸⁸; and

“This matter need not be so complicated. Just ask yourself. When the time comes for you to go, do you not want others to respect your last wishes and follow your will. Whether a great man or a common folk passes away, I am sure ultimately, he or she will want his or her will to be respected.”²⁸⁹

As evidenced by this array of quotes, the debate between preserving the house in remembrance of Lee Kuan Yew and demolishing the house in respect of his will is a central dilemma in this case. This dilemma is taken up with regard to key value narratives, which in effect, define and forward his legacy in different ways through different decisional outcomes.

Chapter Summary

This cultural significance assessment for 38 Oxley Road has outlined all the current values that stakeholders ascribe to it. From a broad consideration of all the values, those values which are most frequently cited, indicating their general relevance to the particular societal context, and which have the greatest potential for serving the collective good rather than individual or niche interests, are prioritized. While a typological framework was used as a means of organizing the different heritage values into categories, in reality, many stakeholders put forward multiple values at once. For example, one petitioner wrote, ““I agree with the idea of turning it into a museum in remembrance of our late founding father...Lee Kuan Yew. The next and many [generations] to come should be reminded of his life's work to transform Singapore to what it is today. It will be a reminder of how our late Mr Lee Kuan [Yew] lead by example through his frugal lifestyle. His incorruptible, determine character which in turn influence and shape the Singapore Government. What better place to have this museum [than] the very place that Mr Lee stayed all his life! [sic].”²⁹⁰ This petitioner therefore ascribes to the site symbolic commemorative value, the social value of inculcating the cultural value of frugality, and the political value of exemplifying good governance, and envisions their transfer to future generations of Singaporeans through turning the house into a museum. This is why the organization of values into key narratives proves more useful than the typologies in moving from the cultural significance assessment to a scenario analysis of possible futures for the property, as such an organization can more clearly show how and which values are related, and so how they may be collectively preserved or projected into the future.

²⁸⁸ Nicholas Yong, “Lee Siblings.”

²⁸⁹ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

²⁹⁰ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

6 Scenario Analysis

Within current preservation practice, values are recognized as concerning the present, tied to contemporary stakeholders and the surrounding current context. Despite representing a general shift away from the more traditional materials-based paradigms in arguing that values are ascribed rather than intrinsic, a values-based approach still largely operates on the premise that the ascribed values are nevertheless ultimately embodied in a site's physical attributes or character defining features. The presumption is that by preserving those features, the values that stakeholders have ascribed to the site will be transferred to the future. However, the exercise of identifying physical features in relationship to contemporary values to determine what physical aspects of a site should be preserved remains firmly rooted in the present, and does not fully understand how those values might be more effectively transmitted to the future. Thus, the use of a scenario analysis methodology allows values-driven heritage decision-makers to move beyond being caught up in the present to making more future-looking decisions based on not where the values currently lie in the present physical context, but how they see those values being transferred to future generations.

Scenario analysis, also known as scenario planning, is a strategic-management tool that has frequently been employed in business, government, and urban and environmental planning contexts. This method is rooted in the creation of different scenarios, which are “essentially storylines that can describe possible futures.”²⁹¹ It represents a break from strategic planning methods that begin with a “single-point forecast of the future—a single prediction—and then tries to control things well enough to win in that future.”²⁹² In contrast, scenario planning encourages the consideration of “multiple alternative scenarios, so you can pick the one that yields the best win-win for all involved.”²⁹³ As futurist Peter Schwartz, writes, “Scenario planning is not a tool for making predictions. The future remains as unpredictable as ever. Rather it is a tool for better decision making. The test of good scenarios is not an accurate prediction of the future. Rather the measure of good scenario planning is whether we made a better decision as a result of having considered the possible scenarios.”²⁹⁴

The use of scenario analysis in the heritage field has as yet not been well-characterized, although it seems to have gained some traction in recent years as a potential method to enhance decision-making. In the World Heritage arena, for instance, scenario analysis has been put forth as a method for better anticipating and preparing for the impact of climate change on World Heritage sites²⁹⁵, and for enabling managers of marine sites to “create an optimized set of management actions to meet the goal of conserving [their Outstanding Universal Value] while simultaneously allowing a

²⁹¹ Fanny Douvere, *World Heritage Marine Sites: Managing Effectively the World's Most Iconic Marine Protected Areas* (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2015), 55.

²⁹² James A. Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures: Scenario Planning as a Tool for a Better Tomorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

²⁹³ Douvere, *World Heritage Marine Sites*, 55.

²⁹⁴ Peter Schwartz, “Foreword,” James A. Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures: Scenario Planning as a Tool for a Better Tomorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²⁹⁵ Augustin Colette, Ed., *Climate Change and World Heritage: Report on Predicting and Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage and Strategy to Assist States Parties to Implement Appropriate Management Responses* (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007).

sustainable socio-economic development” through providing “alternative designs for policies, plans, projects or payment schemes [and showing] how certain events or activities might unfold.”²⁹⁶

In Singapore, the URA has in some instances incorporated scenario planning into their heritage conservation decisions, often occurring when there is public outcry over a proposal. For example, the disquiet generated by the publication of the 1992 and 1997 URA master plans, which slated the Old National Library for demolition in order to construct the Fort Canning Tunnel, prompted the URA to consider alternatives proposed by other government agencies and experts, such as rerouting the tunnel or expanding one of the existing roads, that would save the building. In the end, these alternative scenarios “posed challenges which persuaded them the original solution of demolishing the National Library and constructing the tunnel was still the most practical.”²⁹⁷ Similarly, in response to public concerns over the threat to a distinctive bungalow known as the Amber Road “Butterfly House” in the face of a private developer’s proposal to use its site for a condominium, the URA considered a variety of scenarios, including keeping the bungalow without the redevelopment, implementing a transfer-of-development-rights scheme which does not yet exist in Singapore, amalgamating neighboring plots or building over the bungalow to still achieve the site’s full development potential, and moving the bungalow to a different location.²⁹⁸ The final decision saw the partial demolition of the bungalow, which retained its entrance porch but lost its unique crescent-shaped verandah for the construction of the condominium.²⁹⁹ (Image 6A).

For the case of 38 Oxley Road, a scenario analysis will be employed as a method to determine a range of possible outcomes to determine how the prioritized values from the cultural significance assessment may be effectively transferred to future generations. Projecting current values into the future prompts the consideration of two different kinds of scenarios, physical and interpretive. Both are essential in addressing the central question of whether 38 Oxley Road’s association to Lee Kuan Yew and related historic events, from which stem many of the site’s values, should be interpreted; and if so, where and how should such interpretation take place?

The interpretive scenarios are represented as key value narratives, which are based on the values that were identified and prioritized in the cultural significance assessment. These value narratives can be understood as groupings of values that constitute certain stories that are deemed important to transfer to future generations. The physical scenarios look at how those key value narratives may then be transferred to future generations through different spatial outcomes. As already seen throughout this thesis, many of the scenarios presented here have also been proposed by current

²⁹⁶ Douvere, *World Heritage Marine Sites*, 55.

²⁹⁷ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 189-197.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 210-213.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Some commenters such as SHS President, Kevin Tan, have noted that the partial demolition should have kept the crescent-shaped wings instead of the front porch and lamented that the resulting combination of condominium or was not visually well-integrated. However, the URA rationalized that the latter was “familiar to the public” and so this option was the “most feasible and realistic option.” They therefore consider this case a success because it demonstrated their responsiveness to the public and how they were able to balance conservation and development by striving “to achieve an outcome where the owners can optimize land use and the heritage building can be retained.”

stakeholders, as representing their preferred positions and where they may be willing to compromise based on their interests and the values they ascribe to 38 Oxley Road.

Given the conflicts and contradictions between different values as revealed through the cultural significance assessment, it is clear that with the formation and transmission of each narrative rooted in particular values, with each resultant physical scenario, there will be trade-offs with other values, as the opportunity to convey a different narrative is lost. Thus, this scenario analysis concludes with a synthetic evaluation of the physical and interpretive scenarios in order to uncover some of those compromises and trade-offs to demonstrate the consequences of transferring a particular narrative or set of values at the expense of others through different decisional outcomes.

Physical Scenarios

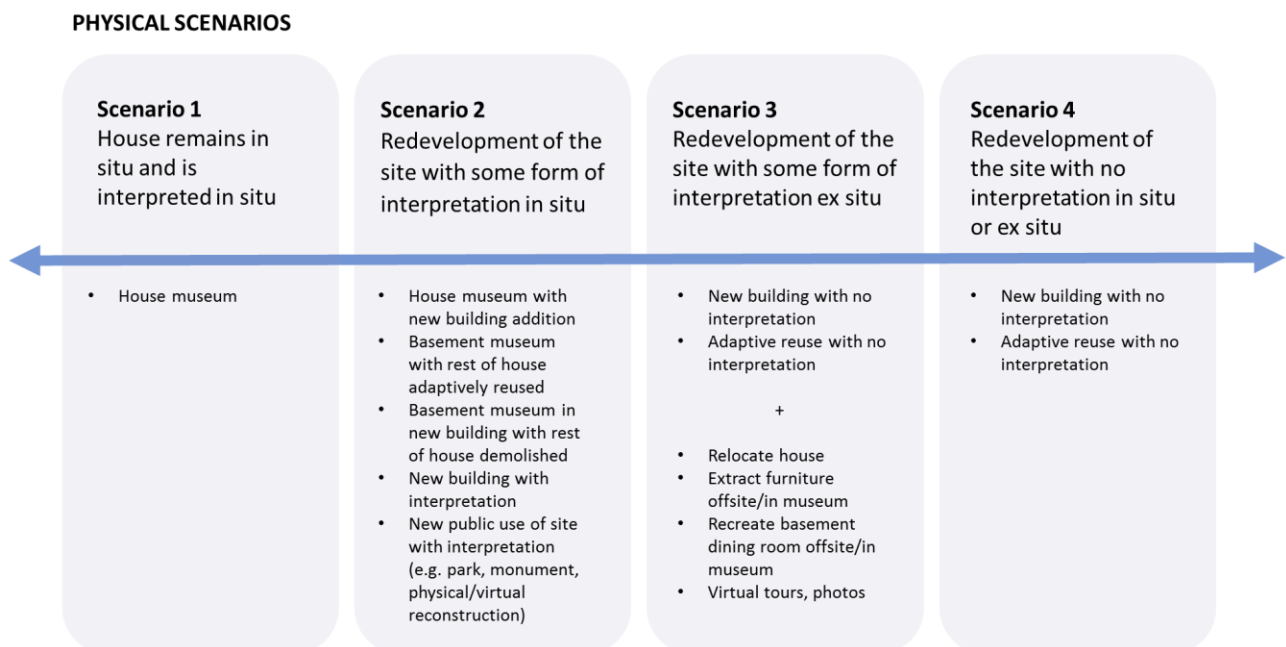
The potential physical outcomes of the 38 Oxley Road case fall into four overarching scenarios, ranging from the preservation and interpretation of 38 Oxley Road’s association to Lee Kuan Yew and 38 Oxley Road by converting the house into a museum and complete redevelopment of the site without any interpretation of this association taking place at all.

The four overarching scenarios are:

1. House remains in situ and is interpreted in situ
2. Redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation in situ
3. Redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation ex situ
4. Redevelopment of the site with no interpretation in situ or ex situ

Within these, there are more specific scenarios (Figure 6.1), which will be addressed in the subsequent sections where they are discussed and evaluated in relation to the interpretive scenarios.

Figure 6.1



Interpretive Scenarios

The interpretive scenarios are represented by three key value narratives, which constitute the values ascribed to the 38 Oxley Road that were prioritized for transmission to future generations in the preceding cultural significance assessment. (Figure 6.2).

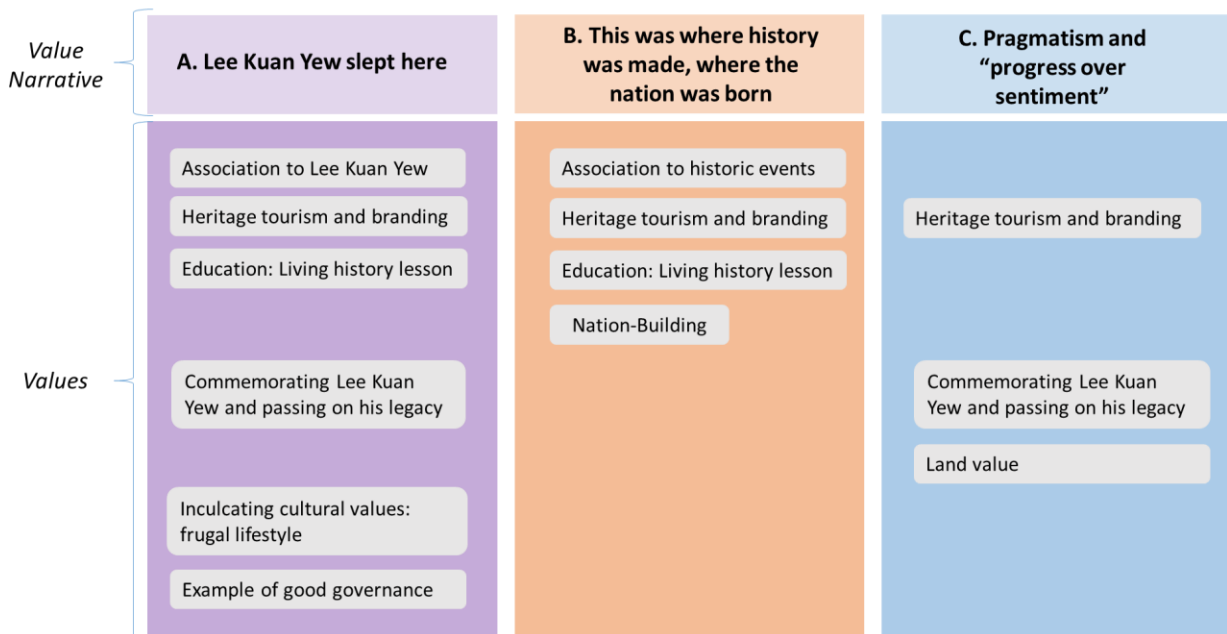
The three value narratives are:

- A. Lee Kuan Yew slept here
- B. This is where history was made, where the nation was born
- C. Pragmatism and “progress over sentiment”

All three value narratives are rooted in the significant association of 38 Oxley Road to Lee Kuan Yew and the related historic events—the discussions which led up to the founding of the nation, from which many of the other prioritized values stem. The first and third narrative relate to different ideas of commemorating Lee Kuan Yew and passing on his legacy, while the second focuses on the events at 38 Oxley Road surrounding Singapore’s birth as a modern nation and the nation-building potential that arises from this. Each narrative description concludes with a discussion on how that narrative is spatialized in the physical attributes or character defining features of 38 Oxley Road, and through the physical scenarios for the site, as listed above.

Figure 6.2

INTERPRETIVE SCENARIOS



Value Narrative A: Lee Kuan Yew slept here

Playing off the American preservation movement's penchant for saving any building traversed by that nation's founding father, George Washington, by quipping "George Washington slept here," this value narrative for 38 Oxley Road is rooted in the house's association with Lee Kuan Yew, hence "Lee Kuan Yew slept here." From this association stems additional values which are deemed important to transmit to future generations through a decision on the case, namely the social value of education, the symbolic value of commemoration, the social value of frugality, and the political value of good governance. In this narrative, commemorative value is based in the perception that Lee Kuan Yew's frugal lifestyle and non-corrupt governance are part of his legacy that should be passed on to future generations. "I am signing because the late [Mr Lee] has built Singapore from scratch and his home will be a good reminder of the essence of the man, his [values of] integrity, frugality..., simplicity and humility. By preserving his home we are preserving a part of him hopefully to inspire the next generation to continue on his mission."³⁰⁰

The forwarding of such a legacy of these values depends on an outcome where the Lee Kuan Yew association to and ultimately, his modest lifestyle at 38 Oxley Road, are interpreted in some way. Such interpretation should capture the potential to teach future generations about Lee Kuan Yew, the possibility for commemorating him and his legacy, and the examples he sets for frugality and good governance for future generations to learn from and emulate. Public access to some form of interpretation is deemed paramount in endowing future generations with the opportunity to learn about Lee Kuan Yew, his life and principles, and to keep alive the memory of all his contributions to the nation. As Teo Kok Seah wrote in his letter to the *Straits Times*, which served as the basis of Benedict Yuen's petition, "I sincerely hope that the relevant authorities will seriously consider preserving 38 Oxley Road as a national monument, which would serve as a useful and constant reminder to all Singaporeans of Mr Lee's legacy."³⁰¹

Commemorating Lee Kuan Yew's Life: Association to Lee Kuan Yew, Heritage tourism and branding value, Living history lesson

As already acknowledged, much of 38 Oxley Road's cultural significance derives from its association with Lee Kuan Yew, one of the most important figures in Singapore, and perhaps even world history. Gopalan Rama, senior consultant at law firm, KhattarWong, is quoted as saying, 38 Oxley Road is of "great historical value" because it was "the house of the first Prime Minister who has done so much to develop Singapore to the state that it is in today with his early comrades."³⁰² More bluntly put, a supporter of Benedict Yuen's petition arguing for the house's preservation, commented, "We don't need reasons. Simple and facts, it is the former residence of Mr Lee Kuan Yew. He is the founding father of Singapore. Without him, there is no Singapore, no country, no home. [sic]"³⁰³ Similarly, a

³⁰⁰ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³⁰¹ Teo Kok Seah, "Preserve Home."

