

CONTAINMENT VERSUS MOBILITY: EMBODYING NATION BUILDING IN THE  
CITY-STATE OF SINGAPORE THROUGH URBAN PLANNING

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in  
the Department of Geography

Chapel Hill  
2012

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## **ABSTRACT**

**AGNES K. L. CHEW: Containment versus Mobility: Embodying Nation Building in the City-State of Singapore through Urban Planning**  
(Under the direction of Nina Martin)

Feminist geographers have shown how control of territory, borders and mobility at multiple scales are central to inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building. This thesis explores how urban planning in the global city-state of Singapore utilizes territory, borders and mobility as tools of marginalization and inclusion, tied to the desirability of different bodies. Whilst planning policies for foreign worker dormitories relegate migrant workers to peripheral areas and attempt to contain them through the provision of in-house facilities, strategies of neoliberal urbanism embodied in the Master Plan 2008 facilitate the mobility of citizens, tourists and skilled talent on multiple scales, for the dual purpose of attracting capital and engendering love for the city. This contrast brings to the forefront questions of social-spatial justice within Singapore's planning framework, as well as the role of the built environment and the state in negotiating the relationship between neoliberalism and nation building.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This piece of work could not have been accomplished without the unwavering support of my husband, who has made me numerous cups of tea and coffee during my writing phase,

as well as my family who has cheered me on via long-distance phone calls.

I would also like to thank my committee for their guidance and feedback. Lastly, many thanks to my wonderful cohort for your guidance, support and cheerfulness.

You guys kept me sane.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

There are some jobs that Singaporeans won't do, and then there are some jobs that Singaporeans cannot do... We need to be welcoming our guest workers; we need to be welcoming our expatriates, all of that in pursuit of our national interest.

(Law Minister K Shanmugan, cited in Spykerman, 2008, p A4)

Migrant workers, I don't like them... all of them. They make my home no longer my home. My home looked one way when I left the country, but when I came back, it looked different. I can't recognize my home anymore. The trains are all crowded and all that.

(Interviewee A, recorded 31 May 2011)

The relationship between nation building and migration is an intimate yet paradoxical one, as illustrated by the two quotes above. On one hand, the inflow of temporary migrant workers into a nation-state to make up the domestic shortfall in (often unskilled/low skilled) labor can be seen to positively contribute to nation building. Such practices allude to the experiences of Western European metropolitan centers after the Second World War, a key example being the arrival of Turkish *gastarbeiters* into Germany (Miles, 1982; Leitner, 1995). The unskilled workers were often seen purely as units of manpower and thus, their presence in the territory of the nation-state was deemed to be transitory. On the other hand, an influx of great numbers of unfamiliar bodies into a society has often rendered feelings of threat, insecurity and fear by the local population. Whether founded or unfounded, such feelings, which tend to intensify during periods of economic recession, have typically led to the social-spatial exclusion of migrants.

Competition for capital has led many cities and regions to adopt strategies of neoliberal urbanism in the hope that they would engender economic growth. Alongside



this is a parallel movement of migrants into these regions to work either in the construction industry or as domestic labor (Cohen, 1995; Abdul-Aziz, 2001; Chang & Ling, 2000; Chin, 1998). Singapore is no stranger to this. Being a small island city-state with limited natural resources, Singapore has in recent decades pushed to remake itself into a cosmopolitan and vibrant global city that will attract investments and skilled talent. The city-state's aspiration to be a global city was enunciated as early as 1972 by then Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam, prior to urban theorists such as John Friedmann (1986) and Sakia Sassen (1991) developing the concept in a more scholarly and empirical manner:

...we are more than a regional city. We draw sustenance not only from the region but also from the international economic system to which as a Global City we belong and which will be the final arbiter of whether we prosper or decline.

(S. Rajaratnam, 1972; quoted in Oswin & Yeoh, 2010, p 167)

Given Singapore's shortage in domestic labor and its decreasing rate of population growth in the recent decade, this drive to be a global city has been accompanied by an inflow of both skilled and low/unskilled migrant workers into the city-state, a trend that has accelerated in recent years. In 2004, foreigners made up only a quarter of Singapore's labor force. Yet, this percentage has now increased to about a third of Singapore's workforce of 3 million (Chia, 2010). This rapid increase in migrant workers in such a short time span and their growing visibility in public spheres has sparked off much resistance and unhappiness amongst the local population. Mid-tier and skilled foreigners are accused of taking away jobs from the local population and increasing the prices and rent of real estate property, whereas low/unskilled foreign workers are discriminated against for a whole host of reasons, often linked to processes of racialization. This tension thus reveals the contradiction between the city-state's need for manpower for economic growth and local anxieties stemming from the increasing presence of migrant 'others'. In

fact, the topic of migration was so salient that it became one of the key policy issues battled between the different political parties in the Singapore's 2011 General Election.

This relation between nation building and migration forms part of my larger research inquiry about *the embodiment of the nation-state through the profession of urban planning*. In combining feminist geopolitics literature about nation-states with that of urban planning, not only does it become clear that the policing of national borders can take place on sub-national scales and through means other than immigration, the embodiment of planners' everyday work also sheds some light on issues of social justice and neoliberalism within planning, which is an area of extreme interest to urban theorists.

The establishment of a nation-state is carried out in complex ways, most of which focus on the maintenance of sovereign power over a national territory, as well as the creation of boundaries clearly demarcating 'us' from 'them' (Paasi, 2003; Newman, 2003). The social-spatial classification of different population groups for inclusion or exclusion into the nation-state is often predicated on racist practices (Chow, 2002). However, the idea of race struggle was not always based on state exploitation or discrimination; Foucault (1997/2003) showed how race struggle was initially a form of discourse utilized by the ruled to challenge or subvert the power of the ruler or ruling classes. Yet, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these discourses were co-opted by the ruling classes for state practices, creating state racism which depicted the nation as a homogeneous race, for which racial others are deemed as threats. This explains why even in the era of biopower where the focus is on the extension of life, the identification and killing of 'others' is deemed central to nation building projects.

State practices and nation building also bring to the forefront questions of territory, borders and mobility. Whilst it is not possible today to have a fully impenetrable national boundary under the current neoliberal framework (or even historically, for that matter),

part of the state's influence on nation building is the ability to control the mobility of different bodies across national borders. In this area, feminist geographers have built upon the work of critical geopolitics to further extend these concepts of territory, borders and mobility (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Mountz & Hyndman, 2006). Their work has drawn attention to how borders can work on *multiple scales* to bring about social differentiation that is reproduced and inscribed on the scale of the *human body*. In the case of migrant workers, for instance, borders do not only function to determine whether migrants are allowed to enter the territory of a nation-state, but also used as a tool of classification and categorization to differentiate between groups of migrant workers based on varying bodily attributes such as level of skill, class, race, nationality or gender (Nagar, Lawson, McDowell & Hanson, 2002; Silvey, 2006). Such processes of social differentiation on the scale of the human body serve the interest of the state in disciplining and managing different population groups (Foucault, 1977; 1991).

In the past decade, there has also been a flourishing of scholarly literature showing how different bodies have variable abilities to negotiate borders, resulting in different mobility outcomes. This focus on mobility has led scholars to herald a 'mobilities turn' or a 'new mobilities paradigm' (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006), to which feminist geographers have contributed to by highlighting the power relations that undergird the movements of bodies on a multitude of scales (Hyndman, 1997; Jirón, 2009; 2010). Therefore, through a multi-scalar understanding of borders and mobilities, as well as situating the body as both a site and scale of study, feminist geographers have shown how the 'edges and entry points of the nation' (Silvey, 2006, p 72) can be continually re-inscribed and enacted through a variety of ways that seek to discipline and regulate the conduct (and mobility) of different bodies.

At the same time, attention to the bodily scale is useful in elucidating the everyday

lived experiences and practices of people. This helps to break down the notion that a state or organization is a monolithic, inscrutable, unchanging entity, but rather reveals it to be constructed through the mundane practices of bureaucrats or workers. Scott (1998), for instance, illustrates how the creation of a modern state involves disparate practices of legibility such as ‘the creation of last names, the standardization of weights and measures, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers’ (p 2), amongst many others. Similarly, in their study on the spatialization of states, Ferguson & Gupta (2002) show how the ‘verticality’ and ‘encompassment’ aspects of state spatiality were created and maintained through mundane bureaucratic practices such as inspections and registers. In addition to practices, attention to the bodily scale also highlights how people’s experiences and thoughts about an event or entity can be widely variable. This helps to break down a monolithic understanding of any topic, be in nation building or social justice.

Although literature in feminist geopolitics has deepened discussion and provided a more nuanced understanding of the processes of nation building, most of the literature on embodying the nation-state has focused on migration studies or war atrocities (e.g. Mountz, 2004; Mayer, 2004). In this thesis, I am interested in expanding feminist geopolitical literature on the embodiment of the nation-state through the lens and profession of urban planning. Urban planning can be seen to parallel nation building in one important manner: both are dependent on the control of territory and the demarcation of borders to achieve their respective objectives. While the establishment of a nation-state consists of demarcating a national boundary, urban planning operates to demarcate borders on a sub-national scale, between parcels of land, neighbourhoods or larger districts. It is with this similarity in mind that urban planning can be viewed as enhancing understandings of how social differentiation between different population groups/bodies

within Singapore is enacted internally within the national territory. Thus, by shifting the scale of analysis, rather than purely viewing the process of ‘othering’ on a national scale via migration flows, one can investigate how social exclusion is created through the policies of urban planning on a sub-national scale.

At the same time, the use of urban planning as a lens of study also broadens our understanding of the processes of nation building. Other than the demarcation of social-spatial borders within the national territory, urban planning can forge and enhance feelings of national identity through the built physical environment, such as the conservation and preservation of historic monuments that hold special memories for citizens (Heidenreich, 2008). Furthermore, with ongoing competition between cities to draw in capital and skilled talent (see Florida, 2002), urban planning also contributes to nation building by projecting a high impact and positive representation of key (often capital) cities to the rest of the world. This is typically accomplished by strategies of neoliberal urbanism that commodify the built environment to produce iconic buildings or spaces that represent a city. Although such urban redevelopment schemes are often implemented for economic reasons and to facilitate the ongoing circulation of capital (Lefebvre, 1976; Harvey, 1985), they can also enhance national identity and pride. Hence, using planning as an analytical lens, nation building can be construed in a broader framework and on multiple scales, all of which this thesis intends to investigate.

Lastly, urban planning draws attention to two additional themes which are also briefly explored in this thesis: neoliberalism and social-spatial justice. The profession of planning cannot be divorced from wider political-economic forces. Thus, this thesis takes the opportunity to explore how planning in Singapore, as an arm of the state, relates to neoliberal forces. With the acceleration of globalization and neoliberalism, some scholars have questioned the political efficacy of the nation-state, as it has been argued that free

market logics has led to the ‘hollowing out’ of the state (Jessop, 2002), and the reduction of its ability to structure territories (O’Loughlin, Staeheli & Greenberg, 2004). This promotes a view of neoliberalism and nation-states as being antithetical, as pitted against one another. In this vein, another avenue of investigation is to see whether this dualism is enacted in the same manner within the profession of urban planning, or whether relations between the state and neoliberalism are more complex in reality. That is, are state interventions (in this case urban planning policies) obstacles to the operation of neoliberalism? Or do such policies negotiate a more multifaceted relationship between national goals and neoliberalism? More specifically, is it possible that nation building and neoliberalism can be achieved in tandem, not one at the expense of the other?

The second theme considers issues of social-spatial justice, an area that has been extensively studied within urban planning and geography, partly in response to the increasing inequalities generated by neoliberalism (Harvey, 1973; Dikec, 2001; Fainstein, 2010; Marcuse et al., 2011). Such research has either focused on empirical case studies of injustices, or attempting to see how ‘justice’ as a moral imperative can be defined and used as an evaluative criterion to bring about just outcomes. Given that planning is predominantly about the control of territory and the demarcation of borders, the aim is then to investigate whether planning policies and guidelines lead to just *outcomes* both socially and/or spatially. An additional related question pertains to the issue of social justice during the *process* of planning. Is social justice a criterion for the formulation and implementation of planning policies in Singapore? What do Singaporean planners mean when they refer to social justice, if they do so at all?

In summary, my research aims to bring together literature on feminist geopolitics and urban planning to better understand how nation building is embodied through urban planners. By bringing two bodies of literature – feminist geopolitics and urban

planning/geography – in conversation with one another, a number of theoretical and empirical inroads are established. First, urban planning is often thought to operate in a local or regional context (especially in the U.S.), and studied in relation to the themes of neoliberalism and social justice. That is, most research today explores how planners utilize strategies of urban entrepreneurialism to attract capital and people, and whether the outcomes of these development projects are socially just (e.g. Marcuse et al., 2011, Fainstein, 2010). Whilst this body of research is clearly important, combining it with feminist geopolitics literature makes us recognize that uneven outcomes of planning can also be tied to inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building, in that the tools of urban planning are used to include desirable bodies but ‘other’ undesirable ones on sub-national scales. This point is more salient for political entities such as city-states where the borders of the nation overlap with that of the city, Singapore being a key example. Furthermore, the focus on urban planning broadens existing analyses of embodied nation-states within the feminist geopolitics literature, where the policing of national borders and territory are often studied in relation to immigration policies or the use of rape as a war weapon. Secondly, applying the concept of embodiment to urban planning literature helps to deconstruct the monolithic, homogenous image of planning or other state organizations. In exploring the actual everyday experiences of urban planners, we see how ideals of nation building and social justice are unevenly experienced or propagated within the organization, which highlights the possible disjuncture between academic discourse and lived experiences.

Drawing on this, my thesis objectives are thus guided by the following research questions:

- On a sub-national scale, how do urban planners in Singapore utilize territory and borders to create social-spatial differentiation and variable mobilities between low/unskilled foreign workers and more desirable population segments (i.e. citizens and skilled talent)?

- How do urban planning practices and policies elucidate the relationship between the mobilities of bodies and that of capital on multiple scales to forge and enhance feelings of national identity, as well as elevating the status of Singapore on the international arena?
- How do urban planners themselves embody and mobilize ideas of nation building and/or nationalism in their work?
- How does urban planning in Singapore negotiate the tension between nation building, nation-state and neoliberalism? What role does the state play in negotiating this relationship?
- How is the concept of social-spatial justice illuminated in both the processes and outcomes of urban planning in Singapore? Do planners adopt social justice as a criterion and if so, in what form?

The thesis is organized as follows. In the second chapter, I establish the theoretical framework of my research by examining the various strands of literature that are briefly outlined above: feminist approaches to the embodiment of nation-states through the concepts of borders, territory and mobility; the relation between urban planning and nation building; and lastly, the connections between planning, neoliberalism and social justice. I then proceed to outline my research methodology in the third chapter. Next, I draw upon a range of secondary sources to contextualize Singapore's global city aspirations, and how this is related to the structure of its migration regime and urban planning efforts. In the fifth chapter, I focus on the regulations applicable to foreign worker dormitories to draw attention to the ways in which planning policies result in the social-spatial segregation and containment of unskilled/low skilled foreign workers. The sixth chapter, which is intended as a contrast to the fifth, illustrates the inclusionary processes of nation building through strategies embodied in the Master Plan 2008. Here, I show how mobility of desirable bodies is facilitated by planning initiatives which are tied to dual objectives of grounding national identity and contribution to economic growth. I then move on to investigate how ideas of nation building and social justice are embodied by urban planners themselves, focusing both on how they see their work as relating to



these larger ideals and in their embodied movements in the implementation of their plans. Throughout the last three chapters, I draw attention to both the discursive and material effects of social-spatial justice and neoliberalism. In the final chapter, I offer concluding remarks to my thesis by re-situating the research findings in the wider theoretical framework and highlighting their implications.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Theoretical Review: Linking Urban Planning to Wider Geographical Themes**

As a profession whose main technique of implementation and power rests on its ability to control and organize space, it is not surprising that urban planning has intimate links with a wide range of geographical topics. In this chapter, I review the connections between urban planning with three major bodies of geographical research: nation building; neoliberalism and social justice. The intention is to show how these three areas of work can be brought together through the lens of urban planning to deepen our understanding of how processes of nation building are spatialized and embodied on multiple scales, and how they are connected to the wider neoliberal economy.

This chapter is divided into four segments. The first segment explores processes of nation building through racialization, territory, borders and mobility. Not only is racialization an intrinsic feature of nationhood, the control of territories, borders and mobilities is also fundamental to both inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building. The second segment turns to the specific ways in which urban planning ties in with nation building, both materially and symbolically through the built environment and spatial planning strategies. As urban planning does not take place in a vacuum but has to be understood contextually, I then proceed to embed practices of urban planning in the wider neoliberal economy, focusing on the role of the state and commodification of the built environment. It is also in this neoliberal context that an interest in social-spatial justice in cities has emerged. As a result, in the last segment I draw upon the work of urban theorists to examine how justice as a moral imperative is defined and understood in

different ways, and how the concept is put forth as an evaluative criterion for assessing just outcomes.

### **Rethinking Nation Building: Racialization, Territory, Borders and Mobility**

This segment critically explores the processes of nation building through the themes of racialization, territory, borders and mobility. In what follows, I first elucidate how nation building is inherently undergirded by racialization, before moving on to show how our understandings of nation building cannot be divorced from questions of territorial, border and mobility controls. A number of case studies are then briefly presented at the end to highlight how these themes are intimately intertwined in nation building on multiple scales.

#### *Part I: Foucault's Biopower and Racism*

For what is geography, if it is not the drawing and interpretation of lines?

(Gunnar Olsson, 1991, p 181)

There are two dimensions to nation building; the inclusionary and exclusionary. These two aspects are mutually constitutive. The idea of a homogeneous political community, an 'us' with certain shared attributes - be it heritage, culture or history - cannot exist without the 'other', often demonized as inferior and primitive. Inclusionary processes of nation building are means through which national identity is strengthened, such as the use of media, stories or history to create a cohesive, unified identity. This is one way in which nation-states employ strategies to make their citizens feel part of what Anderson (1991) terms the 'imagined community'. Nationalistic feelings can also be generated through the role of memory and landscapes such as monuments, memorials and museums (Till, 2003). On the other hand, exclusionary nation building is often accompanied by the identification of the 'other', a process often carried out on the grounds of racial and ethnic differences (Chow, 2002).

Drawing heavily on Foucault's discussion of the Western invention of 'Man' and his theory of biopower, Chow (2002) demonstrated how all nation-states, regardless of their political systems or values, are predicated on the 'letting live' of certain populations and the killing of racialized, ethnicized 'others'. Although 'Man' is supposed to be a universal notion applicable to all humans, Chow (2002, p 2) argues that in reality, 'some humans have been cast as objects, while other humans have been given the privilege of becoming subjects'. Read in this light, Foucault's argument that 'Man' is a recent historical invention makes perfect sense: 'Man' is a Western invention whose superiority rests on the debasement and dehumanization of racialized 'others'.

The question that Chow (2002) continues to pose is: how is this Western invention of 'Man' tied to Foucault's notion of biopower, and if the 'letting live' of populations is the new technology of governance, how can we reconcile this with the ongoing killing and debasement of certain population groups? How does this change our reading of the nation-state?

In writing about the changing technologies of power, Foucault (1978; 1997/2003) illustrated how in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a shift towards control over life as opposed to death. Instead of the sovereign's right to kill, biopower, or control over life and its mechanisms, slowly emerged as a central tenet of the knowledge-power nexus. This ascendancy of life over death was accompanied by the need to govern populations as a totality, to 'regulate and administer humans as a species, as a global population, by calculating and manipulating the effects of all their activities' (Chow 2002, p 7). This discourse of biopower is utilized by many governments to justify their interventionist measures in the name of helping the human species improve its chances of survival. Yet, if biopower is about extending life, how can we reconcile this with the ongoing exploitation and marginalization of certain population groups? To address this, Foucault

turns to race and racism.

What does racist discourse do? For one, it is 'a means of introducing...a fundamental division between those who must live and whose must die' (Foucault, 1991). It fragments the biological field, it establishes a break inside the biological continuum of human beings by defining a hierarchy of races, a set of subdivisions in which certain races are classified as 'good', fit and superior. More importantly, it establishes a positive relation between the right to kill and the assurance of life. It posits that 'the more you kill [and]...let die, the more you will live.

(Stoler, 1995; taken from Chow, 2002, p 9)

What this means is that instead of seeing the right to kill and the right to life as distinct and separate entities, they are mutually constitutive in that the survival of 'us' necessitates the killing of the 'other'. The act of killing that is predicated on racism thus appropriates the discourse of biopower; in other words, the measures and procedures that ensure the continuity of life are the flip side of the right to kill. As Chow (2002, p 9) succinctly summarized, 'killing off certain groups of people en masse is now transformed into a productive, generative activity undertaken for the life of the entire human species. Massacres are, literally, vital events'. Tying this back to the supposed universal notion of 'Man', the killing of human *objects* - the racialized 'others' - is what props up the survival of human *subjects*.

In highlighting the role that racism plays in Foucault's theory of biopower, Chow (2002) brings to the forefront the fact that nationhood is inherently a racist project. Although Foucault cited the Nazi state as an example of a racist state, he also argued that the intimate association between biopower and the right to kill exists in all modern states, regardless of their political values. This led Stoler (1995) to conclude that 'racism was intrinsic to the nature of all modern, normalizing states and their biopolitical technologies' (p 88; cited in Chow, p 11).

However, it must be noted that there are multiple means of racialization which are never fixed but rather evolve historically and geographically. Whilst race was

predominantly associated with nature and biological differences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, racism in the post World War II period was justified via cultural differences; cultural differences were naturalized to categorize individuals or groups into a fixed hierarchy (Balibar, 1991). Racialization can also occur through labor processes internal to a society. Roediger (2008) illustrated how racial divisions between African Americans and Whites in 19<sup>th</sup> century United States were formulated via possession of labor. This idea originated with John Locke's conception of the body as property. Hence, citizenship rights were accrued to White men as they possessed and controlled their "free labor", whereas African American slaves were owned as property and denied citizenship. Similarly, Chow (2002) highlights the racialization of labor in modern day - what she terms the 'ethnicization of labor'. Her point is that those marked as 'ethnic others' (often immigrants) are also usually the ones who work as low-level laborers. Hence, the ethnic laborer simultaneously becomes a site of foreign 'other' and one who occupies the lower ranks of society's hierarchical labor divisions.

### *Part II: Territory, Borders and Mobility*

The process of social differentiation (or 'othering') between different groups in the name of nation building or nationhood has spatial consequences as well. Specifically, where are the spatial borders drawn and on what scale? How does this relate to control of territories? Whose mobilities are affected and on what basis?

Feminist geographers have attempted to address the above questions through criticisms levied at the traditional sphere of geopolitics. One criticism is its masculinist tendencies, associated with an all-seeing vision capable of conquering a transparent space, or what has been termed the 'view from nowhere' (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997). This manner of approaching the world has also led to 'the privileging of Western theory...and a concern for formal, institutional politics, particularly at the level of the state' (Staehele &

Kofman, 2004, p 4). To counter the perception of politics as existing only at the international or national scale with elite agents as the main actors, feminist political geographers have emphasized how socio-political relations also play out on the scale of the intimate, the mundane everyday lives of people mediated through social differences such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, etc. In doing so, the notion of politics is broadened to incorporate a wider range of actors and scales, with an associated recognition of political subjectivity predicated on differences (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Sharp, 2004; Hyndman, 2007).

If the personal is political, and politics (or nation building) is mediated by social differences, the question is, how are these differences observed in society? This is where the concepts of *territories* and *borders* come into the picture, as they are inextricably intertwined with questions of difference and identity. Wastl-Walter and Staeheli (2004) show how territories and borders are socio-political constructions that not only reflect power relationships, but are also used to enforce ‘ideas about who and what belongs to particular places and the kinds of activities and practices that belong to a place or are seen as being appropriate’ (p 141). Hence, questions of identity and difference are often mapped onto the bounding of territories and the drawing of boundaries, often for very specific goals.

Whilst the concepts of territories and borders are most closely associated with the nation state, feminist political geographers have sought to destabilize this common association by showing how territories and borders also operate on other scales, and that they are not fixed, but contested and struggled over. As Paasi (2003, p 113) puts it, ‘boundaries – as lines of inclusion and exclusion between social groups, between “us” and “them” – do not locate only on border areas [of the nation state] but also are “spread” – often unevenly – all over the state territory’. Therefore, in exploring processes of nation

building, one has to bear in mind that borders regulating social differentiation do not just occur on the national scale, but are tied to events or processes at other scales, whether supra-national, sub-national or even at the bodily scale.

For feminist geographers, the body is understood as both a site and scale of study. Recognizing the body as a site of analysis has led feminist geographers to adopt an embodied approach to research. This means studying how particular outcomes are achieved via practices or discourses mediated through bodies. At the same time, seeing bodies as a site and scale of study has implications for the way we understand territories and borders. Just as impacts on the body cannot be divorced from processes occurring at other scales (body as scale of study), the body itself can be understood as a form of territory (body as site of study). Thus, going back to Paasi's (2003) quote above about the "spreading" of borders, one can see how (national) borders and territories can be "spread" onto bodies such that they can be utilized as territorial strategies for purposes of inclusion and exclusion.

The policing of national borders on the bodily scale also involves controlling the mobilities of different population groups. Specifically, the mobilities of those considered as 'others' will have to be restricted or restrained as they are deemed threatening to the body politic of the nation-state.

The politics of mobility is a key area of research for feminist geographers as well as scholars working within the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006; Creswell, 2010a). The point is that the mobilities of some are predicated on or may even entrench the immobilities of others. Thus, mobility has to be understood in relation to immobility. Doreen Massey has argued that movement should not be generalized as a universal benefit. Rather, movement is a highly differentiated activity experienced differently by individuals or social groups embedded in power relations. As



she discussed, ‘some are more in charge of it [mobility] than others; some initiate flows and movement; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it’ (Massey, 1993, p 61).

Drawing heavily on Massey’s work on power-geometries and mobility, Adey (2006) advocated for a relational understanding of mobility. Adey’s starting point is that everything is mobile in this world today, even things that seem fixed in place. Adopting a relational understanding of mobility (and immobility) means that entities that seem immobile are actually mobile, just that they are moving and changing very slowly *in relation* to things that move faster. The point is to understand why certain things or people move faster (or slower) than others and what the political implications of this are. Similarly, Creswell (2010b) identified six elements of a politics of mobility, showing how these elements are useful in teasing out power relations between different social groups and their abilities to move. His six elements negotiate the relationship between mobility and power in terms of ‘motive force, speed, rhythm, route, experience and friction’ (Creswell, 2010b, p 17). By asking why people or things move (*motive force*), how fast they move in relation to others (*speed*), in what *rhythm* do people or things move which mark them out in certain desirable or undesirable ways, how mobility is channeled (whether evenly or unevenly along certain *routes*), what the *experience* of moving is like (positive or negative) and what the obstacles to movement are (*friction*), Creswell (2010b) shows how mobility is implicated in socio-political relations embedded in highly uneven power relations.

The connection between mobilities and nation building is brought to the forefront by Stephen Graham’s (2010) discussion of ‘securocratic wars’, a phrase termed by Allen Feldman to refer to de-territorialized wars, organized on the basis of public safety and not territorial conquest. Given the blurring of the ‘inside’ (domestic) and ‘outside’ (foreign)

in the contemporary globalizing world (especially after 9/11), Graham (2010) argues that national borders and ideas of citizenship are being radically reconfigured and imagined. The difference between ‘us’ and ‘other’, for example, is no longer regulated by state borders. Similarly, ‘ideas of national citizenship, rather than necessarily being merely opposed to the outside and foreign, are now increasingly being remade against others deemed to be outside or beyond citizenship, whether they lie inside or beyond the actual geographical borders of nation-states’ (Graham, 2010, p 91). Given that dangerous bodies can now exist both within and outside national boundaries, the maintaining of state sovereignty entails controlling and monitoring mobilities and flows deemed threatening to the social order. The point is to weed out the mobilities of dangerous bodies – insurgents, terrorists and illegal immigrants – through the implementation of technological devices that monitor and track the population at large.

### *Part III: Bringing it all together*

The above discussion demonstrated how inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building cannot be divorced from control over territory, borders and mobility. In studying nationhood, the following questions will have to be addressed:

- 1) Who is included (‘us’) or excluded (‘other’), and on what basis?
- 2) What strategies are adopted or implemented to establish social and/or spatial differences? How does this affect the control of territory and/or borders? On what scales are national borders established?
- 3) Whose mobilities are affected and in what ways?

Through a number of case studies, this segment shows how territory, borders and mobility are intimately intertwined in the re-scaling of national boundaries and processes of ‘othering’.

To start with, the most obvious examples are those focusing on the hardening of national borders against immigrants. For instance, Hyndman (2004) utilized an embodied

mobility approach to study the politics associated with migration and its exclusions – or what she termed the ‘(geo)politics of mobility’. Drawing on a case study of immigrating Sikhs to Canada in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, she elucidated how racist and discriminatory discourses painting Sikhs as unworthy citizens led to a series of immigration laws to try to curtail Sikh immigration from India. Similarly, based on a case study of Chinese Fujian refugees arriving at the Canadian border, Mountz (2004; 2011) illustrated how the policing of national borders are mapped onto the policing of certain bodies and identities. Not only were the refugees criminalized through discourses painting them as carriers of diseases or as ‘immigrant aliens’, binaries were also established to delegitimize the status of the Fujian Chinese, further reinforcing the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality. Whilst ‘proper’ migrants who came in via established channels were applauded for their economic and cultural contributions, the refugees were punished for their ‘opportunistic’ attempts to ‘demand’ citizenship from the Canadian state.

Negative reactions towards migrants have intensified since 9/11, especially since many of the terrorists involved in the attacks legally entered the United States as migrants. This has led to the discursive articulation of ‘immigration’ as a weapon utilized by terrorists (Graham, 2010). A 2008 document published by the Center for Immigration Studies, an American independent, non-profit research organization, made this explicit:

Immigration, secure borders, and terrorism are linked, not because all immigrants are terrorists, but because nearly all terrorists in the West have been immigrants. Terrorists have shrewdly manipulated the openness of the United States and exploited America’s traditions of inclusion, invoking the compassion expressed in our laws to enable their crimes. Gaming these generous laws, Islamic terrorism has sought before and since 9/11 to "infiltrate recruiters, facilitators, sleeper cells, and hit squads as weapons in an asymmetric war." Immigration, then, is terrorism’s "indispensable asymmetric weapon," the suicide bomber or the suicide-bound hijacker, by extension, the "organic synthesis" of combatant and weapon. The conversion of immigration, as refuge from persecution to the means by which terror is imposed upon innocent peoples, inspires fear that arguably diminishes the stature of authentic immigrants, many of whose entry into America is compelled by the same violence terrorists would bring to American shores.

**That immigration is now used as a weapon cannot be doubted.** The facts are plain.

(“The Weaponization of Immigration”, CIS, Feb 2008, emphasis mine)

Such discourses have only served to heighten the sense of paranoia against migrants and resulted in intensified security measures implemented at immigration checkpoints.