³⁰² Zaccheus, "Law Allows."

³⁰³ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

writer for an independent Singaporean media source, the *Online Citizen*, Yeo Toon Joo emphasizes the associative value of the house not just regarding Lee Kuan Yew but his family as well, stating that the house “certainly has historical value, because of the person and family that lived there.”³⁰⁴ This statement encapsulates the idea that not only does 38 Oxley Road have distinction as the adulthood home of Singapore’s first prime minister, but so too did it serve as the childhood home of its third prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew’s eldest son, Lee Hsien Loong. Kwa Geok Choo, who ran not only the household but also their law firm, Lee & Lee, also played a seminal role in Singaporean politics, acting as “her husband’s staunchest supporter” and speech proofreader, also helping to draft the People’s Action Party’s constitution and the clauses in the Separation Agreement in 1965 to guarantee water agreements with the state of Johor.³⁰⁵ Ultimately, however, it is specifically the association with the larger-than-life founding father that has driven interest in the pending decision on 38 Oxley Road, and the many calls for preserving the house so that current and future generations can get a glimpse into the private life of this revered public figure.

Public interest in Lee Kuan Yew’s personal and home life at 38 Oxley Road can already be seen by the launch of the “About Mr. Lee” tour on March 16, 2016, and online comments indicating perceived value in the house’s potential to offer insights into how this great figure lived and thus, a more complete picture of the man himself. The “About Mr. Lee” tour is a four-hour tour that was launched by a local tour firm, Tribe, one week before the first anniversary of Lee Kuan Yew’s passing. Proceeding mostly by bus, the tour route to various locations frequented by the founding father also features a jaunt down to Oxley Road where they may see the fenced property from the street—though not enter it, given that it remains the private residence of Lee Wei Ling. Tribe co-founders state that the passing of Lee Kuan Yew on March 23, 2015 provided the inspiration to start researching and creating a tour of the private life he had “guarded fiercely.”³⁰⁶ As for the online comments, supporters of Benedict Yuen’s petition to preserve the house for a glimpse of Lee Kuan Yew’s private life reason,

“Because Mr Lee’s home is a good reflection of his private self and how he lives day to day”;

“It’s the home of our First PM and we should preserve it for our future generation to see and to know him better”; and

“I would like his house to be preserved as national monument. He was a great man and leader and he had contributed so much to the country. He was so private while he was still living. Now he is gone. I feel that I didn’t know much about him at all except his public life. Let’s learn more about his personal life and things he left behind.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ Yeo, “When National Interest.”

³⁰⁵ “Without Her.”

³⁰⁶ Benjamin Tan, “New Guided Tour Sheds Light on Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s Private Life,” *Straits Times*, Mar. 16, 2016; *Ibid.*, “New Tour Sheds Light on Mr Lee’s Private Life.” *Straits Times*, Mar. 17, 2016.

³⁰⁷ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

This interest in Lee Kuan Yew's living spaces and private life shows how 38 Oxley Road has the potential to generate local and international tourism. It is also from this association with Lee Kuan Yew that the house may acquire branding value as a national icon, since Lee Kuan Yew is so closely tied to the Singaporean nation; as Neil Swidey quips, "Their stories are indivisible."³⁰⁸ Online commenters have thus recognized the heritage tourism and branding value of 38 Oxley Road as arising from the particular connection between the site, Lee Kuan Yew, and the Singaporean nation, expressing such thoughts as, "The house serve as a reminder & a symbol for all Singaporean, a great leader like Lee Kuan Yew exist only in Singapore & Singapore exist because of him," and "...Once demolished, we do not have anything to remember our founder Mr LKY...All over the world, those great people who build up their country, their residence are left for the people to remember them. Now when we visit their country, we visit and know their story...why can't we do that? ..."309

Indeed, many commenters invoked comparative examples of the homes of political leaders and other famous figures in other countries that were preserved and opened to the public to demonstrate 38 Oxley Road's heritage tourism potential. The list of comparisons is long, and includes Tunku Abdul Rahman's residence in neighboring Malaysia, Ho Chi Minh's house in Hanoi, Ferdinand Marcos' home in the Philippines, the residences of Sun Yat Sen³¹⁰, Mao Tse Tung, and Zhou Enlai in China, Gandhi's home in Mumbai and the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat where he began his famous Salt March, Mozart's residences in Salzburg and Vienna, Austria, Shakespeare's house in Stratford-on-Avon, Mandela's cell on Robben Island, and George Washington's Mount Vernon in the United States.³¹¹ Commenters insist that Lee Kuan Yew's house is equal or greater in significance to those preserved and celebrated buildings. Recall, too, that Lee Kuan Yew himself in *Hard Truths* had equated his house to Shakespeare's and Nehru's houses, which are now popular tourist sites. Neil Swidey of the *Boston Globe*, for example, compared 38 Oxley Road to his nation's own founding father's Virginian plantation house that has been a mecca for patriotic Americans and international visitors alike.³¹² He boldly asserts, "In preservation terms, [Lee's] cream-colored bungalow at 38 Oxley Road is probably even more significant than Mount

³⁰⁸ Swidey, "The Singapore Lee Built."

³⁰⁹ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home"; Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³¹⁰ Some stakeholders have pointed out the irony that there is so much debate surrounding the preservation of the house of Singapore's own founding father, when a villa used by founding father of the Republic of China, Sun Yat Sen, as a headquarters in the late 1900s had been preserved and turned into a memorial hall in 1940. As part of his comment on the petition webpage, a supporter wrote, "If there is a building that is being conserved for Sun Yat Sen, who has only benefited Singapore indirectly –then 38 Oxley deserves more recognition." Another agreed with this sentiment, noting the temporary nature of Sun Yat Sen's house in comparison to 38 Oxley Road's longer association with their own founding father, where "he has been staying in since his political life." And yet another echoed, "If the Sun Yat Sun [sic] villa can be preserved here in Singapore, then shouldn't we preserve one of our own greats." (Yuen, "38, Oxley Road.")

³¹¹ Ibid.; Dennis Chan, "Don't Demolish Historically Significant House"; Joseph Jones, "Should Home Be Demolished?"; Yeo, "When National Interest"; Yuen, "38, Oxley Road"; Swidey, "The Singapore Lee Built."

³¹² The second acquisition of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, George Washington's Mount Vernon was purchased in the 1850s, restored, and successfully run as a house museum by the association. It is thus often hailed as the birthplace of the historic preservation movement in the United States. See for instance: Charles Bridgham Hosmer, *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg*. New York: Putnam, 1965, Chapter 2.

Vernon. Not only did Lee live there for most of his life, but in the basement he led activists in hatching the movement to break away from the British Empire.”³¹³ On the same note, Yeo Toon Joo of the *Online Citizen*, highlighting especially local tourism potential argues, “If our Singapore residents queue up in such numbers in March and April to pay their last respects during the lying-in-state, why won’t they join the line to visit his home, not just in the next several months, but also long after? People still snake in long lines to visit Mozart’s 19th century house in Vienna, Anne Hathaway’s 16th century cottage at Stratford-on-Avon, Mao Tse Tung’s mummified body in Beijing- albeit preserved for their tourism value- why not Mr Lee’s bungalow at Oxley Rise? Does it not equate in significance and attraction? To Singaporeans in particular?”³¹⁴

Likewise, referring to the efforts by the Chinese government to turn Lee Kuan Yew’s ancestral home in Dabu County into a tourist site, a supporter of Benedict Yuen’s petition to gazette the house and turn it into a museum lamented, “Even the authorities in a county in southern China are spending S\$8.8 million to turn Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s ancestral home into a tourist attraction and here is the original we are not doing anything. Sad indeed.”³¹⁵ Similarly, petitioners cite the Sun Yat Sen villa in Singapore, used as a temporary headquarters for Sun Yat Sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, in the 1900s, and was turned into a memorial hall in 1940, as justification for their position on preserving 38 Oxley Road. They state, “If there is a building that is being conserved for Sun Yat Sen, who has only benefited Singapore indirectly –then 38 Oxley deserves more recognition.”³¹⁶ And yet another echoed, “If the Sun Yat Sun [sic] villa can be preserved here in Singapore, then shouldn’t we preserve one of our own greats.”³¹⁷

The association to Lee Kuan Yew also becomes the basis upon which the house is activated with social educational value as an invigorating “living history” experience for future generations of Singaporeans to learn about their founding father. As a petitioner wrote, “It will be truly something for the future generations to experience, instead of just reading from the books. Only when people go through this house, can they really experience history itself and maybe get a better insight into the man who was Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. If the authorities are concerned about what our first Prime Minister said about not wanting strangers to trudge through his house...then they could have limited viewings, which can be closely managed to avoid his fears being realized. It will be a service to the country and to history of Singapore to preserve his house as a National Heritage.”³¹⁸

A number of stakeholders believe that the house as living history can provide a more effective and powerful educational tool than simply learning about Lee Kuan Yew through textbooks. Teo Kok Seah, for instance, whose letter to the *Straits Times* was quoted and adopted by Benedict Yuen as the expressed impetus for his petition, wrote, “It would be most regrettable if Mr Lee’s house were

³¹³ Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

³¹⁴ Yeo, “When National Interest.”

³¹⁵ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

eventually demolished. Students would have to make do with referring to pictures of our statesman's house in their history textbooks, which is not a very constructive way of teaching and learning history..."³¹⁹ Another letter to the *Straits Times* by Steve Goh was simply titled, "Nothing Beats the Real Thing in Learning From History."³²⁰ Thinking back to his visit to Monticello, a commenter on P. N. Balji's article articulated, "...Maybe we will regret demolishing the house sometime in the future. Personally, history comes alive in such places. Visiting Thomas Jefferson's house (which I did many years ago) helps you understand him that little bit more."³²¹ In the same vein, one petitioner attributed the reason for supporting the motion to convert the house into a museum to a "[belief] in authentic learning," while another reasoned, "Because I personally feel that the house can be part of our heritage. Where the future generations can go and relate to the days of our founding father lky [sic] and not just through textbooks and word of mouth which honestly would not prevail and is impractical."³²² Other comments to the same effect include,

"I signed because this was what our SG Father had left for us. It will be a good educational point for learning journey for our future generations [sic]";

"I see value in preserving the house as a place of significance in Singapore's history and will help to educate future generations by providing a glimpse into the personal lives of the family";

"Is a very good lesson for our younger generation to know our founding father more";

"I believe that LKY's Oxley [Road] home is a very special place for Singapore's history and should be kept and preserved for the public and future generations to learn more about the life and legacy of LKY"; and

"We don't have much of a history. During the week of national mourning many would have [realized] our modern history and Mr Lee was instrumental in charting this history. Preserving his home is as much as preserving all his speeches and his writings. They all tell us about the man who defined what it means to be a Singaporean."³²³

Thus, it is clear that the history lessons that arise based on the site's association with Lee Kuan Yew are primarily geared toward future generations, with many stakeholders believing that this educational value would increase over time as public memory of Lee Kuan Yew recedes into the past. As Steve Goh wrote in his letter to the *Straits Times*, "...We this generation will be able to preserve [the house] in our heart. What about 2 generations down the road? Though there is history/social studies lessons made compulsory in schools but how many of us really remembered everything that was taught to us. And isn't it only until last [week] did we find out more about what mr Lee is like? And what he has

³¹⁹ Teo Kok Seah, "Preserve Home."

³²⁰ Steve Han Choon Goh, "Nothing Beats the Real Thing in Learning from History," *Straits Times*, Apr. 17, 2015.

³²¹ Balji, "Let the Hard Truth."

³²² Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³²³ Ibid.

done for us? I want the house to be preserved so that our children, grandchildren can visually see how the late Mr Lee's life was...It will be a good place to educate the young...Having something to see is definitely better than just reading from the books and hear say. [sic]"³²⁴ While current generations have had the first-hand experience of living under Lee Kuan Yew's rule and getting to know him over the years, at least on the public level, future generations cannot rely on these lived experiences and memories, which may thus be brought to life through an interpretation of the site that capitalizes on its association with Lee Kuan Yew for educational purposes. This future-looking impulse is captured by an online commenter, who writes, "After the immediate members of the family are no longer staying in it, it should be preserved for future generations. As the founding father of Singapore, his house is intertwined with Singapore's history. We may think there isn't much to view in his house, but that is missing the point – the point IS – for future generations a few hundred years later, that house will have historical value, e.g. Sun Yat Sen's villa, Sir Stamford Raffles' house (if it had been preserved till today)."³²⁵

Passing on Lee Kuan Yew's Legacy: Inculcating cultural values: frugal lifestyle, Inspiring good governance

38 Oxley Road has the potential to act as a conduit of cultural values, whereupon the interpretation of Lee Kuan Yew's life at 38 Oxley Road is not only one that surrounds a historical lesson about the man who changed the fate of a nation, but also a cultural lesson in transferring the morality of a particular lifestyle, —a modest and frugal lifestyle—to future generations for their emulation. Opening Lee Kuan Yew's living spaces to the public can aid in educating Singaporeans, especially those of the younger and future generations, on values that are deemed important to Singaporean society and culture. Here the word "values" is defined differently from heritage values; in this case, they refer to "morals, principles or other ideas that serve as guides to [individual or collection] action."³²⁶ As Dennis Chan wrote in his letter to the *Straits Times*, "...preserving the house would serve as a reminder to Singaporeans to always aspire to the founding values of the country that Mr Lee was so instrumental in building."³²⁷ Similarly, a petitioner posited that "Not only was it a house where history was made, it reflects the values of our founding fathers lived by; values that we would, and want the next generations to, live by. Don't we and the generations to come want to preserve this significant piece of history and have a grasp on Mr Lee Kuan Yew's legacy and values?"³²⁸ These values include frugality, humility, dedication, selflessness, honesty, and integrity, all of which are more or less readable from the founding prime minister's modest living arrangements.³²⁹ Above all, the value of frugality remains the most obvious and most commented on.

Lee's frugality is a well-known and celebrated trait, and his "simple, down-to-earth lifestyle" is reflected in his un-renovated more-than-a-century old home with its old furniture.³³⁰ 38 Oxley Road's

³²⁴ Goh, "Nothing Beats the Real Thing."

³²⁵ Navaratnarajah, "Over 1,450 Sign Petition."

³²⁶ Mason, "Assessing Values," 7.

³²⁷ Dennis Chan, "Don't Demolish."

³²⁸ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³²⁹ Nicholas Yong, "Lee Siblings"; Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³³⁰ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

“quaint mismatched 1950s-style furniture” stands in stark contrast to the modern luxuries that fill many other Singaporean houses.³³¹ In a *Straits Times* article in 2012, reprinted in the weeks following her father’s death, Lee Wei Ling describes the out-of-date window model air-conditioner in her room and mosaic tiles in the bathroom, popular in the 1970s but no longer easily available in Singapore.³³² Those who had the privilege to visit the house also commented on its interior. Member of Parliament from 1991-2011, Associate Professor Koo Tsai Kee, described it as “a very humble house. The furniture has probably never been changed. Some of the pictures are yellow already.”³³³ A journalist friend of Lee Wei Ling also observed an “ancient exercise bike” that Lee Kuan Yew had used until his 70s, which was kept in a corner after being replaced with a newer model, and is now on display as part of the *We Built A Nation* exhibit.³³⁴ Also put on display were the earthenware jars that the family used for bathing before Kwa Geok Choo’s illness and the late installation of a shower in 2003.

With an interior representative of an earlier era, 38 Oxley Road’s aesthetic value feeds into the social value where the house’s modest interior serves as a lesson in the merits and morality of a frugal lifestyle. Lee Kuan Yew’s daughter, Lee Wei Ling, penned an article in August, 2012 that was republished the day after her father’s death in tribute to him, in which she describes how she and her brothers had been “trained...to be frugal from young,” by their parents, Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo, despite them being well-off with such high-end jobs as prime minister and lawyer respectively.³³⁵ She recounts a conversation with the family’s contractor and housekeeper, Mr. Teow Seng Hua, who upon taking up the job, asked her, “Your father has worked so hard for so many years. Why doesn’t he enjoy some luxuries?” In response, she explained, “...we were perfectly comfortable with our old house and our old furniture. Luxury is not a priority.”³³⁶

38 Oxley Road stands out as an anomaly in the Singaporean residential landscape, even among its neighbors, for between “1960 to 2001, Singapore’s per capita gross domestic product surged more than 100-fold. But the Lee’s modest home remained largely unchanged in that time and had become dwarfed by multi-million dollar, multi-storey bungalows that sprang up around it.”³³⁷ As one petitioner noted, “...At that time most [homes] in Singapore are modernised and beautifully decorated whereas the interior of Mr Lee’s home still maintain its original look of 1960s...”³³⁸ Similarly, Chia Boon Teck expressed his admiration for the former leader in a letter to the *Straits Times* in 2011 in response to the publication of Lee Kuan Yew’s wish to demolish the house in *Hard Truths*, that “I believe my view is shared by many, that MM Lee’s home should be preserved in its original condition for future generations to appreciate how such an extraordinary man who founded and built modern Singapore from scratch, whose far-sightedness and policies have brought so much wealth and material comforts to

³³¹ Ibrahim, “Decision on Preserving Lee Kuan Yew’s House Deferred.”

³³² Lee Wei Ling, “At Oxley Road We Value the Frugal Life,” *Straits Times*, Aug. 5, 2012.

³³³ Chan and Tan, “Devoted Husband.”

³³⁴ Judith Tan, “Mighty Man’s Modest Home.”