Yet, just as national borders are hardened against security threats, we see a concomitant re-spatialization of national boundaries at both the supra-national and sub-national scale. For instance, Hyndman and Mountz (2006) show how territorial strategies of exclusion have expanded beyond internationally recognized borders of nation-states through the development of what they term an ‘architecture of enmity’ - third country agreements such as that between the United States and Canada, and the ‘creation of stateless spaces in extra-territorial locales where states hold migrants in legal ambiguity as a mechanism of control’ (p 79). At the same time, borders are increasingly re-spatialized within state territory to ‘other’ those deemed as security threats or unworthy of citizenship. Going back to the blurring of boundaries between the ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’, Graham (2010) illustrated how colonial tropes and security exemplars have crept into cities of the capitalist heartlands, resulting in what he calls a ‘new inner city Orientalism’ – the depiction of immigrant districts or enclaves as ‘backward zones threatening the body politic of western cities or nations’ (p xix). In the case of France, such discursive articulations led to state planning initiatives that situated immigrant *banlieues* away from the country’s major cities.

The drawing of national borders also takes place on the bodily scale. The example that immediately comes to mind is the use of rape as a weapon during times of conflict. Here, the territory of a nation is most directly mapped onto the bodies of women and the act of rape itself is a transgression of bodily-national borders (Mayer, 2004). However, bodily attributes and markers are also important in facilitating the mobility of bodies

across borders. For instance, Abu-Zahra (2007), in her case study of the Israel-Palestine conflict, showed how the mobility of Palestinians was highly restricted by border controls and how paper work such as legal documents, identification papers and colored car plates played crucial roles in enabling one's journey. Here, not only are bodily characteristics used as a marker of social (in this case national) differentiation, the boundaries of the body are also extended to incorporate entities such as identification papers and colored license plates. Similarly, biometric borders are increasingly being forged within state territories with the use of biometric technologies of voice, gait and face recognition (Graham, 2010). As with tracking and surveillance devices, the objective is to weed out security threats based on bodily markers or suspicious mobilities.

Therefore, as illustrated by the case studies, inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building do not just occur on the national scale. Instead, borders are now increasingly re-spatialized on multiple scales, be it supra-national, sub-national or even at the scale of the body. Furthermore, questions of borders, territory and mobilities are intimately intertwined with each other and have to be addressed in conjunction with processes of nationhood.

### **Nation Building through Urban Planning: Built Environment, Symbolism and 'Othering'**

Having outlined the key ideas behind nationhood, this section turns to the specific ways in which urban planning contributes to both inclusionary and exclusionary aspects of nation building through its control over the built environment and spatial technologies of governance.

#### *Part I: Inclusionary Planning*

One way that urban planning is associated with nation building is through symbolic elements such as memorials, monuments or iconic landscapes, often constructed

to project a sense of national prowess and pride. Such iconic developments are often driven by two underlying purposes: to produce a material and symbolic landscape that builds upon the history and memories of the nation to internally engender and entrench feelings of nationalism (what I term inward-looking nation building), or to externally project a nation's modernist and forward looking aspirations that will hopefully be acknowledged by other international players, especially in the current era of interurban competition for talent and capital (what I term outward-looking nation building).

Urban planning and nation building are most commonly intertwined through the construction of memorials, monuments and iconic architectural developments, typically in capital cities (Gittus, 2002; Kolbe, 2008; Gigova; 2011). Cosgrove (1998), based on a detailed case study of the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome, illustrated how the Italian state aimed to concretize the fluid and dynamic notion of 'Italianness' through the architecture and location of the monument. The Vittorio Emanuele II monument was reflective not only of the power of the Italian state, but also of its imperial past and desires. In addition to being nationalistic in its design and aesthetics, urban spatiality was also utilized to ground the monument as the center of the Italian capital, state and empire. For instance, highways and major avenues were constructed to center the monument, and buildings in the surrounding area were demolished to ensure that the monument was not overwhelmed spatially.

Iconic developments also contribute to nation building by projecting a symbolic image of the nation-state into the international arena. Whilst this is certainly part of cities' attempts to market themselves to capital and talent, an internationally recognizable image also elevates the status of the nation in the eyes of other nation-states. One example where this point is clearly illustrated is the construction of the Beijing National Stadium for the 2008 Olympics. Ren (2008) discussed how in the shift from a Fordist to Post-Fordist

regime of production, cities have increasingly been transformed from a sphere of production to one of consumption. Paralleling this shift is the increasing propensity of national and local governments to encourage flagship architectural developments and the hosting of symbolic international events so as to put their cities or nation-states on the world map (McNeill, 2000; McNeill & Tewdwr-Jones, 2003). In the case of the Beijing National Stadium, the drive to construct an iconic development known as the ‘Bird’s Nest’ to the locals was not only to keep up with the interurban competition between cities, but was also an attempt to project the national prowess of China. As discussed by Ren (2008), ‘in addition to the tangible economic benefits of urban growth, the symbolic significance of hosting the Olympics is what has driven the central government to support Beijing’s bid...It will represent to the world China’s rise as a new global power, backed by a dynamic national economy and consolidated under the rule of the Communist Party’ (p 178-179).

However, iconic developments do not only serve to elevate the status of a nation-state or city but are also used by authorities to generate new ideas of citizenship linked to positive feelings of pride. Tim Bunnell (1999), in his study of the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, illustrated how the towers were not only a means to symbolically image Malaysia as a modern world class city, but were also utilized by the government to promote ‘new ways of seeing’ among national citizens, more specifically, the Malay population. For instance, the incorporation of Islamic geometry into the construction of the Twin Towers could be read as an architectural sign of the *Melayu Baru* (new Malay), the modern Muslim incorporated into the world of commerce. Similarly, the height of the Twin Towers could be thought of as representing high ambition, intended to engender feelings of optimism and strength amongst Malaysians. This spirit of competitiveness and ‘can-do’ attitude was epitomized in what Bunnell (1999) terms the *Malaysia Boleh*

(literally meaning Malaysia Can) spirit. Therefore, the Petronas Twin Towers are seen to play a dual role of projecting a symbolic image of Malaysia externally, and to generate new ways of citizenship understanding which contribute to national identity internally.

Although most research has focused on the symbolism of the built environment in relation to national identity, Kezer (2008) turned to examine how spatial strategies were used to integrate Turkey during the Republican era through infrastructural projects such as railways, roads and bridges. Here, it is the material aspects of the built environment that is important, although this can similarly influence the ways people relate to the nation through their daily lives and practices. Kezer (2008) illustrated how the construction and expansion of railways were crucial to national integrity. As railways transformed the landscape of Turkey, they shortened transit times and opened new corridors of communication access, facilitating the spread of national ideas. Infrastructure developments not only served to influence and regulate the daily lived patterns and mobilities of citizens, they were also combined with the state's attempts to control and propagate symbolic meanings of the national territory. In particular, she emphasized the role of synchronicity (imposed through the material environment) in developing a sense of unity – 'roads, railroads, streets, and, ultimately, bodies became the sites of a nationwide pageantry in which the repeating patterns of movement, synchronized rhythms, and shared silences were to confer a sense of unity upon the landscape and its inhabitants' (Kezer, 2008, p 523).

### *Part II: Exclusionary Planning*

Although the above examples elucidated the positive connections between urban planning and nation building, it is premature to conclude that planning is always seen to lead to beneficial outcomes. Rather, there has been an emergence of literature illustrating what Yiftachel (1998) terms 'the dark side of planning'. It is now widely recognized that



planning is not neutral or value-free; rather, it is intimately embedded in power relations. As Watson (2009) summarized, 'clearly, planning systems can be a 'two-edged sword' and can potentially be used as a tool to achieve good, but can just as easily be used in ways which are regressive and oppressive: to promote vested interests and political, class, racial or ethnic domination' (p 154). In this vein, Yiftachel (1998) developed a conceptual framework within which planning as a form of social control can be studied, linking this to wider debates about the social production of space, state and nation-building. He argued that the function of urban planning cannot be divorced from the 'modern nation-state's attempts to control the production of space within its boundaries' (p 399), so as to facilitate capitalist accumulation and the moulding of a unified national identity. Four dimensions of the relationship between planning and society/state were identified: i) *Territorial*, which involves the control of borders and territories in relation to land use and spatial development patterns; ii) *Procedural*, which involves the processes in which policies and plans are formulated and implemented; iii) *Socioeconomic*; which covers the socioeconomic outcomes of planning policies and guidelines; and lastly iv) *Cultural*, which looks at the impact of planning on the various cultures and group identities that exist within the nation-state. Although these four dimensions are all equally important in investigating how planning can be used as a tool of social control, here I focus on the territorial dimension as this is one key aspect highlighted in my previous discussion about nation-building.

The production of space and the control of territories for purposes of nation building and/or neoliberalism has been used to not only discipline societies and the bodies within (Foucault, 1977), but has often also resulted in negative outcomes such as large-scale displacement of peoples and spatial segregation. It is with this recognition that led Merry (2001) to view space as a regime of governance – 'whereas modern penalty is

largely structured around the process of retraining the soul rather than corporal punishment, recent scholarship has highlighted another regime of governance: control through the management of space' (Merry, 2001, p 16).

The use of space as a tool of 'othering' is discernable in colonial times. Njoh (2009), in his case study of urban planning in colonial Africa, examined how spatial strategies were utilized for purposes of economic extraction and social reform. Here, territorial control was reflected in the colonizers' use of land use zoning to spatially segregate the residences of the colonizer from the colonized, under the pretext of hygiene and public health concerns. At the same time, space was organized to ensure that any potential political upheavals could be put down quickly. For instance, the development of access roads in 'native areas' facilitated the easy movement of colonial government officials. However, such spatial tactics were not just implemented in colonized areas, but were also brought back to the imperial 'heartlands' to handle dissenters – what Foucault terms the 'boomerang effect' (Graham, 2010). For instance, the 'Hausmanization' of Paris was predicated on the techniques of social control utilized by the French in Algeria (Graham, 2010).

How then does viewing space as a tool of governmentality change the way we understand the relations between urban planning and nation building? One way is to recognize the flip side of urban redevelopment efforts, or the underlying ideologies of planning efforts that intentionally or unintentionally result in social-spatial segregation. Going back to the example of the Beijing National Stadium, whilst it is important to recognize the stadium as a symbolism of China's rising modernist power, we should also be aware of the large scale displacement of populations and dispossession of land that resulted from the construction. Furthermore, Broudehoux (2007) illustrated how disciplinary measures were put in place by the government to produce a desirable image

of China and its citizens – ‘as local governments seek to eliminate visible traces of poverty and decay while producing a tame and obedient citizenry to fit global expectations of civility, such tactics of social beautification may bring about a tightening of the social control apparatus and the imposition of new limits on civil liberties’ (Broudehoux, 2007, p 390). The negative effects of nation building via urban planning are not only embodied through these urban renewal efforts, but also through the tools that planners use, such as Master Plans, zoning regulations and such like. Baviskar (2003) illustrated how Delhi, as the capital of India, felt the need to make the city a ‘legible space with docile subjects’ (Scott, 1998) so as to project a desirable image of the nation-state internationally. This underlying goal was a major factor in influencing how planners formulated the Delhi Master Plan, which ‘envisaged a model city, prosperous, hygienic and ordered’ (Baviskar, 2003, p 91). Yet, this vision neglected to take into consideration the need for labor power to produce such a city, which led to the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements. The outcomes of social exclusion and disciplinary measures accompanying these urban planning efforts are clearly linked to the processes of creative destruction or what Harvey (2008) terms ‘accumulation by dispossession’ under neoliberalism. Predatory planning not only tries to create an urban *tabula rasa* for real-estate speculation but also subjects bodies that do not conform to neoliberal values to ‘panoptic’ or ‘fortress’ methods (Tiesdell, 1998) – for instance, San Juan’s urban planning policy of segregating the wealthy from the poor/criminal (Garcia-Ellin, 2009).

Just as national borders are increasingly re-spatialized on multiple scales (Hyndman and Moutz, 2006; Graham, 2010), the use of territorial strategies by planners to exclude undesirable bodies from the nation-state also takes place on many scales, and the role of the ‘other’ is not restricted to one specific population group. In the case of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, geometric dimensions of space (points, lines, surfaces and

volumes) were used by the Israeli state to expand their frontier against Palestine (Weizman, 2004). For instance, in order to counter uncontrolled Palestinian population growth, Ariel Sharon utilized settlements and placed them as wedges to break down the consolidation of Palestinian metropolitan centers. Depending on the topographic and geographic context, settlements were sometimes also planned and stretched into a long, thin form to envelop and enclose Palestinian cities. Graham (2004) also illustrated how the Israelis utilized their understandings of territory and borders to enact 'urbicide', the killing of (in this case, Palestinian) urban areas via bulldozing. Therefore, as Weizman (2004) astutely concluded, 'Sharon and the engineers, already experts in military defence works... thus had to become *urban planners*...*Architecture and planning* were thus used as the continuation of war by other means' (p 180, emphasis added). Here, Foucault's theory about biopower and racism becomes explicit - the survival of the Israeli state and its people depended on the killing of the racialized Palestinian 'other'.

On a sub-national scale, migrants and their enclaves are often construed as the 'other'. In response to discursive articulations of the 'weaponization' of immigration and the 'new inner city Orientalism', urban planning theorists such as Leonie Sandercock (2003) have attempted to push for greater recognition of diversity and multiculturalism. Sandercock (2003) discussed how the 'othering' of migrants is predicated on fear and aversion, a fear which can be found within urban planning - 'Planning and urban management discourses are, and always have been, saturated with fear. The history of planning could be rewritten as the attempt to manage fear in the city: generically, fear of disorder and fear of dis/ease, but specifically fear of those bodies thought to produce that disorder or dis/ease' (p 111). Accompanying this fear is the tendency for people to equate their immediate surroundings, their home, with the national territory. Hence, the visibility of migrant others in one's immediate neighbourhood is automatically translated into the

‘penetration’ of the national territory by these undesirable migrant bodies. It is such discourses that Young (1990) and Sandercock (2003) hope to challenge by advocating for inclusion predicated on ideas of multiculturalism and difference.

Based on the extensive literature outlined above, there are thus three broad ways in which we can think about urban planning and nationhood, mapped onto inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building. First, the production of symbolic and iconic landscapes serves a dual purpose: to enhance national identity internally through monuments and memorials (inward-looking), but also to externally project a highly recognizable image of the nation-state into the international arena (outward-looking). Secondly, the material outcomes of planning such as infrastructural works can be combined with symbolic production of space to propagate ideas of national importance. Lastly, the control of territory, space and borders (as spatial technologies of power) can be utilized by states to exclude populations who are deemed undesirable. Such practices of exclusion take place on multiple scales and ‘other’ different population groups depending on the context.

### **Neoliberalism Urbanism: The Role of the State and the Built Environment**

Although planning initiatives such as urban redevelopment play a significant role in contributing to nation building, such strategies cannot be divorced from wider political-economic forces at play. As illustrated by Ren (2008) above in his case study of the Beijing National Stadium, mega-redevelopment projects should also be viewed as one of many responses to the current neoliberal world order and its emphasis on market values and urban competition. Most cities today see redevelopment projects as a panacea to their ailing economies. However, this imperative to economic growth is a function of the dominant neoliberal regime cities are embedded within – either they grow or they lose out in the competition. Hence, neoliberalism is often seen as an inevitability, both

intellectually and in practical realms such as urban planning.

Although the ideology of neoliberalism predicated on free market competition is widely recognized, understanding neoliberalism purely based on this can sometimes lead to an uncritical adoption of the term without exploring its nuances. This has resulted in what Ong (2007) termed ‘formulations [of] Neoliberalism with a big “N”’ (p 4), where neoliberalism is depicted as an abstract, monolithic entity that spreads destruction wherever it goes. To challenge such illustrations, scholars have advocated for a shift towards understanding neoliberalism as a process rather than an outcome (Brenner & Theodore, 2002b; Peck, Theodore & Brenner; 2009). This shift in approach – from neoliberalism as an outcome to the processes of *neoliberalization* – means that the forces and impacts of neoliberalization are context-specific, path-dependent, as well as socially and politically embedded. Instead of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ entity, neoliberalism is now seen as “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002b).

One important dimension of “actually existing neoliberalism” is the role of the state. Although neoliberal ideology often paints states and markets in direct opposition to one another, research has often proven otherwise (Peck & Tickell, 2002). As Peck, Theodore and Brenner (2009, p 51) succinctly summarized, ‘while neoliberalism aspires to create a utopia of free markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, it has in practice entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose versions of market rule and subsequently, to manage the consequences and contradictions of such marketization initiatives’. Thus, instead of simply seeing the state as being ‘hollowed out’ by neoliberalism, they argued that there has actually been increased state intervention both to encourage the emplacement of market based initiatives but also to carry out disciplinary measures on populations that have been marginalized under neoliberalism.

The role of the state and changing forms of governance are also picked up by Bob Jessop (2002), whose objective was to de-center neoliberalism by identifying it as one of many possible modes of governance today. Other than neoliberalism, which focuses on marketization, privatization and deregulation, he identified three other possibilities: *neostatism*, *neocorporatism* and *neocommunitarianism* (see Table 2.1 below).

<b>Mode of Governance</b>	<b>Characteristic Features</b>
Neoliberalism	Marketization, privatization, de-regulation
Neostatism	‘Market conforming but state sponsored approach’ (Jessop, 2002, p 462) in which the state continues to play an important role in guiding national strategies, regulating competition, as well as overseeing the formation and operations of public-private partnerships
Neocorporatism	A negotiated approach aiming to strike a balance between competition and cooperation. It draws in a wider circle of actors from both public and private spheres and aims to expand the role of public-private partnerships.
Neocommunitarianism	Typically seen as the most direct opposite of neoliberalism, neocommunitarianism emphasizes the importance of community development, the empowerment of local communities for economic self-sufficiency, and social use value rather than economic exchange value.

Table 2.1: Features of the various modes of governance identified by Jessop (2002)

Thus, instead of assuming neoliberalism as a hegemonic mode of governance that is operative everywhere, Jessop (2002) shows how there are other forms of governance which involve the state to different degrees and for different purposes. In doing so, he highlighted how governance and the role of the state are actually more complex and multi-faceted than most people recognize.

Now that neoliberalism has been exposed as contingent and path-dependent, how does this relate to cities and urban planning? What are the connections between planning and neoliberalism? Harvey (1973) had earlier explored the linkages between urbanism and capitalism, seeing cities as created through an aggregation of surplus value. However, for the reproduction of the capitalist system, an ongoing circulation of surplus value - the reinvestment of social surplus to create more channels of surplus leading to economic

growth – is needed. Although Harvey's (1973) analysis is important, additional questions need to be asked: have these connections changed under neoliberalism and is there a particular role that cities play today?

Here, Soja's (1980) reading of Henri Lefebvre's work in the urban spatial problematic is useful in teasing out the complexities between neoliberalism, cities and urban planning. Unlike Harvey who was still focused on the role of industrial production in the 1970s, Lefebvre (1976) quickly came to realize the importance of space and financial capital in the perpetuation of capitalism. He argued that capitalism was only able to reproduce itself through the occupation and reproduction of space and this was aided by the rise of financial capital, or what he termed the secondary circuit. The emergence of financial capital and its connections with real estate eventually led to the utilization of the built environment and urban space as a means of realizing surplus value. As Soja (1980) summarized, the 'secondary circuit is deeply involved in the manipulation of the built environment, the extraction of urban rent, and the organization of urban space for collective consumption' (p 215). Soja's reading of Lefebvre's work brings out the importance of cities and urban planning under neoliberalism, in particular, the commodification of space and the built environment as ways of perpetuating the neoliberal agenda and promoting market-oriented economic growth. A few decades later, Brenner and Theodore (2002a) themselves came to the same conclusion, seeing neoliberalism as a form of political-economic restructuring that 'uses space as its privileged instrument' (p 343). Whilst the use of space for neoliberalism occurs in many areas, many scholars see cities as localities where processes of neoliberalization are most intense and visible. This has resulted in neoliberal urbanism or urban entrepreneurialism, which show up on the urban landscape through gentrification or redevelopment projects.

Gentrification and mega redevelopment projects are the most obvious hallmarks



of neoliberal urbanism, coupled with clear connections to urban planning. Both Smith (2002) and Hackworth (2007) have demonstrated the qualitative shifts in gentrification. Smith (2002) identified five dimensions of this new wave of gentrification as global urban strategy: 'the transformed role of the state, penetration by global finance, changing levels of political opposition, geographical dispersal and the sectoral generalization of gentrification' (p 441). Not only is gentrification occurring on a much larger scale and geographically diffused away from urban centers and global cities, states and private corporations are increasingly partnered in gentrification schemes, accompanied by intensified levels of state repression towards anti-gentrification struggles, or what Smith (2002) termed the 'revanchist city'. Research examining the connections between mega-redevelopment projects and neoliberalism has also been conducted. Basing their work in thirteen large scale urban development projects (UDPs) in the European Union, Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez (2002) utilized the UDPs as analytic lens to tease out the wider political-economic forces at play and the resulting social-spatial exclusions. Similar to Smith's discussion on gentrification, Swyngedouw et al. (2002) illustrated how UDPs are one way of extracting economic surplus value through the built environment, whilst at the same time remaining an exclusionary sphere designed by and catered for the elites. Furthermore, the proliferation of UDPs also reflected a systemic change in the urban planning system, where large scale projects (*Projects*) are seen to replace statutory planning (*Plan*) as the dominant mode of intervention in cities. Therefore, there has been a 'shift from universalist to spatially targeted and place-focused' (p 564) approach of urban planning – whilst UDPs used to be an 'exceptionality' in urban planning, they have now become the norm.

The qualitative changes in gentrification from the 1970s onwards and the proliferation of mega-redevelopment projects acutely reflect the inextricable linkages

between cities, neoliberalism and urban planning, each reinforcing one another through the mediation of the real estate market and the built environment. As Smith (2002) neatly summarized, ‘real estate development becomes a centerpiece of the city’s productive economy, an end in itself...the construction of new gentrification complexes in central cities across the world has become an increasingly unassailable capital accumulation strategy for competing urban economics’ (p 443). Urban planning agencies are seen to play a central role because they are the ones who have dominant control over the way space and the built environment are utilized and occupied. As the discussion above illustrated, most urban planning authorities have tended to jump upon the neoliberal bandwagon, dishing out incentives and tax rebates so as to be able to capture global capital in the hope of reviving their ailing economies. Gentrification of neighborhoods and mega-redevelopment projects are the materializations of such attempts, accompanied by social-spatial exclusion of those who cannot afford such luxuries. It is the oft-complicit role of urban planning in aiding neoliberalism that led Gunder (2010, p 52) to conclude as such: ‘planning provides the discipline for life in urban spaces to achieve the ends of our dominant market logics. Planning is the ideology of contemporary neoliberal space.’ Although this is a pessimistic take on the profession, there have also been attempts to push for a more progressive sense of urban planning where notions of justice play a central role. It is to this we now turn.

### **Social-Spatial Justice**

Research on social justice has proliferated in the past few decades, in part due to the widening inequalities engendered by neoliberalism (Harvey, 1973; Merrifield & Swyngedouw, 1997; Mitchell, 2003; Fainstein, 2010; Marcuse et al., 2011). Academics have sought to explore the various ways in which social justice or injustice shows up within city landscapes. Mitchell (2003), for instance, highlights how the exclusion of the

homeless from public spaces is an ongoing and intensifying trend in American cities, whereas Fainstein (2010) points to the exclusionary aspects of redevelopment schemes such as the ‘squeezing out’ of local businesses and inner city populations. Such findings illustrate the concrete realities of injustice that take place in cities, sometimes at the hands of planners themselves.

Although there are many competing theories of justice grounded in different ontological and philosophical bases, the objective of this section is not to evaluate these competing theories to see which is better, or best suited to be incorporated into the planning profession. Rather, the intention is to highlight key areas of tension surrounding writings on justice, and to use these as points of entry into understanding the ‘justness’ of planning in Singapore.

Firstly, justice should not be seen as a universal and eternal moral imperative but as a quality that is grounded in specific historical and geographical context, or as Harvey (1973, p 15) puts it, ‘as something contingent upon the social processes operating in society as a whole’. Whilst there is no doubt that justice is a positive quality, what one really means by justice changes with context and positionality (Harvey, 1992). This, however, does not mean that we should adopt a relativistic notion of justice, which renders it politically impotent. Rather, Harvey (1992) argued that justice still contains a political and mobilizing power which people can relate to in their everyday struggles. Hence, instead of seeing justice as something that is always revolutionary, Harvey (1992) argued for a critical genealogy of the term. Seeing the meaning of justice as embedded in wider societal processes can help to tease out its effectiveness as a revolutionary tool.

Another dimension of justice that is often discussed is its relation to distribution and production, mapped onto outcomes and processes. Here, Rawls’ (1971) theory of justice plays a central role. He advocated a *distributive* theory of justice whereby a just

society is one that a person would agree to if they did not know what position they would occupy within it. This meant that behind a 'veil of ignorance', people would adopt principles that are fair to everyone, leading to a just distribution of goods such as wealth, opportunity and liberty. Rawls' theory has been criticized on a number of dimensions, including his emphasis on distribution and his idea of justice as something aspatial and ahistorical. Against this idea of seeing justice as based purely on outcomes and distribution, Harvey (1973) sought to understand territorial justice as 'a just distribution justly arrived at' (p 98), thus introducing the idea of *processes* being key to the production of (in)justice. Under Harvey's exploration of justice, both production (processes) and distribution (outcomes) are important. Similar to Harvey, Young (1990) too advocated for a move away from distributive justice to recognizing the underlying structural forces that create injustices and inequalities. It is this shifting emphasis from outcome to process that led her to identify the five faces of oppression (exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence) and the importance of respecting difference – 'social justice... requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression' (Young, 1990, p 47).

Although recognizing the importance of process, Fainstein (2010), writing within the planning discipline, challenges the effectiveness of the communicative theory of planning which sees just processes as necessarily leading to just outcomes. She argued that the communicative theory of planning does not adequately take into consideration power relations amongst participants, hence, what is typically seen as a democratic process does not automatically entail a just outcome. To her, both process and outcome are important in the search for the just city, which led her to define justice within planning as 'equity, diversity, democracy'.

Lastly, there is increasing recognition of the spatial dimensions of (in)justice. Drawing heavily on Lefebvre's work on the social production of space and right to the city, both Dikec (2001) and Soja (2010) highlighted how space and social relations are mutually constituted and held in dialectical tension with one another – not only are social relations borne out in space, the organization of space and the built environment also influences social relations. This led Soja (2010) to argue for a critical reassertion of space in social theory and the recognition of the spatiality of (in)justice. Similarly, Dikec (2001) showed how Lefebvre's idea of right to the city involved the appropriation of space and participation in decision making processes of the production of urban space. It is the mutual constitution of the social and spatial that led him to postulate a spatial dialectics of (in)justice. This spatial dialectics comprises of two notions: spatiality of (in)justice and (in)justice of spatiality. Whilst the former refers to the spatial dimension of (in)justice (i.e. (in)justice can be borne out in space), the latter refers to how spatiality can be used as a tool to enforce or reinforce domination and oppression (i.e. the spatial processes that lead to (in)justice). Dikec's (2001) formulation is dynamic as not only does he highlight the spatial dimension, he also alludes to both processes and outcomes of (in)justice.

To sum up, three main points about justice are presented above. First, justice is to be understood contextually. Second, both processes and outcomes are important in explorations of justice; and lastly, it is imperative to pay attention to spatial dimension of in(justice), in terms of spatial outcomes but also the use of space as a tool of marginalization. Understanding how these dimensions of social justice intertwine in urban planning in a specific context will hopefully pave the way towards a more socially just city.

## **Conclusion and Theoretical Framework**

Each body of literature reviewed above provides the theoretical background of the

current research, but also poses additional questions that this thesis investigates. The first segment introduces the key points and tools of nation building; the social-spatial differentiation of ‘us’ from ‘them’ takes place on multiple scales and requires control over territory, borders and mobilities. The second segment turns to the specific ways in which urban planning contributes to inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building via spatial strategies and the built environment. Not only can space be utilized to exclude undesirable populations through displacement or segregation, the built environment can also create new imaginings of national identity and belonging.

The third segment explores the wider political-economic context that urban planning is embedded in, specifically, the relation between cities, neoliberalism and nation building. Two points are made here. First, the concept of “actually existing neoliberalism’ necessitates a questioning of the role of the state today; whilst neoliberal ideology paints state interventions as obstacles, recent research has shown how state measures can entrench neoliberalism or play more nuanced roles. Secondly, the built environment is highlighted as the intermediary between cities and neoliberalism. That is, surplus capital is increasingly being realized through strategies of neoliberal urbanism such as gentrification or redevelopment projects. The last segment then turns to social justice, highlighting how justice is not a fixed, eternal moral imperative, but a concept that should be understood contextually. Furthermore, it is important to consider both processes and outcomes in explorations of social justice, as well as its spatial dimensions.

So how do these bodies of literature combine to provide a framework for this thesis? Figure 2.1 illustrates how the various segments discussed above come together to inform the current research. The key point is that as a profession, urban planning has to negotiate pressures of both nation building and neoliberalism. This not only brings into question the relation between nation building and neoliberalism, but also the role of the

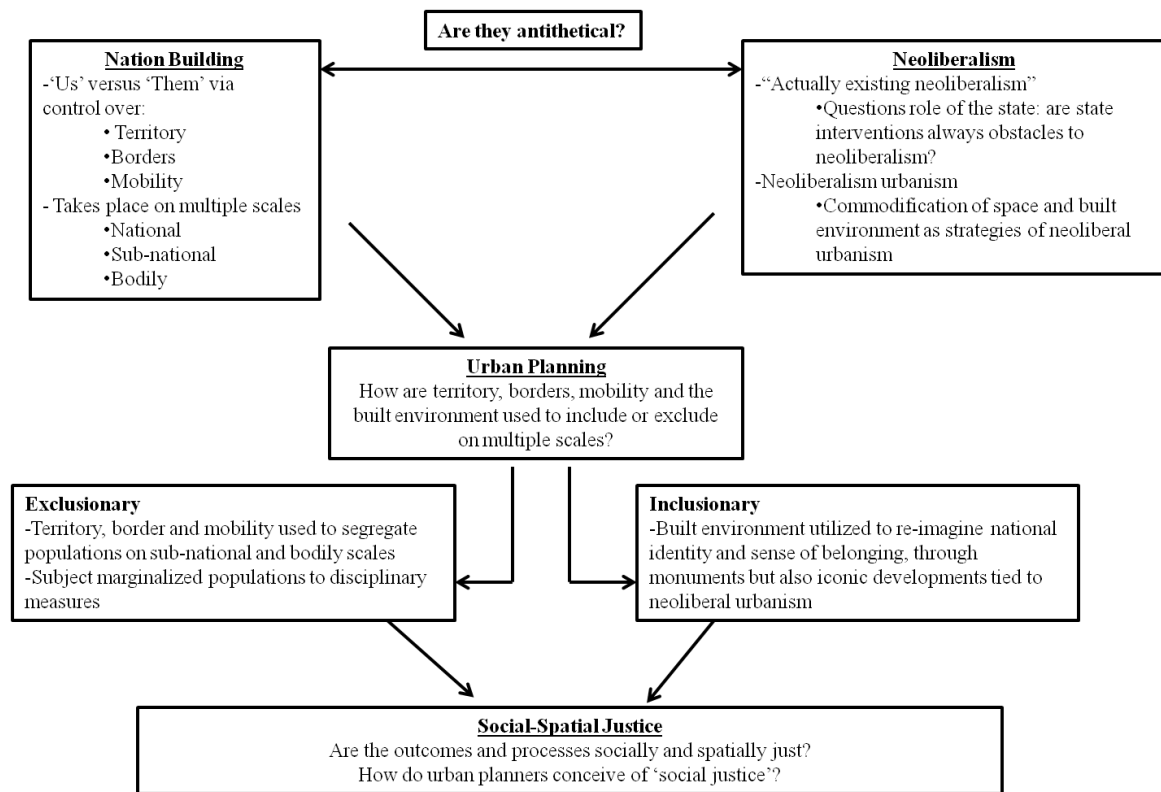


Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework of this study

state and its institutions (in this case, the planning authority and its planners) in negotiating this relationship. In addition, territory, space and the built environment are tools applicable to both nation building and neoliberalism. Space and territory can be used to include or exclude, just as the built environment serves the dual purpose of enhancing national identity and realizing surplus capital. Thus, we have to ask how urban planners in Singapore utilize territory, borders, mobility and the built environment to include or exclude specific population groups. Furthermore, in line with discussions above on how the body can be construed as a site and scale of study, it is imperative to explore whether and how bodily attributes or markers play a role in creating social boundaries. Lastly, the disparate treatment of different groups engendered by nation building and/or neoliberalism begs the question of justice, imploring us to uncover whether processes and outcomes of planning in Singapore are socially and spatially just. These questions, posed by the theoretical framework above, are explored in the subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

In this chapter, I outline the methodologies employed for the current research. Two sources of data were utilized: interviews as primary source of data, and public documents as secondary source of data. These data were coded to identify key themes, and then analyzed using discourse analysis to probe the structures underlying the surface text. This process is summarized in Figure 3.1, and described in more detail below, where I elucidate the reasons for adopting these methods and the processes of applying them, before concluding with some consideration of issues of positionality, ethics and limitations of the study.