³³⁵ Lee Wei Ling, “We Value the Frugal Life”; Chan and Tan, “Devoted Husband.”

³³⁶ Lee Wei Ling, “We Value the Frugal Life.”

³³⁷ Judith Tan, “Mighty Man’s Modest Home.”

³³⁸ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

so many Singaporeans, would himself live in such a simple.”³³⁹ Thus, displaying the house and its furnishings for the public, can be an indoctrination tool to help to educate current and future generations on the importance of not squandering money on frivolous luxuries, and to put the needs of others and the nation before their own comfort.³⁴⁰ As one commenter noted, “If a picture speaks a thousand words, what more for the actual house that our founding father lived in? In it, so many precious lessons can be learnt, his frugality, his commitment, his endearing love for his wife. Let our late Mr. LKY continue to teach his people the important things in life.”³⁴¹

38 Oxley Road may thus serve as a “focal point” for building character, where Singaporeans can emulate the values by which Lee Kuan Yew lived, especially those related to frugality.³⁴² Tan Tiong Cheng, the chairman of Knight Frank, was one of the business leaders interviewed by the *Business Times* on the best way to honor the spirit of Lee Kuan Yew. He was one of the few who thought that the Oxley Road house should be conserved as a national monument as “a constant reminder and testament of Mr Lee’s spirit of frugality” for “...many may not know that Mr Lee was also a frugal man who did not indulge in excess.”³⁴³ Many petitioners agree that Lee’s residence can serve not only as a reminder of his frugality, but through this can also inspire current and future generations to subscribe to a life of discipline and thrift, as follows:

“...the home will and can teach all generations of Singaporeans and even others the importance of being thrifty and frugal. When I first saw his home, I felt that time has stop and I felt a sense of nostalgia. I also learnt that it is also a blessing to live a life of simplicity and frugality...”;

“All future generations need to know the roots of our greatest nation’s father’s humble & frugal home, in which he had sacrificed & lived his entire life in this house during the built-up [sic] of our country from 3rd [world] to 1st world within a remarkable 50 years! We should show as a start to all young school children from the start to be humble & frugal which is part of his legacy”;

“The simple lifestyle of our former leader will instill the message of frugality and wise-spending which will be beneficial for all future young generations ahead!”;

“I agree that it is a part of Singapore’s history; as well as the fact that it was Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s residence. It shows how simple a life he lived, something I wish we could all emulate”;

“...It can also show us how a man who could afford anything...everything he wanted but instead chose to be simple. He has shown me how to appreciate the simple things in life and being happy has nothing to do with what one has...”; and

³³⁹ Chia Boon Teck. “Preserve MM’s Home.”

³⁴⁰ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ “How can Singapore Best Honour the Spirit of Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew?” *Business Times*, Mar. 30, 2015.

“I'm signing this because this house shows how Mr Lee Kuan Yew lived throughout his life and his attributes of a good leader and good role model for next generation. There should be a comparison of most Singaporeans interior home versus Mr Lee's in 2010. At that time most home in Singapore are modernised and beautifully decorated whereas the interior of Mr Lee's home still maintain its original look of 1960s. People can learn and inspired that there is a powerful leader who can avoid luxury [temptation] and always put his mind to his people future. As long the house and [furniture] serve its purposes, there is no reason a leader cannot live spartanly and not waste money. [sic]”³⁴⁴

Many comments explicitly stem from a concern about the moral degeneration of an increasingly indulgent younger generation. Lee Kuan Yew's Spartan home has great potential to set an example of the type of lifestyle that they should aspire to, instead of “living their lives beyond their means” and showing off their wealth. These include the following:

“Frugality and prudence are two fast-disappearing qualities that must be “re-imbued” into Singaporeans especially the younger generation and middle-class group. I see many people around me living their lives beyond their means...38 Oxley Road must be preserved in its entirety as physical evidence that one can live a full and meaningful life without being entrapped by decadent pursuit...”³⁴⁵;

“Then there's actually seeing for one's self the simplicity of his life, which is quite in contrast to what too many people wrongly think is important now. Perhaps, it will wake them up”³⁴⁶; and

“Putting it in a simple manner. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew has contributed tremendously to the transformation of Singapore from a third world to an Asian tiger. Whether the policies are controversial or not what matters is the remembrance of how it all started. Thus, the preservation of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's house is necessary to educate and provide a [first-hand] experience of how a great man once lived. It would be an excellent example of how one man can simultaneously hold great power yet remain humble which may be rare in an ever changing society that are [sic] producing power hungry individuals.”³⁴⁷

Accordingly, Lee Kuan Yew demonstrates how greatness can be achieved without excessive wealth or spending and all the modern luxuries that this younger generation has become so used to. Lee Kuan Yew's life serves as an example that what makes a good or noble life is not its lavishness in and ostentation of material wealth, but the principles by which one lives. Principal architect of CHANG Architects, Chang Yong Ter, believed the house would have served as an appropriate site for the founders' memorial to “let future generations have a sense of how Mr Lee had lived simply despite his extraordinary vision for Singapore,” although it is clear that the government intends to keep the two

³⁴⁴ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”.

³⁴⁵ Navaratnarajah, “Call to Preserve LKYs Home.”

³⁴⁶ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

³⁴⁷ “Should We Preserve.”

matters and sites separate.³⁴⁸ A petitioner also enthusiastically proclaims that the house is “a very important place for the young generation to learn how and where their nation founder was working hard to build the country with a persistent vision! And how a great man’s personal lifestyle could be that simple! Material is not an element for success!”³⁴⁹ Similarly, another petitioner wrote, “This house represents the altruistic, simple and humble characteristics of the founding father of Singapore. It would serve as a reminder to our future generation that...even with humility, one can achieve greatness!”³⁵⁰

Also gleaned from Lee Kuan Yew’s modest lifestyle at 38 Oxley Road is his integrity and commitment as a political leader, which can set an example of good and clean governance for future generations of political leaders. Singapore has constantly ranked in the top ten least-corrupt countries, according to the Corruption Perceptions Index, which was launched by Belgian-based Transparency International in 1995, and this perception of non-corruption is something that Singaporeans are proud of, especially when they make comparisons with the ranks of neighboring countries and the lifestyles of other powerful leaders.³⁵¹ As Neil Swidey wrote in the *Boston Globe*, “But unlike so many other powerful leaders, he usually seemed to have the best interests of the people at heart, rather than his own enrichment. In fact, if there was one thing that Lee was less tolerant of than litter and gum, it was graft in his government. Photos of the interior of his house reveal tired furniture and worn carpets, hardly the lair of a leader who had been lining his pockets.”³⁵² Several petitioners have also mentioned the way in which the house demonstrates how Lee Kuan Yew’s life in politics was free of corruption. Among these are the following comments from supporters outlining why they signed Benedict Yuen’s petition:

“it is a testament to Mr Lee’s advocacy for honest & committed governance. The next generations will not only read his books, but also [be] able to see what he stood for”;

“I agree with the person who started this petition that preserving Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s home would show to future generations how someone of his stature had actually lived such a simple lifestyle his whole life. He wanted to show the world that the Singapore Government is not a spendthrift Government is not a spendthrift [government] and this was the way he lived till his last day”;

“...We can definitely feel his presence in the home he lived in with the love of his life, a simple life with nary a branded piece of furniture or appliance despite him being able to afford them. Goes to show he cared only for the nation and not for frivolous things like other countries’ leaders. He lived a simple but pure life –just like the white shirt he always wore...”;

³⁴⁸ Rachel Chang and Rachel Au-Young, “A Right Way to Remember,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 18, 2015.

³⁴⁹ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ “Corruption Perceptions Index,” *Transparency International*, accessed Apr. 11, 2016, <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>.

³⁵² Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

“Mr Lee’s modest home represents his character as an honest leader with integrity as it has remained largely unchanged even though Singapore’s per capita GDP has soared between the 1960s and today.” So that no one can [accuse] him of corruption as his “Palace” is so Spartan. Also as for history, he is the legacy so that the future generation will know that a tiny Singapore had a great man who make what is it today...”; and

“This house says so much about LKY as someone who is not corrupt. He did not live in a palace, but an ordinary house which he bought before he gained power. May Singapore enjoy clean government always!”³⁵³

The house also stands as a demonstration of how Lee Kuan Yew apparently prioritized the good of the nation before personal gain, in line with Singapore’s first national value of putting “nation before community, and society above self.”³⁵⁴ As one petitioner wrote, “38 Oxley Road is not just where he lived but the way he lived is a good testimony to the way he governed without fear or favour having the ultimate good of the nation and the people of Singapore of his heart.”³⁵⁵ The unpretentious home is evidence of “the simple life that he led for complete dedication to building the peaceful, progressive and prosperous nation that Singapore is today.”³⁵⁶ Therefore, Singaporean petitioners have also indicated that not only does the house with its simple furnishings provide cause for respect and admiration of the late leader, it may also effectively serve as a vivid example and constant reminder of the standards of good governance for current and future political leaders within and even beyond Singapore to aspire to. Comments to this effect include:

“this house will not only preserve how Lee Kuan Yew lived but also it teaches a valuable lesson of one should never abuse their authority in any circumstances”³⁵⁷;

“It reminds us that clean, frugal leadership is possible. We [should] emulate”³⁵⁸;

“Make his simple lifestyle [an] inspiration and a gold standard for future leaders of Singapore”³⁵⁹;

“I don’t believe that it is shameful if it shows how LKY lives frugally during his lifetime. It will instead [show] how a powerful, not extremely rich person like LKY lived straight- without going on a path of corruption and showing off his wealth to Singaporeans as well as the world. It would be a shame if the house is being demolished”³⁶⁰; and

³⁵³ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁵⁴ Lim Tin Seng, “Shared Values.”

³⁵⁵ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

“Much of what we have become is because of Mr. Lee. As a true public servant that he is, I understand Mr. Lee’s desire that we do not build a monument in his name, I think it is important that we preserve this as a legacy for all future Singaporeans to remind them of the ideals that the late Mr. Lee upheld in the struggle to build this nation and the standards he set for public office.”³⁶¹

In terms of commemorating Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy as arising from an acknowledgement of the modest furnishings of 38 Oxley Road, there is much focus on how his simple living spaces demonstrate the personal sacrifices he made in the name of national interest, in forgoing a life of luxury despite his status. Therefore, some stakeholders see potential in preserving the house to serve as a powerful reminder of Lee Kuan Yew’s selfless contribution to the nation for generations to come. As one petitioner reasoned, the house should be gazetted as a national monument and opened to the public “[for] us to reflect, how simple this great man was, who transformed the lives of millions.”³⁶² Other commenters expressed the same sentiment, writing,

“I believe this is an important historical building for Singapore, and a significant and poignant reminder of a great leader and all that he represented. It would be a fascinating place to visit, and would foster ongoing respect for Mr Lee Kuan Yew so that his great deeds and service to Singapore will not be forgotten”;

“I’m signing because our founding father of Singapore Mr Lee Kuan Yew has lived there for most of his life...all should be kept as it is for us Singaporeans to remember what he has done for us and how he has given his whole life to the country”;

“Mr Lee Kuan Yew is the founding father of Singapore. Please preserve his house so our future generations of Singaporeans can actually see his house and reflect all that our founding father has done for us!”;

“I believe the younger generation would need a visible symbol of how our founding father lived and worked to bring us from 3rd world to 1st world”;

“We should retain this as a national heritage site for our younger generation to remember our great hero”; and

“We should keep Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s house as it is not courteous to leave the future generation with no chance to see and treasure part of our founding father’s legacy. We should keep it as a constant reminder to appreciate, remember and be thankful that there was once a great man who ever lived,

³⁶¹ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁶² Ibid.

loved and sacrificed so much for Singapore. Demolishing his house is like demolishing a precious artifact that is should be valued highly [sic]³⁶³; and

I, 100% support Mr. Benedict [Yuen]. It will be the greatest blow, shame and humiliation and injustice for us, Singaporeans, if we demolish Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's home. The older, now and younger generation never knew Raffles personally BUT MR.LEE is not only the founding father but he was the Breathe and Pulse of Singapore!! He put his all in Singapore not to mention the other handful of great men ...so that we can live in harmony and walk safely around any time of the day on top of other things! He was not perfect ...But then who is and was?? HE is an example many world leaders till today would like to follow but unable to achieve and in which many citizens from other countries who wish, wishes and wished their leader can take a page from! So, please please please do not deprive us Singaporeans the one place we can always go back and learn about this Great man's dedication, contribution, sacrifices and achievements and pass down to our descendants the history of Singapore's Making. [sic]³⁶⁴

Thus, as seen from these comments, many who ascribe commemorative value to 38 Oxley Road also embrace the argument of preservation for the sake of intergenerational inequality, in order that Singapore's younger and future generations should be able to inherit a symbol of their founding father and a place to understand his legacy, since they would not have had the same opportunity to know him as those of his time and who grew up under his rule. Still, as already indicated in the cultural significance assessment, the act of preserving the 38 Oxley Road house as an act of commemoration of Lee Kuan Yew and his legacy is greatly debated, especially since he had explicitly asked for it to be demolished and included this wish in his will. This contradictory aspect of commemorative value with regard to this case is taken up in the third key value narrative, which provides a different idea of Lee Kuan Yew's legacy and how it may be passed on through a decision on the fate of 38 Oxley Road, but not necessarily through a straightforward preservation of the house itself.

How this value narrative is spatialized

This narrative upholds that the association between 38 Oxley Road and Lee Kuan Yew should be preserved and interpreted in some way, as it is from this association that a number of values that are deemed important to transfer to future generations arise. From the above discussion, it is clear that many stakeholders see the future interpretation of Lee Kuan Yew's lifestyle at 38 Oxley Road as occurring in situ, where the house is preserved and opened to the public as a museum. This scenario would effectively capture all the values in this narrative. At the same time, however, it is also apparent that the different values which constitute this narrative may in fact be spatialized in different ways with regard to the site, thus opening up alternative scenarios.

For instance, the inculcation of frugality and good governance in future generations and passing on Lee Kuan Yew's legacy through this, relies most heavily on the preservation and interpretation of the property's interior furnishings, which may thus be removed and interpreted ex situ. The values of

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home."

commemorating and educating future generations about Lee Kuan Yew's life and association to 38 Oxley Road, as well as heritage tourism and branding on the other hand, are equally tied to the furnishings, the bungalow itself, and the land upon which it sits. For these, the preservation of the whole house in situ is desired, although it is possible that the preservation of one of its physical attributes—the furnishings, the house, or the land—may be enough to transmit this value to future generations. For example, if interpretation does not take place in situ, the house may not necessarily have to be standing to transfer the aforementioned values as long as the land is used for such interpretation. Recall, after all, that the NHB and URA have already determined that any redevelopment of the land must “not diminish its historic significance.”³⁶⁵ In a similar manner, if the house or its furnishings are moved to a different location, their interpretation in a way which allows for such learning and commemoration of Lee Kuan Yew's life can still be effective *ex situ*. Preserving the house in its original setting may not be as important from this standpoint because the surrounding neighborhood had already undergone many changes throughout Lee Kuan Yew's lifetime and continues to evolve in this “city of continual renewal,” given that it is not designated as a controlled conservation area.³⁶⁶

Value Narrative B: This is where history was made, where the nation was born

Not merely a place to learn about Lee Kuan Yew's life, 38 Oxley Road can serve as a center for educating future generations on the seminal meetings that occurred there, which shaped the course of Singapore's history. It was through discussions among Lee Kuan Yew and fellow members of the Oxley Road Circle held in this house's basement dining room that the possibility of an independent Singaporean nation first took root. The site thus also carries incredible nation-building value, serving as a focal point for future generations to foster patriotism, unity, and social bonds. As a supporter of the petition to preserve the house commented, “The Late Harry Lee Kuan Yew's home is not only his personal home but a venue which is part of Singapore's important history for all generations. 38 Oxley Road is a place where Harry Lee and his colleagues have worked hard to gain Singapore's independence.”³⁶⁷ Similarly, Tan Tiong Cheng, Knight Frank chairman, who was among business leaders interviewed on the best way to honor the spirit of Lee Kuan Yew, asserted, “While this is a simple house by any standard and cracks were notably visible on the wall, the house is also a place of high historical significance where some of the most important discussions on the future of Singapore were held in the 1950s.”³⁶⁸ Benedict Yuen also started his petition to save the house based on the significance of these discussions, during which Singapore's pioneer leaders charted the country's future and its path to independence.³⁶⁹ This narrative thus broadens the perspective of the property's significance, moving from a strict association with Lee Kuan Yew toward an association with other historic figures and events, particularly those related to the founding of the nation. As with the previous value narrative, this association serves as the basis on which the site's potential for heritage tourism and branding and education can be realized.

³⁶⁵ Ler and Wee, “Plans.”

³⁶⁶ Chew, “Lee Kuan Yew Wanted.”

³⁶⁷ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁶⁸ “How Can Singapore Best Honour.”

³⁶⁹ Navaratnarajah, “Over 1,450 Sign Petition.”