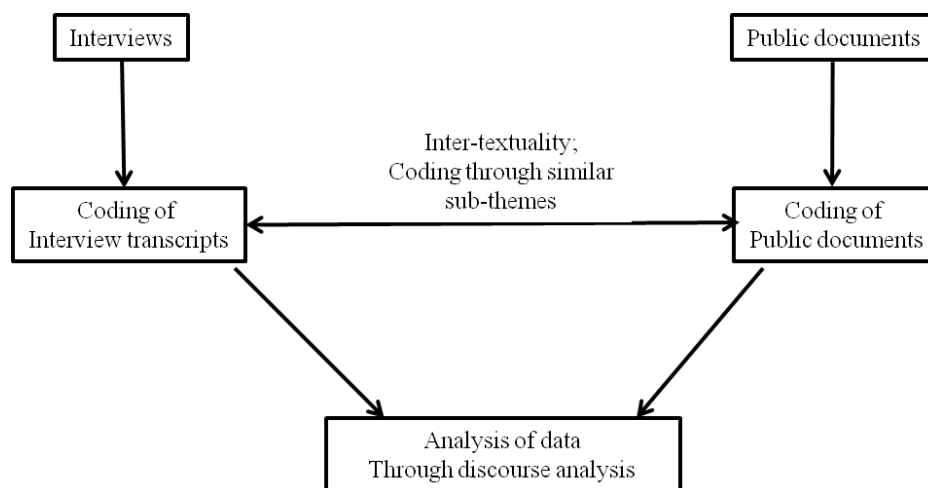


Figure 3.1: Methodology framework for current research

#### Interviews as Primary Source of Data

Given the overarching research question of how planning embodies nation building, interviews are the most appropriate method to deploy, as not only are they sensitive and people-oriented, they also allow for the elucidation of individuals'



experiences and meanings through a fluid conversational form (Valentine, 2005). This gives planners the opportunities to express what they think about their work and how it contributes to nation building. In addition, interviews as conversational methodology also offers chances for wide-ranging discussions which other methods such as questionnaires may not allow (Dunn, 2005). For example, through the interaction between researchers and interviewees, unanticipated topics or themes could appear (Silverman, 2001) and what is typically deemed as mundane and unexciting could be exposed as complex and contradictory (Bryman, 1988; cited in Valentine, 2005). In the context of this study, interviewing was the most appropriate method as it allowed planners to talk about their everyday work experiences while also enabling me to explore the rationales of particular planning policies that are important to both exclusionary and inclusionary processes of nation building.

In utilizing interviews as methodology, the question of who to interview is very much predicated on the study. Unlike questionnaires which aim to have a representative sample of informants, choosing who to interview is a theoretically motivated decision (Valentine, 2005). In this study, urban planners form the bulk of research informants. However, I also conducted one interview with an operator of a foreign worker dormitory to better understand the planning approval process from his perspective. Interviewees were initially chosen due to personal contacts, as I had worked in the URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority) before. As the interviews proceeded, however, planners would often suggest that I interview other planners who played key roles in formulating or implementing certain planning policies or initiatives. Hence, interviewees were selected through a combination of personal contacts and snowballing, which are appropriate sampling methods in this case as it allowed me to seek out interviewees with specific experiences or backgrounds necessary to my research project (Valentine, 2005).

As far as possible, I tried to interview planners from every department within the organization so that I could get a holistic picture of how urban planning relates to nation building and the complexities therein. Unfortunately, not every planner I approached was willing to be interviewed. Hence, certain departments such as Public Relations (PR) and Marina Bay Development Agency (MBDA) are not covered in this study. Based on the profile of my interviewees, a large majority of planners came from the Physical Planning Group (PPG) and the Development Control Group (DCG). All in all, I interviewed a total of twenty planners and one foreign worker dormitory operator.<sup>1</sup>

In preparation for the interviews, I assembled a set of questions and themes which I wanted to cover. These questions helped to guide the interview, although I did not strictly abide by it all the time. Rather, the interviews were semi-structured in nature and I allowed the dialogue to flow as much as possible, whilst still attempting to relate it back to the initial questions or themes. Interviewees were briefed on the objective of the study and their rights before the start of the interview. They were also asked if the interview could be taped; for those who were not comfortable with having the conversation recorded, I took notes by hand. Interviewees were also allowed to pick the location and time for the interviews, given their busy work schedules and the fact that being interviewed at the work place may make them uncomfortable and more conscious of their comments. One last point to note is that some of the interviews involved two planners instead of one. This situation arose mainly because when contacted, one planner would suggest that another planner came along, either because they both worked on the same policy, or one had just taken over the portfolio from the other. In such circumstances, I agreed to conduct group interviews, as I felt that a dialogue between planners who worked on similar projects may help to throw up complexities and contradictions which

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<sup>1</sup>For purposes of protecting participants' identity, a full profile of respondents cannot be given.

may not show up as easily if interviews were conducted one-to-one. The benefits of conducting small group interviews are similar to using focus groups as a method, albeit on a smaller scale. Not only does it allow the researcher to gain access to a wide spectrum of views regarding a specific issue, new perspectives may be gleaned from the interaction and dialogue between participants (Conradson, 2005).

#### *Coding of interview transcripts*

After each interview was completed, the audio recording of the interview was transcribed manually into type-written notes. As far as possible, I stayed true to the recorded conversation, paying attention to pauses, silences, tones of speech, etc.

After all the interviews were transcribed, I proceeded with the coding of data. Coding is useful as the abstracting of information facilitates familiarity with the data, and the development of a coding structure aids in data organization (Cope, 2005). Cope (2005) outlined two different types of codes: manifest messages or descriptive codes are those that are obvious and jump out from the text, whereas latent messages or analytic codes are those that are inferred from the text. However, the two should not be thought of as mutually exclusive as descriptive codes often reveal or lead to analytic codes.

The process of coding is a recursive, repetitive process. There are, however, different ways to code one's data. Crang (2005) highlighted how the sifting and sorting of data is theoretically informed by one's research questions, and the point is to understand the relationship between the materials gathered and the codes developed. He suggested three ways in which coding can develop this relationship: i) building up theory; ii) searching for formal relationships and structures, and iii) building up narratives, plots and characters. Cope (2005), drawing on the work of Anselm Strauss, highlighted four themes which are useful in sifting out ideas: i) conditions or context; ii) interactions among actors, or relationships; iii) strategies and tactics, and iv) consequences.

For this study, I first started coding my interview transcripts loosely, looking for manifest or descriptive codes that fit within the following overarching themes:

- i) Exclusionary processes of nation building
- ii) Inclusionary processes of nation building
- iii) How, where and why mobility and embodiment come into play
- iv) How do planners think about their work in relation to nation building
- v) How and why are discourses of neoliberalism utilized by planners
- vi) When are discourses of social justice utilized and for what purposes

After going through the interview transcripts a few times, I developed codes that fit into the themes above. However, each theme soon became too broad and unwieldy for data analysis. Hence, within each overarching theme, I started to break them down further into sub-themes. For instance, there are many ways in which urban planning contributes to inclusive nation building; some could be focused on the materiality of the built environment, whereas other policies were more concerned with symbolic aspects of the environment. Hence, instead of coding the various ways all under one theme, they were each broken down based on the individual processes, policies or events. This process was repeated for the other overarching themes, and the development of a finer-grained coding structure aided in assembling analytic codes and latent messages. In addition, I paid special attention to how codes may overlap (i.e. relationships between different codes), for instance, how discourses of neoliberalism interacts with inclusionary or exclusionary processes of nation building to bring about certain outcomes.

### **Public Documents as Secondary Source of Data**

Clark (2005) outlined a number of benefits of using secondary data for one's research, including providing a guidepost to the geography of the topic or area of interest, and providing a context for the primary data. In this thesis study, public planning documents (e.g. leaflets, pamphlets, planning newsletters, etc) and media reports on planning related policies and events are utilized as secondary sources of data. These

secondary sources of data aided in contextualizing the work of URA, but also provided a wider spectrum of views about planning policies. Public planning documents are available on URA's public web portal, whereas media articles were gathered through URA's media library archive. Based on my research questions, I searched for articles that were relevant to foreign workers, as well as any other planning policies or events that contributed to the strengthening of national identity. The articles were gathered predominantly from the year 2008 onwards, because that was the year the revised Master Plan was legally enacted, and it was also around this period of time when increasing discontentment towards rising migrant populations was reported in media.

*Coding of public documents: Inter-textuality with interview transcripts*

The media reports and public planning documents were coded utilizing the sub-themes assembled from the interview transcripts. Inter-textuality was important here; I constantly went back and forth between the interview transcripts and public documents to pencil out how they related to each other, and marked out new sub-themes or ideas when they appeared. If a new sub-theme was created from coding the public documents, I referred back to the interview transcripts to see how it could be applied there. I also made it a point to note the commonalities or differences between information gathered through interviews and those from public documents.

**Discourse Analysis of Interview Transcripts and Public Documents**

Gordon Waitt (2005) made a distinction between discourse analysis and other forms of textual analysis such as iconography and content analysis. Content analysis as a methodology takes the text as transparent and therefore can be analyzed in isolation, often through the quantification of certain themes. In contrast, discourse analysis aims to uncover the structures and power relations that prop up a certain discursive regime, one that causes certain knowledges to be naturalized and accepted as the 'truth'. It is this

focus on identifying and understanding how certain ideas are privileged through circulation of texts and representations that signifies a break between discourse analysis and other forms of textual analysis. Drawing on Gillian Rose's (2001) work, Waitt (2005) outlined seven steps in which a discourse analysis can be conducted:

- 1) Suspend pre-existing categories: examine your texts with fresh eyes and ears
- 2) Familiarisation: absorb yourself in your texts
- 3) Coding: identify key themes to reveal how the producer is embedded within particular discursive structures
- 4) Persuasion: investigate within your text for effects of 'truth'
- 5) Incoherence: take notice of inconsistencies within your texts
- 6) Active presence of the invisible: look for mechanisms that silence
- 7) Focus on details

Discourse analysis was carried out on interview transcripts to uncover the contradictions present in what planners say and actually do. Although interviews provide opportunities for planners to voice their individual opinions and experiences, not every planner would be truthful about what they feel about their work; this is dependent on the power relations and the level of trust between the researcher and interviewee, as well as how comfortable the interviewee feels about the topic of discussion. Such feelings of uncertainty can, in some circumstances, cause interviewees to adopt a cautious attitude, which reproduces the public discourses perpetuated by URA. However, a discourse analysis of interview transcripts can help to partially overcome this obstacle; looking for contradictions and silences within the transcripts may prove useful in uncovering the discursive structures that support both exclusionary and inclusionary processes of nation building.

The primary analysis of interview transcripts was supplemented by discourse analysis of public documents. In conducting this secondary analysis, I found that certain areas of my research were more amenable to this methodology than other segments. For instance, in exploring the exclusionary processes of nation building, I found it useful to carry out discourse analyses of media articles and planning documents to uncover the

various discursive regimes that helped to prop up the idea that foreign worker dormitories should be located in peripheral areas. However, for inclusionary processes of nation building, the articles themselves were explicit about nationalistic ideals, although discourses of neoliberalism were discernible beneath the texts.

Hence, discourse analyses of public documents and interview transcripts enabled me to explore the various underlying discursive structures of power that tended to naturalize certain knowledges as ‘truth’, whether these ‘truths’ appeared in public documents or in conversation with planners.

### **Positionality and Reflexivity**

Many scholars have highlighted how research is not an objective process (Rose, 1997; Valentine, 2005). The kind of research we do, why we do it and the methods utilized are all reflective of who we are and our engagement with the world. There is a need to recognize our positionality and be reflexive about the research process, where reflexivity is defined as ‘self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as a researcher’ (England, 1994, p 82). Hence, instead of seeing research as a ‘view from nowhere’ or a ‘God’s eye trick’ (Haraway, 1991), research is always partial and subjective. In addition, the research process is laden with uneven power relations. Questions of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, or any other axes of social difference all serve to mediate the research process and relationships between researchers and their informants. The point is not to do away or deny these things, but to recognize and learn from them (Schoenberger, 1992; cited in Valentine, 2005).

Given the fact that I had previously worked in the URA for five years before becoming a graduate student, I feel that my positionality as a researcher in the current study is one of in-betweenness. Throughout the research process, I had to negotiate the process of simultaneously being an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’. My five years of working

experience had provided me with numerous contacts within the organization, which facilitated the interviewing process. People who were familiar with me were more willing to talk to me about my research. Hence, my prior connections had enabled me to gain a foothold in the organization easily. On the other hand, I was also considered an ‘outsider’ as I was no longer working for the organization, and hence, not privy to certain kinds of information and access to certain peoples, especially those in senior management. In addition, my previous work experience in a particular department (DCG) may have influenced the research process, as I am more familiar with the work of DCG than that of other departments. Similarly, my previous job scope also meant that I got to work with certain departments more closely than others. This would certainly affect my interpretation of the work that URA does, and the roles of the various departments within the organization.

As most of the people I interviewed were those who had worked with me before, were in the same department as I was, or held the same rank as me, the interview process was not overly fraught with tension. However, I also interviewed people from other departments whom I was not familiar with. The power relationships in those situations were slightly more complex, as I felt that I had to rely on them for information that was necessary for my research. The power relations became more obvious when I had to interview people who held higher positions within the organizations, such as those of Deputy Directors. In those situations, not only did I feel compelled to get my information quickly due to their tight time schedules, I also felt the need to ‘perform’ as someone who is simultaneously ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, as someone who had some common knowledge and shared assumptions of the organization culture, but who also needed their help in gathering further information.



## **Ethics and Precautions**

Any research process carries with it some risks for both researchers and research informants, which highlights the issue of ethics. In this particular study, the risks fall more on research informants than the researcher. Although the main aim is to analyze discourses and public information, during the course of the interviews, certain sensitive information may come up. In addition, when it comes to asking planners about how they relate to their work and nation building, planners may express their personal opinions which may put them, their colleagues, bosses or the organization in a not-so-favorable light. Such information, if made known to senior management, may cause planners to get into trouble and in the worst case scenario, lose their jobs. Hence, there is a need to ensure that information collected during the interviews are protected and not leaked out.

A number of precautions were adopted to minimize any risks to those who were willing to be interviewed. First, research objectives were clearly explained to participants and their consent to partake in the interview was obtained. To protect the anonymity of planners, no personal data or real names are made available; rather, pseudonyms are used throughout the research process. In addition, planners got to decide on the time and location of the interviews, to ensure that they felt comfortable before the interview proceeded. Planners were also assured that all information gathered during the interview would be kept confidential, and should they wish to stop the interview or not answer any questions, they were free to do so. All interview data are safely secured on my personal laptop, which requires a password to access.

The above risks to research informants and the precautionary measures adopted were all outlined in my submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) in Feb 2011. The IRB subsequently exempted the current research from further review in March 2011.

## **Limitations of Study**

I consider this research to be preliminary in many ways. There are certain limitations which influenced the outcome of the research process. First, accessibility to planners is uneven; I was mainly able to interview planners who held low to mid tier positions within the organization. None of my research informants comprised of people who were in senior management (i.e. directors and above). In addition, most of my interviewees were highly educated and held university degrees. In contrast, I did not have the opportunity to interview technical officers whose jobs were to gather technical information for planners' use, and who tended to be less educated and vocal about their opinions. Although this is a limitation, it must be borne in mind that most of the planning decisions and recommendations are made by planners, rather than technical officers. Secondly, information about planning policies and initiatives are restricted to those in the public domain. Hence, when it came to uncovering the underlying rationales behind policies, most of the information dealt with public discourses, which may be very different from the real reasons stipulated in confidential documents. Yet, it is hoped that by conducting a discourse analysis of textual material, this limitation can be partially overcome. Lastly, the impact of planning policies on nation building and national identity is studied through the lens of urban planners and media reports. To get a truer picture would entail having to interview groups most impacted by policies, such as migrant workers in the case of foreign worker dormitories. Yet, due to time and resource constraints, I was unable to do so, which further perpetuates the silences around the everyday experiences of migrants. Notwithstanding these limitations, my thesis aims to enhance understandings of how urban planning contributes to nation building, through both exclusionary and inclusionary processes that are connected to wider structural forces and the everyday activities of urban planners.

## CHAPTER 4

### **State, Migration and Urban Planning in the Global City-State of Singapore**

To remake the economy and attract talent, we have also got to remake our city. This has to be a city which is full of life and energy and excitement, a place where people want to live, work and play, where they are stimulated to be active, to be creative and to enjoy life... But we must capitalise on our strengths. And what are they? Our multicultural heritage, our clean and safe environment, our disciplined and energetic people, a cosmopolitan and open society, and then we can make Singapore a vibrant global city, not just for tourists but for our own people to create an outstanding living environment for all Singaporeans.

(Mr Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister, National Day Rally, 21 Aug 2005)

Not only do we have to make sure we have enough land to sustain Singapore into the future, it is no easy challenge to transform a little island – bits of land, water, sea and greenery – into a living, thriving city state with world class facilities, into a home, into a magnet for business and an exciting playground.

(Mrs Cheong K.H., former CEO of URA, The Business Times, 14 Oct 08, p 4)

In a bid to overcome its limited natural resources and shortage of manpower, Singapore has in the past 2 decades implemented a whole host of initiatives to try to achieve the status of global city (Yeoh, 2004; 2005). As highlighted by current Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong in the 2005 National Day Rally Speech, this aspiration is seen to ultimately benefit all Singaporeans and tourists. The remaking of the city to attract investment and talent, as alluded to by the Prime Minister, is where the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) plays a central role, as attested to by former CEO Mrs Cheong in the second quote above. However, the key question here is: who is included or excluded in this dream of making Singapore a global city? Who are the winners and who are the losers? Whilst the Prime Minister indicates that Singaporeans and tourists will stand to benefit, what about the large numbers of low/unskilled migrant workers who are

currently residing within the national territory but are rendered invisible by the silences in his speech? Similarly, whilst the URA strives to produce a quality built environment with ‘world class facilities’, ‘a home’ and ‘an exciting playground’, do these facilities serve everyone or are some people privileged over others?

This chapter is an attempt to answer these questions and to contextualize Singapore’s global city strategy and migration regime. Here, I draw attention to the relationship between Singapore’s drive to achieving global city status and its immigration policies, showing how its shift to a knowledge-based economy is predicated on the exploitation of a segment of migrant workers for the good of the general public. First, I briefly examine Singapore’s global city project with reference to the discourses employed by state politicians, as well as the various urban planning initiatives that have been implemented to draw in skilled talent. In doing so, the emphasis is on showing how skilled foreign expatriates are favored for their social and cultural capital over low/unskilled migrant workers, who are typically treated as units of manpower (Yeoh, 2004; 2006). Second, I show how this favouring of ‘foreign talent’ over ‘foreign workers’ is similarly paralleled in the structuring of migration policies, which strategically utilize borders to socially classify different migrants based on their level of skill. Crucially, I highlight how immigration policies are used as a ‘technology of power’ (Foucault, 1977; 1991) to subject low/unskilled migrant workers to bio-political control and surveillance, while less stringent policies apply to foreign talent to encourage them to make Singapore their long-term home.

### **The Making of a Global City, But for Whom?**

Since the 1970s, a shift in the structuring of global economic forces was slowly becoming apparent; capitalist institutions have increasingly freed themselves from local or national constraints to organize production and consumption on a global scale. Despite

the accelerated flows of people, goods and capital across borders, some have argued that geographic place still matters (Friedmann & Wolff, 1982; Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991; 2006). Instead of seeing a 'placeless' world that is entirely homogenous, scholars such as John Friedmann (1986) and Saskia Sassen (1991) have illustrated how the simultaneous global dispersal and integration of economic activities has led to strategic roles for global cities, which tend to be key nodes and command points in the organization of the new world economy. Yet, global cities do not only function to concentrate economic capital, but are increasingly associated with the aggregation of social and cultural capital (Yeoh, 2005; Kong, 2007). Here, social and cultural capital are not necessarily valued for their inherent qualities, but are commodified and instrumentalized to further attract economic capital or talent. Hence, inter-urban competition today is no longer purely predicated on economic grounds, but also involves the use of cultural strategies (Hall & Robertson, 2001; Chang, 2000; Chang & Lee, 2003).

Another aspect of global cities that has been intensively studied is the nature and extent of polarization that takes place within them (Friedmann & Wolf, 1982; Fainstein, 2006; Marcuse, 2006). As the formation of global cities is intimately tied to the processes of capitalism, it is no surprise that inequalities are generated within these cities both socially and spatially. As early on as 1982, Friedmann and Wolff (1982) illustrated how global cities are polarized on many fronts: economically (high-level, well-paying jobs versus informal, illicit forms of employment), socially (transnational elites versus the underclass), and physically (the citadel versus the ghetto). This trend of polarization has continued apace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In her detailed case studies of New York, London and Tokyo, Saskia Sassen (1991; 2006) illustrated how the transition from a manufacturing based economy to one premised on financial and business services has not only led to the appearance of a transnational, elite class of professionals, but also an increased demand

for low waged migrant labor to carry out the manual and service work needed to support the high-value industries. Thus, although low/unskilled migrant labor is necessary for the creation and maintenance of global cities, they are typically discriminated against and occupy marginalized positions in wider society (Yeoh, Huang & Willis, 2000; Yeoh & Chang, 2001). What this shows is that not everyone is equally incorporated into the global city to enjoy the benefits that it purportedly brings.

In the case of Singapore, becoming a global city was seen as the only way out, a matter of survival that is often associated with ‘an air of inevitability’, the only way for the nation to react in response to both the ‘unassailable trend (of competition) in the global economy’ and its shortage of natural resources and manpower (Coe and Phillip, 2000, p 418). This is reflected in the discursive articulations of key Singaporean politicians. For example, current Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew once reflected that:

To succeed, Singapore must be a cosmopolitan center, able to attract, retain and absorb talent from all over the world. We cannot keep the big companies out of the local league. Whether we like it or not, they are entering the region... Now in a globalized economy, we are in competition against other cities in the First World. Hence we have to become a cosmopolitan city that attracts and welcomes talent in business, academia or the performing arts. They will add to Singapore’s vibrancy and secure our place in a global network of cities of excellence.

(cited in Yeoh, 2004, p 2435)

Former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong similarly couched the need to go global as something that needs to be done and will ultimately benefit the city-state. In his 2001 National Day Rally Speech, he argued:

We have no choice but to run at the high speed of the global economic treadmill. Otherwise, we will be thrown off, and all Singaporeans will suffer...the need for global talent... is a matter of life and death for us in the long term.

(Goh C.T., 2001 National Day Rally, cited in Baey, 2010, p 40)

As evident from the two quotes above, in order for Singapore to become a global city, foreign talent is needed, a need that is still iterated and emphasized today. Even in the

past couple of years when local resistance towards the influx of migrant workers has increased tremendously, current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong still made reference to the benefits of having foreign talent in his 2011 National Day Rally Speech:

Yes we will moderate and manage the foreign workers but we have to bring in enough so that we have the manpower and the talent to grow and to prosper. This is what we must do when it comes to putting Singaporeans first, stay open but moderate our policies, solve the problems, whether it is housing, whether it is education, whether it is jobs. It has worked, we have brought global winners here and we have created prosperity for Singaporeans.

(Lee H.L, 2011 National Day Rally)

The idea of drawing in talent into the city-state to achieve economic growth which will ultimately benefit all Singaporeans brings to mind Richard Florida's theory of the creative class. Florida (2002) argued that the key to economic prosperity lies in the ability of urban areas or cities to attract the creative class, a segment of mobile, elitist people who are drawn to places with a culture of diversity, openness and tolerance. This has led to cities blindly adopting and applying his principles in a bid to rejuvenate their economies and stay ahead of the game. In many ways, Singapore exhibits the same tendencies. In moving towards the goal of becoming a global city, the government has introduced and instituted a whole host of initiatives to attract the creative class, ranging from capitalizing on arts and culture to creating new entertainment and leisure districts along the waterfront (Chang, 1997; Chang, Huang & Savage, 2004; Chang, 2008; Chang, Huang & Savage, 2011). These strategies are often associated with the work of urban planners and their varied job scopes, such as physical planning, urban design, place making and conservation (for a more detailed outline of the organizational structure and division of responsibilities in URA, see Appendix A). For instance, Chang (2000) documented how both URA and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) worked together in an attempt to re-image Singapore as the Global City of the Arts, through creating arts districts and building infrastructure such as the Esplanade Theatres on the Bay. Similarly,

Chang et al. (2011) examined how the area around the Singapore River was revitalized into a world class entertainment district with a 24/7 buzz. Another key initiative is the construction and development of the two Integrated Resorts (IRs), one at Sentosa and the other at Marina Bay. The Marina Bay IR, which was developed as an extension of the central business district (CBD), was not only intended to provide more premium commercial space for high value companies, but also to enhance the downtown skyline. In fact, the development of the entire Marina Bay area is so central to the city-state's national identity and global competition strategy that it was presented as a key highlight in the 2008 Nation Day Rally.

However, as we know, Florida's thesis has been picked apart by several scholars, Jamie Peck (2005) providing perhaps the most trenchant (and illuminating) critique. Peck (2005) argued that Florida's thesis provides a front for the operation of neoliberal ideology and is generic enough to be mass-marketed and thus adopted by many cities without question. Furthermore, he draws attention to the elitist nature of Florida's theory: in purely focusing on the mobile, creative class and pandering to their needs, what will happen to the rest of the population who are stuck in low waged jobs and face limited mobility? Who will cater to the needs of these people whom Wilson and Keil (2008) identify as 'the real creative class' due to their creativity in getting by day to day? Similarly, in the case of Singapore, scholars have documented how these urban renewal or redevelopment strategies have led to socially inequitable outcomes. Public flats are demolished, people are displaced and even if there are no strict qualifications barring people from certain so-called public spaces, some members of the public may not feel comfortable visiting these revitalized areas due to their lack of income, cultural or social capital (Chang et al., 2011). Therefore, as much as the Singaporean state strives to remake itself into a world-class city, it has to be acknowledged that this is a deeply uneven



process that tends to exploit some for the benefit of others. Low/unskilled migrant workers are one such group who do not stand to benefit, although they are the ones who provide the manual labor that goes into the construction of many of these new urban redevelopment schemes.

### **Singapore's Foreign Population and Migration Regime**

As previously noted, the percentage of foreign population in Singapore has steadily increased since the 1970s, although this trend has greatly accelerated in the past few years due to the city-state's efforts to distinguish itself as a global city. As Table 4.1 below shows, the non-resident population increased from approximately 61,000 in 1970 to 755,000 in 2000 (Yeoh, 2007). This trend has continued apace even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; as of 2007, there was slightly over a million non-residents residing within Singapore (see Figure 4.2).

	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	2,074,507	100	2,413,945	100	3,016,379	100	4,017,733	100
<b>Total resident population</b>	2,013,563	97	2,282,125	94.5	2,705,115	89.7	3,263,209	81.2
<b>Citizens</b>	1,874,778	90.4	2,194,280	90.9	2,595,243	86	2,973,091	74
<b>Permanent Residents</b>	138,785	6.7	87,845	3.6	109,872	3.6	290,118	7.2
<b>Total non-resident population</b>	60,944	2.9	131,820	5.5	311,264	10.3	754,524	18.8

Table 4.1: Changing proportion of citizens to foreign non-residents in Singapore, 1970-2000 (Compiled from Del Tufo, 1949; Arumainathan, 1970; Singapore Department of Statistics, various issues; cited in Yeoh, 2007)

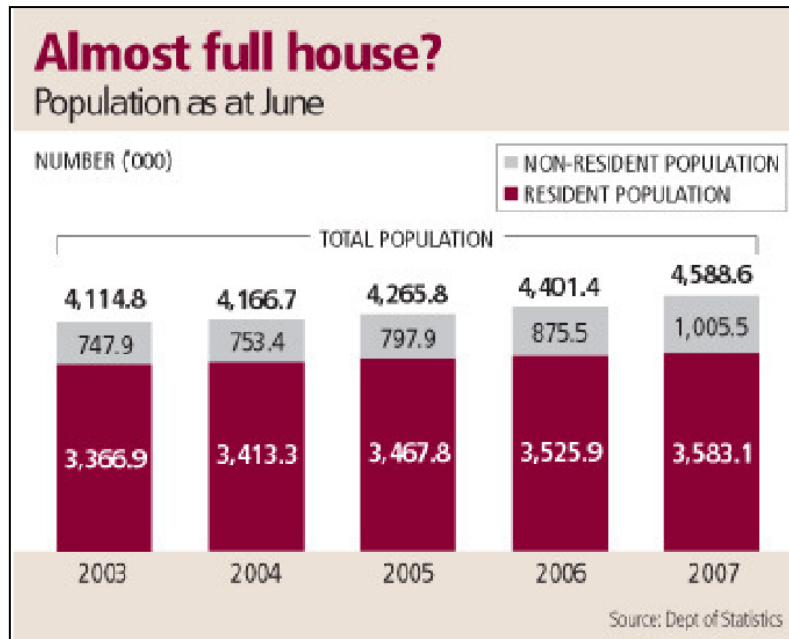


Figure 4.2: Comparison of resident and non-resident population from 2003 to 2007 (Compiled from Department of Statistics, cited in *The Business Times*, 5 Feb 08, p 8)

Singapore's increasing percentage of non-resident population is a direct consequence of the government's policy to bring in foreign manpower for economic development. It feeds into the strategy of developing Singapore into a 'brains service node', 'an oasis of talent' and ultimately, the 'Talent Capital' of the New Economy, 'where local and foreign talent combine their strengths, ideas and creativity to drive the economy and rise above global competition' (Lee Boon Yang, then Minister for Manpower, quoted in Yeoh, 2006, p 31). This has led to a parallel increase in the number of foreign workers in the labor force; whilst foreign workers constituted only 7.4% of the labor force in 1980, this figure has increased to 29% in 2000, and is approximately 33% in 2010 (Yeoh, 2007; *The Straits Time*, 1 Jan 2010; see also Table 4.3 below).

Year	Total labor force	No. of foreign workers	Percent of total labor force
1970	650,892	20,828	3.2
1980	1,077,090	119,483	7.4
1990	1,537,000	248,000	16.1
2000	2,094,800	612,200	29.2

Table 4.3: Numbers of foreign workers in Singapore, 1970-2000 (Compiled from Rahman, 1999:7 (for 1970 and 1980) and Singapore Department of Statistics, 2001:43 (for 1990 and 2000); cited in Yeoh, 2007)

However, there is a general bifurcation underlying these statistics of foreign manpower, as is typical of the labor workforce in global cities: an influx of both highly skilled talent working in knowledge industries and low/unskilled migrant labor providing manual or domestic labor. In Singapore, out of the 670,000 foreign workers in 2006, about 85% of them were low/unskilled migrants concentrated in construction, shipping, manufacturing industries or domestic labor, whilst the remaining 15% were skilled employment holders (Yeoh, 2007). This high percentage of low/unskilled labor in the past five years is not surprising, given the state's major urban redevelopment schemes such as the two Integrated Resorts. Indeed, the surge in construction demand and projects has led to both an increase in the absolute number of foreign workers (excluding domestic workers), as well as their dependency ration. Although Rahman (2006) showed that in 2006, the dependency ratio was 1 full time local worker to 4 foreign workers, this ratio has now increased to 1 to 8 in 2009 (Baey, 2010).

Whilst foreign construction workers hailing predominantly from the South Asian continent provide the hard menial labor of the state's infrastructural developments, foreign domestic workers are employed as substitutes to perform social reproductive labor for dual-income families (Huang & Yeoh, 1996; Huang & Yeoh, 2003; Yeoh, 2006). The employment of foreign domestic labor in high-growth economies that actively pursue the neoliberal agenda has been widely documented by scholars (see Cheng, 1996; 2003; Chang & Ling, 2000; Silvey, 2004; Constable, 2007). As is the case in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the incorporation of women into the labor force in Singapore is predicated on the recruitment of foreign domestic workers from Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka to perform the duties of social reproduction. Today, approximately 1 in 6 households are estimated to employ foreign domestic workers (UNIFEM Singapore, 2009), and their recruitment is increasingly

seen as a common way of life, especially associated with middle-class living.

The general bifurcation of the foreign labor force in Singapore is reflected in the state's immigration policies. Here, immigration policies are used as a technology of power to not only control movement into or out of the national territory, they also subject different segments of foreign manpower to different policies, depending on their level of skill and desirability. As depicted in Table 4.4, the Singaporean government has adopted a highly stratified system of governance to manage and control the different flows of migrant workers into the city-state.

In line with its desirability for 'foreign talent', highly skilled professional workers are readily welcomed with open arms (under the EP<sup>2</sup> and PEP<sup>3</sup>), whereas low/unskilled migrant workers are subject to a host of stringent requirements that subject them to bio- political control and surveillance (under the WP<sup>4</sup>). As reflected by Poon (2009, p 76), it is through this highly tiered and structured migration policy regime that the state controls 'which bodies within the territorial borders of the nation may be construed as mobile, permanent or transient'. To attract foreign talent, liberal guidelines are put in place to help ease the movement and settling in of these expatriates. These include giving grants to companies in order to ease the cost of employing skilled labor, organizing recruitment drives overseas, and less stringent criteria for permanent residency schemes (Yeoh, 2006). In addition, the guidelines for bringing dependents into the nation-state are more relaxed for those on the EP and PEP passes, as are the rule governing inter-marriages between foreign talent and the local population.

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<sup>2</sup>EP refers to Employment Pass, which is the highest tier of work visa allocated to skilled talent.

<sup>3</sup>PEP refers to Personalized Employment Pass, which is a new tier of work visa allocated to entrepreneurs.

<sup>4</sup>WP refers to Work Permit, which is the lowest tier of work visa allocated to low or unskilled foreign workers.

Type of Work Pass	Pass	Criteria	Who?	Dependent's Pass	Comments
Employment Pass (EP)	P1	Fixed monthly salary of more than S\$8,000 (US\$6,163)	Foreign professionals, managers, executives and specialists	Yes	P Pass holders are eligible to bring their parents/parents-in-law on Long-Term Visit Passes
	P2	Fixed monthly salary of more than S\$4,500 <sup>1</sup> (US\$3,467) and up to S\$8,000 (US\$6,163), and recognised qualifications			
	Q1	Fixed monthly salary of more than S\$3,000 (US\$2,311), and recognised qualifications <sup>2</sup>	Skilled and experienced (minimum of 5 years) workers		Dependent privileges are extended only to spouse and children under 21 years of age
Personalised Employment Pass (since January 2007)	PEP	Fixed annual salary of at least S\$34,000 (US\$26,194) in the preceding year	Selected foreign professionals, EP holders and foreign graduates from institutions of higher learning in Singapore	Yes	PEP holders are not tied to any employer and are able to remain in Singapore for up to 6 months in between jobs
S Pass (since July 2004)	S	Fixed monthly salary of at least S\$2,000 (US\$1,540)	Middle level skilled workers, e.g. specialised workers, technicians, and accountants	Only those earning more than S\$2,800 (US\$2,157) per month are eligible.	Applicants are assessed using a points system based on salary, educational qualifications, work experience, and job type
Work Permit (WP)	R	Source country restrictions apply for specific sectors of industry, in addition to various dependency ratios, tiers and levy rates <sup>3</sup>	Semi-skilled and unskilled foreign workers (FW) who do not qualify for S Passes	No	FWs are not allowed to engage in any form of marriage in Singapore
		At least 23 years old with a minimum of 8 years of formal education, together with the successful completion of an MOM-stipulated entry test	Foreign domestic workers (FDW)		A FDW may face deportation if she is found pregnant during the term of her employment contract

**Table 4.4: Overview of work passes in Singapore**  
(Based on Baey, 2010; updated with figures taken from MOM website)

In contrast, the state regulates the inflow and movement of low/unskilled migrant workers (i.e. those on WP passes) through a series of measures. Such measures include the work permit system, where only 2-year work permits are typically granted; the dependency ceiling which controls the proportion of unskilled foreign labor in relation to local workers; and the foreign worker levy, where employers have to pay

additional money to employ foreign workers. Together, these initiatives provide an abundant supply of low-skilled workers for economic growth, yet ensure that jobs are not taken away from the local population (Yeoh, 2006; 2007). In fact, due to increasing local resistance against the visible presence of migrant workers within the city, the government has since 2010 slowly introduced a number of market-based measures to regulate their inflow (MOM press releases on 23 Feb 2010, 21 Feb 2011 and 16 Aug 2011). Although the measures are discursively articulated as ways of enhancing economic productivity through the reduction of reliance on lower skilled foreign labor, they also draw attention to the state's preference of skilled workers over low/unskilled workers. For instance, the first two tweaks introduced in 2010 and early 2011 were only targeted at the low and mid-skilled foreign labor under the WP or S pass segments, involving a levy hike as well as an increase in qualifying salaries. It was not until mid to late 2011 that the state also tightened the qualifying salaries for those under the EP pass system. Yet, even in the latest measure, the criteria relevant to the highest tier under the EP pass system (i.e. the P1 pass) remain unchanged.

Low/unskilled migrant workers are also subject to bio-political control and surveillance measures that serve to restrict their mobility. For instance, it is mandatory for employers to submit a security bond for each worker, and the bond operates as collateral against the potential breaking of regulations. Workers under the WP category are generally required to undergo a medical examination every 6 months to ensure that they do not have contagious diseases, and in the case of foreign domestic workers, that they are not pregnant. Pregnant domestic workers would be deported immediately, and the security bond paid by the employer will be forfeited (Yeoh, 2006). The mandatory security bond has also caused employers to strictly regulate and control the mobility of their workers. A report submitted by a coalition of migrant non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) to the UN Universal Periodic Review in 2011 highlighted the ways in which migrants' freedom of movement are severely restricted. For instance, workers' passports are confiscated by employers, and domestic workers are confined by not being given any day-offs (Solidarity for Migrant Workers, 2011). Such measures have also been extensively studied by academics in Singapore (Yeoh & Huang, 1998; Yeoh, Huang & Gonzalez, 1999; Huang & Yeoh, 2007). For instance, Huang and Yeoh (1996) documented how employers of domestic workers went so far as to install the latest electronic gadgets which track the numbers that domestic workers dial from their mobile phones. Such practices have continued to the present day, as illustrated by Yeoh and Huang (2010) in their detailed study of how domestic workers continue to be rendered immobile via the 'ground rules' instituted by their employers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated the relationship between Singapore's aspiration to be a global city, its urban planning efforts, as well as its migration regime. All three phenomena cannot be adequately characterized or explained without reference to one another. In the city-state's push to distinguish itself as a global city, several initiatives have been implemented. Urban planning schemes and city branding are part of these initiatives, both falling under the purview of the URA. Not only do we see key infrastructural developments such as the two Integrated Resorts being constructed to draw in capital, tourists and talent, there has also been a shift towards city branding and place management so as to successfully project a highly symbolic image of the city onto the international arena. Yet, whilst these developments cater towards the highly mobile transnational elites (recognized as 'foreign talent' by the state), there is a parallel influx of low/unskilled migrants into the national territory. Although these low/unskilled migrants (known as 'foreign workers') are typically seen as the 'underbelly' (Yeoh and Chang,

2001) of the labor force, they play a crucial role in nation building by providing either the menial labor that goes into urban redevelopment schemes, or performing social reproductive roles as local women are increasingly incorporated into the workforce. Yet, the contributions of these workers are barely valued by the wider public. This bifurcation of the migrant inflow is also reflected in the highly stratified migration policy regime, evident from the different tiers of work passes available. Whilst foreign workers are subject to stringent requirements controlling the basis of their entry into the nation-state, as well as surveilling and regulating their conduct, foreign talent are welcomed with wide open arms and liberal policies are put in place to incentivize them to make Singapore their future home.

This chapter forms the background and context of my thesis. It is with this in mind that we can move on to examine how nation-state building can be understood through urban redevelopment efforts, as well as how borders and mobility are utilized by urban planners as means to socially and spatially differentiate bodies of different desirability within the national territory. However, one qualification has to be made here, regarding the subgroup of low/unskilled migrants that is the focus of this research. As foreign domestic workers typically live with their employers in the household, they are highly geographically (though not necessarily socially) integrated within the city-state. Furthermore, the locations of residences of foreign domestic workers do not fall under the control of the URA. This is in contrast to the situation of male foreign workers who are concentrated in the construction, marine or manufacturing industries; these workers are typically clustered together in foreign worker dormitories, whose location is directly determined by the URA. Therefore, in exploring the ways in which different bodies are socially or spatially included or excluded as part of the nation-state via urban planning, this thesis will only take into consideration the case of foreign worker dormitories.



## CHAPTER 5

### **“We need you but not in our backyard” The Racialization and Containment of Migrant Bodies through Urban Planning**

This chapter illustrates the exclusion of migrant workers from the nation-state through planning policies pertaining to foreign worker dormitories. The processes of exclusion and containment are revealed in three segments. The first section explores the rationale behind URA’s planning policies for foreign worker dormitories, linking the discourses utilized by planners to social-spatial outcomes on the landscape. The second segment turns to how these policies have impacted upon the daily operations and management of foreign worker dormitories, highlighting the security and surveillance measures put in place by operators to regulate the bodies of migrant workers. The last segment then turns to a specific case study involving the temporary conversion of a school to a worker dormitory in a middle class housing estate to elucidate how these exclusionary practices are grounded in reality; the debates brought up during the Serangoon Gardens debacle was a microcosm of the tensions felt within the nation-state as a whole. To conclude, I briefly evaluate how urban planning for migrant workers fares in terms of social-spatial justice before reiterating the key points of the chapter.

Given the rapid influx of migrant workers into Singapore in the recent years, housing them has become a problem. The crunch in migrants’ accommodation led to overcrowded conditions with minimum standards of living, causing the state to recently come onboard to implement temporary measures to resolve this shortfall. To date, there are four ways of housing migrant workers (Ang, 2008):

- i) In rented public housing or in private residential developments
- ii) On the grounds of or close to large construction projects

- iii) Purpose-built dormitories
- iv) Factory-converted dormitories

The four means of accommodation cater to all types of migrant workers, from those working in services to construction and marine industries. This chapter, however, only covers the last two accommodation types - purpose-built and factory-converted *dormitories*. This is because URA was heavily involved in formulating policies concerning dormitories and continues to play a significant role in implementing the guidelines. URA's focus on dormitories also highlights a distinction between different types of migrant workers, based on the jobs they are employed to do. As one planner explained:

The workers (*from construction and marine industries*) are **not assimilable** to the general public, so they generally will not be able to stay in public flats. But partly also because of the nature of their work; construction workers come in one large group. It's also more economies of scale for the operator to house them together in one dormitory than to let them go source for their own housing. For *services*, you get your waitresses, customer service officers... basically they are **working like any other Singaporean**, so therefore we cannot cater housing for them.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011, emphasis mine)

Therefore, those housed in dormitories are generally assumed to be less assimilable to the public, whereas those in residential housing are seen no differently from Singaporeans. Given this distinction, focusing on planning guidelines pertaining to foreign worker dormitories helps to better elucidate how undesirable migrants are excluded from the nation-state.

### **URA's Planning Guidelines for Foreign Worker Dormitories (FWDs)**

There are two types of FWDs under URA's purview – purpose-built, independent dormitories and factory-converted dormitories. Purpose-built dormitories are typically commercially run by operators and house workers employed by different companies. Hence, they tend to be bigger developments housing hundreds to thousands of workers.

Factory-converted dormitories, however, tend to be smaller in scale and can cater to both on-site and off-site workers. Those catering to on-site workers (i.e. those employed by the owner or lessee of the factory) are called ancillary dormitories, whereas those catering to both on-site and off-site workers (i.e. employed by other companies or who do not work in the subject development) are termed secondary dormitories.

URA's guidelines for FWDs cover a number of dimensions, ranging from location, zoning, quantum control, allowable intensity to the types of decisions granted (for detailed planning parameters, see Appendices B & C). Here, I touch on three aspects of the guidelines that highlight the exclusion of migrant workers from the nation-state: *location of FWDs*, *amenity provision guideline*, and *consultation process* with advisors and grassroots.

#### *Location of FWDs*

The guidelines for location of FWDs are stated as follows in the development control handbook of the URA:

Workers' dormitories can be considered on:

- i) Sites within an industrial estate which are outside hazard zones as defined by Pollution Control Department (PCD, NEA)<sup>5</sup>
- ii) Sites within an area earmarked for such development
- iii) Sites within an existing development within B1/B2<sup>6</sup> zone

The location for proposed workers' dormitory should also be **located away from residential area and areas where the use is likely to cause amenity problems**. Workers' dormitories are **not allowed in the Central Area**.

Within industrial estates that are safeguarded by JTC<sup>7</sup> or HDB<sup>8</sup> for **strategic**

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<sup>5</sup>The PCD (Pollution Control Department) is part of the National Environment Authority (NEA) and ensures that any FWDs are located outside the health and safety buffers.

<sup>6</sup>B1 and B2 are land use zones referring to industry areas in the Master Plan.

<sup>7</sup>JTC refers to Jurong Town Corporation, a statutory board who manages a large proportion of industrial areas in Singapore.

<sup>8</sup>HDB refers to the Housing and Development Board, a statutory board who is responsible for provision of public housing.

**industries or where the workers' dormitories may be incompatible with the surrounding land use**, only ancillary workers' dormitories (i.e. housing on-site workers) are allowed. Secondary workers' dormitories (i.e. housing off-site workers) are not allowed within these areas...

(URA development control handbook, emphasis mine)

The first point to note is that FWDs are usually located in industrial areas. This is borne out in points (i) and (iii) above, where 'B1/B2 zones' are land use zones used to describe industrial areas in the Master Plan. The perception that FWDs should be located in peripheral industrial areas is evident in both media reports as well as planning discourses. When queried, planners agree that the most appropriate locations for FWDs are in industrial areas, as they tend to be located further away from residential estates, thus reducing or minimizing any potential amenity concerns. As one planner explained,

Well, I think the concerns are on amenities. You know, if they (FWDs) are located further away, then it may not affect the residents as much.

(Interviewee H, recorded on 31 May 2011)

Another planner made the same point.

From a planning point of view, that (industrial areas) would be a suitable area to locate FWDs...partly to address concerns from residents, partly to be pro-business and to allow industrialists to convert their premises to FWDs; by allowing them to be located within industrial areas, as long as they are outside the health and safety buffers.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011)

Although the guidelines only stipulate that FWDs be located away from residential areas, planners whom I interviewed also mentioned that areas near schools or parks are not suitable as well, as there is the concern that migrant workers will pose security risks to children, or they will loiter about in nearby parks.

The 'amenity concerns' raised by residents are predicated on the racialization of migrants' bodies. When queried about the types of 'amenity concerns', planners often cited problems such as littering, loitering, security concerns associated with crime and

sexual assault, drinking, etc.

I think there's a lot of fear of high crime rates. Like, people would say, bicycles get stolen and stuff like that, especially when there are big numbers of foreign workers. We are talking about an international community of **strangers** that suddenly comes into the **heartlands**. People are threatened and afraid to a certain extent.

(Interviewee D, recorded on 27 May 2011, emphasis mine)

The quote above is illuminating, especially in the contrast of the terms 'strangers' and 'heartlands', the latter term being a local phrase used to refer to public housing estates where the majority of Singaporeans live and have close emotional connections to. Here, not only are migrant workers depicted and seen as strangers, their appearance in places close to one's home is seen to threaten both the physical and emotional connections to the nation, a point made by Sandercock (2003).

Planners, however, are also aware that depictions of migrant workers are not necessarily true, but are grounded on racism or fear of the unfamiliar.

I think it's an issue of unfamiliarity to a certain extent. It's like... to make it sound very bad, it's stereotyping and racism. Everyone deep down inside is a racist, deep down inside. It's just that in Singapore, we do it very well to hide it. It's just not being familiar with the people and culture around you.

(Interviewee E, recorded on 27 May 2011)

Depictions of the racialized nature of migrant bodies are even more evident in media reports (see Figure 5.1). In Little India where large populations of migrant workers tend to congregate, residents have complained about the dangers posed to their neighbourhood:

They (the foreign workers) get drunk, and then some fight, defecate in car parks and sleep on the roads, causing traffic hazards. They leave behind their litter, which attracts rats and cockroaches.

(cited in Gan, 2011)

Similarly, residents in Jurong West<sup>9</sup> have complained to their Members of Parliament

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<sup>9</sup> Jurong West is a neighborhood situated at the Western portion of the island, which is also where majority of the industrial estates are clustered.

(MPs) numerous times. As one resident said,

The workers drink beer, get rowdy and urinate all over the place. Once, they fought using beer bottlers. Sometimes, they pass out at the void deck after drinking too much.

(cited in Suhaimi & Sudderuddin, 2007)



Figure 5.1: Representations of foreign workers in Singapore media (Taken from The New Paper, 19 June 2011)

Associating foreign workers with thrash, infestations and defecation is one way of excluding them from the nation-state. Sundberg and Kaserman (2007) illustrated how migrants attempting to cross the border lands between Mexico and the United States were demonized via their practices of throwing waste and defecating, which destroyed the pristine wilderness of mother nature. Such acts were seen as antithetical to the United States' emphasis on protection of nature and the wild, thus indirectly excluding the migrants from the nation-state and its ideals. The same argument can be made in the Singapore context, which has a reputation for being a clean and green city. The way migrant bodies are racialized through their association with filth, diseases and acts of defecation is a huge contrast to the international reputation and image of Singapore.

Hence, discourses of hygiene are utilized by residents and the media to marginalize and exclude foreign workers from the nation-state.

In a similar vein, foreign workers are ‘othered’ with reference to their highly sexualized ‘nature’. Residents are wary that having foreign workers nearby will result in sexual assaults against women and foreign domestic maids. Media reports have also played up the bodily, eroticized aspects of foreign workers, linking them to moral corruption and vice. For instance, a newspaper report in January 2009 uncovered how foreign workers living in a dormitory in the northern part of the island need not travel far for sex, because there were services for ‘sex on delivery’ (The New Paper, 26 Jan 2009). The report illustrated how pimps were bringing prostitutes to the forested area behind the dormitory, so that foreign workers could easily engage in sexual services in makeshift brothels.

Such depictions draw heavily on representations of masculinity intersecting with race. Although masculine identities are widely recognized to be fluid, as well as temporally and geographically contingent, dominant representations of hegemonic masculinity which focus on ideal qualities such as rationality, emotional self-control and sexual performance still persist today (Jackson, 1991; Berg and Longhurst, 2003; Hopkins and Noble, 2009). Whilst these qualities can be viewed positively in certain contexts, they can also be seen as threatening when such qualities are embodied by men of ‘other’ races. In the Singaporean context, the highly sexualized ‘nature’ of male foreign workers leads to ‘othering’ on two accounts. First, local men fear that sexually aggressive foreign workers will assault their female family members or foreign domestic workers. Here, masculinity is explicitly tied to nationhood; local men see the need to protect their women (and hence their nation) from the aggressive advances of the threatening ‘other’ (Nagel, 1998). Second, despite the neoliberal aspirations of the city-

state, Singapore still maintains a focus on Asian identity and conservatism. Hence, to this day, issues of sexuality are still deemed taboo and inappropriate for discussion in the public sphere. Painting foreign workers as highly sexualized beings who will pay for sexual services in makeshift brothels in the forests not only goes against the mainstream conservatism of Singapore, but also paints them as being bestial and closer to nature. Ironically, this goes against the ideal masculine quality of sexual *control*; the sexual impulses of foreign workers are here seen to overcome their rationality, and their sexuality is seen as more animal than human.

The stereotypes of migrant workers is a strategy utilized by the media and residents to delimit boundaries when in actual reality, such clear-cut boundaries may not exist. Chow (2002) explained how racial stereotypes are often used to construct a mythic ‘other’, whether for purposes of national defence, war or protectionism. She cites Richard Dyer in her argument:

[The most important function of the stereotype] is to maintain sharp boundary definitions, to define clearly where the pale ends and thus who is clearly within and who clearly beyond it. Stereotypes do not only, in concert with social types, map out the boundaries of acceptable and legitimate behaviour, they also insist on boundaries exactly at those points where in reality there are none.

(Dyer, 1993; cited in Chow, 2002, p 59)

The point is not that residents or the media are lying about the behaviour of migrant workers; rather, it would seem that the stereotypes are exaggerated depictions applied wholesale to the entire migrant population, when in reality, not all of them misbehave and create trouble for residents.

Other than being located away from residential areas, FWDs are also not allowed within the Central Area, which in the Master Plan includes not only the Central Business District (CBD) but also key entertainment districts that are significant to the tourism industry. When queried why this was the case, more than one planner responded to say



that locating a FWD in these areas is not only incompatible from a land use point of view, but would also damage the premium image of these areas, possibly leading to loss of investment and capital.

Because of all the ongoing construction going on there (in Marina Bay), we have to build foreign worker dormitories, right? And these are usually situated quite far away from the city, I suppose for good planning reasons...you know, when you suddenly see a workers' dormitory that is quite near, can see from the Sky Park<sup>10</sup>, that's not very nice.

(Interviewee J, recorded on 1 June 2011)

Although FWDs are not to be located in central areas as a rule of thumb, for the construction of developments in Marina Bay, the state decided to allow FWDs to be temporarily located nearby on an exceptional basis. The rationale for this decision was explained as follows:

Yes (it is unusual), but it also makes sense from the transport point of view. They move shorter distances. But the good thing is that Marina Bay, well the Marina South area was largely vacant by that time, in a way, there would not be a lot of dis-amenity. So, land was set aside for these major developers to build interim dormitories.

(Interviewee L, recorded on 2 June 2011)

When asked about the current status of the FWDs, given that Marina Bay has been more or less developed, the same planner replied,

The dorms are in the Marina South area, so that will be closer to the side of the Gardens. So we consciously discussed, that partly because of the image and partly because of the demand for dorms will go down or expected to go down, partly also because there were some concerns on how they will use the spaces, in time for the opening of the gardens, these dorms will no longer be there.

(Interviewee L, recorded on 2 June 2011)

Therefore, although a one-off decision was made to locate FWDs near the city center, this was because the surrounding area was largely vacant and thus, there was less concern about potential dis-amenity. However, once the development of the area was nearing

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<sup>10</sup>The Sky Park refers to the 57<sup>th</sup> storey roof top garden sitting atop the three towers of Marina Bay Sands.

completion, there were concerns that the FWDs would tarnish the image of the area and they had to be removed. Thus, the rationale undergirding this one-off situation is similar to discourses used by planners to justify the relegation of FWDs to peripheral industrial areas.

In a similar vein, secondary and independent dormitories are not allowed to be located near strategic industrial areas as they may downgrade the image of these areas.

Strategic industrial areas are probably those areas with multi-national companies (MNCs). Allowing dormitories in those areas will downgrade the image of the area and the MNC may not like it.

(Interviewee C, recorded on 26 May 2011)

This view was similarly expressed by another planner:

Strategic to JTC could mean company of high importance, high value companies. I do not know what are the strategic companies, but basically I think they mean companies that JTC value... high importance, pump in millions of dollars in Singapore. So, allowing dormitories will downgrade the image of the area.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011)

From the quotes above, it is evident that FWDs are seen as antithetical to capitalist accumulation; if FWDs are located near strategic industries or in the city center, they will tarnish the image of these areas and cause a loss of investment and capital. However, discourses of racialization are never far from the surface. As one planner remarked,

It is also because the strategic industries are more sensitive... there are some concerns... Like certain areas... mainly food zones... it depends on the different type of industries. Like pharmaceutical companies, when they manufacture certain things, **you wouldn't want workers around there; they loiter around, they leave the food behind, the rats and cockroaches and what not will all turn up.**

(Interviewee H, recorded on 31 May 2011, emphasis mine)

The relation between FWDs and neoliberalism as a market efficient system is an interesting one. On one hand, as the quotes above show, FWDs are antithetical to capitalist accumulation. On the other hand, planners often utilize economic reasons to justify why FWDs are relegated to peripheral areas.

Yes, there are concerns from residents. But on the other hand, you can also see it as workers **saving transport costs**. It is also **pro-business**, as it allows **flexibility for business owners** to convert part of their premises to dormitories.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011, emphasis mine)

Another planner remarked:

Proximity to industrial estates, I guess that minimizes time for travel. Plus, industrial areas are also where **property values are already low**.

(Interviewee G, recorded on 30 May 2011, emphasis mine)

Reasons of ‘saving transport costs’, being pro-business and providing flexibility to private enterprises all help to facilitate the efficiency of market forces. Hence, economic discourses are used by planners to partially justify the locations of FWDs, just as FWDs are seen to work against capitalist accumulation. The irony becomes starker when we realize that foreign workers are the ones who build the infrastructural developments necessary for neoliberal urbanism, yet they are banished to peripheral areas and rendered invisible through market discourses.

#### *Amenity Provision Guideline*

The amenity provision guideline also contributes to the exclusion of migrant workers from the nation-state, specifically through the containment of migrant bodies within dormitories. The guideline was implemented in Dec 2010 and applies to only ancillary and secondary workers’ dormitories. The objective of introducing the guidelines is stated as follows in the circular:

The amenity provision guidelines are introduced **to improve the living conditions for foreign workers staying in ancillary and secondary workers’ dormitories in industrial/warehouse developments**. The guidelines are drawn in collaboration among URA, JTC, HDB and other relevant government agencies. They apply only to new ancillary and secondary workers’ dormitories housing more than 50 workers.

(Amenity Provision Guideline, emphasis mine)

The amenity provision guideline states that it is mandatory for developers to provide both basic and recreational amenities for workers. Basic amenities comprise living quarters, toilets and dining areas, although developers are also encouraged to construct additional amenities such as sickbays, laundry, and drying areas. The amount of indoor recreational amenities to be provided is tied to the number of workers living within the dormitory; the greater the number of workers, the more area the developer has to set aside for recreational facilities (see Table 5.2 below). Examples of indoor recreational facilities include gymnasium, reading rooms, etc. In addition, developers are strongly encouraged to provide outdoor recreational facilities such as outdoor games court, socializing areas, etc. For dormitories housing more than 100 workers, developers are allowed to provide up to 20 sqm of floor area for commercial facilities such as minimarts, telecommunications shops, internet shops, remittance shops, postal service shops and Automated Teller Machines (ATMs).

No. of workers housed in a dormitory	Minimum recreational amenities GFA [not including outdoor recreational facilities]
50 to 300	50 sqm
301 to 500	75 sqm
More than 500	100 sqm

Table 5.2: Minimum floor area to be set aside for indoor recreational facilities based on number of workers (taken from [http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dcdnrhb\\_d0e4.htm](http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dcdnrhb_d0e4.htm))

The circular clearly states that the objective of the guideline is to improve the living conditions of migrant workers. This view was espoused by some planners whom I interviewed:

This whole amenity provision guidelines is very new, it only came out last year. So, the whole guideline came about because we realized all these factory dorms, they house workers but they don't provide any form of amenity. Some do, some actually provide reading room, TV room for their own workers, but some don't.

So, we felt that as a planning authority, we should give some recreational space for the workers to enjoy. That's why we came up with the guidelines in Dec last year.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011)

However, this does not paint the full picture. When queried further, it became clear that the guideline was instituted as a response to residents' complaints, and the hope was that providing workers with in-house facilities would prevent or discourage them from leaving their dormitories. Hence, the amenity provision guideline should be interpreted as a policy of containment of migrant bodies. This tension between the stated objective and the underlying rationale of containment was expressed by many planners. For instance, the same planner who explained the objective of the guideline above made the following comment in the same interview.

Mainly complaints from residents [which prompted the guideline]. Because all these foreign workers, during the weekends and after work, they have nowhere to go. So, what they do is they go to the HDB void deck, they go to HDB coffee shops and we receive a lot of complaints and you can see that from the newspapers as well. Areas like Kaki Bukit, Jurong West... that's why we came up with the amenity provision guideline. That's how the Soon Lee Recreation Park came about as well. There are a lot of complaints from Jurong West residents, that's why we tried to find a suitable area where all the workers can go during the weekend and after work, and there are facilities there to cater to their needs.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011)

When asked whether this could be construed as a policy of containment, the planner became slightly defensive and responded as follows:

No, we believe that we provide these facilities not to contain them so that they will not go out. We also believe that they have a 'broke out'<sup>11</sup> mentality, especially during the weekends. I mean, they are free to go to Little India in their free time, and we can't stop them right? So, all these in-house amenities are basically to serve them in the daily basis. Whether it will work or not, we don't know lah because we just implemented last year only.

(Interviewee B, recorded on 26 May 2011)

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<sup>11</sup>A "broke out" mentality is a slang term referring to the behavior of young National Service men who are allowed to leave camp during the weekends.

Other planners, however, had fewer problems reconciling the two, recognizing the dual objectives of the guideline.

Of course we want to cater for the well being of the workers, I mean, they are human beings, and we want to cater for their needs. And they are such a large number, so we want to ensure that their needs are met, and if possible, onsite, instead of them coming out to look for facilities and amenities within residential areas.

(Interviewee I, recorded on 31 May 2011)

Although some planners were aware of the benefits of better living environment for the workers, it was clear to them that the policy was one of containment. The excerpt below shows this clearly.