Association to historic events, Living history lesson

Lee Kuan Yew's house at 38 Oxley Road became a meeting point in the early years of Singapore's road toward independence as is evident by the quote from *Men in White*, "If the walls of the home of the founding father of the Republic of Singapore could speak, they would narrate the unending procession of trade unionists, workers, tradesmen, students, journalists, civil servants, professionals and intellectuals passing through its gates in the 1950s asking for Harry, Kuan Yew or Mr Lee."³⁷⁰ These numerous figures, only the most prominent of whose names have been recorded for the history books, include the founding members of the People's Action Party who partook in heated political discussions and debates held in the basement dining room held every other Saturday at first, and then every Saturday from 2:30 to 5:30 in the afternoon.³⁷¹ Because of these meetings, the house had solidified its place as "a part of a significant period of Singapore history..." and so deserved to be preserved, according to one of the supporters of Benedict Yuen's petition.³⁷²

The Oxley Road Circle started out small with just a few of Lee Kuan Yew's English-educated college friends, who gathered to contemplate the potential for forming a democratic-socialist political party to challenge British colonial rule but serve too as an alternative to the growing communist movement.³⁷³ The meetings grew in formality and expanded to incorporate some twenty participants, diverse in race and professions, of "British-educated scholars, self-styled socialists, Malay trade unionists and Chinese-speaking leftists," fourteen of whom became the founding members of the PAP, inaugurated in November 1954, in time to contest the 1955 elections.³⁷⁴ Lee Kuan Yew acted as secretary, taking notes, while Ton Chin Chye chaired the meetings, becoming the first chairman of the party and deputy prime minister under Lee from 1965 to 1968.³⁷⁵ In the 1959 election, the party won a majority of 43 out of 51 wards, defeating the coalition government of Lim Yew Hock who had taken over the position of Chief Minister from David Marshall in 1956.³⁷⁶ The party has ruled Singapore ever since. The authors of *Men in White* do not exaggerate, then, when they claim that the "hush-hush meetings" held around an otherwise "nondescript formica-topped table"³⁷⁷ in the basement dining of 38 Oxley Road, "changed the history of Singapore."³⁷⁸ Here, after all, was "where it all started," a frequently echoed affirmation that ties the house closely with the birth of the nation.³⁷⁹ As with the connection to Lee Kuan Yew, this connection between 38 Oxley Road and the founding of modern Singapore highlights the potential for the site to become an icon of the nation, showcasing how far the nation has progressed from its humble beginnings in a basement dining room. In this way, it may also generate some tourism

³⁷⁰ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 43.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁷² Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³⁷³ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 160.

³⁷⁴ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 4, 51.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 51; Elgin Toh, "MM's House: 'When I'm Dead, Demolish It,'" *Straits Times*, Jan. 21, 2011.

³⁷⁶ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 4.

³⁷⁷ Zaccheus, "Artefacts."

³⁷⁸ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 43.

³⁷⁹ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

interest who are interested in Singapore's history and curious to behold where and how this "remarkable, outlier nation" was born.³⁸⁰

As with the previous narrative's value related to learning about Lee Kuan Yew, the house has the potential to serve as an educational tool for younger and future generations to learn about those historical events that changed the destiny of this colonial fishing village. Thinking of future students, the following stakeholders uphold the preservation of the house as a beneficial out-of-textbook education opportunity, stating,

"It is a tangible asset. History can't be replicated. To revive interest in Singapore history lessons, students should be able to see where our founding fathers gathered frequently for discussions on the future of Singapore"³⁸¹;

"Preserving the house will be a good way to allow our future generations to visualize and enhance their learning of our country"³⁸²;

"...I am signing this petition, because I strongly feel this house preserved would help future generations to relate to not just Mr Lee Kuan Yew, his legacy, but to the historical events of that time, the people and their struggles...Walking amongst historical buildings in England, somehow brings to mind that something concrete like an old house, does help us all to learn, and be inspired, by history. This house, is a part of the history of Singapore; and it would be a shame if future generations are not able to see it [sic]"³⁸³; and

"I totally agree that we must preserve the house not only as a remembrance of Mr Lee but also allow Singaporeans especially the younger generations to get a real feel of the good times when great things were being done. Reading on textbook is just no good enough [sic]."³⁸⁴

Nation-building

With the historic discussions that founded the country occurring in its basement dining room, 38 Oxley Road is seen as a symbolic site, symbolic of the nation's birth or even the nation itself. Largely from these significant events that occurred in the basement dining room, 38 Oxley Road can be construed as a symbolic birthplace of modern Singapore. In the words of *Hard Truths* authors and journalist P. N. Balji respectively, here was "where it all started," essentially, "where modern Singapore's destiny was made."³⁸⁵ This characterization of the house as a symbol of Singapore's moment of independence or the nation itself, can be activated as a political and social tool for emphasizing shared

³⁸⁰ Swidey, "The Singapore Lee Built."

³⁸¹ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home."

³⁸² Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Han et al., *Hard Truths*; Balji, "Let the Hard Truth."

identity and national unity among the country's multi-racial population. The potential for the house to foster social cohesion and strengthen national identity thus constitutes its nation-building value.

Petitioners for gazetting the house and turning it into a museum highlighted how visits can increase patriotism and stir up feelings of national pride, as “stepping into the room where critical decisions were made on Singapore’s future will be a poignant and powerful moment for all Singaporeans...”³⁸⁶ They use patriotic and poetic language to describe how they see the house as symbolic of their country’s beginnings, and thus speaking out against demolition, christening the house the “heart and soul of Singapore,” or the “heart of the Singapore spirit.” Rather than simply serving as a space where history is made, to some petitioners, the house at 38 Oxley Road *is* the history of Singapore. Some even go as far as to say that the house is the most significant building in Singapore or more significant than the British colonial buildings preserved as heritage in Singapore because it symbolizes the start of modern independent Singapore, and not only that, but its success and achievements as a nation, defying all expectation. They write,

“It is definitely important to preserve the home of the Late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. It is the home which signifies the start of Singapore. It has seen everything...from the split of Malaysia and Singapore to the decision of building [the] Marina Barrage. It should be preserved”;

“It’s a very important part of Singapore’s starting point of where LKY drove Singapore towards achieving full independent and a successful global metropolis...[sic]”;

“The place is so meaningful to Singaporean. To teach and tell our Young Generation the history of Singapore and our founding father Mr Lee Kuan Yew. To remind every Singaporean how we come this far to where we are today. [sic]”; and

“I respect and support late Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s decision not to have a statue nor Changi Airport renamed after him. But his Oxley Residence is where it all began...the plans the vision all were conceived here. It would be a valuable part of our heritage, it will be [too] great a loss to have it demolished.”³⁸⁷

Thus, perceiving 38 Oxley Road as a symbolic locus of Singapore’s history and its moment of independence, the site becomes understood as one of collective or national memory. Therein lies its nation-building potential for acting as a focal point to bring and bond Singaporeans together over common roots and values, strengthening their sense of national identity, pride, and unity. 38 Oxley Road may act as a central place where current and future generations of Singaporeans may gain an understanding of “who they are and where we come from,” which is the essential basis for any nation-building project. The house can thus be capitalized on as a source of shared memory and shared

³⁸⁶ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

identity, and one of national pride and solidarity, which can be an important “unifying force” during times of crisis or may even work to prevent a crisis in the first place.³⁸⁸ Similar comments include,

“...This is the place where the foundation stone of modern Singapore was made. This is a physical representation of Singapore’s struggle in the early days of nation building and a reminder of how much a man can give to a cause he truly believes in. It is a place worth preserving to remind the later generations where we came from”; and

“I agree that Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s house will be the best way of instilling patriotism and fostering national bonding to our future Singaporean. Please preserved [sic] it”;

“We should definitely not demolish the house and keep it as a national monument so that future generations of Singapore can know where it all began and connect with the past. Without a sense of rootedness, there can be no sense of shared identity or nationhood”³⁸⁹; and

“If we don't preserve who we are and where we come from—we are a society of no-body because our future generations do not know who we are and where we come from. This is probably the strongest and best argument—on the need to preserve this heritage. [sic]”³⁹⁰

How this value narrative is spatialized

In this narrative, the basement dining room is regarded as the most significant part of the house as it was in this room that the history-making meetings were held. The preservation and interpretation of this particular room is thus deemed most important for transmitting the values in this narrative. As Chan Yeow Chuan wrote in the *Straits Times*, “...as someone who enjoys visiting historical sites here and abroad, I would surely visit Mr Lee’s house if it were open to the public, especially to see the basement of his house, where the founding fathers of the nation, such as Dr Toh Chin Chye, Dr Goh Keng Swee and Mr S Rajaratnam, were said to have gathered with Mr Lee to discuss their collective goals and plans.”³⁹¹ Similarly, T. N. Srinivasan writes that the basement dining room is “most politically and historically important part of the house...where Mr Lee and his colleagues started the People’s Action Party that strategized the path of Singapore’s success.”³⁹²

As the basement dining room is deemed the primary attribute through which the values of nation-building and educating future generations on Singapore’s moment of independence may be transferred to future generations, this means that the rest of the house may be demolished and redeveloped as long as the basement dining room is preserved and open to the public. The setting of the house follows as the next most important attribute to preserve. In situ interpretation would allow

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

³⁹¹ Chan Yeow Chuan, “Fate of Home A Private Family Matter,” *Straits Times*, Mar. 27, 2015.

³⁹² T. N. Srinivasan, “Dismantle and Reassemble Basement as Museum Exhibit,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 15, 2015.

the historic discussions to be more accurately and readily brought to life, through the retention of the particular “soporific” atmosphere of the meetings arising from the fact that the “room was in a hot, uncomfortable part of the house facing the setting sun, and even with three wide-open windows, two open doors, and a powerful ceiling fan whirring it could become extremely muggy.”³⁹³ Ex situ interpretation through the recreation of the basement dining room in a different location would preserve the most significant physical attribute of 38 Oxley Road, but it may make it more difficult to recreate the particularities of the historic atmosphere gleaned from the original setting. As one petitioner who ascribed nation-building value to the site emphasized, retaining the setting is important so that “our future generation will get to see and be at the exact spot where history is made. Amidst the changing landscape in SG, preserving his house in Oxley will be a national PRIDE.”³⁹⁴

At the same time, there are those who may not agree to preserve simply the basement dining room, out of context with the entire house even if it is here that this value narrative is concentrated, as one petitioner wrote, “Singapore already has very little heritage left to savour. While it is true that true legacy of Mr Lee lies in everything around us, we should still preserve as much of our history as possible. And this is a very good piece of 3D history. We should preserve this not because it is our founding father's house, but because this is indeed where it all started. This is where meetings were held in the early days, this is the election office, this is the place where history of Singapore started. To demolish this place is to tear our history down. We must continue to develop but not at the cost of our history. We should try our very best to develop with heritage sites like this intact.”³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the measure for recreating the basement dining room ex situ has been suggested by a number of stakeholders as a means of reaching a compromise with the impulse to respect Lee Kuan Yew’s wish for demolition. Of all the values in this narrative, heritage and branding value deriving from the house’s association to the historic events surrounding Singapore’s birth, would be the most lenient with regard to preserving setting.

Value Narrative C: Pragmatism and “progress over sentiment”³⁹⁶

This third value narrative presents an opportunity to forward a different conception of Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy than that of the first narrative, where in this case, Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy is perceived to be rooted in and representative of the pragmatic nature of Singaporean society instead of gleaned from the modest furnishings of his Oxley Road home. Rather, this value narrative is driven by the need, through the decision on 38 Oxley Road, to transfer values to future generations, which would embody the ideals that Lee Kuan Yew upheld and upon which Singaporean society is organized, namely pragmatism and a belief in progress, especially as understood through economic growth and benefits that can be quantified in monetary terms. Thus, this narrative comprises of the economic values of heritage tourism and branding value and land value, both of which have the same goal of forwarding a narrative revolving around the best use of land and money but rely on different decisional outcomes to do so; the latter

³⁹³ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 160.

³⁹⁴ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Fiona Chan, “Straddling Fine Line.”

does not seek any necessary interpretation of Lee Kuan Yew and related history surrounding 38 Oxley Road, while the former encourages it. Like land value, commemorative value in this narrative does not rely upon the preservation or interpretation of the house. Instead of preserving the house as an act of commemorating Lee Kuan Yew and his legacy as with the first value narrative, commemorative value in this narrative of pragmatism sees Lee's legacy as more appropriately and effectively passed on to future generations through demolition and redevelopment, in accordance with his wish which is rooted in a disbelief in the practicality of monuments and sentimental attachment to objects, in addition to a straightforward weighing of the economic costs and benefits of preservation. As Carlton Tan writes in the *Asian Correspondent*, recalling Lee Kuan Yew's interview for *Hard Truths*,

...[Much] of our history was made within the four walls of the elder Lee's bungalow at 38 Oxley Road, and its preservation is arguably a matter of public interest now. But Lee never saw it that way. After all, he never really could understand the sentimentality of the people he ruled. When a Straits Times journalist asked him if he would consider preserving his house as it is a part of Singapore's history, Lee's response was to give an icy cold estimation of the costs. He cited the age of the house, the lack of a foundation, the need to allow neighbouring houses to be built higher and the need to allow the land value to increase; but he ignored the question. It was as if he had dismissed the intangible benefit of heritage preservation entirely and there was only one column on his balance sheet — costs, no benefits.³⁹⁷

However, even if through the lens of pragmatism, one may overlook the “intangible benefit of heritage preservation,” it could be more persuasive to argue that preserving the 38 Oxley Road house and interpreting its historic association in some way can capitalize on its heritage tourism value, incurring economic benefits for Singaporean society, directly from tourism revenue and indirectly by serving as a branding tool to elevate the country's competitiveness in its quest to be a global city. As a commenter on the *Dialectic* forum highlighted, “In the face of heightened competition amongst the world's cities, heritage and culture are regarded as a key ingredient in defining a vibrant and cosmopolitan global city. Therefore, as part of the Heritage Development Plan, NHB's vision is to develop Singapore into a distinctive, global city for heritage and culture. This will in turn be integral to the whole-of-government effort to position Singapore as a global city. As such, one of the aims of developing heritage is preserving distinctive content. As Mr Lee Kuan Yew's house can help capture the essence of national values, it would help in defining the Singapore cultural brand.”³⁹⁸ At the same time, perhaps because the benefits deriving from heritage tourism and branding value seem more indirect and difficult to define, this value is often not as strongly leveraged within this narrative of pragmatism as that of land value through redevelopment, which effectively forms the core of this value narrative.

Heritage tourism and branding

As already discussed, heritage conservation in Singapore at the government level emerged largely because of tourism value. Perhaps somewhat ironically in light of his adamancy to demolish his

³⁹⁷ Carlton Tan, “One Last Wish.”

³⁹⁸ “Should We Preserve.”

highly significant house, it was Lee Kuan Yew who so clearly highlighted how heritage was an important driver for tourism, which would form a critical portion of the economy of an island nation-state with no natural resources to rely on and a vision to be a global city. In an often-quoted statement made in 1995, Lee noted,

We made our share of mistakes in Singapore. For example, in our rush to rebuild Singapore, we knocked down many old and quaint Singapore buildings. Then we realized we were destroying a valuable part of our cultural heritage, that we were demolishing what tourists found attractive and unique in Singapore. We halted the demolition. Instead, we undertook extensive conservation and restoration of ethnic districts such as Chinatown, Little India and Kampong Glam and of the civic district, with its colonial era buildings: the Empress Place, old British Secretariat, Parliament House, the Supreme Court, the City Hall, the Anglican Cathedral, and the Singapore Cricket Club. The value of these areas in architectural, cultural and tourism terms cannot be quantified only in dollars and cents. We were a little late, but fortunately we have retained enough of our history to remind ourselves and tourists of our past. We also set out to support these attractions by offering services of the highest standard.³⁹⁹

What Lee Kuan Yew is essentially drawing attention to in this passage is the importance of preserving heritage because this is what gives Singapore its unique character necessary to attract a tourist economy. Following this, then, 38 Oxley Road is viewed by some stakeholders as part of that heritage which makes Singapore an attractive place to visit. Echoing Lee Kuan Yew's words twenty years later, a commenter on Romesh Navaratnarajah's article on the "Call to Preserve LKY's Home," wrote, "For those thumbing down such a proposal call, imagine for a moment, if you will, what if we tore down all of the old buildings throughout Singapore including the ones recently restored in local parts Chinatown, Indian or Malay areas for that matter across the nation ... What would be left to remind us of old Singapore, its culture, heritage, and past and present history? Perhaps nothing left but a few old books and pictures or perhaps an old news real or so of some sort, all gone at the blink of an eye. A modern city where visitors have nothing to see or experience during their visit, except new shopping malls and theatres all of which they already have back at their own country."⁴⁰⁰ Here, the focus is not simply on 38 Oxley Road, but the house becomes situated in a wider heritage consciousness or worldview; 38 Oxley Road is regarded as one of several heritage buildings that should be preserved in order for Singapore to be a viable tourist destination. For some stakeholders, this concept took precedence over the particular significance of the house itself. A supporter of Benedict Yuen's petition gave as the reason for signing simply that it "will be wonderful to add another historic site for Singapore," and another concurred, "I totally agree, we need another place of interest."⁴⁰¹ An even simpler and more direct reason, unashamedly published on a commenter's Twitter account in response to the 2011 *Straits Times* survey stated plainly, "it should be conserved for the tourism money."⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 225.

⁴⁰⁰ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home."

⁴⁰¹ Yuen, "38, Oxley Road."

⁴⁰² Hannah Koh, "62% of ST Readers."