**Me:** Why do you think the amenity provision guideline was crafted?

**G:** It's called containment.

**F:** Yah, keep everything within the compound so you don't create dis-amenity.

**Me:** Why do you think that has to be so?

**F:** Because Singaporeans have been complaining about the presence of foreign workers in housing estates.

**G:** Dis-amenity, devaluation of property. So, it's out of sight, out of mind...

**Me:** So you think that was part of the reason for the guideline?

**F:** Yah, apart from giving them a better living environment

(Interviewees F and G, recorded on 30 May 2011)

The policy of containment is not restricted to views expressed by planners, but is also evident in tender documents prepared by the Building Construction Authority (BCA) for construction of FWDs, as shown below:

Paragraph 1.1.7

A living domain and a social domain shall be demarcated within the Plot. The living domain shall be out of bounds to residents. The amenities shall be appropriately located in both the living domain and social domain **to meet the objective of containing Foreign Workers/Foreign Construction Workers within the Plot.**

(Taken from Appendix III of the Kranji Lodge tender documents obtained via personal correspondence, emphasis mine)

Similarly, newspapers have reported on the possibility of self-contained townships for foreign workers, especially after the Serangoon Gardens debacle. In 2008, ex foreign

minister George Yeo told reporters that the Ministry of National Development (MND) is “seriously considering how to create townships for foreign workers which are sustainable and self-contained” (Perry, 2008). Although the idea of townships housing more than 100,000 workers has taken off in the Middle East, the lack of space makes it more difficult for townships to be implemented in Singapore (Arshad, 2008). Nevertheless, trends towards containment are evident, not only in the implementation of the Amenity Provision Guideline, but also in the development of recreational parks specifically catering to the needs of foreign workers<sup>12</sup>. One such park is the Soon Lee Recreation Park located in the western region of Singapore, which is also where a large proportion of industries are clustered (see Figure 5.3). The facility was developed by the Singapore Contractors Association and costs \$5 million. It houses a football field, an amphitheatre, multi-purpose sports courts, postal and remittance facilities, a beer garden, a medical station, a canteen, a supermarket and lots of open green space (Sim, 2008).

When the facility was first unveiled, Member of Parliament for West Coast GRC (Group Representative Committee), Mr Cedric Foo, represented the facility as a gift to the workers for their contributions to Singapore.

This is a way to show our appreciation for their contributions to the economy and also provide them with proper facilities to unwind, relax and socialize after work. Such a facility sure beats HDB void decks.

(cited in Sim, 2008)

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to the policy of self-containment, there is a new trend of locating FWDs in further outlying areas that are largely inaccessible, such as next to cemeteries (Suhaimi, 2008; Arul, 2008). Not only is this a form of social and spatial isolation, the mobility of migrants is highly restricted as not many buses serve these areas and the closest amenities are a few miles away. When interviewed by reporters, foreign workers who live in the dormitories responded to say that they wished more buses would be made available during the weekends so that they could travel to Little India, and some commented that they had to travel for nearly an hour just to get groceries. Due to the lack of facilities in the surrounding area, the Building Construction Authority (BCA) said that recreational and commercial facilities would be provided in-house. Hence, FWDs which are located near residential areas are self-contained so as to discourage workers from unnecessarily leaving the compound, whereas in this case, the dormitories are self-contained as there is a lack of facilities nearby. Regardless of the circumstances, the key point is that policies are put in place to render foreign workers invisible through self-containment, restriction of their mobilities or banishing them to outlying areas of the island.



Figure 5.3: Facilities at Soon Lee Recreation Park (Photos: Author's own)

However, such a representation is surely partial and cannot be divorced from the racialization of migrants' bodies, residents' complaints and the idea of containment. As made explicit by other media reports, the development of the recreational park was meant to restrict the movement of foreign workers, such that they had less reason to venture out into the residential estates. As one article reported, 'the General Manager at Soon Lee Lodge said that such arrangements not only give the foreign workers the feeling of being at home, it also prevents foreign workers from venturing out into the neighborhoods' (Lianhe Zaobao, 21 Sep 2008, p 8).

#### *Consultation Process*

From around 2008 or so, a new consultation process was put in place for proposals that involve a significant increase in the numbers of foreign workers, especially in areas that are near residential estates and where complaints had been previously made.



When such proposals are received, URA has to decide whether or not to consult the grassroots committees and advisors of the constituency. The objective is to alert the grassroots of the proposal so that any pre-emptive measures or problems could be resolved upfront. However, this consultation process also highlights the attitudes of locals towards foreign workers and the policy of containment. When asked how the process was carried out, one planner described it as such:

It was very long drawn, it look like a year plus to two years to clear the proposal. The advisor wanted it to be very self-contained, so they had a lot of requests. We had to brief the advisor on the proposal. I think we went two or three rounds with the advisor before he finally agreed to allow the operator to brief her grassroots leaders. After briefing the grassroots leaders, he wanted us to brief the grassroots members. So, at each time, as long as someone made a comment, every agency will be scrambling to help the advisor, help the operator to say how we are addressing, how the operator is addressing, how the agencies can help to address these concerns. So, it took a very long time. And for some things, he refused to budge, like there's no ATM. He demanded an ATM.

(Interviewee H, recorded on 31 May 2011)

When I queried about the requests the advisor or grassroots members made, the same planner responded:

...ATM. He wants them to sell alcohol in the FWD. He wants them to sell alcohol within so that they wouldn't go out and drink; they drink within their own dorm. But technically, workers are not allowed to drink within their premises. They can only drink within their canteen. So, there is a lot of like...conflicts. SPF (Singapore Police Force) is the one who don't allow them to drink within the workers' dorm premise, but the advisor wants them to drink within. So, the compromise is drink at the canteen... He wanted recreational space, those within the dorm and those outside the dorm. Of course, he doesn't want the workers to loiter along the park connector, so he wanted the agency to come up with interim park space, recreational space like the Soon Lee one, a bit smaller scale because he didn't want to attract too many workers there also. So, he had a lot of requests that we had to work with a lot of agencies to get it cleared. In the end, we cleared it.

(Interviewee H, recorded on 31 May 2011)

What is clear from the discussion above is that the consultation process takes as granted the racialization of migrant workers and the problems they bring with them to residential estates. It is also an opportunity for grassroots members to make their concerns known

and institute measures beneficial to them, which end up restricting the mobility of foreign workers and containing them within their dormitories. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the planning consultation process is highly uneven, one which gives voice to residents but not to the foreign workers. Therefore, not only is the planning *process* undemocratic, the *outcomes* of planning policies are also spatially unjust, as foreign workers are segregated and relegated to peripheral areas with their mobilities highly restricted.

### **Surveillance and Mobility: Regulating Migrants' Bodies**

Processes of racialization and marginalization are not just espoused by urban planners, but are also evident in the ways operators manage the dormitories and the migrant workers within. This section turns to explore how disciplinary and surveillance measures predicated on racialization are instituted within FWDs, and how the policy of self-containment results in a paradoxical outcome – although foreign workers are discouraged from physically venturing out into residential estates, the provision of facilities within the dormitory enhances their virtual connectivity to the external world.

To reduce amenity concerns, operators of FWDs are required to implement certain measures within the compound. These measures play a dual purpose; on one hand, they are intended to screen off activities within the dormitory from public view, on the other hand, they place foreign workers under constant surveillance to reduce any potential security concerns. BCA's tender document for the development of Kranji Lodge dormitory highlights these dual purposes effectively. For instance, the following measures are intended to minimize disturbances to the surrounding residents:

Paragraph 1.1.6:

Opaque parapet walls shall be provided along the common corridors to screen off the activities within the dormitories from the public's view as well as to provide a tidy and conducive living dormitory environment for the Foreign Workers/Foreign Construction Workers.

Paragraph 1.1.8:

The clearance of the Authority shall be obtained on the operational hours of the amenities which include but not limited to the minimart, barber shop, canteen, gymnasium, reading room, TV rooms, etc.

Paragraph 1.2.1

...The proposed planting shall meet the objective of shielding/screening off visually the activities in the workers' dormitories from the view of the public.

(Taken from Appendix III of the Kranji Lodge tender documents;  
obtained via personal correspondence)

The use of opaque parapet walls, fences and planting not only screens off activities from the public, but also reinforces the social-spatial differences between the residents ('us') and the foreign workers ('them'). Foreign workers are also subject to surveillance and disciplinary measures within the dormitory through CCTV cameras, identification passes and having to comply with house rules that regulate their daily activities (for a full list of disciplinary and surveillance measures, please see Appendix D). Two points are noted from the long list of measures in Appendix D. Firstly, all migrant workers are stereotyped – based on the house rules, there is a general assumption that all migrant workers will loiter, urinate and cause trouble for residents. Dormitory operators sometimes also adhere to these representations. For instance, the operator I interviewed (henceforth known as T) responded in this manner when I asked why drinking was not allowed in the dormitories:

Because if they go in and drink, we will not be able to control them you know. They have a lot of problems when they are highly intoxicated and they will start fighting, you know. When they drink in the room ah, they become very boisterous, argumentative. They will pick on their co-workers, create trouble and then there will be fights and all that. If they drink outside, yah, they do come back pissed drunk, sometimes flat, but the likelihood of trouble is much lesser.

(Interviewee T, recorded on 20 June 2011)

Although the same argument can be applied to any other human being (that intoxication leads to higher possibilities of conflict), foreign workers are painted as being less in control of themselves and thus needing disciplinary measures to put them in place.

In addition, paternalistic attitudes are often adopted towards foreign workers, for instance, depicting them as incapable of being clean and tidy and thus needing help in basic hygiene. The Straits Times recently ran a report showing how dormitory operators have resorted to placing bins at multiple locations within the dormitory so as to encourage workers to throw their trash into the bins and not leave them lying about (Goh, 2010).

Similarly, T explained:

Every 3 months, we give them rewards for the 3 cleanest units. Provision items like bread, cooking oil, rice, eggs and all that. We check every unit and there has to be some basic cleanliness. If the cleanliness is not there, we will take photographs and send it to the employer, get the employer to come down and see for himself, you know. This one, we have been doing it since day one, so there is a certain standard of cleanliness we expect. So, this has been maintained all over the years, you know.

(Interviewee T, recorded on 20 June 2011)

Secondly, the surveillance measures serve to regulate and restrict the activities of migrant workers. Not only are CCTV cameras and security officers utilized to monitor the activities of occupants, they are also subject to a whole host of disciplinary measures that depict the 'do's' and 'don'ts' within the dormitory. Hence, the dormitory is an environment where bodies are disciplined and punishment is enacted when transgressions occur, often in the form of docking one's monthly salary. In the dormitory that I visited, not only are house rules clearly explained to every occupant, posters are also put up on notice boards and in common areas to remind occupants that they have to adhere to these rules (see Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4: Disciplinary measures within a FWD (Photos: Author's own)

As T pointed out,

We also make it a point to brief the workers on the in-house rules. Cleanliness, liquor, drinking inside the dorm, swapping passes, sometimes they bring their friends and relatives in using their friends' passes. They are not allowed to do that. So we tell them what they can do and what they cannot do. So, from day one, they know that they are not supposed to engage in certain things and if they do that, they will be fined...Even if one worker is replaced, we make it a point to sit him here (in the office). We show him photographs and tell him this is not allowed. This is not allowed, we don't want you to do this, we don't want you to do that...So they understand, they know. And when we punish them, we fine them, they cannot say 'oh, nobody told me'. Because we show them photographs. Even if there is a language barrier, they understand.

The tension between invisibility and visibility is also brought to the forefront in the case of FWDs. On one hand, measures are put in place to render foreign workers and their activities invisible from the public. On the other hand, security measures are also implemented to ensure that within the dormitory, foreign workers remain visible to the operator, security guards and police forces (see for example, Appendix D, criteria "o").

That explains why areas within the dormitory should be sufficiently lit and why corridors should be designed to maximize visibility from any point of a particular floor. Therefore, whilst residents want foreign workers to be invisible, considerations of security mean that security personnel want the opposite.

To address security concerns, patrol teams were formulated to patrol residential estates to discipline foreign workers who misbehave. This is usually a joint initiative between the dormitory operator, grassroots organizations and auxiliary police force. The patrol teams do not purely consist of locals, but also incorporate well-behaved foreign workers who can better communicate with their own compatriots. As T remarked,

So, what we have done is we have teamed up with grassroots organizations in HDB flats – the RCs, the CCCs and all that<sup>13</sup>. We have picked up some of our workers from different nationalities. We have teamed up with grassroots to go on patrols on Sat evenings once or twice a month to talk to wayward foreign workers who may be hanging about HDB flats, to tell them to go back to their dormitories. If they are sitting peacefully, don't engage in anti-social acts.

(Interviewee T, recorded on 20 June 2011)

The policy of containment is similarly espoused by dormitory operators who have to negotiate the balance between residents' complaints and the needs of foreign workers. Of course, as part of the planning approval process, operators have to comply with the long list of requirements either stated in tender documents or imposed by relevant agencies. However, the key point is that operators themselves buy into the ideology of containment, choosing not to see it as an unjust policy that should be challenged. For example, when asked whether the mitigating measures adopted had led to a reduction in complaints, T replied (emphasis mine):

Yes, it has improved, the complaints have gone down. **On our part, we are trying to provide as many amenities as possible, you know, to the workers, so that we can keep them here, keep them busy, keep them occupied.** When they are occupied with these classes, sometime back, we also have computer literacy

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<sup>13</sup>RCs refer to Resident Committees, whereas CCCs refer to Citizens' Consultative Committee.

classes. **By keeping them occupied after their normal working hours, they don't go out, you know.**

In addition to providing the usual in-house amenities such as minimart, canteen, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, T also brings in external parties to cater to the needs of the occupants. Here, the mobility/immobility contrast is brought to the fore; the immobility of foreign workers is tied to the mobility of others.

We collaborated with NUH<sup>14</sup>, got one team of doctors, about 10-15 doctors and 40 nurses to come here on a Sat evening, provided medical screening, medical treatment. They were all given vitamins, ointment and all that for common and minor ailments. We also have pastoral care classes on Sat evenings. We have worked with Seventh Day Adventist Church – for a pastor to come down and talk to the workers. About you know drinking, common problems, money, financial problems that some workers actually face. And they may have family problems, you know. So, that we are also doing. And recently, we also conduct English classes for the workers - 6 weeks of English classes, twice a week... Then we organize road shows for the telco to come here and sell their phone products, top up cards and all that. We have Singtel holding regular road shows here. M1 also. We also have retailers selling watches, toys, t-shirts, jeans and all that on Saturdays.

(Interviewee T, recorded on 20 June 2011)

It is important to bear in mind that although the mobilities of foreign workers are physically restricted through the policy of containment, technological advances allow for what could be called a virtual mobility, whereby long distance phone lines and the internet provides opportunities for foreign workers to remain connected to the external world. Amenities facilitating the virtual mobilities of foreign workers such as public phones, postal services, internet connections and remittance services are often found within dormitories (Channel News Asia, 18 Nov 2003). As T commented,

Here, we are one of the very few dormitories to provide free internet access to the workers. This is in addition to their own laptops that they have. Workers are allowed to subscribe to their own telephone lines and own internet lines in their own individual rooms, for which they pay themselves.... We have three computers, very few number, we are short of space. The workers are able to access their emails. Sometimes, they bring their own webcam, they communicate

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<sup>14</sup> NUH refers to National University Hospital.

with their families. And we also provide free wi fi-internet connection, so they can use their own laptops and hook onto the internet.

Going back to the amenity provision guideline discussed above, these are also some of the commercial amenities which URA recommends that developers implement. Dormitory operators also try to bring in telecommunication companies for road shows within the dormitory, as stated in T's quote above. Furthermore, in my visit to Soon Lee Recreation Park, I noticed that majority of the commercial enterprises there comprised of telecommunication shops, internet cafes, as well as postal and remittance services. Therefore, whilst the policy of containment aims to restrict the physical movement of foreign workers, the facilities provided within dormitories or recreational parks serve to enhance their virtual mobilities.

### **‘Your backyard, my front door’: The Case Study of Serangoon Gardens**

Having discussed the territorial marginalization of FWDs and the policy of containment espoused by both planners and dormitory operators, this section turns to a specific case study, that of Serangoon Gardens, to show how the exclusion of foreign workers from the nation-state is played out on a micro-scale. The debates surrounding the Serangoon Gardens debacle is a microcosm of tensions felt at the general societal scale. Hence, by highlighting the discourses surrounding the debate and the responses of the state, one is able to discern how urban planning utilizes territories and borders to entrench social-spatial differences predicated on the racialization of migrants' bodies.

The Serangoon Gardens debacle which took place in 2008 attracted intense media attention and sparked off a furious debate on the issue of migrant workers residing within the national territory. Given the rapid increase in number of foreign workers in the recent years due to a proliferation of infrastructural projects, the nation-state faced a severe shortage of accommodation facilities. To make up for this shortfall, a temporary measure



enacted by the Ministry of National Development (MND) was to use vacant state-owned properties to house these workers for a limited period of time, typically for 5 years or less. The Serangoon Gardens Technical School is one such property which the MND proposed for housing foreign workers. However, Serangoon Gardens is a middle class housing estate comprising of private landed property, in contrast to the majority of local population who live in high-rise public housing. When news of the temporary conversion of the school into a foreign worker dormitory was leaked to the public, residents of the estate rose up in arms to protect what they saw as the character of their neighborhood. The placing of a dormitory in the neighborhood was seen as a poor planning decision:

The idea of having a dorm there is just poor planning. It's like wearing a dress for a cocktail party, and then putting on flip flops to go with it.

(Helena Yeo, cited in *The New Paper*, 7 Oct 08, p 20)

A petition was signed by 1,600 out of 4,000 households within the neighborhood, citing reasons of security, safety, traffic congestion and lowering of property values (Sim & Ang, 2008). In an attempt to placate the residents and allay their fears, the MND worked with Members of Parliament (MPs) of the estate and agreed to implement a number of measures, some of which included constructing a new access road that would bypass the estate and increasing the buffer between the dormitory and the estate (Sim & Ang, 2008).

The Serangoon Gardens incident brings to the forefront the concepts of territories, borders and mobility. Firstly, the location of the dormitory was seen as a threat to the character of the neighborhood and the petition was a way for residents to reassert control over both their territory as well as the borders of their neighborhood. Yet, the control over territory and borders cannot be understood without reference to social difference and identity – residents of the estate are middle class people who supposedly paid premium prices to have privacy and security. One resident wrote in with the following comment:

Is it fair to accuse the middle class of being intolerant? If one has paid

considerably more for his property, is it not reasonable to harbor higher expectations concerning such a basic consideration as security and safety?

(The Straits Times Forum, 10 Sep 08, p 23)

The location of the dormitory right within the estate is thus an outright assault to such values favored by residents, and this is in large part due to the criminalization and racialization of migrant workers. Whilst some of the reasons cited by residents may be valid, for instance, traffic congestion and inability of existing infrastructure to support the dormitory, other reasons cited explicitly racialized and criminalized migrant workers. For example, residents expressed fears of migrant workers loitering, urinating and littering in public areas, sexually harassing women and domestic workers, and causing a spike in crime rates in the area (see Figure 5.5 below). However, residents' fears of criminality are mainly unfounded, based on statistics provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Not only do foreign workers constitute less than 20% of the total number of people arrested in 2007, the arrest rate (per every 100,000 people) for work permit holders (227) is much lower than that of locals (435) (Othman, 2008; Arshad, 2008). Despite evidence showing otherwise, the criminalization of migrant workers has continued.

Their main arguments, prefaced with phrases like 'I have nothing against foreign workers but...', can be summarised as follows:

- They will rob our elderly folk.
- They will molest our women.
- They will sleep with our maids.
- They will litter.
- They will get drunk in our parks and make us feel unsafe in our home

Figure 5.5: Excerpt of media report on Serangoon Gardens incident, taken from Tan, (2008)

Adopting an embodied approach also reveals the contrasting ways different bodies are considered un/acceptable. In the case of Serangoon Gardens, when residents found out that migrant workers residing in the dormitory are not from the construction sector but

from the manufacturing sector, they were more amenable to the idea (Chiang, 2008). This reflects the intimate interrelations between racialized bodies and the hierarchy of labor divisions – South Asian workers who are dark-skinned tend to be concentrated in construction industries which are seen as the most menial and least desirable form of labor, whereas lighter-skinned workers from South East and East Asia are predominantly found in manufacturing and service sectors. This harks back to Chow's (2002) argument about the 'ethnicization of labor', where one's 'foreignness' is coupled and tied to the forms of (typically undesirable) labor they perform. In Singapore's multi-cultural society, this may help explain the social differentiation between South Asian migrant workers and Singaporean Indians whose ancestors hailed from the same region.

Gender is also seen to play an important role in the acceptability of migrants – when residents found out that there was going to be a mix of male and female foreign workers living in the dormitory, they expressed some relief. This suggests that female bodies are viewed as less threatening and criminalized than male bodies. As one resident commented,

If there's a mix of male and female, then it's okay. Our concern was that 1000 men from different backgrounds would be here.

(cited in Chiang, 2008)

Once again, this harks back to traditional representations of masculinity and femininity. Whilst male foreign workers are seen as sexually aggressive and hence threatening, female workers are assumed to occupy a 'subordinate' position and thus deemed safe to be resident within the neighborhood. Such assumptions about female workers draw heavily on discourses that associate females with nurturing and thus less threatening roles.

Not surprisingly, economic discourses were also utilized to challenge the government's decision to locate the FWD in the neighborhood. Specifically, residents were worried that having a FWD nearby would lower their property values. This harks

back to the way in which planners justify the relegation of FWDs to peripheral areas; the privileging of exchange value over use value via the commodification of the built environment is a discourse adhered to by both planners and residents.

Just as the tiered immigration regime discussed in Chapter 2 highlights the uneven treatment of different migrants, the Serangoon Gardens incident elucidates processes of assimilation and segregation applicable to different migrants. Within the neighborhood, there is already a significant presence of skilled expatriates, all of whom have assimilated into society and are welcomed by residents (Sudderuddin & Yue, 2008). This is in stark contrast to the way residents responded to the news of foreign workers ‘invading’ their estate. This unequal treatment has been criticized by several Singaporeans writing into newspaper forums, as the quote below shows:

I suppose if the plan is to build a luxury apartment at the same site, the residents will not be complaining about the busloads of foreign workers going in and out of the site, and most of all, the ang mohs<sup>15</sup> who will come live next to them as neighbors.

(hlchina, cited in The New Paper, 7 Oct 2008, p 20)

To allay the concerns of residents, the Ministry of National Development (MND) adopted measures that reinforced territorial and border differences mapped onto social differences of residents versus foreign workers (see Figure 5.6 below). Firstly, supposedly to address traffic concerns, it was decided that a separate access to the dormitory be built such that it leads directly from the expressway into the dormitory, bypassing the private housing estate completely. Pedestrian access from the dormitory into the estate was also closed off so that foreign workers would not wander into the estate and its nearby parks. Secondly, the site area of the dormitory was reduced, setting it further back from homes within the private estate, giving residents an additional buffer from noise and more

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<sup>15</sup> “Ang mohs” refer to people of Caucasian descent.

privacy (Tan, 2008). Such measures which are predicated on entrenching and reinforcing borders between the private estate and the dormitory were enacted so as to ‘protect’ the estate (and its territory) from undesirable influences and bodies. Thirdly, the workers are subject to surveillance measures implemented by the dormitory operator, such as noise and security controls. Patrol teams are also formed to patrol the estate to look out for foreign workers misbehaving. Lastly, the operator was told to provide amenities such as provision shops and recreation areas within the dormitory so that ‘workers will have little reason to leave it’ (Tan, 2008). Suggestions were also made to bus workers to and from between the dormitory and nearby shopping malls during weekends. Evidently, mobile foreign workers are deemed as a threat to the residents, but they can be tolerated if they stay within the compound of the dormitory.



Figure 5.6: Mitigating measures adopted by MND to allay residents’ fears (taken from Sim, M. and Ang, Y., 2008)

## **Planning for Foreign Workers: A Just Outcome?**

Given the above discussion on the marginalization and containment of migrant workers, what does this tell us about justice and the Singaporean planning system? This section turns to evaluate the ‘justness’ of planning for foreign works using Dikec’s (2001) ‘triad’ of justice. Comprising of the spatial dialectics of (in)justice, right to the city and right to difference, Dikec’s (2001) ‘triad’ is a dynamic way of understanding justice as not only does it emphasize both process and outcome, it also recognizes spatial dimensions of justice and the importance of respecting and including social differences.

Firstly, taking the spatial dialectics of (in)justice, both the planning guidelines and surveillance measures result in segregation and containment. Not only are FWDs banished to outlying areas, strategies are employed to reinforce (both physical and social) borders between residents and foreign workers. The injustice is explicitly discernable *in* space. At the same time, space is also used as a tool to reinforce social differences between different population groups. In the Serangoon Gardens case, borders were demarcated between middle class Singaporeans and poorly paid foreign workers. The implemented measures thus used space as a tool of governance that not only restricted the mobility of foreign workers, it also prevented opportunities for interaction between the two groups. Therefore, social relations predicated on prejudice, threat and fear were reinforced *through* space.

Secondly, Lefebvre’s notion of right to the city placed emphasis on the ability of urban inhabitants to both appropriate the city for their own needs and wants, as well as to participate in decisions on the production of urban space (Purcell, 2003). None of the above two conditions were fulfilled. Not only were foreign workers not consulted in the entire process, the fact that they faced numerous surveillance measures definitely impeded them from appropriating the space for their own use. This is in stark contrast to

the opportunities provided for residents to voice their concerns, and the ease with which foreign expatriates were welcomed and assimilated into Serangoon Gardens (Sudderuddin & Yue, 2008). Although it is unclear whether expatriates were given opportunities to participate in the decision making process, they definitely had greater abilities to appropriate urban space for their own needs and wants. This raises the question of citizenship in the city-state of Singapore. Purcell (2003) illustrated that under Lefebvre's notion of right to the city, citizenship is based on urban *inhabitation* and not based on loyalty to the nation-state. Although this radical idea of citizenship has not been implemented, there have been certain trends towards this, for instance, the organization of undocumented migrants' rights for education and health care within certain cities in the United States. In the case of Singapore, however, citizenship is firstly based on whether one is a Singaporean or not, and secondly, whether one has the appropriate skill to be incorporated into the nation-state. Hence, skilled migrants can easily be incorporated as citizens, whereas low or unskilled migrants are viewed as a transitory temporary workforce who contribute to nation building but are not recognized or accepted as citizens (Yeoh, 2006).

Lastly, although Lefebvre's right to the city implores urban inhabitants to appropriate the city for their own use, it is problematic as it does not address how conflicting appropriations between different people or groups can be resolved. This is why Dikec (2001), drawing on Lefebvre's refusal to see difference as particularity, saw the right to difference as complementing the right to the city. Here, Young's (1990) work on the politics and recognition of difference is crucial. It is evident that in the Serangoon Gardens case, difference is indeed recognized, but in a negative way that needs to be subdued and excluded, not to be celebrated and included as Young advocated for. Not only are foreign workers powerless to make their voices and opinions heard, residents are

keen to make them as invisible as possible through marginalization, segregation and containment. Social difference mapped onto bodies thus provides the justification for territorial exclusion through the enforcement of borders.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have highlighted how urban planning utilizes territory and borders to marginalize and exclude foreign workers from the nation-state, albeit on a sub-national scale. Through a detailed discussion of the rationale behind planning guidelines for FWDs, the surveillance measures implemented by dormitory operators and the specific case study of Serangoon Gardens, it is clear that the policy intent is to render foreign workers invisible from the social-spatial landscape of Singapore. This is done by placing FWDs in outlying areas far away from residential estates, as well as by containing them within dormitories or recreational parks through the provision of in-house amenities. The use of territorial strategies to marginalize foreign workers was taken to extreme ends after the Serangoon Gardens incident, when politicians suggested having offshore floating dorms or housing foreign workers in neighboring Malaysia, thereby effectively excluding them from the nation-state.

These policies are not purely driven by the needs of foreign workers; rather, they are driven by public sentiment towards foreign workers which are undergirded by processes of racialization, whether through the use of stereotypes or labor processes. The representations of foreign workers as filthy, dangerous and highly sexualized all result in their exclusion from the nation-state, where cleanliness, efficiency, rationality and conservatism are qualities that are much sought after. The racialization of migrants' bodies are not just borne out in the minds of residents, but are sometimes also adhered to by dormitory operators who adopt paternalistic attitudes towards foreign workers.

Although discourses of racialization are significant in explaining why FWDs are



relegated to peripheral areas, market or economic discourses also play a part. For instance, planners often justify their policies by arguing that locating FWDs in industrial areas helps in the saving of transport costs, and provides flexibility for factory owners to convert their premises to dormitories. In addition, residents often cite the lowering of property values as a reason against locating FWDs in their estates. Similarly, planning guidelines stipulate that FWDs are not allowed in the Central Area or strategic industrial areas due to image and land use incompatibility, potentially leading to loss of capital. Therefore, the relationship between FWDs and economic logic is a complex one; on one hand, they are seen as antithetical to the exchange values of prime real estate, but on the other hand, economic reasons are used by planners to *positively* justify why they should be located within industrial areas.

While there is no doubt that policies implemented by both planners and dormitory operators are socially and spatially unjust in terms of both processes and outcomes, one interesting point to note is the implication on the mobilities of foreign workers. The issues discussed above bring to the forefront Massey's (1993) argument about the differential geometries of power, where the mobility of some are tied to the immobility of others. In this case, the immobility of foreign workers is made possible in part due to the mobility of others, especially that of organizations and retailers who are brought in by dormitory operators to serve the foreign workers. Secondly, although the physical mobility of foreign workers is restricted due to the policy of containment, their virtual mobility is enhanced via the provision of facilities such as internet services, public phones and postal services within the dormitory. Nevertheless, this chapter has effectively illustrated how urban planning excludes foreign workers from the nation-state through the use of borders and territorial strategies that reinforce social-spatial differences undergirded by racialization and discrimination.

## CHAPTER 6

### Singapore Inc: Negotiating Nation Building and Neoliberalism through Urban Planning

Gahment say we must be renewed  
Stop being uncle, try to be a dude  
Don't be an auntie, try to be a chio bu  
So that ang moh country beo you

(Lyrics to Mr. Brown's Forever Young podcast; taken from <http://www.mrbrowns.com/2010/04/09/the-mrbrown-show-forever-young/>)

The above lyrics are taken from Mr. Brown's<sup>16</sup> satirical podcast about the government's attitude towards making Singapore a global city. The point is that Singapore needs to be a "chio bu" (a pretty lady) so that "ang moh" (Western) countries can "beo" (peep or take a glance at) her; that is to say, Singapore needs to implement strategies to make the city-state an attractive place for Western investments (instead of being a backwater fishing village). One way to do so is via urban planning and the built environment. However, although urban planning initiatives can contribute to economic growth, they too can enhance national identity.

This chapter illustrates the inclusionary processes of nation building through urban planning strategies embodied in the Master Plan 2008 (henceforth MP 08). Through this discussion, two related points of tension become salient. First, there is the global-local tension which maps onto the different ways we think about urban planning and nation building. Inward-looking nation building aims to enhance national identity of the *local* population whereas outward-looking nation building aims to project a reputable image of the city-state onto the *global* arena. Related to this is the question of target audience: are

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<sup>16</sup>Mr Brown used to be a regular columnist in one of Singapore's newspapers, TODAY. He is now a popular blogger who writes extensively on the dysfunctional side of Singapore life.

planning strategies geared towards locals or foreigners? Secondly, this chapter elucidates how urban planning strategies negotiate the relationship between nation building and neoliberalism.