More directly, there is potential for this site in particular to act as a “brand” for the country, one that represents it and distinguishes it from other places. As freelance journalist, Surekha Yadav wrote in opposition to demolition, “Regardless of the wishes of the former prime minister, 38 Oxley Road is a building of immense national significance. It’s part of Singapore’s story and pragmatically speaking, part of our brand. A place that people from around the world would visit to ogle [at] the legacy of a man whose name is now a byword for development and progress.”⁴⁰³ Similarly, a supporter of Benedict Yuen’s petition to gazette the house as a national monument and turn it into a museum upheld the economic value of the house through its heritage tourism and branding potential, stating, “Singapore is reliant on Tourism, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew is well known abroad. If we can have a Sun Yat Sen house as Villa. We must definitely keep the Mr. Lee’s house. He is the No. 1 brand inside and outside of Singapore. We need to protect his house and belonging (with Prime Minister’s Lee’s approval) intact, and conserve as a museum for both Tourist and Singapore future generations to know what a simple life a giant like him lived with his wife...[sic]”⁴⁰⁴ Leveraging international interest in Lee Kuan Yew may also help to raise Singapore’s status and competitiveness in the global arena in its quest to be a global city, as one supporter of Benedict Yuen’s petition stated, “...I believe tourist [sic] would also be keen to go there as a place of interest to see & feel how Singapore No. 1 leader, a World Class extraordinary leader had lived his life, to understand why leaders from all around the world respected this great man, Mr LKY. Bringing us to another different & higher level globally.”⁴⁰⁵

In terms of putting money to practical use, heritage tourism at 38 Oxley Road can generate direct revenue which can be put toward charitable causes that advance the social good. For Tribe’s \$30 About Mr. Lee tour, for instance, all proceeds from ticket sales in the month of March were donated to the *Straits Times* School Pocket Money Fund, which helps low-income families fund their children’s schooling. Subsequently, 10% of all earnings will be donated to charity.⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, some stakeholders who advocate for the preservation of the house as a museum suggest charging an entrance fee and donating the proceeds to charity, which makes the economic and social benefits of the house’s heritage tourism value more apparent.

Land value

If Lee Kuan Yew’s rent of \$80 a month was considered a “fairly sizeable sum” in 1940s Straits dollars, an assessment of 38 Oxley Road’s economic value today is likely to draw a similar reaction.⁴⁰⁷ Located in the city center on the edge of the commercial-retail hub of Orchard Road, property consultants have calculated that with a lot area of 12,060 square feet, the selling of the plot of 38 Oxley Road “could fetch at least \$24 million at \$2000 per sq ft,” albeit at “the lower end for landed property prices in the area,” but still a tidy sum.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Surekha A. Yadav, “The House that Lee Built,” *Malay Mail Online*, Dec. 13, 2015.

⁴⁰⁴ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Benjamin Tan, “New Guided Tour”; Ibid., “New Tour Sheds Light.”

⁴⁰⁷ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 90-91.

⁴⁰⁸ Lee and Lim, “Eight Charities.”

The area would be prime real estate if not for the master plan and zoning laws which currently prescribed the area as a low-rise residential precinct for two-story mixed-landed properties.⁴⁰⁹ In his *Hard Truths* interview, Lee Kuan Yew did not see any barriers to changing zoning rules and lifting restrictions on development once his house was demolished, and in fact wished it to be so. After all, under the Planning Act, the URA has the power to propose amendments to the master plan at any time. Lee Kuan Yew proposed, “...Because of my house the neighboring houses cannot build high. Now demolish my house and change the planning rules, go up, the land value will go up.”⁴¹⁰ To do so, would absolve his house from standing in the way of the “march of progress”⁴¹¹ and would allow the neighbors to realize a rise in their property values.⁴¹² In this way, the commercial potential of the 38 Oxley Road plot and its neighbors is not too far from the imagination, where “just a block away, a sign advertises the planned construction of yet another high-rise residential and retail development.”⁴¹³ Commenting on P. N. Balji’s article, a member of the public captures such economic significance based on the property’s land value and (re)development potential, writing, “LKY had a thought that the place should be developed. By tearing down his house, there will be better development potential in that prime area. For years, because of his family’s security, URA’s master plans placed many development restrictions on the neighboring properties. I believe LKY knew this and he thought its [sic] only fair his neighbors should be relieved of his restrictions. For that he was fair. The government should respect his desires.”⁴¹⁴

The recognition of the city’s scarce land and its quest for global competitiveness also comes through clearly in many comments from stakeholders who support demolition in this value narrative of pragmatism and progress over sentiment. Such comments include, “Singapore should continue to be developed. No old houses should be spared. Singapore cannot afford to be stagnant, we have to be faster than the rest of the world,” and “Hallo. Son of LKY. 6.9 MILLION need space. Life goes on.”⁴¹⁵

In another twist of the story, the economic worth of the property has also potential to be put to greater social use, with the announcement that the brothers would each donate half its value to charity. The idea that money bound up in the house can be released for such a noble purpose crystallizes the twin argument that there are better and more legitimate or socially beneficial ways to spend public money than on the upkeep of the old house. As indicated by the YouGov poll, 61% felt that “it is great for the Lee family to do this charity act.”⁴¹⁶ Among comments to that effect is one made in response to P. N. Balji’s article, which reads, “...I’m in support of the tearing down the house & sale of the plot of land as a FINAL GOOD [GIFT] Late LKY contribute to Singapore. This way even after death, LKY 'stand taller than many "heros" of other countries. [sic]”⁴¹⁷

⁴⁰⁹ Ler and Wee, “Plans.”

⁴¹⁰ Han et al., *Hard Truths*, 352.

⁴¹¹ Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

⁴¹² Fiona Chan, “Straddling Fine Line.”

⁴¹³ Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

⁴¹⁴ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

⁴¹⁵ Hannah Koh, “62% of ST Readers”; Navaratnarajah, “Over 1,450 Sign Petition.”

⁴¹⁶ “The Use of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew’s House”; Wong, “56 Percent of Singaporeans”; “Most Singaporeans Support Decision”; Tham, “Poll.”

⁴¹⁷ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

As emphasized, Lee Kuan Yew presented a strong economic argument against preserving his house not only because it would impede the development of a prime area but because it would cost too much to renovate or maintain the old bungalow, and this money could be better spent on more pressing issues. Thus, while some petitioners have suggested that charging visitors an entrance fee could potentially raise money to fund its upkeep, thus allaying fears that public money would be employed for such a purpose, this argument is difficult to substantiate as it is rare that museums can operate purely on admission receipts. Therefore, it may be asserted that the uncertain revenue from charging admission to the house as a museum pales in comparison to the promise of Lee Hsien Loong and Lee Hsien Yang to each donate half the value of the property to charities.

Commemorating Lee Kuan Yew's life and passing on his legacy

As demonstrated in the first key value narrative, the decision on what to do with 38 Oxley Road becomes an act of commemoration as this decision essentially passes on Lee Kuan Yew's legacy to future generations. In the first narrative, Lee Kuan Yew's legacy is deemed to be best passed on through the preservation of the house or its furnishings, which are representative and instructive of his longstanding principles of frugality and good governance. In contrast, this pragmatically oriented narrative finds that Lee Kuan Yew's legacy is best transferred through demolition of the house, which would not only fulfill his will, but forward some of the other values he upheld, such as upholding the most rational use of scarce resources, and the championing of pragmatism over sentimentality and ideals over monuments. In this sense, Lee Hsien Loong's statement that his father's "position on 38 Oxley Road was unwavering over the years, and fully consistent with his lifelong values" can be more easily comprehended.⁴¹⁸ After all, the hard-and-fast economic calculation Lee Kuan Yew provided in *Hard Truths*, weighing the potential benefits of capitalizing on land value and opening up the neighborhood for further development against the costs of preserving the aging bungalow, could be seen, in all its pragmatism, as "classic Lee Kuan Yew."⁴¹⁹

Lee Hsien Loong emphasized in his parliamentary statement on April 13 that "how we honour Mr Lee must be faithful to the ideals he lived by and fought for."⁴²⁰ Accordingly, experts and politicians that *Today* spoke to, agreed that it was "more important...to continue to uphold the principles and values that Mr Lee stood for," than to build or name existing monuments after him."⁴²¹ A Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen, for instance, asserted that Lee Kuan Yew "never believed that physical monuments or towering edifices sustained greatness."⁴²² Associate Professor of Law at Singapore Management University, Eugene Tan, expressed the same doubt about the use and effectiveness of physical monuments, stating that the "life-giving ethos and resilience of Mr Lee and the pioneer generation should imbibed in future generations...Physical structures are severely limiting and may result in our

⁴¹⁸ Lee Hsien Loong, "Parliamentary Statement."

⁴¹⁹ Fiona Chan, "Straddling Fine Line."

⁴²⁰ Lee Hsien Loong, "Parliamentary Statement."

⁴²¹ Amanda Lee, "Upholding Mr. Lee's Principles."

⁴²² Ibid.

focusing on form rather than substance.”⁴²³ Thus, it must be acknowledged that the concept of destruction or demolition itself is culturally specific, where “the very idea of the monument runs counter to prevailing values in some societies which do not produce many monumental buildings and do not emphasise the permanence of structures. Destroying such structures would not, therefore, provoke the sort of emotive reaction that may be expected to occur in other places.”⁴²⁴ Singapore appears to be such a society according to Lee Kuan Yew and Lee Wei Ling, operating on a belief in pragmatism and non-sentimentality rather than in physical monumentality and its permanence.

Furthermore, Lee Kuan Yew’s adamancy against engendering any sort of personality cult or hero-worship is in line with the collectivistic nature of Singaporean society and the first shared value of “nation before community, society above self,” both of which would denounce any self-seeking or self-glorification tendencies. Thus, the preservation of the 38 Oxley Road house, instead of being an act which could effectively memorialize Lee Kuan Yew, would work against the memory of how he lived and how he would want to be remembered. Expressing this worry, Lee Wei Ling wrote in the *Straits Times* that preserving her father’s house “would most certainly go against what he would want and what he stood for in life, such as service to Singapore and Singaporeans, because that was the right thing to do, without any ulterior motive, least of all self-promotion.”⁴²⁵

In addition, while some stakeholders see Lee Kuan Yew’s house as the most effective bearer of his legacy and memory, such as one petitioner who wrote, “Please. A million people mourned for LKY. People can look around us to see his works, but soon people will forget. We need this,” others believe that the preservation of the 38 Oxley Road house is not necessary or appropriate for commemorating Lee Kuan Yew. They argue that Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy lies elsewhere, in the island and people of Singapore. There is, for instance, the argument that Lee Kuan Yew did not build the house at 38 Oxley Road but he built the nation; his legacy lives on through the lives of people who uphold his values. As Lee Hsien Yang stated in an interview, emphasizing the needlessness of preserving the house, “I think for my father, he’s a pragmatic person and to him, it’s not about bricks and mortar and hanging on to belongings. It’s about his values and his work and his work was Singapore. And I think he would have liked these items to be made available so people could have a glimpse of him, and yet I think he was always mindful that it should be, he lives on in our lives and through our lives.”⁴²⁶ Agreeing with him, Minister of Parliament Alex Yam indicated that, “His legacy lies beyond the confines of 38 Oxley Road...We find it in the streets of a peaceful, stable and united Singapore. His memory will better served in our collective efforts to carry Singapore forward to the next 50 years.”⁴²⁷ Similarly, online commenters wrote,

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ McClelland et al., “A Values-Based Approach,” 588; Seung-Jin Chung, “East Asian Values in Historic Conservation,” *Journal of Architectural Conservation* 11, no. 1 (2005): 62.

⁴²⁵ Lee Wei Ling, “Honour the Spirit.”

⁴²⁶ Chia and Siong, “Historical Documents.”

⁴²⁷ “Children Ask Public to Respect Wishes.”

“I sincerely think we should respect the late LKY wishes to demolish his Oxley home upon his demise. His lasting n indelible legacy is Look around You in Singapore n for goodness sake, No Monument at all [sic],” and “Mr Lee Kuan Yew wanted his house demolished after his passing. We must respect his will. His house at Oxley Rise was not built by him. The millions of HDB homes built for Singaporeans are...the true monuments with which we can remember Mr. Lee”⁴²⁸;

“Late LKY has left so much of memorabilia in the form of books, photos, historical documents..., trees planted...etc. The list is endless for future [Singaporeans] to cherish and remember. Why must we gripe over what his last wish was -to demolish his personal possession -the Oxley House? Can't a man be granted his last wish and testament?”⁴²⁹; and

“LKY's and all his capable peoples' work, the institutions they built and the values they have imparted are there for all to see, be grateful for and to build on ... There is no need to preserve the house to get a sense of the great work they have done! We should honour his wish to demolish the house. The national museum, archives, cyberspace etc have enough things and information to remember the leaders. And indeed the best way to remember and honour him and his capable people is to build on the excellent work they have done and the values they have imparted!”⁴³⁰

Thus, an understanding of commemorative value in this narrative does not see the preservation of the 38 Oxley Road house as a necessary conduit for passing on Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy. In fact, his legacy may be more effectively passed on to future generations through making the most pragmatic decision regarding its fate, by weighing the economic benefits deriving from redevelopment versus those from heritage tourism and branding, in addition to the costs of maintaining the house and potentially “[preventing] the march of progress for the neighborhood.”⁴³¹ Above all, the difference in the way the commemoration of Lee Kuan Yew is conceived between this narrative and the first narrative reveals how the same goal, that there is more than one way of transmitting Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy to future Singaporeans depending on how one understands what that legacy is and where it lies. The same value, that of commemorating Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy, can thus be transferred to future generations by way of different scenarios.

How this value narrative is spatialized

Heritage tourism and branding value is the outlier in this grouping because it is the value that relies most on interpreting the historic association of 38 Oxley Road to Lee Kuan Yew and historic events. As already illustrated by the other two value narratives, heritage tourism value can be spatialized in multiple ways, where the interpretative measures may occur in situ or ex situ, with the preservation of just the house, the furniture, or the land as potential outcomes, so long as the heritage

⁴²⁸ “Mr. Lee Kuan Yew Stated in Will that He Wanted Oxley Rd Home Demolished”; Navaratnarajah, “Call to Preserve LKYs Home.”

⁴²⁹ Nicholas Yong, “Lee Siblings.”

⁴³⁰ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

⁴³¹ Swidey, “The Singapore Lee Built.”

connection to Lee Kuan Yew and related historic events is not lost. The realization of 38 Oxley Road's branding value, more so than that of heritage tourism value, may rely on the preservation of the house as a whole, but not necessarily in situ since this value may still have force if for instance, the entire house is moved to a different location. In contrast, land value does not necessitate any interpretation of Lee Kuan Yew's life or legacy at 38 Oxley Road at all. The most important physical attribute of the property is its land, and a redevelopment of this land would incur economic benefits for the neighborhood and the nation as a whole by freeing up a prime area for development in a land scarce island city-state. While capitalizing on the site's land value for future gain does not require any interpretation of the site's historic associations to be included in its redevelopment, the fulfillment of this value does not mean that such interpretation cannot occur; it may be incorporated with the redevelopment in some way in situ, or occur ex situ by way of moving the interior furnishings into a museum, for instance. In contrast, the commemoration of Lee Kuan Yew by honoring and forwarding his legacy of pragmatism, a belief of progress over sentiment, and a disdain of memorialization staunchly militates against any interpretation of his life and work in relation to 38 Oxley Road, as any such act of interpretation, whether in situ or ex situ, would ultimately go against those stated ideals.

Evaluating Potential Outcomes: Compromises and Trade-Offs

The previous section on interpretive scenarios has touched on how the key value narratives pertaining to 38 Oxley Road are spatialized or translated into potential physical outcomes for the site. The next step is then to elucidate the range of physical scenarios and evaluate them according to how effectively they transfer those value narratives and their constituent values to future generations. The range of physical scenarios falls between the two overarching extremes of converting 38 Oxley Road into a house museum and redeveloping the site without any interpretation of its historic associations to Lee Kuan Yew and events leading up to the nation's birth, with several hybrid scenarios that work to combine both impulses. Through an evaluation of these scenarios as organized under the four overarching scenario groupings mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the various trade-offs between the different value narratives and the values they encapsulate can then be brought to light.

Scenario 1: House remains in situ and is interpreted in situ

This scenario interprets the Lee Kuan Yew-related history of 38 Oxley Road on the site itself through the preservation of the house in situ and its opening to the public as a museum. This scenario most straightforwardly transmits the first two value narratives based on the house as the place where the nation's founding father Lee Kuan Yew lived, gathered a group of friends and acquaintances in the basement dining room to form a political party, and led the country to independent rule. In line with Value Narrative A, preserving the house in situ as a house museum would derive social benefits through its educational "living history" value, where future generations of Singaporeans can walk around and learn about their nation's founding father and founding moment. Associated with this is the transmission of the example of Lee Kuan Yew's frugal lifestyle and intolerance of corruption in government for them to emulate as part of commemorating and passing on his legacy.

Of all the scenarios, this scenario may be the one which can most easily serve the nation-building purpose described in Value Narrative B, as it allows for future generations to connect the national foundation narrative to its physical objects and context, the dining table in the basement dining room in the house of the founding prime minister.

While this scenario effectively transfers Value Narratives A and B to future generations, it does not capture the third narrative of pragmatism and “progress over sentiment.” Thus, the other two narratives are put forward at the expense of the opportunity to tell another aspect of Lee Kuan Yew’s and the nation’s story that is grounded in the ideals of pragmatism and the unimportance of individual recognition or self-aggrandizement. Yet the shared value of nation-over-self that forms the basis of such a story is not completely lost here, since the preservation of the house as a museum just as well shows how Lee Kuan Yew gave up a life of luxury to devote himself completely to the nation, and did not abuse his position for self-glorification, still providing a lesson for future generations to take in and emulate.

With regard to economic value, this scenario upholds heritage tourism and branding value at the expense of capitalizing on 38 Oxley Road’s land value. There is a suggestion, however, that even with the house preserved in situ as a museum, the zoning restrictions could be lifted to allow further development for the rest of the neighborhood, so working toward the similar pragmatic land-use goals of Value Narrative C. As a petitioner proposed, “Just as William Shakespeare’s home in Stratford Upon Avon is preserved for future generations. This is more meaningful to preserve than to set up a new/modern LKY museum or monument. The historical significance is there of Mr Lee and all founders. Save 38 Oxley, the restrictions on the surrounding area can be lifted to allow high-rise development, since there’s [sic] no security issues with Mr Lee no longer living there. Already there’s no grave to visit since Mr Lee led by example to all Singaporeans in choosing to be cremated instead of be buried,” in this land-scarce context.⁴³²

Scenario 2. Redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation in situ

Scenario 2 allows for the site to be redeveloped but requires that some form of interpretation of its historic association with Lee Kuan Yew and national history must be incorporated onsite. This seems to be the direction that the URA and NHB might take in light of that joint statement that they will take Lee Kuan Yew’s wishes seriously and “[in] view of the historical significance of the property, if a decision is made to allow for the demolition of the house, the Government is likely to not allow the site to be redeveloped in a way that would diminish its historical significance, for example, for commercial or intensive residential development.”⁴³³

Contrary to Scenario 1, in permitting redevelopment, this scenario opens up a greater range of possible options for the site. In this scenario, the house museum proposed under Scenario 1 may be

⁴³² Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

⁴³³ Ler and Wee, “Plans”; “Unlikely to be Redeveloped”; “Mr. Lee’s Wishes Considered,” *Straits Times*, Apr. 30, 2015.

integrated intact and fully interpreted within a new building, or stand with an adjacent addition or one over top, similar to the options considered in the “Butterfly House” case decision.

Enclosing the house within a new building or constructing such additions to it would require the same sort of preparatory measures described with regard to “Butterfly House” in order to first increase the usable land area for the new developments. These may include amalgamating neighboring plots or partial demolition, for instance through sacrificing the rear wing that used to be servant’s quarters in colonial times, which does not feature prominently in the value narratives focused on Lee Kuan Yew and modern Singapore. Thus, although this specific scenario seems to most effectively capture all three value narratives, including both economic values of land value and heritage tourism and branding value, the feasibility and likelihood of its implementation may be very low. Nevertheless, there are some stakeholders who uphold it as a possibility, as one petitioner wrote, “...I think it should be preserved in in whole or partially. This can be done by consolidating the adjacent plots and developing the consolidated lots as a commercial/institutional development. Perhaps hold a design competition that involves retaining the subject property in whole or in part. That way we are involving the next generation of architects and planners in creating national-social memory. The URA should seek ways to finance the acquisition of the plots down to Lloyd Rd and develop the consolidated properties into a commercial-office/institutional building.”⁴³⁴ Similarly, citing an example of how a historic shot tower was incorporated into Melbourne Central Shopping Centre in Australia, an online commenter wrote, “...Perhaps Singapore might like to do the same, i.e. build a mega-structure enclosing the existing dwelling of the late LKY, conserving a piece of history and yet not hindering progress...,” to which another commenter replied, “We already have such examples in Singapore. There's the South Beach, the Capitol and some condos in Katong which kept old bungalows as clubhouses,” but was less enthusiastic of such measures because, “It's not easy to blend the old and new designs, and can look really ugly if not done well...”⁴³⁵

Along with the idea of partial demolition, another possible scenario would be the preservation of only the basement dining room, which was identified as the most significant physical feature for the transmission of Value Narrative B, as it was in this room that the historic events leading to the nation’s birth occurred. The rest of the house would be demolished, which may help to increase the possibility of constructing a new building on the site. This would capitalize on land value and transfer to future generations the economic and social benefits that would arise from opening up the area for development and from the charitable donation of the Lee brothers as under Value Narrative C, while at the same time, it would still capture Value Narrative B by preserving the historic basement and opening that space up as a museum for the public. Value Narrative A would not be as powerfully transmitted, as the experience of walking through and beholding the rest of the rooms with their modest interiors and furnishings which embody Lee Kuan Yew’s life and legacy of frugality and good governance would be lost. The furnishings may however simultaneously be moved and the rooms recreated and interpreted offsite, which might compensate for the loss of transferring that value narrative in situ.

⁴³⁴ Yuen, “38, Oxley Road.”

⁴³⁵ Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”

Another option would be a full demolition of the house and the construction of a new building on its land that integrates some form of interpretation of the site's significance tied to Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore's history. This interpretation can range from simply naming the new building after Lee Kuan Yew (Value Narrative A) or marking the site as the nation's birthplace through a plaque or sign (Value Narrative B) to more elaborate measures like displaying some of the original furniture or artefacts from the bungalow or other interpretive materials in an exhibit somewhere within the new building. In this way, some degree of heritage tourism and branding value may still be captured. Even the educational values within Value Narratives A and B may be realized to a limited extent depending on how much and how interpretation takes place, where it may be assumed that exhibiting the interior furnishings that embody Lee Kuan Yew's frugality and clean governance or the basement dining room table, or even recreating some of the bungalow's rooms in the new building would be more effective in transferring those values to future generations than just endowing it a representative name or plaque.

The same situation can be seen regarding the effectiveness of such scenarios in transferring nation-building value under Value Narrative B. Very similar to this specific scenario is the redevelopment of the site not for a new building but in the creation of a memorial park or public monument to Lee Kuan Yew and the related history of the site. This particular scenario may not accrue the same economic benefits from the maximization of land value but could support social benefits, such as creating a space for public use and interaction, which may feed into the educational and nation-building purposes of Value Narratives A and B. In this way, such a reuse of 38 Oxley Road's land may also be considered practical enough to fulfill some aspect of Value Narrative C. Furthermore, as with those stakeholders who see Lee Kuan Yew's legacy as lying beyond the bungalow, redevelopment of the site as a public park would "also continue his legacy of loving greenery," in addition to marking or representing the historic significance of the site because "Tress last a long time and signify history," according to local architect Hsu Hsia Pin.⁴³⁶

Other perhaps more unlikely and infeasible ways of interpreting the site without preserving the bungalow that have been suggested include physical or virtual reconstruction of the house onsite. Stakeholder comments include, "The only very painful compromise - to respect the will of Mr LKY and the need to preserve the extremely important part of Singapore heritage - is to demolish it and then build an exact replica of 38 Oxley on the same spot," and "why not think out of the box. do a 3D animation of the entire house and have it hologram on the site. the house will be demolished but a 3D hologram will be screened there. visitors can walk through all the rooms and corridors, see all the furnitures etc [sic]."⁴³⁷ These measures are more similar to those under Scenario 1, transmitting Value Narratives A and B, but not Value Narrative C, to future generations, except in generating heritage tourism and branding value.

Scenario 3. Redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation ex situ

⁴³⁶ Chong Zi Liang and Rachel Chang. "No Offices, Mall or Condo on Oxley Road Site." *Straits Times*, Apr. 30, 2015.

⁴³⁷ Balji, "Let the Hard Truth."

In this way, this scenario works to negotiate between the three narratives, balancing a belief in the educational and nation-building potential in interpreting the Lee Kuan Yew-related history of 38 Oxley Road with the recognition of land scarcity and the need for and opportunity presented by the redevelopment of the 38 Oxley Road site. This scenario deems that it is important to interpret the Lee Kuan Yew-related history of 38 Oxley Road but that such interpretation need not be done in situ. This frees up the site for pragmatic redevelopment of the site where the latter's significant associations to Lee Kuan Yew and national history need not be acknowledged in the new building. As one commenter stated, "Singapore is too land scarce to make any landed home a heritage. For this case, LKY and his home can be displayed in a museum specially for him to honor his great contribution to the modern Singapore..."⁴³⁸ Like Scenario 4 as will be discussed, this scenario would effectively transmit Value Narrative C's characterization of land value and commemorative value as passing on Lee Kuan Yew's legacy rooted in a national consciousness of progress defined by economic growth and the promotion of cultural ideals related to pragmatism and the equality and diminished importance of individuals in a collectivistic society.

There are a number of different options for interpretation ex situ, which can accompany the redevelopment of the site in order to capture the remaining Value Narratives A and B. The entire bungalow may be relocated to a different site where it may indeed operate as a museum. This scenario has been proposed by several stakeholders, who write,

"I would suggest that the government dismantle the house and reconstruct it in a location where it will be open for in a limited way for visitors. There are some instances where historical buildings are moved to another location for preservation"⁴³⁹;

"When the time comes for a decision on the house, I suggest that it be carefully dismantled and then reassembled in another location, as part of a bigger museum or memorial dedicated to the pioneer leaders of modern Singapore. The land itself, which of course, belongs to the Lee family, can then be sold. With current technology, I am sure it can be done, just like how actor Jackie Chan managed to dismantle centuries-old Chinese houses and reassemble them in Singapore. We can have words, photographs or even replicas, but nothing beats the original thing"⁴⁴⁰;

"Uproot Mr Lee Kuan Yew's house and display it at another site. Sell the land and give the proceeds to charity or a foundation in his name"⁴⁴¹; and

⁴³⁸ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home."

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Goh, "Nothing Beats the Real Thing."

⁴⁴¹ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home."

“Relocate the bungalow to another place so that it is more [convenient] for tourist and local to view its deep historical and heritage value. Relocate the bungalow to Sentosa Island for tourists and Singaporean to view its deep historical and heritage value.”⁴⁴²

The last comment illustrates that the strategic relocation of the house, for example to the country’s popular resort island of Sentosa may also enhance its heritage tourism value. Broadly, all three value narratives are fulfilled by this option, although there are sacrifices within these that have been mentioned, such as the diminishment of Value Narrative B’s nation-building value which relies on future generations of Singaporeans experiencing the bungalow’s setting to recreate the historic moment of the meetings that led the country to independence.

Similarly, another commonly cited option that broadly fulfills the goals of the three value narratives but incurs certain trade-offs within them consists of moving the furniture to display in a museum. This has already been done through the temporary *We Built A Nation* exhibit at the National Museum of Singapore. Since Value Narrative A sees the potential to transfer Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy of frugality and good governance as primarily spatialized in 38 Oxley Road’s interior furnishings, the historic associative and social educational values deriving from the donation of these items for public display have been acknowledged by stakeholders, such as Member of Parliament Alex Yam, who commented, “Mr. Lee’s personal effects reveal the human side of a person who for many was almost superhuman- his frugality, values and work habits, all of which made him the man that he was.”⁴⁴³ However, the way the furniture is displayed in such ex situ interpretations may have an impact on the effectiveness of transmitting this particular value narrative about Lee Kuan Yew to future generations. It may be argued that the goal of such a value narrative can be more effectively realized if the furniture and artefacts are thoughtfully and holistically arranged through the full recreation of entire rooms to provide the “the same immersive and participatory experience future generations could have walking through the rooms where history was made, and seeing the simple furniture and fittings that embodied Mr Lee’s lifelong ideals of pragmatism and thrift.”⁴⁴⁴

Therefore, in the same vein, the effective transfer of Value Narrative B also depends on the extent to which the museum exhibit may recreate the historic meeting space of 38 Oxley Road’s basement dining room to create a powerful and meaningful learning and nation-building experience for visitors, a consideration that becomes even more important given that the original character-defining setting is lost. As T. N. Srinivasan emphasized in a letter to the *Straits Times*,

There is a way to both honour Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s wish to have his Oxley Road house demolished and fulfil Singaporeans’ desire to keep the house as a piece of national heritage. The most politically and historically important part of the house is the basement, where Mr Lee and his colleagues started the People’s Action Party that strategized the path of Singapore’s success. When demolishing the house, the basement

⁴⁴² Balji, “Let the Hard Truth.”⁴⁴² Au-Young, “Mr Lee’s Personal Items.”

⁴⁴³ Au-Young, “Mr Lee’s Personal Items.”

⁴⁴⁴ Fiona Chan, “Straddling Fine Line.”

could be taken apart brick by brick and reassembled in its original form at the National Museum, so that the story of the birth of modern, independent Singapore can be told in more vivid detail. The photo of Mr Lee depicting his grief and anxiety at Singapore's separation from Malaysia should find a prominent place in this reassembled basement. This is a win-win for all, and a fitting tribute to Mr Lee.⁴⁴⁵

Certainly, as indicated by this quote, the way that such a basement recreation is presented may to a certain degree be able to incorporate the commemorative value of Value Narrative A in addition to Narrative B. Crucially, the ex situ interpretative exhibit should be of a more permanent nature than the one-year run of the *We Built A Nation* exhibit, as continued public access to such interpretation is paramount for the long-term transmission of both value narratives to future generations.

A final scenario to be discussed is the creation of a virtual tour from photographs or videos of the house to serve as a form of ex situ interpretation. As the *Straits Times* reported, Members of Parliament Ang Wei Neng and Irene Ng "asked if Mr Lee's home could be photographed and recorded on video and other digital media formats, so that Singaporeans could tour the house virtually. This would respect Mr Lee's wishes while preserving the house's heritage value at the same time, they said."⁴⁴⁶ Likewise, an online commenter recommended, "Make a high-definition image of the whole house and compound so the public can visit it virtually."⁴⁴⁷ This scenario would still allow future generations to learn about the significant association between 38 Oxley Road and the nation and its founding father but in a much more distant and less effective way, thus losing the living history lesson potential presented in Value Narratives A and B. Value Narrative B is also greatly weakened here, as its nation-building value relies most heavily on spatial experience, especially a collective spatial experience that can strengthen bonds and foster social cohesion. As then Deputy S. Rajaratnam noted when heritage conservation in Singapore was first starting to take off in the 1980s, "We must realise that photographs and words are no substitute for life-size forms and spaces. For one cannot walk into or around the buildings in these photographs...Buildings demolished are history records gone. While some must make way for progress, some, we hope, will remain to link us with our past."⁴⁴⁸ Finally, the economic benefits of heritage tourism for this scenario are much more unclear as compared to the other two ex situ interpretation options, although there may be social benefits of cultural exchange and learning that may arise from this.

Scenario 4. Redevelopment of the site with no interpretation in situ or ex situ

This scenario posits that the Lee Kuan Yew-related history tied to 38 Oxley Road should not be interpreted on the current site or at a different site. In this scenario, Value Narratives A and B, which are rooted in commemorating Lee Kuan Yew's residence on this site and all the formative events that occurred because of this connection, are diminished in importance in comparison to Value Narrative C, which seeks to transmit the economic value of capitalizing on land value to maximize usage of land by

⁴⁴⁵ Srinivasan, "Dismantle and Reassemble Basement."

⁴⁴⁶ Charissa Yong, "Mr. Lee Kuan Yew Adamant About Having His House Demolished," *Straits Times*, Apr. 14, 2015.

⁴⁴⁷ "On Facebook." *Straits Times*, Apr. 21, 2015.

⁴⁴⁸ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 37.

building a tall and dense building that can drive economic growth and accommodate population growth. Furthermore, it affirms the sense of national identity that Lee Kuan Yew had shaped in his people, based on the values of pragmatism and progress over sentiment.

Whereas Scenarios 2 and 3 also feature redevelopment which would maximize land value and incur the resulting economic benefits, the inclusion of some form of interpretation in or ex situ risks contradicting the commemorative value expressed under Value Narrative C, whereupon Lee Kuan Yew's legacy of pragmatism is also tied to the avoidance of any monumentalization or memorialization measures. In contrast, Scenario 4's exclusion of any interpretation of the site's association to Lee Kuan Yew affirms that no individual should be placed above others, no matter how accomplished this individual is; it thus stands more in line with the nation's embedded collective consciousness about placing nation and society above self and passes on this national value to the future. Thus, it can be seen that this scenario most completely captures the various aspects of Value Narrative C, except for heritage tourism and branding value. Neither Value Narrative A nor Value B are transmitted to future generations in this scenario. Bemoaning their loss, one online commenter griped, "...yes, Singapore is new nation compared to America so it's all the more reason for Singaporeans to preserve its history so that generations to come will not forget. What stories do we have to tell our children and our children's children about Singapore? Oh yeah, this Greenacres condo, last time the prime minister's house used to be there but it was knocked down long ago..."⁴⁴⁹

There is an alternative scenario within this grouping that instead of constructing a new building on the site, may instead keep the bungalow standing and adaptively reused without interpretation. This is a much less cited option, and a much weaker way of transmitting Value Narrative C than constructing a new building on the site, and it still would not capture either Value Narrative A or Value Narrative B. As with the scenario of redeveloping the site as a memorial park or public monument, it could be argued that if a practical rather than sentimental use for the bungalow can be found that may derive broader social or economic benefits, it may be preserved through adaptive reuse. For instance, one stakeholder suggests that converting the bungalow "into a school, child care centre, kindergarten, or something useful...would be more in line with Lee Kuan Yew's ideals" than turning it into a house museum.⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the appeal of this option and its ability to effectively transmit Value Narrative C at the absence of Value Narratives A and B is also diminished by the fact that the opportunities to capitalize on land value or heritage tourism and branding are both lost.

The scenario of adaptive reuse may be strengthened if it is combined with other scenarios in the hybrid overarching Scenario 2 and 3 groupings that call for some form of interpretation of the Lee Kuan Yew-related history at 38 Oxley Road. For Scenario 2, a practical adaptive reuse might occupy the entire house with the historic associations interpreted in some way from naming to displaying some original furnishings. Alternatively, the rest of the house may sport an adaptive reuse, while the basement dining

⁴⁴⁹ Navaratnarajah, "Call to Preserve LKYs Home."