These points of tension are explored in three segments. The first segment focuses on conservation efforts of the URA, showing how conservation is important for the preservation of memories and history of the nation, but can also play a significant role in neoliberal urbanism. The second segment is a case study of Marina Bay exploring how place-making initiatives feed into both nation building and neoliberalism. The last segment explores a new initiative implemented by the URA called “My New Singapore”, elucidating the rationale behind this initiative and its implications for national identity. To conclude, I briefly discuss the importance of mobility in nation building and neoliberalism. The material and examples used in this chapter are predominantly drawn from the MP 08, which I will not go into detail here. The highlights of the MP 08 are shown in Appendix E and constitute the basis of this chapter.

### **Conservation: Embodying memories and commodifying the ‘soul’ of the nation**

The symbolism of the built environment is one of the ways in which urban planning relates to national identity (Cosgrove, 1998; Till, 2003). Monuments and historical buildings play significant roles in embodying and preserving memories of people and the nation. To this end, URA has put in place a conservation program which has resulted in the conservation of 6,800 buildings island-wide (URA, n.d.). To complement its conservation program, URA also implemented the Identity Plan in 2002. The Identity Plan identifies areas of significance to locals and carries out improvement projects to enhance these areas (URA, n.d.).

Planners themselves identify conservation efforts as key urban planning initiatives that contribute to national identity.

...if we look at it from the rootedness and identity point of view, URA plays a very big part in the conservation of built heritage. And that sets the background and er... the daily backdrop for everybody's daily, ongoing. That's the one thing about it. Then, the other aspect about it is because the historical landmarks, cultural markers and heritage stuff, these are kept. In a sense, it actually lets people feel that kind of continuity and that kind of er... sense of belonging. Er... but to the country lah... if there's nothing that is kept today, everything is totally brand new, you could be anywhere, you don't feel rooted to your location. Or, erm.. I don't know lah, not just on conservation lah. I think areas like where you keep certain identity, certain distinctiveness, certain things that you know and recognize immediately that it's your home, or it is Singapore. It doesn't have to be conservation. It's just the efforts to still create an environment that you can recognize and still familiar with. That's my take.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

Even amongst conservation efforts, certain districts play greater roles in the imaginary of the nation's history. In the case of Singapore, the historic districts of Chinatown, Little India and Kampong Glam are the ones most locals identify with.

I think historic districts in general tend to hold more space in people's memories because of the extent of the area. One thing that I think we have managed to do in Singapore is the urban conservation. It's not just a one building thing, like one landmark like that, but it's actually on an area basis. So, when you walk along the streets, there's really the whole streetscape and how you feel when you work. But of course, things change lah. So, I think historic district tends to feature quite highly in people's minds.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

Another planner remarked:

Whilst people may not visit our historic districts on a day to day basis, most of them mention like for Chinatown, they will visit to 'bai nian huo'<sup>17</sup> for Chinese New Year. So, in that sense, it's still significant to them, even if they don't visit every day.

(Interviewee Q, recorded on 13 June 2011)

Efforts to enhance local identities and conserve buildings are similarly found in the MP 08 key growth areas. For instance, although Paya Lebar Central is envisioned as a bustling commercial hub, great emphasis is also placed on retaining the local Malay

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<sup>17</sup>'Bai nian huo', which is a mandarin phrase, literally means the purchasing of goods for the celebration of Chinese New Year.

heritage. As one planner explained,

The vision we had for Paya Lebar is supposed to be a vibrant, bustling commercial hub with a local identity. The local identity comes in because this is the area where we have the annual Hari Raya Bazaar<sup>18</sup>. So, it's also closely related to Geylang Serai. That was why the emphasis on local identity was also put in place for the vision for Paya Lebar Central.

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011)

The Malay heritage is to be preserved through the construction of a civic center, a gallery showcasing the history of the area, as well as the incorporation of Malay architectural motifs.

For Paya Lebar Central, a lot of emphasis is on the Malay identity. So, when we... we actually are rolling out street improvement works, where we are putting up smart posts, which are lampposts with electrical sockets to serve the bazaar needs, so that during Ramadan, they can just plug in and tap on the electrical supply. The motifs of the smart poles were designed to incorporate Malay elements like the floral motifs that are very typical... I think they selected lemongrass. That proposal will probably be implemented towards the end of this year. That's one. The civic center, we will also be working very closely with PA<sup>19</sup> to incorporate Malay elements and see whether or not we can move the Malay gallery (at Haji Lane) to the civic center.

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011)

In the case of Kallang Riverside, the old Kallang airport and its runway are conserved as they embody significant memories of the area. The former Kallang airport, which is Singapore's first airport, was opened in 1937 and was once hailed as the 'gem of the British empire' (Chan, 2008). However, as air traffic increased, the airport was replaced by the Paya Lebar airport, and the runway and airfield were converted into a road and recreational area respectively. Today, the former terminal building is conserved and currently stands as the headquarters of the People's Association (PA). However, as part of redevelopment efforts of the area, the site will be launched for sale along with its accompanying office blocks, former hangar, front lawn and other related historic

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<sup>18</sup>The Hari Raya Bazaar refers to a street market that is set up for Eid celebrations.

<sup>19</sup>PA refers to People's Association, a statutory board whose objective is to promote racial harmony and social cohesion in Singapore.

structures (Chan, 2008). Although the conserved buildings will be put to new uses, the hope is that the retention of structures will go some way towards giving people a sense of belonging.

One very important and unique part of this site (Kallang) is the conservation elements lah. Because it used to be the Kallang airport, there are some conserved buildings and structures on site already. So when future developers come in, they need to incorporate all these existing structures as part of the larger development within the area.

(Interviewee O, recorded on 7 June 2011)

When asked how the conserved buildings contribute to national identity, the same planner remarked:

Ok I suppose for the older generation, for example, when they come in 5 to 10 years time, when the site is developed, they don't feel that the memories are totally lost. There is nothing kept on site from years back. But when they look at the site, the Kallang old airport terminal building and the hangar building are still there but given a new lease of life. In a way, we are not totally discarding the histories and memories. We are trying to put all these buildings to adaptive use to give them a new lease of life.

Although there is no doubt that conservation efforts help in the preservation of memories and heritage, and thus contribute to national identity, such initiatives also lend themselves to economic goals. The built environment and 'soul' of the city is commodified to attract tourists, as explained by one planner:

And actually, if you put yourself in a visitor's shoes, when you go and visit another city or another country, you also want to see their history, you also want to know the background of this place that is like that today. You want to learn more, other than pretty buildings that you can take loads of nice travel photos, you want to know a bit more about what makes the place that it is today lah. So, **I do think that it does create attractions for people to visit Singapore...** Because... if you look at the criteria [of inter-city ranking], how they score these things in the ranking, other than the infrastructure, schools, number of green areas and all that, I think **attractions and places to go, the soul of the city aspect, do come into play as well.**

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011, emphasis mine)

Using the specific example of the former Kallang airport, one planner remarked:

For example, Kallang, of course we picked up Old Airport Square and all that,

things that people are familiar with and can give them a strong sense of identity, not just to the locals **but also in terms of branding, it's also easier to market to investors, both overseas and local.**

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011, emphasis mine)

The dual role of conservation efforts also highlights the issue of sense of ownership over the built environment, that is to say, whether locals feel that conservation efforts are geared more towards tourists than local needs. This is especially salient in the Historic Districts such as Chinatown, Little India and Kampong Glam; these areas are major tourist destinations and yet also constitute central aspects of national identity. Planners also brought up this tension during their interviews.

One of the challenges that we are finding... and we are trying to work through is how to make the historic districts endearing back to the locals, and not just the tourists. I mean, some of them are actually, like Little India, even though there are congestion problems, the locals also feel that it's theirs. It's more organic. Kampong Glam is developing recently. It has quite a couple of organic ground up activities, like Haji Lane has evolved quite nicely and sometimes the stakeholders will try to come together to do an event, or they will ask for partial closure of the street.. you know that kind of thing. And then the youths will go there, the local people will go there, beyond the tourists, and that's what we are hoping to get out.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

This aspect of endearing the historic districts to the local population is seen as crucial to nation building, as the same planner explained:

I don't think it's a challenge to balance the tourism thing. That's STB's<sup>20</sup> job and I don't think they have a problem to make these the top three non-chargeable, non-paying visitor attractions. But it's more how these spaces in their evolution, still relate back to the locals. How do locals think or see that the area is still part of theirs, why do they still visit it, be it daily or yearly or quarterly or whatever, but they should still feel that. Having said that, on one hand, whilst many people still associate with the history, and you asked the question how it contributes to nation building, this is one big chunk of it. We have to continue to make sure that it continues to develop yet remain relevant to the local people.

To resolve this tension, URA has embarked on promotional and outreach events relating to conservation efforts, hoping that such activities will encourage locals to explore the

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<sup>20</sup>STB refers to the Singapore Tourism Board.

island and understand its history better.

Currently, we are hoping to do more promotional and outreach of our conservation efforts... Getting people to enjoy and appreciate these areas is something that we could do more. Be it just engaging tourists or locals, or actually engaging the students, the youths, it's something that we could do, there is a lot of potential in it. Just an example, we are working with Corp Comms [Corporate Communications] on some walking trails where we want to suggest routes for people to enjoy. It's not just a walking map, about landmarks. It's actually a suggested route where people can...like you have 3 hours on a Saturday, why don't you visit Little India? And then we can point out the different things, how our conservation efforts have contributed to this, social history and all of that. So, erm... and then later on see how we can leverage with the local tour guides and work together.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

In addition, conservation planners also have to negotiate the difficult relationship between social and economic objectives. On one hand, conservation helps in the preservation of social history and memories, but on the other hand, conservation efforts are often seen as a hindrance to market exchange values. Most property owners or developers are not keen on conservation as not only does it entail spending more money on preservation and maintenance, it may also affect the exchange value of the property. Despite evidence showing that conservation can actually result in increased property values, some owners are still worried that the number of potential buyers will decrease.

A lot of people will, if you go out with a survey and ask them if they support conservation, everybody will say yes, but maybe they will put a small caveat to say 'but not my building', you know. Most of them are like that, but there are some enlightened ones... To them [people who are not keen], once they see conservation, they see it as a constraint. They think that the pool of potential buyers will decrease, and with a smaller pool, they may not be able to command the prices they want.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

When asked how this challenge has impacted on URA's conservation efforts, the same planner espoused the need to have a balance (emphasis mine):

We look at architectural merits, rarity, history, contribution to the environment. We also look at economic impact. We cannot hide from it lah, coz we are still the planning authority. So before we conserve something, we need to work with the planners to make sure that there is still...it's a **balanced viewpoint**. It's not like



everything must be purely kept. So for example, a cluster of bungalows, sometimes we have to do it quite selectively so that we conserve a few key ones and the rest, no choice, has to be either demolished or intensified.

This challenge of negotiating social and economic objectives is similarly found in strategies of the MP 08. Going back to the example of Paya Lebar Central, despite efforts to preserve the local Malay heritage through the new civic center, the need to consider economic objectives led the URA to propose the demolition of two existing developments which are central to local identity: the Malay Village and Tanjong Katong Complex. Even though some residents were optimistic about the rejuvenation of the area (especially since the Malay Village was not doing very well in its business operations), others had expressed concern that these changes would dilute the area's identity. The worry was that economic objectives had outweighed the social, although from planners' point of view, it is the balance of the two that is important.

A lot of people will view that removing existing buildings like the Tanjong Katong Complex and the Malay Village... there has been quite a few appeals we have received about retaining the Malay village, but erm...the Malay Village was intended as a interim use. So, where we are coming from to try to contribute to that sense of belonging is to still retain Malay elements, because the Malay community feels very strongly for the area, to see if we can at least design the buildings lah, especially the civic center, which the government is doing... I **think we have to play the role of a moderator. We have to balance the needs in terms of national objective, but at the same time, take into consideration the sensitivity.**

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011, emphasis mine)

Similarly, the conservation of the former Kallang airport brings out this tension between economic and social goals. On one hand, conservation helps to retain a sense of belonging, but on the other hand, in needing to achieve economic growth, the buildings are subject to adaptive reuse of a commercial nature.

The PA HQ [currently in the former airport terminal building] is conserved. And the lawn is also conserved. So they have actually. . .instead of demolishing and rebuilding the whole thing, they have painstakingly identified the areas which they want to conserve, even including the green lawn where people really associate the

lamp posts and the long drive in. That road will also be retained. **But you will feel that the whole place is redeveloped lah....coz land is scarce in Singapore.**

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011, emphasis mine)

Therefore, symbolic aspects of the built environment serve to enhance national identity through the preservation of memories, as well as contribute to neoliberal urbanism. Historic districts and conserved properties do not only ground local identities but are also important to attracting tourists. At the same time, conservation efforts have to negotiate the delicate balance between social and economic objectives; although conservation is crucial for retaining social memories, this has to be tempered with the need for economic growth. For planners working in conservation, it is finding the balance between the two that is important.

### **Place making: The case of Marina Bay and key growth areas**

Whilst conservation efforts could be construed as a form of inward-looking nation building which enhances national identity, the strategies of place making and the introduction of key growth areas in the MP 08 could be seen as leaning towards outward-looking nation building where symbolic images of the city-state are created and projected onto the international arena. This section turns to URA's place making strategies through a case study of Marina Bay, the upcoming 'crown jewel' of the city-state (see Figure 6.1). Although the vision behind Marina Bay was primarily economic in nature, this is not to say that there have been no efforts to endear the place to locals, in the hope that over time, a sense of ownership will be developed.



Figure 6.1: Marina Bay, the ‘crown jewel’ of Singapore (Picture taken from the Master Plan 2008, [http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/marina\\_bay.htm](http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/marina_bay.htm))

The vision of Marina Bay is driven primarily by economic growth. On the Marina Bay website, the vision of the area is stated as follows:

Located at the Southern tip of Singapore, Marina Bay is a 360ha development designed to **seamlessly extend Singapore's downtown district and further support the city-state's continuing growth as a major business and financial hub in Asia**. A green-field site surrounded by water and gardens, Marina Bay provides an **opportunity for further urban transformation, attracting new investments, visitors and talent**, as well as **becoming a new destination for the local community**.

(Taken from the Marina Bay website, <http://www.marina-bay.sg/vision.html>, emphasis mine)

Despite the fact that planning of Marina Bay was initiated in the 1980s, the vision of the area as an economic hub never wavered, as explained by one planner (henceforth known as L).

So, if you see historically, it's always been envisioned, and still is, the seamless growth of the CBD. And it's recognized as the core purpose that we need to grow our CBD. Business and financial uses are the foremost important part, because of its location but also because of the economic direction lah. So, that has been the intention even since the 1980s, that growth. So the 1980s would be the Bay Plan, which was adopted in 1980-1981. From then on, we went through a series of continuous refinements, but **always keeping this vision of core business and financial district**.

(Interviewee L, recorded on 2 June 2011, emphasis mine)

Yet, the vision of an economic hub constitutes only one dimension of the area. In URA's attempt to brand Marina Bay, the tag line 'Explore, Exchange, Entertain' was adopted, highlighting the entertainment options offered by the area. As the plan evolved from the 1980s, although the key driver was economic growth, planners started to recognize that the 360 ha site could incorporate a wide range of mixed uses, which could in turn be used as a basis to attract skilled talent and tourists into the city-state. At the same time, the idea of utilizing Marina Bay as an image representing the city-state, just as the Eiffel Tower represents Paris, became popular. Not only would this image make Singapore internationally recognizable, it also gave the city-state a brand that could be easily marketed overseas. Therefore, Marina Bay was envisioned as an all-encompassing urban project that catered to a wide variety of target audiences and with different objectives, be it attracting investment, skilled talent or creating a distinctive identity. L explained (emphasis mine),

The global financial intention is the key driver lah. Even in the last few Concept plans, it's been the thing. So, since early days, we have already identified the area where we have our core. But, then again, what is the form that this CBD should take and to be projected internationally? So, of course the image of a beautiful skyline, a very moving, powerful inspiring image comes to mind. So, this idea of skyline and image has been in the minds of planners. Because usually when we talk about a city, sometimes, it's the postcard image. What shows the city? It's usually the CBD skyline. **So, this idea of image and projecting it internationally has been there in the minds.** And then, after that, you can say: what else besides the physical image? But there's also the thing that ah... relate it to **the large strategy of global competition, you know we always say that to be an important business financial hub, you not only have to have the infrastructure, the land, but you need an all round, good quality of life, good quality environment. All these additional factors led people to come and locate here.** So, here the all-rounded quality environment has also become another key factor lah. So, today if you look at all the tag lines, Marina Bay branding – Live, work, play, translated to explore, exchange, entertain – basically, it's an attractive place where you can come and be entertained.

Although the area is a prime example of neoliberal urbanism, the state played a significant role in developing the locality, which supports Peck and Tickell's (2002) discussion about the continued relevance of the state in neoliberalism. Instead of allowing

the area to be developed by market forces alone, state interventions were common. For instance, significant projects such as Marina Bay Sands were developed through the twin processes of Request For Concept (RFC) and Request For Proposal (RFP). RFC is a process whereby developers are invited to submit their ideas for the conceptual development of a parcel of land. It is typically carried out before the RFP stage. Once the RFC is completed and the state has concrete ideas of the vision of a development, it will then initiate the RFP process where developers submit their proposals (based on the vision laid out by the state) and land tender prices to be evaluated by an external committee. The evaluative criteria for the Marina Bay Sands RFP illustrate the dominance of economic objectives. When asked about the evaluative criteria, L responded:

In terms of RFP, there were 4 criteria: tourism - attraction and concept, architecture design, level of investment and track record of the potential investors. Four main criteria, different weightages. All are jointly, in a way, very important criteria, jointly assessed by different agencies as part of the whole RFP process.

Tourism, architectural design, level of investment and track record of potential investors all point to a concern with economic factors or outcomes. When queried about whether the RFP took into consideration the needs of local population, L replied:

Erm... it wasn't a primary concern. Probably a secondary thing, in that whatever you have, it still has enough integration with the public spaces. It still has facilities and amenities, as a by-product that could be enjoyed by the public. But the primary objectives were largely economic driven, including tourism.

In addition to the RFC and RFP processes, the state and URA also introduced several incentives that encouraged investors to partake in the development of the area. Firstly, the state pumped in billions of dollars into the infrastructural development of the area, such as the extension of public transportation lines, public spaces like the waterfront promenade, as well as basic services like the Common Services Tunnel (CST). To ensure the seamless flow of people and tourists, the underground train networks were extended to Marina Bay, together with new road extensions to the city and airport (Marina Bay

website, n.d.). To take advantage of the bay, URA also proposed plans to have water taxis as alternative modes of transport, at the same time offering scenic routes to tourists and visitors. Furthermore, the state subsidized the construction of state-of-the-art infrastructure such as the CST and district cooling system. The CST, the first of such networks in South-East Asia, is a comprehensive underground tunnel system that houses utilities and telecommunications networks in a “plug and play” format, coupled with 100% emergency backup services and capacity for future extension (Tan, 2009). The district cooling system enables round the clock operations and allows for better economies of scale (Marina Bay website, n.d.). The large amount of state investment was not only intended to attract companies, but also demonstrated the seriousness of the government in building up the area, reflected in L’s response below.

So, ok, all this infrastructure, it’s a major part of the strategies, because we needed a just-in-time or in-tandem infrastructure to be done before these sites were released. With infrastructure, the usual struggles are with finance, getting the funding to do so. But I think we [URA] made a very strong case for the need for in-tandem or just-in-time infrastructure. So, this included the CST to bring the utilities and so on. There were also other agency works such as the rail line, roads and so on. So, we had to go together and help, for example, LTA<sup>21</sup>, justify their funding for the Marina Coastal Expressway. So, all these were part of the larger efforts to make sure that the area is attractive and government is serious about building up this area. Maybe as a reflection, some of our briefing slides to external parties, typical Marina Bay slides would have one slide which shows the amount of government investment infrastructure. I can’t remember the figures but it involves all this investment. It’s to reflect that we are serious, we are putting in money, it’s well thought through, we are investing in the area so you can grow with us.

Other planning initiatives were also put in place to provide flexibility for developers. One example is the implementation of a phasing scheme for the development of strategic sites, coupled with flexible payment options. Instead of having to develop an entire parcel of land at one go, developers have the option of developing it in phases, accompanied by flexible payment schemes where payment is also made in stages.

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<sup>21</sup>LTA refers to Land Transport Authority, a statutory board responsible for public transport within the city-state.

Another example is the zoning of land parcels in Marina Bay as ‘White’. Under the MP 08, a ‘White’ zoning means that developers have the flexibility to propose a mix of uses, subject to the final approval of URA. However, this flexibility has to be carefully managed, as allowing full flexibility may end up working against the vision of the area. As L explained (emphasis mine),

Yes, by right, they [developers] don’t need to come in [for development applications] if it’s a white site. However, flexibility for government part still remains. Even though we give a general flexible approach, we have to meet more strategic intentions. One of it is say for example, to meet the vision for business financial and business district and core, we need a critical mass of developments. So, one illustration is the first two sale sites again. White site sold purely flexible to the first developer. The first guy did a pure office development. The second guy – the Sail – did almost pure residential development. So, if left entirely to market forces, I think we were concerned whether it would erode the intention to build up a critical mass of business and financial uses. So we had to make a decision to put in some guidelines at the lower level. So, for example, the next site we sold, the MBFC [Marina Bay Financial Center], we put in a minimal 60% office requirement, but the rest is flexible to them. So, it’s **partial flexibility**. We needed a lower cap so that we maintain the character of the district, the overall supply needed for the longer term and strategic reasons.

Once again, the role of the state in relation to neoliberalism is shown to be more complex than assumed under neoliberal ideology. On one hand, Marina Bay is a prime example of neoliberal urbanism where the built environment is commodified to enhance the mobility of both global capital and people (tourists and skilled talent). Yet, this is not to say that the development of the area is left purely to market forces. As the discussion above shows, the state is highly involved in preparing the ground for development, as well as dishing out incentives to developers. However, at the same time, flexibility for developers was tempered with strategic national goals. Therefore, state intervention here plays a dual role: in extending the reach of neoliberalism coupled with meeting national objectives.

Although the material infrastructure of Marina Bay is significant in attracting investors, the symbolism and image of the area is also utilized by planners for external branding in inter-city competitions. One planner explained as such:

Ultimately, I do believe that having a strong identity as Singaporeans actually helps to promote the Singapore brand overseas. A country that is strong in its identity is likely to make Singapore a stronger brand than a city that is so cosmopolitan that you cannot put a finger on what it really is. That's what we are trying to hone. You think about the major cities, you think New York, Chicago, London, Paris and all that, there is a certain identity associated with all that. And that in itself carries a lot more weight than simply you can do this, this and this in London. That in itself is important in both...this whole identity issue is important both in marketing and itself lah.

(Interviewee D, recorded on 27 May 2011)

As part of city branding efforts, URA has not only participated in overseas real estate conferences to market Marina Bay (e.g. MIPIM Asia), events of international significance are also held in Marina Bay itself. One example is the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix Race, known popularly as F1.

The Singapore F1 race is a ticketed event that started in 2008. In comparison to the other F1 races around the world, it is unique in two aspects: it marks the first occurrence of the race being held at night-time, and the race tracks are not built outside the city, using existing roads instead. Stakeholders for the event include both private and public institutions, with the latter shouldering a large amount of the cost of the event; a recent BBC news article revealed that the Singapore government was shouldering approximately 60% of the annual cost (\$100 million in Singapore dollars) to host the event (Leyl, 2008). Although the race itself takes place on one day, the activities and festivities associated with the race can span up to 10 days in total. One of the key attractions, other than the race itself, is the F1 Rocks Festival where international artistes such as Beyonce, Black Eyed Peas, and the Backstreet Boys perform to large crowds.

The Singapore F1 race is used by the government to showcase the city's skyline (see Figure 6.2). Fronting the Marina Bay, the racetracks twist and turn among some of the nation's key national monuments, iconic architectural buildings such as the Esplanade, and the newly planned and built up Marina Bay area. By holding the race at night, the city



skyline is more effectively iconized to the world.



Figure 6.2: Picture of the city skyline with the illuminated F1 race tracks (taken from The Guardian, 27 Sep 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/gallery/2009/sep/27/singapore-grand-prix-gallery>, accessed online on 17 Jan 2012)

Furthermore, the Singapore F1 Rocks Festival is an attempt to draw in as many tourists as possible both regionally and internationally. The F1 race is thus a primary opportunity to re-image the city as a vibrant cultural hub in the eyes of international competitors. After the first night race in 2008, media articles all around the world were reporting the success of the event and the glitz and glamour of the city backdrop. As one local paper reported,

In just one weekend, Singapore gained a level of international awareness to rival even Beijing's hosting of the Olympic Games. Every major newspaper in the world seems to have carried a photograph of the track and its glittering night-time setting.

(Slater, 2008)

Similarly, international papers such as The Times, London reported the following:

Never before has the world's most glamorous sport glistened and glowed, smoked and sparkled, quite like it did under 1,500 spotlights in the Far East where a race complete with smashes, slapstick pit-lane comedy from Ferrari and even, dare one say it, overtaking, provided a compelling spectacle against a stunning city backdrop.

(The Times, London, cited in The Straits Times, 30 Sep 2008, p B8)

Therefore, through the hosting of international events such as the F1 in Marina Bay, not only is the city's distinctive skyline memorialized in images, it also placed Singapore

onto the international stage, just like Beijing did with its hosting of the 2008 Olympics (Ren, 2008).

Although the vision of Marina Bay is driven primarily by economic growth, this is not to say that there were no efforts to endear the area to locals. One of the key challenges that planners had to grapple with in the development of Marina Bay is ensuring that planned facilities catered to both foreigners (be they companies, investors or tourists) and the local population. Given the premium developments constructed around the bay (Grade A office buildings, high-end residential suites, etc), it is not surprising that most people feel that Marina Bay caters to mostly foreigners, especially the rich and affluent. This sentiment was similarly expressed by L:

Honestly, if you do a ground survey, you will find that yes; it is definitely all the workers, these banks and financial institutions, which are the main people, and visitors. One factor is because that is reclaimed land, you had nothing to start off with in the first place, so there is no existing housing area. There is no inherent population living there, so it's just as the buildings come in, whoever comes and occupies the buildings and developments. So, if you take a snapshot now, most of these are the bankers, the workers and because it's global, so you have a lot of international workers and so on. Say, you look at the more recent developments like IR [Integrated Resorts], naturally, these are the visitors, whether they are local visitors or overseas tourists, they also form majority of the crowd there. So, if you take a snapshot now, it will be, gut feel, swings towards the global side.

Yet, this is precisely the opposite of how URA and the state want Marina Bay to be perceived. Instead, their hope is that the area could be developed such that it also serves the local population and that over time, a sense of belonging and ownership will become apparent, leading to the enhancement of national identity.

I think this global-local tension has always been identified, even in some of the recent studies and strategies. We always draw two bubbles, some in the presentation slides: **we want to be a global city and at the same time, be an endearing home. And there is this tension, because sometimes if you provide for one, it may be at the expense of the other.** Of course, we hope that these two bubbles intersect nicely and can have something that can be shared. By virtue of location, Marina Bay is also envisioned as center of all attention of Singapore. So, it's likened to be a piazza. It was quoted previously by one of the planners, and then recently by MM in his book *Hard Truths*, it's like a piazza where the... something like a civic space or a San Marco, what it would to a town, like a

central civic space. Symbolic, but partly functional as well. So, we do see that. It still has this function. If we want it to be a symbolic and functional space on the national stage, then we got to plan for that. So, it comes to be translated into open spaces, promenades and also activities. How we can have more inclusive activities and events on a national scale.

(Interviewee L, recorded on 2 June 2011, emphasis mine)

By likening Marina Bay to a piazza in an Italian town, it is clear that planners hope to see the area playing dual roles: a functional role in facilitating economic growth, but also a symbolic role in entrenching national identity and pride.

URA has implemented multiple planning and urban design strategies to endear the area to locals. Firstly, URA planned for public-pleasing facilities that are free of charge. Two examples of public facilities come to mind: the waterfront promenade and Gardens by the Bay. The waterfront promenade is a 3.5km pedestrian loop linking up the key attractions of the bay and costs \$35 million (approx USD \$27 million) to construct (Lim, 2008). When fully completed, not only does it facilitate pedestrian connectivity and mobility, it also creates a vibrant waterfront area, encouraging locals and visitors alike to shop, eat, play or simply take in the view of the bay from any point of the promenade. The other public facility is Gardens by the Bay, which is currently still under construction. Comprising three waterfront gardens spanning 101 ha, the Gardens was envisioned as a premium recreational space open to all in the new downtown area. Among the highlights are two cooled conservatories that showcase flora species of the Mediterranean and the Tropical Montane regions, as well as 10 differently themed horticultural parks that highlight the interrelations between people and ecosystems (Marina Bay newsletter, Oct-Dec 2011). The state has also taken the opportunity to bring in aspects of national heritage in the development of the Gardens. For instance, one of the attractions is the Heritage Gardens which enables visitors to unearth Singapore's history and culture through the role of plants. Divided into four smaller gardens (the colonial garden, Chinese

garden, Malay garden and Indian garden), this attraction not only elucidates the importance of different plants in local ethnic and cultural identities, it also deepens one's understanding of Singapore's colonial history through the spice trade (Gardens by the Bay website, n.d.).

Although the provision of public spaces do go some way towards enticing locals to visit Marina Bay, some planners expressed it could take some time for people to feel a sense of belonging or ownership over the area. This is further tempered by the current inaccessibility of the locality.

So, people do have a feel of some ownership of this place. But then again, it probably takes time. The sense of ownership of a place and identity with a place probably takes time to be formed...It may take time to evolve, and probably one factor could be accessibility. It's not very accessible today, because of a few factors. There are bus services to this newer part of Marina Bay, but there are probably only two services that run along [Marina Bay] Sands. The promenade is probably quite a longer walk, say compared to Esplanade Theatres or the Fullerton. These are quite well known and quite accessible today.

(Interviewee L, recorded on 2 June 2011)

This implies that for a sense of ownership or belonging to be developed, people need to first be able to visit the area. The accessibility of a locality thus plays a significant role in efforts to create bonds between people and nation.

Other than the provision of public spaces, the Marina Bay Development Agency (MBDA; a department within URA) is also tasked with the role of organizing inclusive activities that cater to a wide range of different population segments. This has led to a variety of local events being held in Marina Bay, ranging from sporting events such as The New Paper Big Walk (which is held annually) to monthly events such as free performances and concerts by the waterfront promenade (called Rhythms by the Bay; Marina Bay e-newsletter, Oct-Dec 2011). Such free activities are organized to reach out to the masses and to encourage them to explore Marina Bay in their free time. In addition to planning activities, the MBDA has also organized a number of competitions in the

hope that these would generate a sense of ownership over the locality. Examples include flag design competitions (depicting the bay) as part of the 2009 Singapore Design Festival, photograph competitions as well as art competitions (Marina Bay e-newsletter, Jul-Sep 2010). The URA also sought feedback from the public in the naming of certain public spaces within Marina Bay, for example, the existing Helix Bridge linking Marina Center to the bay front and the youth art park next to the bridge (Shankari, 2008). Such place-making and management initiatives are important in endearing the area to locals and have been partially successful.

It [Marina Bay] probably caters to foreign population, to basically escalate Singapore's identity as a city in the eyes of global viewers to show that we have made a mark with all these iconic spaces and buildings. But at the same time, they are also generating activities which try to engage the heartlanders and general public as well. Because while we have the hardware to mark our signature status globally, if there are no activities to generate usage of that area, then it loses its point as well. So, I think MBDA is also there as a activity, place-making branch where they try to think of activities to hold there to activate the street life.

(Interviewee F, recorded on 30 May 2011)

I think, what I see from at least, MBS [Marina Bay Sands] and all that, there are lots of areas that are specifically made open, accessible and free to the public. So, the issue then is the kind of activities, it's the software and what they are trying to do, like they have international film festival. They had all kinds of festivals. They actually had quite a lot of activities there that actually drew in a lot of Singaporeans and I think from all walks of lives... I actually think it has been fairly successful. I was just there last weekend, and really, you see quite a lot of Singaporeans. The people who are there are not just simply the young, the yuppies, but you do see families, all races. But you need events, you need the software to get them there.

(Interviewee D, recorded on 27 May 2011)

Marina Bay also forms the backdrop for events of national significance, for instance, the National Day Parade and the New Year's Eve Countdown. Since 2007, the celebration of the nation's independence is held on a floating platform in Marina Bay, where locals and visitors alike are treated to a sensory display of performances and firework displays. Utilizing Marina Bay as the setting for national day celebrations is

appropriate as it showcases the immense achievements of the city-state since its independence. Similarly, the New Year's Eve Countdown Party has been held in Marina Bay since 2008, where as part of the celebrations, thousands of lit up wishing spheres are released into the bay. This event could be seen as an attempt to make Marina Bay an icon, much like Times Square in New York on New Year's Eve. Yet, it is hoped that by providing a central symbolic place for all Singaporeans to gather and celebrate, be it the success of the nation or the welcoming of a new year, Marina Bay could lead to the enhancement of national identity and pride.

Attempts to imbue national identity were also present in internationally significant events such as the F1. In this particular instance, holding the race within the civic district where most of the national monuments are located can reinforce the nationalistic feelings of Singaporeans. For example, the tracks go past several national monuments such as the Old Parliament House, Victoria Theatre, and Cavenagh Bridge. These buildings are associated with the British colonial era and play a significant role in the formation of national identity. In addition, the government actively encourages popular nation-imaging, even going so far as to organize a competition for locals to suggest names for three of the circuit corners within the race track. In March 2009, the names were picked: Turn 1 was named Sheares after Benjamin Sheares, who was the second President of Singapore; Turn 7 was named Memorial due to its proximity to the Second World War memorial; and lastly, Turn 10 was named the Singapore Sling after the national cocktail drink (Singapore Grand Prix Website, n.d.).

The use of the bay as a backdrop and the showcasing of the city skyline can also engender feelings of national pride. As one local reporter puts it,

Put it this way: If you don't feel a surge of pride at the sight of the world's finest machines zipping past landmarks all of us are intimately familiar with – City Hall, Anderson Bridge, the Esplanade – you ought to check yourself for a pulse...More than anything else, having the race in Singapore should be a source of pride. We

are putting this island's can-do spirit, top-notch lifestyle and downtown beauty up for show – to 50 million people. It is not so much putting yourself on the map as it is announcing your arrival with a clap of thunder.

(Skadian, 2008, p A2)

Similarly, another reporter made the point that the hosting of F1 can help to bolster a Singaporean identity through the significance of Marina Bay.

That potential [in bolstering a Singaporean identity] lies in the correlation between the event and its site – Marina Bay. And the salience of a site or place is bound to the concept of a 'nation'. Sites can act as anchors because a city cannot exist only in the mind. The 'nation' being an invisible concept needs to be personified and symbolized before attachments can be conceived. Hence, such 'anchors' are commonplace for nations across the world.

(Phua, 2008, p A27)

Phua (2008) went on to argue that such 'totems' can serve as rallying points for national pride and that in the case of Singapore, Marina Bay plays such a role.

The bay is a site steeped in value and meaning, which grants it capital to serve as a national 'totem'. It is a site of preservation, renewal, revitalization and reinvention. Urban planners have expended every effort to infuse the bay with an array of spectacular devices.

Therefore, the iconic image of Marina Bay as a representation of Singapore not only plays into the hands of neoliberalism and facilitates capital flow, but can also be a source of national pride and identity.

### **My New Singapore: Rediscovering love for the city-state**

Another key strategy of the MP 08 was to increase the quantity and quality of leisure destinations on the island. This involved outdoor recreational options such as parks and nature reserves, but also indoor entertainment facilities such as arts districts, retail shops, clubs, pubs, etc. This section explores the dual objectives of improving leisure destinations through the 'My New Singapore' initiative. On one hand, the strategy aimed to endear the nation to locals through a better quality of life, but on the other hand, the provision of multiple lifestyle options could also be utilized to attract skilled talent

into the country. For the successful implementation of this strategy, the mobility of bodies had to be facilitated through a number of measures, which are discussed below.

Although the MP 08 was exhibited to the public, URA wished to create greater awareness about the upcoming leisure destinations. Despite the fact that community and grassroots members were invited to the public exhibition, the response rate was not encouraging. Therefore, in order to get Singaporeans more acquainted with the changes and to instill in them a sense of love for their nation, URA in conjunction with MND launched the 'My New Singapore' initiative in 2009 (Hoe, 2009; Chan, 2009). This initiative comprised a string of activities and aimed to showcase the city-state in a variety of ways to Singaporeans – from roving exhibitions of neighborhood changes to tours of Marina Bay. By bringing the plans to the people and engaging them through community tours, it was hoped that Singaporeans would rediscover the island, reacquaint themselves with it, and out of this rediscovery love can arise (Lee, 2009a). When introducing this initiative, ex Minister of National Development Mr Mah Bow Tan made the following comments:

Perhaps during this downturn it is timely for Singaporeans to take some time to get to know their own city better, enjoy what we have to offer here in Singapore and maybe save a little bit of money at the same time...So let's do what we would like to do overseas – let's do our shopping, our eating, our sightseeing – let's travel around Singapore, revisit the places we have not visited for a long time, maybe even discover some new surprises.

(cited in Chan, 2009)

I hope that when Singaporeans rediscover Singapore, we will realize what a special little city we have and perhaps, we will love our city even more.

(cited in Hoe, 2009)

Mr Mah's comments were paralleled by other politicians and professionals working in the real estate industry. For instance, Member of Parliament (MP) of Hong Kah GRC, Dr Amy Khor, remarked:



Our rootedness could weaken if we do not put in significant effort to endear Singapore to Singaporeans...We run the risk of losing a bit of our 'soul' in the grand pursuit of success if we do not make an effort to reflect on issues like what would 'bind' us to Singapore.

(cited in Lee, 2009b)

To embark on this journey of endearing the island to Singaporeans, urban planners launched the island-wide Leisure Plan that showcases the upcoming leisure destinations (see Appendix E). Here, the mobility of bodies is fundamental to the successful implementation of the Leisure Plan. To encourage locals to move around the island and enjoy the outdoors, more park connectors have been built to create a web of outdoor spaces. Plans for a round-island route are also in place; this 150km loop of park connectors not only enables locals and visitors to cycle round the island in one day, it also brings recreational options closer to homes (URA website, MP 2008, n.d.).

In addition to the great outdoors, the Leisure Plan also introduces entertainment options in the city center. As great nightlife is a hallmark of vibrant global cities, the URA has collaborated with other government agencies to generate a vibrant evening economy with multiple entertainment options. Many of these entertainment options are built near transport nodes so as to facilitate the movement of locals and visitors. For instance, all the key growth areas are built up near existing or new transport networks such as train and bus interchanges. Jurong Lake District (JLD) is built around the existing Jurong East Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station, which is a huge interchange for two train lines. Similarly, the location for Paya Lebar Central was selected based on its proximity to transport nodes.

Actually, Paya Lebar Central is the area immediately around the MRT. So, one of the reasons why this area was selected as one of the growth areas is also because of, apart from its proximity to the city center, it is also quite well served by expressways, as well as the MRT. So, with Paya Lebar MRT becoming an MRT interchange in 2010, there was actually opportunity to start developing the area. It's the interchange between Circle Line and E-W line.

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011)

As for Kallang Riverside, the area is served by two existing train stations, as well as an upcoming train line. Furthermore, two major expressways are connected to the area, making it accessible via driving. The positioning of the key growth areas near transport nodes is undoubtedly a strategy of facilitating the mobility of bodies; tourists can easily move around the island to visit attractions and locals can rediscover their love for the nation through these leisure opportunities.

The facilitation of mobility is not limited to placing key growth areas near transport nodes, but also involves seamless connectivity within each growth area. In Paya Lebar Central, pedestrian connectivity is enhanced by underground walkways, overhead bridges and pedestrian malls linking the MRT station to the various attractions within the area. Pedestrian malls or plazas lined with shops and activities not only facilitate movement, but also provide opportunities for people to take in the sights (URA website, MP 08, n.d.). Similarly, for JLD, a seamless commuter experience will be made possible via a network of walkways at both the ground level and the second storey. Jurong Gateway (the commercial hub) will be integrated with Lakeside (the entertainment sector) via lushly landscaped pedestrian links and malls. Such measures are also applied to Marina Bay, although connectivity to international destinations for business and financial purposes are crucial as well. Therefore, virtual connectivity to the wider world is made possible through digital networks and complimentary wi-fi systems.

Another component of 'My New Singapore' is a roving exhibition organized by the URA, titled 'My Endearing Home'. This exhibition was brought to major malls around the island so that Singaporeans could learn more about their city as well as sign up for community tours. As one planner explained,

So only a few people came [to the MP 08 exhibition]. So we realized then, ok, in order for our plans to really reach the people, we have to change the way we, you know, do it. So, in the next year, 2009, we decided to really bring the plans to the

community instead. **So, instead of asking them to come here, we bring the things out there.**

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011, emphasis mine)

By bringing the plans to the people, planners hoped that a sense of awareness could be created, which in turn engenders some sense of belonging and ownership.

A lot of times, the planners when we plan on paper, not everyone in Singapore knows what we do. That was why last year, we had this roving exhibition. It's part of My Endearing Home exhibition. We actually bring the plans to the heartlands and actually explain to people what these plans are about. For each heartland, there is a certain specific thing that we bring out. For instance, when we went to IMM, we highlighted that JLD will be developed in the next 10 to 20 years, so that people are aware of the plans and they can feel that they are part of it.

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011)

Another planner espoused the same view:

Yes, I think awareness is definitely important. If people don't even know, they can't care for it. So, they need to know what is happening around them. What is happening today, and what is coming up in the future tomorrow. And having a say in what's going to come up tomorrow definitely helps them to feel a sense of ownership, to feel like they have a say what's going to happen to their future, and that will definitely help to add to their sense of belonging to Singapore.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011)

The roving exhibition was brought to major malls scattered across the island, especially those with high visitor numbers. There were four modules to the exhibition: a regional module which was tailored to the exhibition location, a 'highlights' module showcasing Marina Bay and the Jurong Lake District, a leisure module showing leisure opportunities on the island, and a heritage module focusing on conservation efforts of the URA. Whilst the 'highlights' and leisure modules were more future-orientated and aimed to create awareness about URA's planning initiatives, the heritage module focused on shared memories of the nation.

However, bringing the plans to the people was only one aspect of the exhibition. To really get Singaporeans to travel around the island and rediscover new places, the

URA also organized community trails guided by planners.

That was also quite interesting, coz aside from the physical exhibition, there were all these programs. **Part of why we did that was because we thought, instead of showing people all these places on panels, why don't we also bring them to locations as well.** Let them experience it for themselves. So what we did was earlier on when we talked to PA, we said let's try sharing these idea with the grassroots first...So, I think arising from all the feedback, we finally decided on a series of community tours and erm... we offered the entire list through the grassroots and through PA. We kind of got them to sign up through various avenues, through the CCC network, through their website, through our website. So, various channels were open to them. And we worked with agencies to offer the tours at a lower, subsidized price if there were chargeable stuff. Or we tried to arrange so that we can have guided tours.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011, emphasis mine)

Even when it came to choosing locations for the community tours, URA adopted a strategy of bringing people to lesser known places. As S explained (emphasis mine),

We tried selecting them based on firstly... we tried of course to find projects that URA were involved in, like Southern Ridges, Changi Point, Marina Barrage. Of course, there were also other agencies involved as well. But we also tried to find places which are people may not really know of very well, like they may have heard of it but never gone there themselves, like Dempsey, the rejuvenated Botanic Gardens, places like Lim Chu Kang, the farm areas where people may not know of and have not gone on their own. **We tried to help them to rediscover Singapore.**

In addition to physical mobility, virtual networks were also mobilized by URA to enable greater engagement with the public.

I think while we had the... we tried to incorporate some new media engagement as well. We had a Facebook page. Every exhibition, everywhere we went, we posted pictures, posted comments. We also had a online photography competition, where we asked people to take photos of places where they feel bound to, they feel a sense of belonging to, and submit the photos through Facebook. So, we got quite a lot of entries and we have prizes to the top photographers. So that was very good, successful. And people got interested in the whole topic as well.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011)

Therefore, it is evident that both physical and virtual mobility played significant roles in grounding national identity and engendering a sense of ownership. Not only were plans brought to the people and community tours organized to bring people around the island,

the effective use of social media also resulted in greater engagement with the public.

Although new leisure destinations and 24/7 city center buzz could result in love for the city-state, the provision of a good quality of life is also utilized as part of a wider strategy to facilitate the flow of talent and capital into the city-state. Whilst being interviewed about the 'night buzz' panel that aims to deliver more after-dark leisure options, former CEO of the URA, Mrs Cheong Koon Hean, made the following remark:

If you have a great nightlife, it is really a differentiating factor for Singapore. Cities compete against one another and lifestyle is a very, very major consideration when people make choices of where to live or to work.

(cited in Lee, 2008a)

Having a great nightlife is thus a comparative advantage that Singapore should capitalize on. Not only does it multiply memories and deepens the sense of rootedness of locals, it also revs up the city's hip factor in the global race for talent (Lee, 2008b). This brings to mind Richard Florida's (2002) theory of the creative class, where he argued that cities need to re-image themselves as hip and tolerant places with multiple lifestyle options and 'authentic' experiences so as to draw in the creative class. Here, URA's strategies to create an evening economy with great nightlife suggests that the state has bought into Florida's theory; 24/7 buzz and multiple leisure opportunities provide lifestyle options that clearly cater to the mobile, elitist skilled talent that Singapore seeks after. Of course, having great nightlife options also cater to tourists, which in turn generates revenue. For instance, malls which participated in Singapore Tourism Board's late-night shopping scheme in 2006 reported a 15% increase in sales revenues. Clearly, having a night economy makes money sense. As one local paper reported, 'it is as much an economic component of cities as a measure of lifestyle quality' (The Straits Times, 19 Sep 08, p 34). Thus, the provision of multiple leisure options not only caters to Singaporeans, it is also seen as a comparative advantage that should be utilized to draw in skilled talent into the

country.

## **Conclusion**

Drawing on the MP 08 planning strategies, I have highlighted how space and the built environment are utilized by planners for inclusionary nation building and neoliberalism. URA's conservation efforts, place-making initiatives and outreach efforts such as 'My New Singapore' are all intimately intertwined with grounding national identity. Conservation efforts help to preserve the shared memories and history of the nation through the built environment, whereas outreach efforts aim to endear the island to Singaporeans by encouraging them to reacquaint themselves with leisure destinations within the city-state. Such initiatives aim to enhance national identity and sense of belonging, and are examples of inward-looking nation building. On the other hand, place-making strategies such as the development of Marina Bay and the key growth areas are often seen as leaning towards outward-looking nation building. Especially in the case of Marina Bay, part of the planning vision of the area was to develop a distinctive city skyline and image that can be effectively iconized to the rest of the world. In doing so, Marina Bay would symbolize Singapore just as the Eiffel Tower symbolizes Paris.

However, drawing a clear distinction between inward and outward-looking nation building may be counter-productive as the two are not mutually exclusive. For example, although the image of Marina Bay is useful in external branding of the city, the area can also engender feelings of national pride. Furthermore, planners implemented a whole host of measures to ensure that the area catered to locals as well; public facilities, the organization of events that appeal to a wide range of population segments and the holding of events of national significance in Marina Bay all helped to ensure that both the needs of foreigners and locals are met. Similarly, whilst conservation efforts are fundamental to national identity through the preservation of shared memories, historic districts such as

Chinatown and Little India are also tourist attractions.

The discussion above also highlights the challenges that planners face in their work, in terms of negotiating the balance between social and economic objectives. Often, the two are thought to be antithetical. However, what we have seen is that urban planning strategies in Singapore cater to both through a careful balancing act. Hence, instead of seeing nation building and the facilitation of market forces as strictly oppositional, they can be perceived as two sides of the same coin. In addition, whilst neoliberal ideology sees state interventions as obstacles to the operation of free market forces, here we see the Singaporean state intervening to extend the reach of neoliberal forces (e.g. through dishing out incentives to developers and providing them with flexibility in terms of land use), but at the same time ensuring that national objectives are not compromised. Whilst this supports Peck and Tickell's (2002) argument about the continued relevance of state interventions under "actually existing neoliberalism", it also paints a more nuanced picture in that state policies are formulated not just to emplace marketization, but to fulfil strategic national goals as well.

Another key point of this chapter is the importance of mobility in both nation building and neoliberalism. Interview data and media reports suggest that mobility of bodies is fundamental to grounding national identity. Whether through conservation trails, park connectors or community tours, planners think that it is necessary for Singaporeans to be able to move around the island, reacquaint themselves with it, and in doing so, a love for the nation can arise. Mobility of bodies is enhanced through a number of measures and on multiple scales. The positioning of key growth areas near transport nodes facilitates the movement of bodies island-wide, whereas pedestrian connectivity within each growth area facilitates seamless movement within each commercial and/or entertainment district. In terms of outreach efforts such as 'My New Singapore', not only

were plans brought to the people in the heartlands, community tours were also organized to bring residents to new localities. Furthermore, virtual networks were mobilized to reach out to a wider segment of the population.

Whilst mobility enhances national identity, it is neoliberal urbanism that facilitates mobility. Here, conservation efforts, place-making and the creation of an evening economy all facilitate the international mobility of capital and bodies. The development of Marina Bay and commercial districts in the key growth areas are attempts to attract overseas investment into the country. At the same time, planning for a variety of leisure destinations and lifestyle options not only attracts tourists but also skilled talent into the country, in the hope that they will make Singapore their home.

Another way to view the relationship between mobility and neoliberalism is the creation of subjects of consumption. As Harvey (2010) explained, the survival of the capitalist system depends not only on the ongoing circulation of capital, but also on the absorption of surplus value. One way in which surplus value is absorbed is through the creation of effective demand. By formulating subjects of consumption, effective demand can be increased and crises within the capitalist system can be averted. With this in mind, it is probable that measures to improve mobility not only help to ground national identity, but also facilitate the formation of subjects of consumption. Looking back at the internal connectivity planned for each growth area, pedestrian malls or plazas lined up with shops, kiosks and activities are often part of URA's planning strategy to activate street life. Whilst this may be true, it also encourages the creation of subjects of consumption. Therefore, just as the restriction of mobility is associated with the 'othering' of undesirable population groups, the facilitation of mobility feeds into inclusionary processes of nation building and neoliberalism.



## CHAPTER 7

### **Unpacking the Organization: Embodying Planners in Nation Building and Social Justice**

Having outlined both the exclusionary and inclusionary processes of nation building via planning policies and initiatives, this chapter turns to the embodiment of planners in their daily work and how they relate to ideals of nation building, nationalism and social justice. The point is to illustrate how the URA is not a homogeneous organization where nation building principles or values are evenly propagated or experienced amongst planners and different departments. Rather, what becomes clear from the interviews is that planners often have to think hard about what nation building or social justice mean and how they relate to such ideals.

This chapter explores the embodiment of planners in three segments. The first looks at how planners relate to nation building and/or nationalism, focusing on what these terms mean to them, how they perceive their work in relation to these goals and whether they consciously feel that their work is driven by such ideals. The second segment turns to the issue of social justice in planning, exploring whether social justice is an explicit criteria in planners' work, what is meant by social justice and how planners perceive their roles within the organization as possible champions of justice. Lastly, this chapter briefly illustrates how planners are personified through their work and their mobilities.

#### **Dissecting nation building and nationalism: Planners' perspectives**

A number of overlapping themes emerged from the interviews when planners were asked how they perceived their work in relation to nation building or nationalism. What is striking is that for many of them, these terms are too broad and unwieldy and can

be interpreted in multiple ways. However, generally speaking, planners often alluded to both the *material* (hardware) and *symbolic* (software) contributions of planning. The hardware aspect of planning typically refers to the way land use zoning helps to ensure that there is sufficient space for competing needs, whereas the software aspect refers to the preservation of memories, heritage and identity through the built environment. Through the development of infrastructure and the meanings associated with the built environment, planners see their work as contributing to both nation building and nationalism.

Hmmm... Well it's a tough question. I think nation building is a very big thing that you know, generally, government as well as Singaporeans, all feel that it's happening around us. We want to meddle with it, we want to shape it. And when I say 'we', I am also not sure who exactly it is, whether it's government, civil servants or just in general. Because I think in general, we know the sense of identity and feeling of being united in this country and nation is something that every nation wants, Singapore included. So, this endearing home element and how the physical environment can contribute to it definitely plays a part but I don't think it's the only thing. It's only the backdrop and stage for the activities, the people to really, you know, shape things in their landscape. I mean, just the building on its own, the setting is not going to help people feel that the place is special. It's what memories that they form there, so the people part has to come in.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011)

I think URA is the land use agency. We deal mainly with land and that is our core purpose lah. So, really, what stems from the land is you can put in the nation building into it. So, in terms of land use, it's quite easy to say we can contribute to nation building. So, all this zoning is on the hardware. The Endearing Heartlands one – that's on software. Another thing is when you mentioned the growth areas, I would say Marina Bay, all these, we have the place making department in URA, and all these are very focused on software issues like identity of the place, how you link that to national identity. So that will be the software part of it.

(Interviewee G, recorded on 30 May 2011)

Another way in which planners relate their work to nation building or nationalism is to see their roles as one of balancing various interests. Nation building here means being able to balance the competing interests of various groups, or wide ranging strategic

needs of the nation. This idea of a delicate balancing act was mentioned time and time again by different planners.

I mean, for my daily work, because this department works a lot with agencies, government agencies, and sometimes you receive requests from a particular agency on certain things. Then for me, it's very important that you don't compromise the bigger interest of the public because of a particular request from a government agency. That means you need to **balance the interests** not only of public and private, but also the government and the general public, as in your people. This is something that I feel quite strongly about, the balancing.

(Interviewee O, recorded on 7 June 2011, emphasis mine)

Actually, in what we do, the planners most of the time, we have to... **we have to play many different roles. We have to put on many different hats.** Where we come from is we take into account the different perspectives from the residents all the way up to strategic objectives of the nation. So, in terms of nationalism.... How we do play a role ah? Hmmmm.... I think for us... ok, maybe let's state an example. In planning for a certain area or for a new area to be developed, we often take into account the type of amenities that are needed to serve the people. I'm not sure how that actually relates to nationalism, but from where we are coming from, **it's always for the greater good.** Like planning for areas where we want to build up near MRT stations, so that people can stay near transport nodes and it's easier...they have better access to public transport. Yet, at the same time, we also have to balance that sense of overcrowding against others.

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011, emphasis mine)

The above two quotes reference having to balance the interests of different population groups for the greater good. Yet, other planners remarked on the need to negotiate between social and economic strategic interests of the nation. Whilst redevelopment is crucial to economic development, the continual demolition of the physical environment can sometimes run counter to the preservation of people's memories and heritage.

Yah, we were struggling with this because the feeling of whether you feel a sense of belonging is very waffly, it's very hard to pin down. We also try very hard to get a handle on it. My own take on it is that we can't do everything. Almost anything and everything can be part of this feeling. So, in URA at least, we can look at the physical environment and we know that the physical environment does influence how we feel about a place, whether a place looks familiar, whether the familiar elements are still there. That definitely adds whether we feel anything for the place. I mean, imagine your favorite neighborhood, if those trees were cut down, shophouses disappeared and it all became big apartments or flats or

shopping malls, I don't think we would be happy. So definitely the physical environment and allowing it to evolve at its own pace, not too fast but not with a lot of heavy handed intervention. That's the balance that we need to strike lah.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011)

Depending on the job scope, planners also relate differently to nation building and nationalism. Generally speaking, planners seem to associate nation building with infrastructural development, and nationalism with symbolic, emotional ties to the nation. While some identify more strongly with nationalism, others connect more easily to nation building. Planners involved in conservation, place management or place-making are more likely to see their work as enhancing nationalism, whereas those in Physical Planning and Development Control relate more easily to nation building. For example, one planner in Physical Planning remarked,

So, in terms of nationalism....How we do play a role ah? Hmmmm..... I think for us... ok, maybe let's state an example. In planning for a certain area or for a new area to be developed, we often take into account the type of amenities that are needed to serve the people. **I'm not sure how that actually relates to nationalism**, but from where we are coming from, it's always for the greater good. Like planning for areas where we want to build up near MRT stations, so that people can stay near transport nodes and it's easier...they have better access to public transport. Yet, at the same time, we also have to balance that sense of overcrowding against others. So, we put in parks, neighborhood centers to try to meet their needs. **But how this relates to nationalism, I really don't know how to answer. Nation building, yes. But nationalism, no... not sure.**

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011, emphasis mine)

In contrast, when asked about how conservation work contributes to nation building or nationalism, one Conservation planner chose to speak only about nationalism in her response, and clearly associated it with identity and people's memories.

In the first place, nationalism has to be defined lah, but of course, if we look at it from the rootedness and identity point of view, URA plays a very big part in the conservation of built heritage. And that sets the background and er... the daily backdrop for everybody's daily, ongoing... Then, the other aspect about it is because the historical landmarks, cultural markers and heritage stuff, these are kept. In a sense, it actually let people feel that kind of continuity and that kind of sense of belonging, but to the country lah.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

Another interesting observation that emerged is how organizational structure plays a key role in influencing the ways planners perceive their roles with regard to nation building (see Appendix A); planners working on upstream planning policies such as those in Strategic Planning (henceforth SP) often had no problems linking their daily work to nation building. In contrast, those working on downstream planning policies such as Development Control (henceforth DC) saw their work as highly distanced from this vision. Therefore, how one relates their work to nation building depends very much on the department they are in and their specific job scopes. One planner working within the SP Department commented as follows:

Right now, we are doing up the concept plan. So, I see that for concept plan, we get a lot of inputs from economic agencies, as well as social agencies, and a lot of thinking from.. and inputs from strategic committees which are formed by key leaders in the respective industrial agencies. So, with regard to that, what we are doing is **very high linkage, very strong linkages to purpose of nation building, in terms of economic growth, social growth, how to be inclusive, be environmentally sustainable as well.** Put all these together and then do our concept plan and our long term strategies. So, in that sense, I can see how it comes together and **being very nation-centric**, and being very all-rounded in our policy decision as well.

(Interviewee F, recorded on 30 May 2011, emphasis mine)

As SP planners work on island-wide policies and interact with multiple high-level governmental agencies, it is not entirely surprising that they see their work as easily fitting into the larger goals of nation building. In contrast, DC planners typically feel highly disconnected from this larger vision, as the following exchange illustrates.

**Me:** Do you feel your work specifically contributes to nationalism or nation building?

**J:** No.

**K:** We are the downstream process, but we are not the ones who directly influence...

**Me:** You don't think working with developers and all that helps?

**J:** I think we feel that we are more the workers in trying to implement the vision that is already set out.

**K:** Yes!

**J:** We are not part of the upstream planning process where you plan for the area.

**Me:** So you feel that the planners upstream have a greater sense of...

**J:** Exactly...

**K:** Yah, it's their achievements. They have a direct hand in it. For us, we are just handling the downstream process whereby we just approve the plans.

**J:** Even sometimes when we process individual developments, we have to ask our counterparts what is the overall planning vision for the area, coz we don't know. It's not communicated.

**Me:** So you feel a bit distanced?

**J:** Yes, distanced.

(Interviewees J and K, recorded on 1 June 2011)

In contrast to SP, DC planners work on development applications that are based on specific parcels of land. Being of a more operational nature, their job often means that they do not play major roles in formulating the vision of a planning area, much less the nation. This explains why they commonly express feelings of disconnection from the goals of nation building.

Although SP and DC are extreme examples, they are useful in elucidating the underlying trend which is heavily predicated on the notion of scale. Planners working on macro-scale policies have few problems seeing their contributions to nation building, whereas those working on micro-scales perceive their contributions as minute. Those working on meso-scales such as planners within Physical Planning (henceforth PP) exhibit mixed qualities; on one hand, they too deal with a specific planning area which reduces their abilities to link their work to strategic nation building, but on the other hand, they have greater abilities than DC planners who work on specific sites to formulate visions of particular planning areas.

Not only do planners perceive their relationship to nation building or nationalism differently, such ideals are also not at the forefront of their minds, in that these values are not explicit drivers in their daily work. Although all the planners I spoke to acknowledged that at the end of the day, every planning policy could be tied back to nation building or nationalism, most of them felt that such values are only present at the back of their minds. For instance, when asked whether nation building or nationalism were key drivers of her work, one planner thought about it for such a long time that she eventually responded as follows:

If I need to think so long, then probably I am not thinking about it, yah.

(Interviewee O, recorded on 7 June 2011)

Another planner, in response to the same question, replied as such:

No. But I think it's (nationalism) very innate. It's supposed to be your overriding... For us, sometimes we get so focused in processing cases, we only bear in mind certain key principles like how we optimize land, how do you reduce certain land take, can you co-share, etc. Sometimes it becomes so part of you that you... it's hard to put it across.

(Interviewee M, recorded on 6 June 2011)

Even Conservation planners whose jobs are more directly connected to nationalism acknowledged that such values do not play a major role in their daily work.

I don't know. I think to achieve... I personally feel to achieve or to contribute to nation building or nationalism is a very high level vision and intention, and I honestly do not feel it in my daily work because when you boil down and drill down to the daily operations level, implementation stuff, it's a bit different. Although you can always tie back, whatever you do you can tie back to nationalism, it's not consciously at the forefront of my consciousness. When I speak to applicants, or when I speak to other agencies, or when we fight to have the road reserve line adjusted, it's not consciously that I am doing this for my nationhood. But I must add that working on conservation work or projects gives me a huge sense of satisfaction. It might not be a daily thing. I mean sometimes when I feel like pulling out my hair, like why can't they just understand what I'm trying to do. But overall it does give me a sense of achievement or satisfaction in what I do. I feel positively feel that I have done whatever I could to contribute to this higher level goal, so to speak. But it's not like a daily thing that I feel good.

(Interviewee P, recorded on 13 June 2011)

Therefore, whilst there is no doubt that planning contributes to both nation building and nationalism, what is clear from the above discussion is that this relationship is experienced very differently and unevenly by planners within the organization, largely depending on their specific job scopes and the scale of their work (micro, meso or macro). Furthermore, ideals of nation building or nationalism are not explicit drivers of planners' daily work; whilst they do influence policies, they seem to do so in a more indirect and unconscious manner.