⁴⁵⁰ Hannah Koh, "62% of ST Readers."

room is preserved intact as a museum, serving as the source of interpretation. For Scenario 3, the bungalow can feature an adaptive reuse while any of the interpretation measures occur *ex situ*. Adaptive reuse can thus add some of the essence of Value Narrative C into these scenarios, but again, it is emphasized that its effectiveness in transmitting that value narrative to future generations is limited in comparison to constructing a new building, and will also depend highly on the new use that goes into the bungalow.

Chapter Summary

Through this scenario analysis, the answers to the two key questions posed at the beginning of the chapter can be readily understood. The first question was, “Should 38 Oxley Road’s association to Lee Kuan Yew and related historic events, from which stem many of the site’s values be interpreted?” For the three interpretive scenarios, the answer is “yes” for Value Narratives A (Lee Kuan Yew slept here) and B (This is where history was made, where the nation was born), whose transmission to future generations is rooted in that association, and “no” for Value Narrative C (Pragmatism and progress over sentiment), which does not rely on or militates against that association for its transmission to the future. Instead, Value Narrative C operates on a different interpretation of Lee Kuan Yew’s legacy and concerns itself with forwarding different values that are engrained in a pragmatic outlook on progress. Centered on maximizing land value and economic growth, the fulfilment of Value Narrative C thus relies largely on redevelopment of the 38 Oxley Road site rather than the interpretation of its history. For the four physical scenarios, the first three include some form of interpretation and the last three include the redevelopment of the site. Thus, taken together, it can be seen that Scenarios 1 (House remains *in situ* and is interpreted *in situ*), 2 (Redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation *in situ*), and 3 (Redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation *ex situ*) would ultimately fulfill the goals of Value Narratives A and B, and they would do so to varying degrees based on how and where that interpretation occurs, which was the second key question this chapter sought to answer. On the other end of the spectrum, Scenarios 4 (Redevelopment with no interpretation *in situ* or *ex situ*), 3, and 2 would capture Value Narrative C, and likewise do so to varying degrees depending on what sort of redevelopment is proposed and what the economic or social benefits it would accrue for future generations.

Crucially, this scenario analysis has shown that the values arising from the cultural significance assessment may be transmitted to future generations in a variety of ways that do not necessarily rely on the preservation of all or any of 38 Oxley Road’s physical attributes. Thus, an informed decision must look beyond these attributes in order to determine how these values are really spatialized in potential outcomes, which are the interpretive and physical scenarios that this chapter has outlined. From Figure 6.1, it is evident that the most extreme physical scenario groupings had the fewest potential outcomes, while the two groupings in the middle had many more options. This immediately reveals how much potential for compromise is lost when the 38 Oxley Road case is framed as a dichotomy between preserve-versus-demolish positions as opposed to a spectrum of possibilities. In fact, the options that capture the most values and most effectively negotiate between the competing value narratives are those which fall in the middle categories. Furthermore, it is right between the two hybrid scenarios that

the most creative and comprehensive combinations can be reached, through a redevelopment of the site with some form of interpretation occurring in situ *and* ex situ. This idea has been proposed by a commenter on the *Dialectic* forum, who imagined a compromise between upholding the historic associations to 38 Oxley Road (Value Narratives A and B) and the pragmatic impulse of Lee Kuan Yew's will (Value Narrative C), writing,

I have great respect for Mr Lee Kuan Yew, and I think that we must preserve the parts that have intrinsic historical value, and we can do so without contravening the terms in his will. Once Dr Lee Wei Ling no longer lives there, I propose that historians and academics properly document and catalogue all the items in the house. The ones of historic value should be placed in a museum. Then, I propose that the entire basement - which had the most historical significance due to the founding of the PAP - be recreated in the museum with the original furniture and fittings. Once that has been done, the house can be demolished, and the site should be converted into a park, called the Lee Kuan Yew Memorial Park. This proposal will ensure that (1) the historical value is preserved and can be taught to future generations in the museum; (2) his wishes to destroy the house are respected, and (3) the address 38 Oxley Road will not be used for any other occupant and will be a place of national remembrance.⁴⁵¹

Thus, while it may be argued that the two ends of the spectrum represent the “purest” outcomes that most strongly capture Narratives A and B for Scenario 1 and Narrative C for Scenario 4, it is in the hybrid scenarios that decision-makers can find more opportunity to combine interpretation and redevelopment, so that greater shares of all three value narratives can be at once passed on to future generations.

⁴⁵¹ “Should We Preserve.”

7 Conclusion

In line with Singapore's first national shared value of "nation before community, and society above self," many stakeholders of the 38 Oxley Road case argue that preserving the former home of the country's founding prime minister which also witnessed the birth of the nation is a matter of national interest that should take precedence over an individual wish for its demolition. The quandary here, though, is that this wish to demolish the house was put forth by the very person whose association forms the basis of those values which warrant its presence for posterity. Some observers have thus pointed out that Lee Kuan Yew's wish to demolish the house is, as such, out of character with his longstanding political mantra and the country's foremost shared value of putting nation and society above self. As *Boston Globe* journalist, Neil Swidey, wrote, "Lee's demolition demand put his prime-minister-son in a jam, since it contradicts the founding father's longstanding premise that Singaporeans should think of the state first and themselves second. Following Lee's death, even the dutiful *Strait Times* quoted preservation specialists arguing that the greater good would be served by denying Lee's last wish."⁴⁵²

However, this thesis has challenged the notion that Lee Kuan Yew's will is really incongruous with the principles by which he lived and on which he founded the nation. Rather, it has become clear from the formation of the key value narratives that his will, which may of course be seen as having certain individual interests such as privacy, is not totally self-serving after all; besides a concern for privacy, which may be seen as the most personal of his interests, Lee Kuan Yew also requested the demolition of his house based on the fact that it could save public spending on renovating or maintaining it, and more importantly, that it would free up a prime downtown area for economic growth and progress. Thus, even if Lee Kuan Yew's will is, in a literal sense, an individual private wish, the underlying interests for his position on demolishing the house may equally be aimed at serving the collective national interest. Just as other stakeholders argue for the preservation of the house to transfer the value narratives comprising of associational, heritage tourism and branding, educational, and nation-building values to future generations, Lee Kuan Yew's economic arguments constitute a value narrative rooted in pragmatism that similarly works toward a future public good, albeit a different vision of what that might be.

Recognizing this, then, as tempting as it may be to frame the 38 Oxley Road case as "clearly an issue between a personal wish and the national interest," this thesis has shown that such a strict divide between private and public wishes, or individual and national interests, does not quite exist in this manner.⁴⁵³ Rather, as illustrated by the three key value narratives that arose from the stakeholder analysis and cultural significance assessment, it has to be acknowledged that there is more than one idea of the "national interest," and therefore, more than one way to work toward reaching a common good for future generations. This is where scenario analysis comes in as an especially relevant and

⁴⁵² Swidey, "The Singapore Lee Built."

⁴⁵³ Ang, "Demolishing 38 Oxley Road."

helpful tool in teasing out the various ways in which the current values that contemporary stakeholders ascribe to a site might be projected to the future, and with what trade-offs.

The use of scenario analysis can enhance values-driven decision-making processes by providing a platform of communication between heritage professionals and non-expert stakeholders. It helps to bridge stakeholders' more instinctive positions (e.g. preserve the house or demolish the house) with the heritage discourse of values. The concoction of interpretive scenarios by translating values into more widely understandable narratives, which are essentially stories to tell future generations, can help to translate the professionalized values-based paradigm into one that is more participatory and accessible to non-experts. Furthermore, scenario analysis can make more transparent the connection between the singular positions that stakeholders may uphold and their underlying interests and values. As this thesis has shown, moving from singular positions to a deeper understanding of such interests and values affords flexibility and opportunity to negotiate and compromise, as there is usually more than one potential outcome or scenario that can capture those values and interests.

Starting with values instead of with outcomes forms the foundation of scenario planning as Jay Ogilvy outlines,

Scenario planning breaks sharply from the kind of strategic planning that starts with a single-point forecast of the future—a single prediction—and then tries to control things well enough to win in that future. True to the Enlightenment paradigm from which it derives, this older form of strategic planning makes an overly sharp distinction between the objective facts in the external environment and the internal wishes, wants, and aspirations of an institution—what is often referred to as its vision. This older form of strategic planning consists primarily in predicting the future, shaping a vision, then plotting the steps to fulfill that vision in the context of the future as predicted.⁴⁵⁴

It seems that much heritage conservation work today still tends to operate within this older Enlightenment paradigm of strategic planning, where the field's decision-makers start with a preferred outcome—preserve the site—and plan toward that end. On the other hand, this thesis has shown that if the ultimate goal of heritage conservation is to conserve the significance of a site for future generations, it is beneficial to step back and begin not with an outcome that a priori assumes that the preservation of material fabric will automatically fulfill this goal of safeguarding significance, but instead with a robust understanding of the nature of that significance—what are the values, who ascribes them, and why. This would help to determine what outcomes would adequately spatialize that value so it may be transmitted to the future. As an illustration of this, the analysis of the 38 Oxley Road case has shown how the outcome of adaptive reuse, which might be considered a traditional preservation outcome because it “saves” the building, could not in fact capture any of the three key value narratives effectively. This warns of the danger of locking into a specific outcome based on preservation biases and advocating for it without first taking the time to understand if that option truly makes sense with regard to the specific cultural context and stakeholder values involved in a case.

⁴⁵⁴ Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures*, 12.

In working toward its goal of reaching decisions built on consensus and seeking to satisfy as wide and diverse a range of stakeholders as possible, a values-based approach risks becoming too preoccupied with the present, losing sight of longer-term consequences that their decisions may have on future generations. The use of scenario analysis prompts heritage decision-makers to think about the future, which means that the task shifts from trying to balance the contemporary interests of stakeholders to prioritizing the values they ascribe on the basis of which ones future generations should inherit. Considering future benefits therefore means having to sometimes overstep current stakeholder's specific individual interests in order to fulfil particular visions of a greater collective good. For example, Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo's interest of keeping their home a private space even after death must be deprioritized in order to most compellingly transfer the value narratives rooted in associative significance by opening the house to the public.

A more future-oriented method like scenario planning builds on and contributes to a values-based approach by providing a means of bridging current stakeholder values with ideas of possible futures through the proposal and evaluation of interpretive and physical scenarios. Through this, the 38 Oxley Road case study has shown that the traditional assumption that preserving physical attributes invariably preserves the values which stakeholders ascribe to heritage sites for future generations to inherit no longer holds, as it is clear that the passing on of certain key value narratives to future generations may not necessarily happen through the preservation of physical attributes but through more broadly defined spatial outcomes. This thesis has thus demonstrated how the seemingly contradictory concerns of interpretation and redevelopment—and positions of preservation and demolition on a broader level—are not mutually exclusive; instead, a debate that is often perceived as dichotomous can be reframed into a spectrum of outcomes through values-based and scenario planning methods that do not shun but embrace conflict and contradiction as mechanisms to strengthen decision-making processes and outcomes. A combination of these methods thus enhances the potential to reach creative combinations of and compelling compromises between the multiple values present.

This enhanced ability and willingness to compromise, along with the consideration of non-traditional values, particularly economic and social values, empowers heritage conservation to be more relevant and integrated in a public policy context of planning for the future, where it may be able to more creatively and effectively balance its own goals and interests concerning the built environment with those of other policymakers in land-use and sustainability planning, for instance, when it does not write off values, narratives, or scenarios that seem intuitively opposed to a more traditional attitude of materials-based preservation. In this way, heritage conservation can begin to take into account and address questions of social, political, and economic sustainability in its decisional outcomes.

As Singapore has had to balance heritage conservation against the pressures of population growth and land scarcity since its founding, this case and the Singapore heritage context may thus serve as a model for understanding the challenges that heritage professionals in other places will have to tackle in an uncertain future faced with climate change and sustainability concerns. Part of Lee Kuan Yew's legacy lies in having inculcated a set of values in the Singaporean population so they would be

prepared to deal with their small land area and lack of natural resources. This has afforded Singaporean heritage authorities to some extent, more than anywhere else, the ability to bring such an economically-minded interpretive scenario of pragmatism and progress over sentiment to the negotiation table as a legitimate value narrative vis-à-vis more traditional preservation value narratives rooted in historic associative value. As Lily Kong writes in URA's 2011 publication, *Conserving the Past, Creating the Future*, "The ways in which a society allows for, and then resolves varied preferences and divergent expectations, demonstrate the maturity of its social compact, and point to its ability to relieve, if not resolve, tensions. So far, Singapore has managed to accommodate difference. With respect to urban conservation, market forces will continue to persist, even while conservationists persevere in their cause. The continuing act of balancing interests among divergent groups will remain the abiding task confronting the country."⁴⁵⁵

Futurist Peter Schwartz upholds that scenario planning can be a powerful tool in balancing those interests among divergent groups, writing, "Scenarios can foster understanding and empathy about potentialities for tomorrow. Scenarios are only stories after all. They are not ideologies or matters of faith. They are simply ways of exploring possibilities. Scenarios provide a way of having a more imaginative and coherent conversation about the future. And since there are more than one plausible scenario, scenario planning enables a conversation that does not end with one side winning and the other losing. Indeed the differences among us are among the most important tools for creating a diversity of possible futures, giving real meaning to human freedom."⁴⁵⁶ From this, it would seem that scenario analysis is a logical methodological step forward for a values based approach to heritage conservation, as both are centered on a recognition of plurality, of voices, values, or possibilities. Just as a values-based approach sees a strengthening of heritage conservation decisions through the consideration and balancing of a greater range of stakeholder interests and values, scenario analysis demonstrates how a consideration of diverse alternative futures can generate greater participation in imagining shared futures that can incur greater collective benefits and fewer trade-offs.

Through an analysis of the 38 Oxley Road case, this thesis has shown how a pairing of scenario planning and a values-based approach to heritage conservation can enhance decision-making by exploring tools for translating current values into future outcomes. Heritage conservation is, after all, ultimately a forward-looking field that is about shaping the future through decisions about the past. Expanding the conservation toolbox through the sharpening and greater adoption of such methods as values-driven planning and scenario analysis can enhance heritage decision-making and strengthen the field's ability to lead the way in creating a better collective future.

⁴⁵⁵ Kong, *Conserving the Past*, 224-225.

⁴⁵⁶ Peter Schwartz, "Foreword," James A. Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures: Scenario Planning as a Tool for a Better* Schwartz, "Foreword."

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Appendix: Images



Image 1A and 1B. Views of 38 Oxley Road.



Image 1C and 1D. 38 Oxley Road viewed from the street.



Image 1E. Sketch of 38 Oxley Road in the 1950s before “it was fortified by security grilles and its frontage walled off.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 340-341.

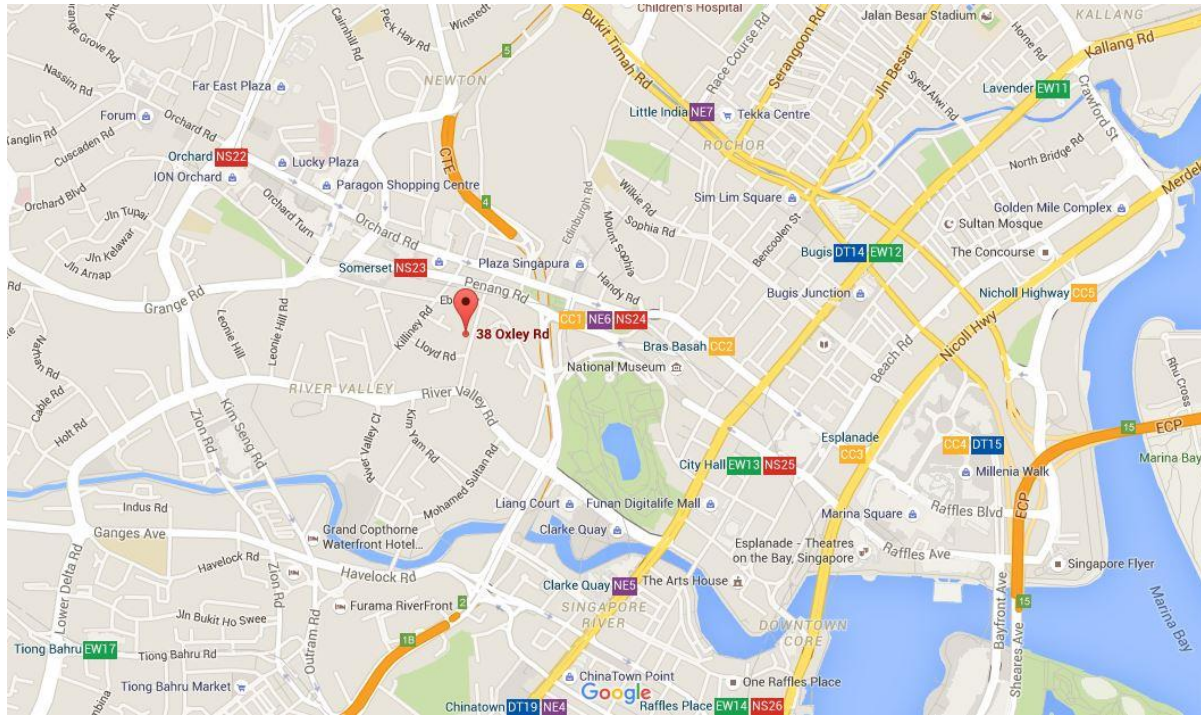


Image 1F. Map showing location of 38 Oxley Road



Image 1G. Bird's-eye view map of 38 Oxley Road.



Image 1H. The Lee family on the grounds of 38 Oxley Road



Image 1I. The Lee family on the veranda of 38 Oxley Road.



Image 1J. The basement dining room of 38 Oxley Road



Image 1K. "Where the PAP was conceived: Some of the party's founding members meeting in the basement dining room of Lee Kuan Yew's home to discuss the design for the party's symbol. (clockwise from top right) Ismail Rahim, Lee (standing), K M Byrne, S Rajaratnam, Devan Nair, Toh Chin Chye, Goh Keng Swee and Samad Ismail."⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁸ Yap, Lim and Leong, *Men in White*, 340-341.



Image 4A. A gurkha guarding 38 Oxley Road



Image 4B. Furniture from the Lee Kuan Yew estate on display at the *We Built A Nation* exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore.



Image 4C and 4D. The basement dining table of 38 Oxley Road displayed in the *We Built A Nation* exhibition.



Image 4E. Lee Kuan Yew's desk on display in the *We Built A Nation* exhibition.

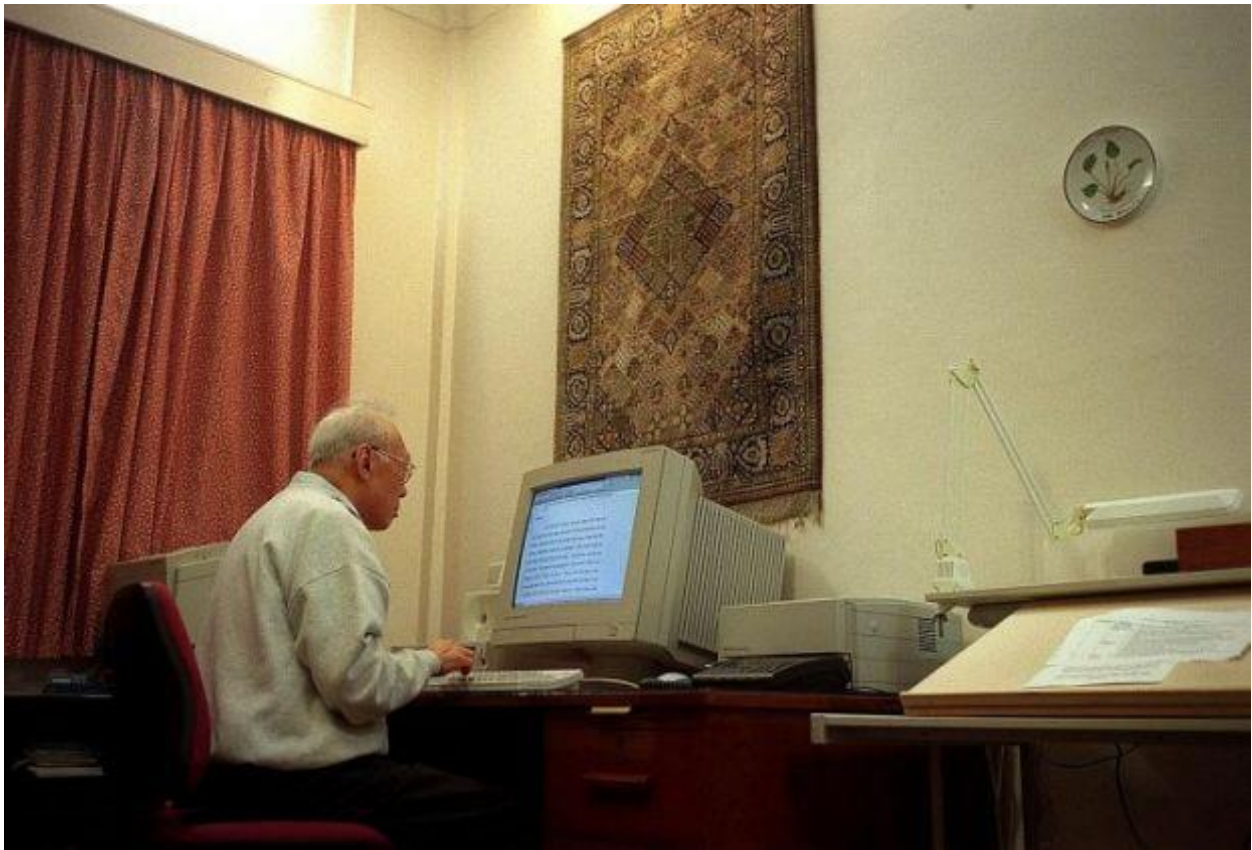


Image 4F. Lee Kuan Yew working at his desk.

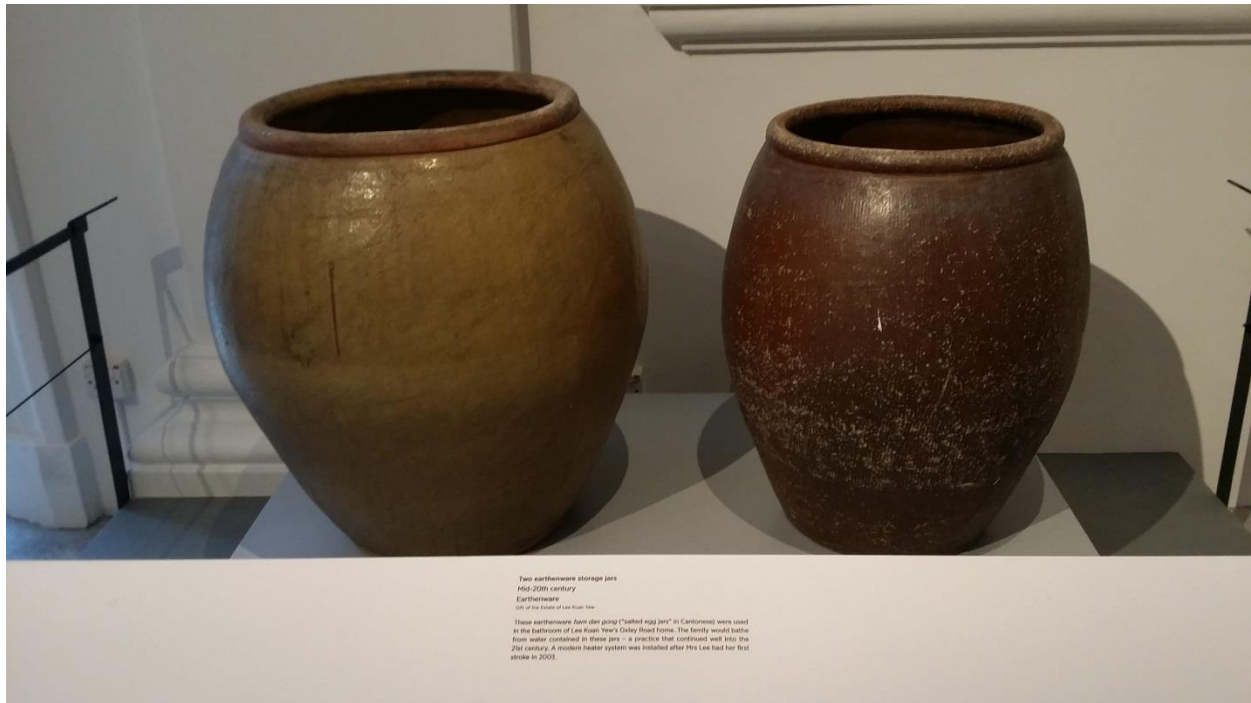


Image 4G. The earthenware jars the family used for bathing before installing a shower in 2003.



Image 4H. Scale model of 38 Oxley Road. The former servants' quarters wing can be seen at the rear of the main bungalow.



Image 4I and 4J. The scale model of 38 Oxley Road viewed from different angles.

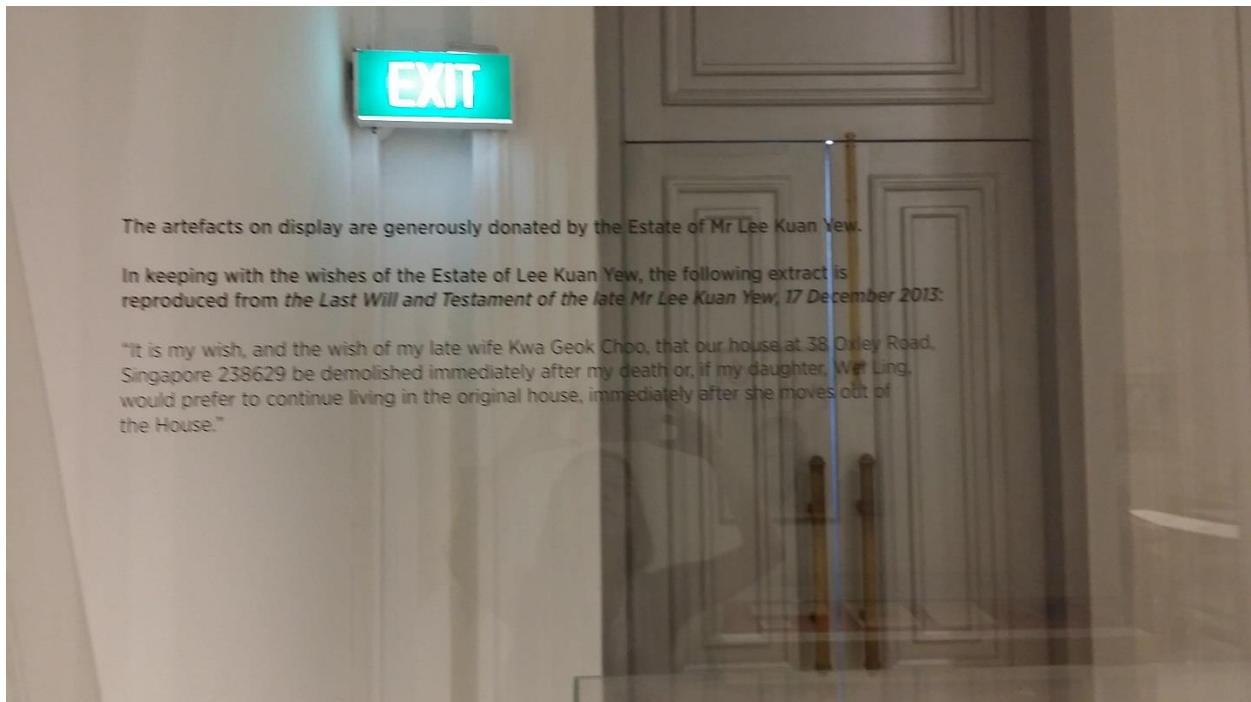
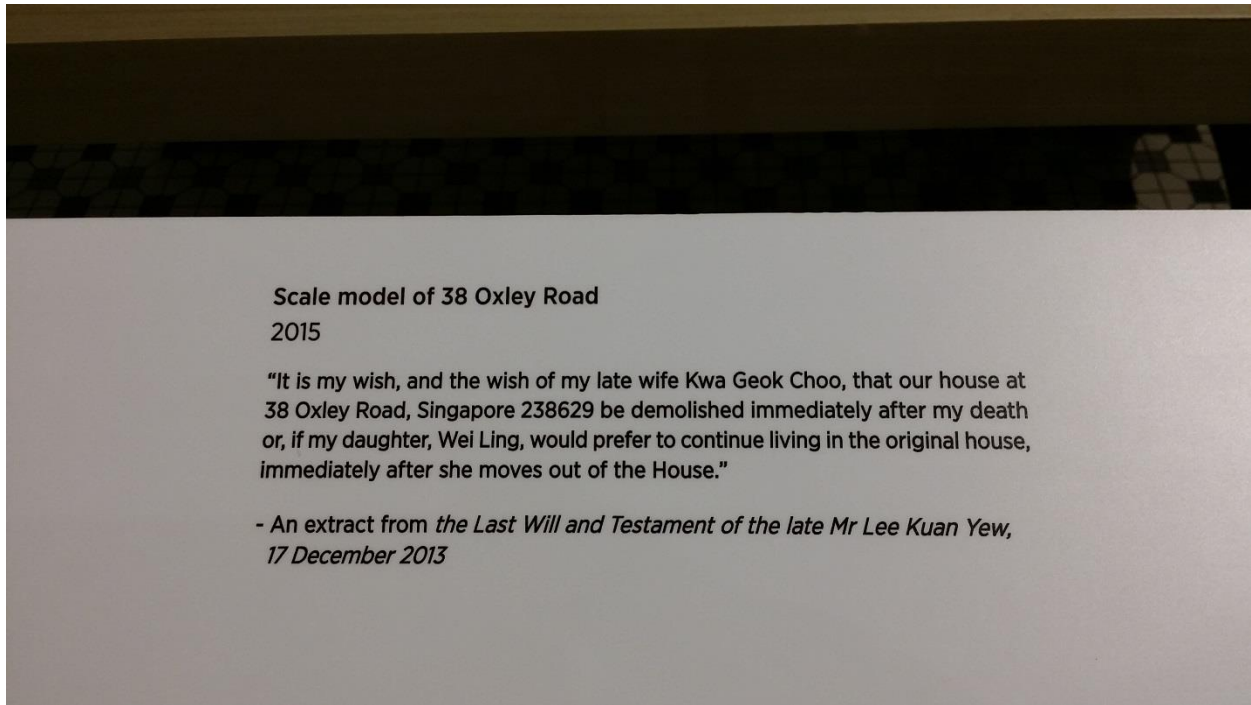


Image 4K and 4L. Examples of the signage with the extract about 38 Oxley Road from Lee Kuan Yew's will throughout the exhibition.



Image 4M and 4N. Ong Kim Seng's painting of 38 Oxley Road.



Image 40. URA 2004 Master Plan at the Singapore City Gallery.

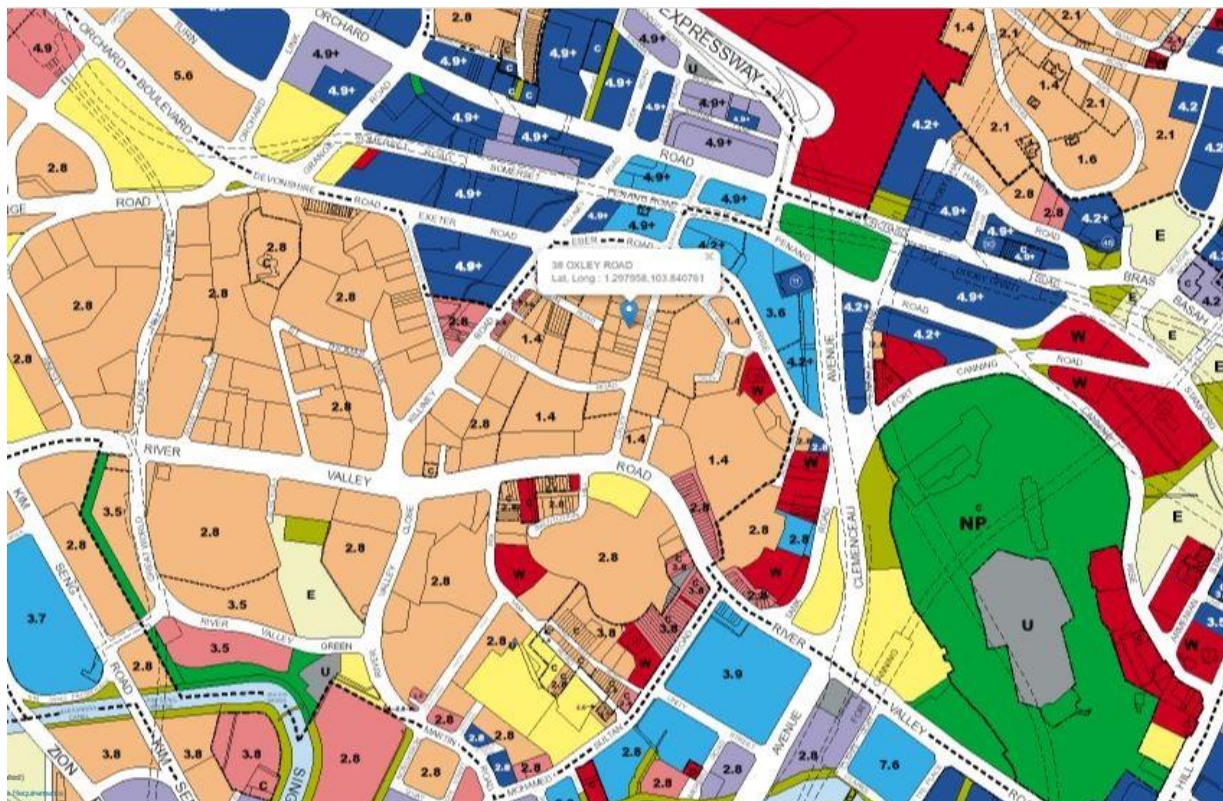


Image 4P. 38 Oxley Road called out on the URA's 2004 Master Plan, showing the surrounding neighborhood's residential zoning and height restrictions, although it is on the fringe of commercial zoned properties along Orchard Road. Legend included above.



Image 4Q and 4R. Lee Kuan Yew's ancestral home in Dabu County, Guangdong Province, which the Chinese government is turning into a tourist attraction.



Image 6A and 6B. Amber Road's Butterfly House before partial demolition.



Image 6C. The retained front porch of the Butterfly House with the new condominium development.