### **Dissecting social justice: Planners' perspectives**

In discussing the ways in which planning results in exclusionary processes and outcomes, a related concern that came up was the issue of social justice. Specifically, planners were asked whether social justice is one of the driving concerns of planning, and what exactly do they mean by social justice. Furthermore, how do they perceive their roles as planners in relation to social justice? Do they actively pursue it or is it something that is sidelined?

When asked about the factors influencing their daily work, most planners remarked that one key consideration is management thinking and direction. Being a hierarchical organization with strict delegation roles, planners felt that they could only do so much. Most of the time, the resulting policy is largely driven by what management wants or thinks is correct.

Management thinking. They shape your work lah. I mean, you start off with your own inputs, think think think, but ultimately as it goes up the channel, you start to see a clearer line of management thinking and your policy gets shaped accordingly lah. I would say, middle management and top management, they shape a lot of the policies.

(Interviewee G, recorded on 30 May 2011)

However, this is not to say that planners have completely no say in their work. Instead,



they acknowledged that top or middle management are often open to suggestions, and if the recommendations make sense, they would be incorporated. Therefore, planners do have some room to make their opinions and voices heard, although at the end of the day, the final decision still rests with management.

I don't think we have the power to change anything, especially if our bosses' minds are set, but I think we have the power to raise our opinion. We have the power to say our peace, we have the power to give our views to top management, but I think that's also because probably our top management minds are pretty open. But if they decide against it, then so be it lah. But that is their decision to make lah. I mean, ultimately, he is the CEO, he's the Chief Planner. If something screws up, it's not my head that is going to roll, it's his. That's the... I am quite happy enough to be able to have the power to air my own views, and not be screwed after that.

(Interviewee E, recorded on 27 May 2011)

As the quote above makes clear, having additional layers of clearance is sometimes beneficial as it reduces the responsibility of planners if the wrong decision is taken. Some planners even think that management has the right to overtake planners' recommendations as they have more experience in planning matters.

But on the other hand, when I came in, I felt that way, that a lot of the personal perspectives were overtaken by management thoughts. Looking back, I also think that should happen. If not, my naivety could cause a lot of problems downstream. I think they have the ability to see things from different perspective coz they handle different portfolio, to see the land demands and constraints from a bigger picture rather than where I am here.

(Interviewee F, recorded on 30 May 2011)

The above discussion is relevant as it helps to set the context of the decision making process within the URA, and in doing so, uncovers the possible roles that planners can play in championing for social justice. Although planning work is predominantly driven by management thinking and direction, there is room for planners to make their opinions heard. Whether planners ultimately choose to do so, however, depends on the personality of the planner and how risk averse they are. For instance,

when asked whether they would push for something that is socially just but politically controversial (in that management would likely disagree), one planner responded:

I think that depends on personality trait as well. For me, I am not a risk taker so I probably won't do that. However, if someone who is more vocal and who really believes in what you do, not that I don't, but more adventurous in making your stand heard and following it through, then that person... there is scope for that to happen. There is scope for that to happen but personally, I wouldn't do that. Because you know that you will be countered against...and if I don't have very strong reasons for that, I won't stay to it lah.

(Interviewee F, recorded on 30 May 2011)

Another planner even went so far as to suggest that her job as a planner is no different from that of a relay messenger or a conduit, which seems to imply that social justice may not be a highly relevant concern.

It's just a job. I mean, personally, I won't push push. I feel like if I have really strong grounds, I would just voice them out but ultimately the decision is not at my level. I am just the conduit. The medium. I don't take it personally that they don't agree with me. Nothing is right or wrong in planning.

(Interviewee G, recorded on 30 May 2011)

Such responses are typical of other interviewees in my sample, which suggest that although there is some room for the championing of social justice, most planners would choose not to push the boundaries.

Although planners conceded that social justice is important in planning, it is important to elucidate what they mean when they utilize this term. Three observations were made. First, planners often equated justice with the act of balancing multiple interests, similar to the way they relate their work to nation building. Second, tied to the act of balancing various interests, planners often associated social justice with neutrality; to achieve justice is to be as neutral as possible when crafting policies or guidelines. Third, we have to ask for whom is justice served. Logically, social justice aims to eliminate the inequalities faced by marginalized or exploited population groups. However, in this case, planners often alluded to justice for 'the greater good', where the 'greater good' is

intimately tied to the interests of citizens and the nation.

Similar to nation building, planners often think about social justice as a balancing act.

Actually, I think there will be [concerns of social justice]. Frankly speaking, there will be some element, especially... you don't talk about DC [development control] policy lah. DC policy is a bit straightforward to some extent lah. But PP [physical planning] policies talk about foreign workers dorm, places of worship. I think **social injustice or equity** comes into play heavily. Place of worship is a very good example, I don't want to elaborate coz it's sensitive. But we are very mindful when we come to those kinds of policies, where we are very certain **that it may disturb the balance that is currently out there**. Then, I would think social justice or social equity comes into the picture. It really depends on the policy lah.

(Interviewee E, recorded on 27 May 2011, emphasis mine)

Social justice or equity thus means retaining the status quo or finding the balance between potentially controversial issues. In terms of tying this to planning policies for foreign worker dormitories, most planners did not see the policy of containment as necessarily unjust, as the outcome was a delicate balance between the needs of the workers and residents. The following exchange demonstrates this succinctly.

**G:** If I am **servicing the people**, then yes, I think it is fair. It's not what I think, it's the **perception of people**.

**Me:** So what is your work driven by then?

**G:** Balancing the needs of people with the needs of... it's not an unfair policy what. They get their facilities and everything, the needs of the residents are met. As a person who has to balance all these, it's a pretty good job.

**Me:** What do you think the role of the planner should be?

**G:** **Finding the equilibrium**.

**Me:** Even if you do not necessarily agree with the policy?

**G:** Yes, there must be a **separation of values and job scope**, I guess.

(Interviewee G, recorded on 30 May 2011, emphasis mine)

Not only is it the planner's job to 'find the equilibrium', it would also seem that planning is an apolitical profession involving a separation of one's values from the job. Furthermore, planning serves the 'people'. Although 'people' in this exchange is not clearly defined by the planner, when read in the context of foreign worker dormitories, it

presumably references residents of the neighborhood. Such responses of tying justice to neutrality and of serving the general public are not uncommon.

**D: I don't think social justice per se comes into consideration. Social issues will...** The issue is we always try our best to look out for the **bigger general public**.

**Me:** The bigger general public?

**D:** I think, as a whole, you know, it tends to be that lah. So, like for example, place of worship, it's a social issue, it's sensitive. So, we make sure that we keep the social cohesion. But I don't think we say 'oh, there is this issue of social justice that we are looking at, and we need to campaign for certain rights, even for foreign worker dorm'. You know? But yet, if you talk about social justice... We are not very.... I guess being in a statutory board makes you very **neutral about things**. You are not out there to champion for things, for certain people's rights. **You are out there to try to make sure... to balance everything**. We try to be very neutral and general, and not be passionate on one side versus the other.

(Interviewee D, recorded on 27 May 2011, emphasis mine)

Here, a crucial distinction is made between social justice and social sensitivity. The point is that planning is not driven by social justice per se, but more by social issues that are potentially controversial. Hence, the role of the planner is to be as neutral as possible so as to achieve a delicate balance between multiple interests or goals. When asked how this influences planners' daily work, given that most of their policies are driven by management thinking, the same planner responded as follows:

I mean, it's [that work is driven by management think] true coz that's work. But what your bosses want a lot of the time is not really skewed to a certain interest. They are not skewed to say that I am skewed in favor of the landed owner's interest per se or the developer's interest per se. They just try to be more neutral in their approach, even though it's ultimately what your bosses want. I mean, I wouldn't say that our policies are that much influenced by ministries, political decisions, you know. I mean, they can overturn us lah, but it doesn't influence how we do the basic groundwork. At URA level, we don't factor that [politics] in as much. But ultimately, of course whether they overturn the decision or not, that's up to them.

What all this suggests is that the championing of social justice is tantamount to adopting a one-sided view, which goes against the supposed neutrality of the profession. At the end of the day, whilst planners acknowledged the importance of social justice, what they mean by justice is a delicate balancing act where the needs of the general

public are met. Despite the little room that planners possess to fight for justice, most of them seem content with voicing out their opinions and leaving the final decision to top management. As one planner concluded,

Planning's more neutral. I mean, social justice is hard to quantify. It can be a very loaded term. And I think that in a government service or in statutory board, it isn't really quite the place to champion your causes. It doesn't really allow you the framework to do that.

(Interviewee D, recorded on 27 May 2011)

It would thus seem that in the case of the URA, planners' sense of justice is couched in a more utilitarian manner. Justice is for the general public, not specifically for marginalized, dispossessed or exploited populations such as migrant workers.

### **Personifying planners**

Being a large organization with nearly a thousand employees, it is all too easy for the public to think of the URA as a faceless organization where plans and policies are churned out by robotic planners. However, in the recent years, URA has attempted to put a face to the planning work that is conducted behind the scenes.

One initiative involved using planners as photographic models in the Master Plan 2008 exhibition, especially in showcasing the key growth areas. Planners are also personified through the heritage module of the roving exhibition. For this, planners throughout the organization were invited to provide photographs of themselves or their families in locations which held special memories for them. As one planner explained,

The heritage portion was a bit unique because what we did was we collected a lot of photographs from our own staff, memories, family photos with Singapore as the background at various locations like Fort Canning, City hall, or Botanic Gardens. Wherever they feel... and actually you find that a lot of the memories are shaped by similar backgrounds. So these physical landscapes really play a role lah, in shaping people's and generations of memories. So we took them [the photos] and kind of made a montage and that was quite a big hit. Because people.... You know, the authenticity and genuine aspects really came through in these photographs.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011)

In doing so, the heritage module not only enhances the sense of belonging amongst the general public, it also personifies the work of URA through the embodiment of planners.

Planners are also embodied in their work through their mobilities. As discussed in Chapter 6, the mobilities of planners were crucial to the successful implementation of the 'My New Singapore' initiative. In bringing the plans to the people via the roving exhibition, planners took turns managing the exhibition in different malls. Similarly, in the organization of walking trails or community tours, planners had to function as tour guides. When asked about URA's role in the community tours, one planner explained,

I think we also deliberated 'why don't we just let them [the public] find out and let them do it on their own with the agency representatives?' But we also felt that it's a missed opportunity coz we wanted the residents to also understand how URA played a role in all these places. Like Marina Barrage, if we just set them on their way and we don't join them, they will just see it as it is and they won't understand that in the past, it was just a pump house. URA played a role and land use planning played a role in trying to make it more attractive. So we decided that ok, one planner will tag along for the tours and do some introduction why we are doing it, the context, and also give out some materials that will help publicize out programs like city gallery, our published documents like the Timeout magazine called Rediscover Singapore.

(Interviewee S, recorded on 16 June 2011)

Through the mobilities of planners, face-to-face interaction between planners and the general public is facilitated, which renders the work of the URA more accessible and personable.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter embodies planners through their mobilities, as well as how they relate their work to the larger ideals of nation building and social justice. Although all the planners I interviewed agreed that planning contributed to nation building, the way each of them experienced this relationship is highly heterogeneous. Whilst some felt that ideals of nation building were more explicit in their work, others did not feel the same and had to struggle with fitting their work into the larger vision. In addition, what is striking is that

such ideals are not active drivers of planners' daily work; instead, they are perceived more as innate qualities at the back of planners' minds. Such findings help to break down the image of the URA as a homogeneous, coherent organization where values of national importance are propagated evenly.

With issues of social justice, whilst there is some room for planners to champion for social justice within the organization, most chose not to do so. In extreme cases, some planners felt that they simply played the role of relay messengers, as mediums or conduits whose work are predominantly shaped by management. Justice in planning is also interpreted in a very specific manner here. To be just in planning is to be neutral so as to achieve the delicate balance between competing interests and needs. In addition, justice serves the general public, not specifically the marginalized or exploited population segments within the nation.

Lastly, one aspect of embodying the planners is to explore how they and their work can be personified through planning initiatives. The above discussion illustrated how planners and the URA were given a public face through a number of strategies, such as using planners as photographic models in the Master Plan 2008 exhibition, or embodying the memories of planners and their families through the heritage module of the roving exhibition. Furthermore, the mobilities of planners during the roving exhibition and community tours helped to facilitate interaction between URA's staff and the general public, making the work of the organization more accessible and personable.

## CHAPTER 8

### Discussion and Conclusion

Through the lens of the urban planning profession, I have sought to explore how urban planning embodies inclusionary and exclusionary processes of nation building via controls over borders, territories and mobilities. At the same time, as nation building cannot be divorced from the wider political economy, I also explored the relationship between nation building and neoliberalism, with an accompanying focus on the social-spatial 'justness' of planning processes and outcomes. This chapter resituates the main findings within the wider theoretical literature, before highlighting the implications of this thesis.

#### **Resituating the findings**

Nation building is predicated on the drawing of social-spatial boundaries that demarcate between 'us' and 'other'. In the Singaporean context, the position of the 'other' is often occupied by low or unskilled migrant workers who are seen as a transitory but necessary work force for the nation's global city aspirations (Yeoh, 2006). Although much academic literature have focused on the hardening of national borders against migrants (Hyndman, 2004; Bluntz, 2004; 2011), this thesis demonstrated how national borders are re-spatialized on the sub-national scale to exclude migrant workers who are already residing within the national territory (Sandercock, 2003).

A number of strategies were employed to establish social-spatial differences between migrant workers and more desirable groups. Social borders were drawn with the use of racialized stereotypes; not only were migrant workers painted as filthy and



unhygienic (a contrast to the image of Singapore being clean and green), they were also depicted as sexually aggressive men who could not control their sexual impulses. Representations of bodily attributes are here (falsely) used by media and residents to resist the ‘invasion’ of migrant workers into the nation or residential estates, which brings back the point about the body as both a site and scale of study. Tying migrant workers to the types of labor they perform is another means of racialization, which harks back to Chow’s (2002) argument about the ‘ethnicization of labor’. In the Singaporean context, instead of seeing a wholesale rejection of all low-skilled migrant workers, society is more acceptable of migrants in ‘cleaner’ industries than those performing menial and dirty jobs. In addition, bio-political and surveillance measures were implemented at multiple levels and by different agencies to police the conduct of migrant workers (Yeoh, 2006; Poon, 2009). For instance, migrants are subject to medical screenings and their daily lives within dormitories are closely regulated by security forces employed by dormitory operators.

This brings to the forefront Foucault’s discussion about biopower, racism and nation building. Although the ‘letting live’ of ‘us’ is intimately tied to the killing of racialized or ethnicized ‘others’ (Chow, 2002), in this context, biopower is enacted in a more nuanced manner by the state for two underlying purposes. On one hand, biopolitical measures such as medical screenings of migrants can be interpreted as ways of policing national borders albeit on the bodily scale (e.g. ensuring that female domestic migrants do not give birth within the nation), but on the other hand, such strategies can also be tied to neoliberal purposes. Specifically, migrant workers are viewed as units of manpower where the extraction of economic labor is necessary for the construction of urban development projects. Seen in this light, biopolitical strategies are also means of ensuring there is a continuous supply of healthy bodies for nation building purposes. Therefore,

biopower serves to both marginalize migrant workers from the geo-body of the nation-state, and to 'give life' so that manpower needs are met.

Explorations of nation building cannot be divorced from control over territories, borders and mobility (Passi, 2003; Newman, 2003). Focusing on these geographical themes, chapters 5 and 6 provide contrasting material in which to understand how planning policies contribute to exclusionary and inclusionary nation building. In the case of foreign workers dormitories (FWDs), planning policies utilize territorial control and borders as tools of marginalization. Not only are FWDs relegated to peripheral areas of the island far away from residential estates, ideologies of containment are also evident in both the Amenity Provision Guideline and the development of recreational parks.

Similarly, territorial control and border demarcations were at the forefront of the debates surrounding the 2008 Serangoon Gardens incident. When residents found out about the FWD in their private residential estate, they created such a furor that the state eventually implemented measures to allay their fears. These measures not only reinforced the social-spatial boundaries between the FWD and the private estate, it also sought to restrict the mobility of migrant workers by making the dormitory self-contained. In times of 'securocratic wars' where danger and security threats are no longer clearly defined on the basis of territory (i.e. blurring of 'inside' and 'outside'), the need to weed out dangerous mobilities or circulations becomes crucial (Graham, 2010). In the case of Singapore, the security threats posed by migrants' bodies are restricted through containment policies, as well as disciplinary and surveillance measures. This harks back to Yiftachel's (1998) discussion of the 'dark side of planning' and the use of space as a regime of governance (Merry, 2001). Just as planning strategies were utilized by colonizers to control the colonized (Njoh, 2009) or by the state to segregate the rich from the poor (Garcia-Ellin, 2009), urban planners in Singapore used space as a technology of

governance to discipline those deemed un-assimilable to the nation-state.

In contrast, chapter 6 illustrates how space and the built environment are utilized by planners for purposes of inclusionary nation building through the enhancement of national identity or pride. Just as iconic buildings and monuments are intimately linked to national identity (Cosgrove, 1998; Till, 2003), conservation efforts in Singapore are means of concretizing Singapore's shared heritage and memories. Even for newly redeveloped areas such as Marina Bay, efforts to imbue national pride are evident, highlighting Tim Bunnell's (1999) point that the built environment can be associated with new imaginings of national identity or citizenship. Lastly, space is used as a tool to facilitate mobilities of bodies around the city-state, which is seen as a necessary first step to rediscovering love for the nation. For instance, key leisure districts are planned in close proximity to major transportation nodes and within each entertainment district, seamless pedestrian connectivity is provided. By making travelling around the island easier, it is hoped that citizens will 'rediscover' their love for the nation. At the same time, the development of these growth areas facilitates international flows of people (such as tourists and skilled talent) and capital into the city-state.

There is thus a stark contrast in which territories, borders and mobilities are utilized as tools to bring about different outcomes. Whilst migrant workers are banished to outlying peripheral areas, entertainment districts are planned near the city-center or major transport nodes. The focus on different mobility outcomes also highlights the uneven geometries of power (Massey, 1993; Adey, 2006; Creswell, 2010a); whilst migrant workers are self-contained, the mobilities of desirable bodies (citizens, skilled talent and tourists) are facilitated on the international and sub-national scales. Furthermore, thinking about mobility-immobility relationally means the immobility of some are predicated on the mobility of others; in the case of FWDs, external services are

brought in to serve the needs of migrants in the hope that they would not venture out.

Yet, mobility is not just about physical movement of bodies; one can also think of virtual connections to the external world. This brings out an interesting finding, which is that although migrants are restricted in their physical movements, they remain well connected to the external world through virtual networks. This outcome is facilitated by the provision of wi-fi networks, postal services, telecommunication services, etc within dormitories and recreational parks.

In thinking about how planning embodies nation building, it is also imperative to turn to planners to see how values of nationalism or nation building influence their daily work. Although planning guidelines can always be tied back to nation building and/or nationalism, most planners struggle to connect their everyday work and routines to such larger ideals. In addition, organizational structure and the scope of one's work seems to highly influence how one relates to nation building – those working on macro-scale policies see the connections more intuitively, whereas those working on micro-level policies feel highly distanced from these larger ideals. This helps to break down the image of the URA as a coherent organization where values of nation building are evenly propagated or experienced.

In exploring the relationship between planning and nation building, the role of the built environment brings to the forefront another consideration, that of neoliberalism. Under neoliberal ideology, nation building and neoliberalism are often seen in direct opposition – the operation of free market forces and de-regulation of industries entails the 'hollowing out' of the nation-state (Jessop, 2002). However, this thesis has demonstrated how the built environment can serve both nation building and neoliberalism. Not only do conserved buildings and iconic developments concretize national identity and pride, the commodification of the built environment helps to extend neoliberalism through the

realization of surplus value (Lefebvre, 1976; Brenner & Theodore, 2002a). Under Singapore's global city aspirations, the development of Marina Bay and key growth areas are clear examples of neoliberal urbanism, intended to attract capital, tourists and skilled talent (a.k.a. Florida's "creative class"). Just as Ren (2008) demonstrated how the Beijing Olympics Stadium (the "Birds Nest") was a means of showcasing China's modernist aspirations through architectural flag-ship developments, Marina Bay was developed in Singapore with the main objective of putting Singapore on the world map. Furthermore, the planning of key growth areas in Singapore corresponds with Swyngedouw et al's (2002) conclusion that urban development projects (UDPs) have now become the main mode of planning in today's era of inter-urban competition.

The case study of Marina Bay illuminates the point that the built environment serves both purposes of nation building and neoliberalism. Although the development of the city's 'crown jewel' is predominantly driven by economic concerns, numerous measures were also implemented to endear the area to locals. Therefore, planning efforts in Singapore, be they conservation, place-making or the development of an 'evening economy', have negotiated the balance between neoliberalism and nation building such that they are better seen as two sides of the same coin.

Similarly, we have to question the role of the state in 'actually existing neoliberalism' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002b; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2009). Although neoliberal ideology paints state interventions as obstacles to the operation of free market forces, this is often not the case (Brenner & Theodore, 2002b; Peck & Tickell, 2002). In the case of Marina Bay, the state (and the URA) played a major role in dishing out incentives and preparing the infrastructural development of the area, highlighting the importance of public-private partnerships in neoliberal urbanism today (Smith, 2002; Hackworth, 2007). However, this is not to say that the state was only concerned with

extending neoliberalism and facilitating market forces. For Marina Bay, although the ‘White’ zoning of land parcels was originally intended to provide developers with full flexibility, this initiative was subsequently tweaked as it was felt that giving full flexibility could work against national objectives. Hence, economic considerations were tempered with national objectives. Going back to Jessop’s (2002) typology of the various modes of governance, it would perhaps be more suitable to describe Singapore’s mode of governance as one of *neostatism*, where the state continues to play an important role in guiding national strategies and in formulating public-private partnerships.

Lastly, there is the question of social-spatial justice in Singapore’s planning framework. Through exploring how planning embodies nation building and how it’s tied to neoliberalism, we also have to ask whether the planning processes and outcomes are socially and spatially just (Dikec, 2001; Fainstein, 2010). Based on material covered in this thesis, the answer would seem to be ‘no’. In comparing the location of FWDs to the planning of key growth areas, it is clear that the outcome is spatially unjust. Whilst migrant workers are segregated or contained within dormitories, the key growth areas are planned to be well-connected to other parts of the city. At the same time, the consultation process for proposals involving FWDs clearly shows how one-sided the process is – although the FWDs are intended for the migrants, they are never consulted. Instead, grassroots members and residents of nearby estates are given opportunities to voice their concerns at an early stage. Furthermore, it would seem that planning for FWDs is driven not so much by the needs of migrant workers, but by the need to manage or reduce any potential public backlash.

Even in exploring how values of social justice are embodied in planners’ daily work, the results are disappointing. In most planners’ points of view, to be socially just is to be able to balance the interests of multiple groups and to be as politically neutral as

possible. Championing for the rights of a particular group, even if they are marginalized or exploited, is seen as antithetical to objectivity. Here, it would seem that planners have bought into the rational theory of planning, where to be a good planner, one has to separate one's value system from one's work. Furthermore, although there is some room for planners to make their voices or opinions heard, most of them would prefer not to champion for social justice, as doing so may go against management's wishes. Such pessimistic findings suggest that the planning framework in Singapore still has much potential to be realized in terms of social justice.

### **Wider implications, theoretical contributions and future research directions**

What wider implications can we then draw from these findings, and what contributions does this thesis make to the wider theoretical field? Firstly, this research furthers literature on nation building via the profession of urban planning. Most academic literatures on nation-states either focus on geopolitical conflicts between different nations, or the hardening of national-scale borders against migrants (e.g. migration studies). However, this study not only shows how national borders can be re-spatialized on the sub-national and bodily scales for purposes of 'othering', it also highlights the role of other governmental agencies (other than immigration) that are also involved in processes of exclusion. Hence, the sphere of nation building is widened beyond geopolitical conflicts or migration studies, and the body as a tool of social differentiation is brought to the forefront. Furthermore, by drawing attention to how planning contributes to nation building, the relationship between the two is more explicitly made, and the importance of control over territories and borders in both is emphasized.

Secondly, this thesis makes salient connections between fields which are otherwise seen as distinct or separate. One example would be the linkages between planning and the 'mobilities paradigm'; specifically, how mobility is both a factor and

outcome of planning work. Similarly, feminist geographers' theory about embodiment is hardly applied to planning theory. In bringing the two together, for instance through the embodiment of planners in their daily work, this research uncovered the pressures that drive planners' everyday routines and showed how heterogeneous the work experience within URA is. This has important implications, especially in the discussion about planners and social justice. It is by embodying planners and their thoughts on social justice that it becomes clear that 'social justice' in the Singaporean planning context differs greatly from the ways social justice is discussed in theoretical literature (e.g. Fainstein, 2010; Marcuse et al., 2011). For instance, Fainstein's definition of social justice as 'equity, diversity, democracy' clearly departs from the way Singaporean planners associate justice with political neutrality. This not only highlights how different planning frameworks may have consequences on the way social justice is theorized and defined (which could be a research question in its own right), it perhaps also shows how Fainstein (2010) should have taken into consideration the power relations that take place within an organization in theorizing about social justice. Therefore, whilst there is a lot of planning literature out there that is prescriptive in nature (i.e. telling planners how social justice should be a key criterion and how it should be enacted in their work), there is less research on how the actual realities of organizational structure and pressures of daily work impact on the way planners 'practice' social justice. Understanding the factors that prevent planners from implementing just policies will pave the way towards achieving social justice.

Lastly, this thesis provides empirical evidence of 'actually existing neoliberalism' in a non-Western context. By illustrating the specific (non-oppositional) relationship between nation building and neoliberalism, as well as the neostatist mode of governance in the Singaporean context, such findings reinforce the point that neoliberalism is a



contextual, contingent process, and provide richer empirical support to Theodore and Brenner's (2002b) theory of 'actually existing neoliberalism'. In addition, most literature on cities and neoliberalism has focused on the Western (North American or European) context. This research thus contributes to the theoretical field by highlighting the processes of neoliberalization in a specific Asian city.

As previously stated, this research is preliminary in many ways. There are thus limitations to this study which poses further research questions. The most salient one that comes to mind is the generalization of the relationship between planning and nation building to other contexts. As Singapore is a city-state with a highly centralized planning framework, the relationship between planning and nation building is more direct and explicit. Urban planning strategies that favor the city also favor the state. However, it is not entirely clear how in a different context, say, in North America where the scale of operation is much larger and the planning framework is highly de-centralized, whether the relationship functions in the same manner. For instance, inter-city competition between different cities in the United States may work for or against nation building, where 'nation building' is something that needs to be first defined given the federal system of governance in the U.S. Hence, there is scope to extend research on the relationship between planning and nation building in varied contexts.

Secondly, this thesis explores nation building from the perspective of planners only. The question of *how effective* planning policies are in either including or excluding certain population segments could constitute a further research topic for investigation. This aspect is not included in the current research due to time and resource constraints – doing so would entail having to interview migrant workers, citizens and skilled expatriates for their views.

Lastly, Poon (2009) has argued for the need to explore the possibilities of resisting

against existing norms of power that come with nation building. Whilst the current research has investigated how the state (through its numerous agencies) has policed national borders on multiple scales, there is scope to extend research into exploring how resistance strategies are enacted by those marginalized or excluded from the nation-state. The political capacity of Singapore civil society and non-governmental organizations in promoting the rights and welfare of the ‘underbelly’ of global cities thus remains a relatively unexplored but critical terrain for both political and scholarly activism.

Nevertheless, in uncovering the geographies of inclusion and exclusion engendered by planning, this thesis highlights the political ramifications of urban planning in cities, and brings to the forefront questions of social justice (Harvey, 1973; Olsson, 1974; Lefebvre, 1970/2009). Showing how planning plays a hand in creating injustice or inequality is only the first step towards a socially just city; moving forward, it is necessary to explore in what ways planners can bring about social justice, an issue that is currently unresolved but requires urgent attention.

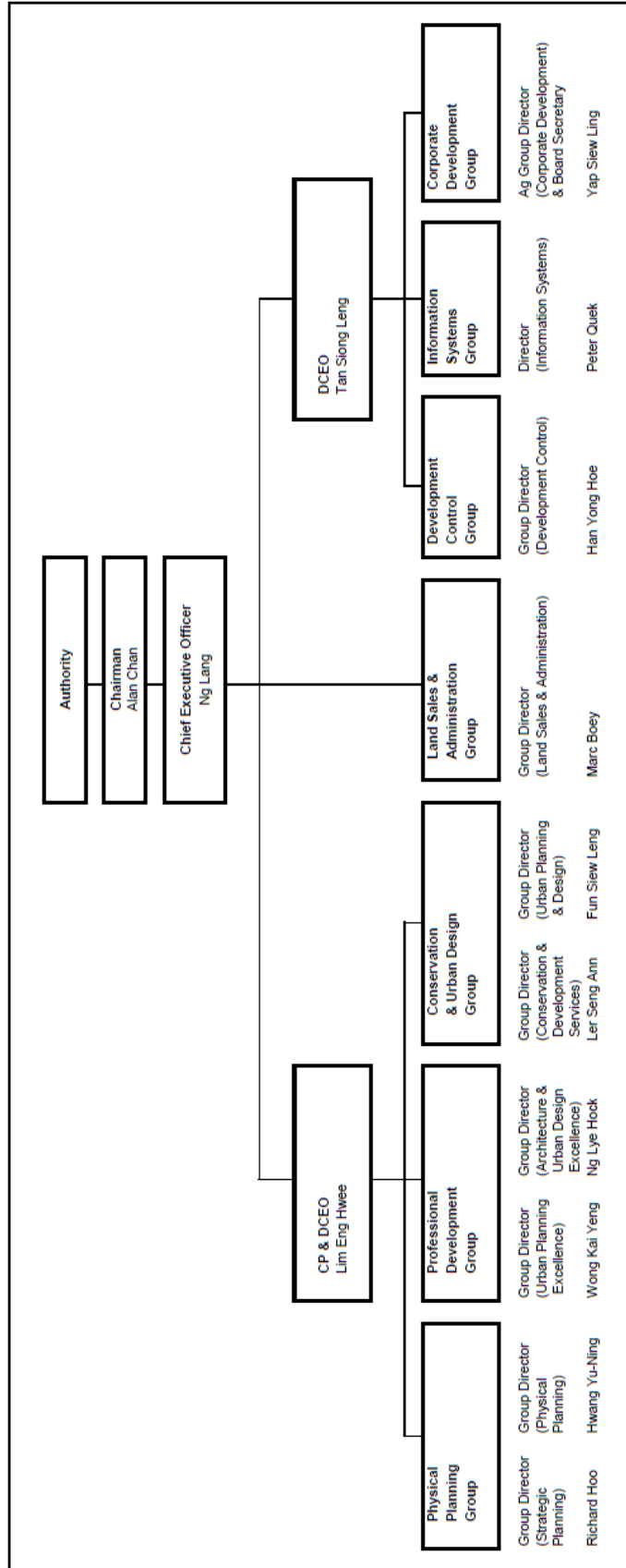
## **Appendix A: URA's organization structure and job distribution**

URA is today the national land use planning and conservation authority of Singapore. The urban planning framework in Singapore is predicated on the **Concept Plan** and the **Master Plan**. The Concept Plan charts out the long term land use and transportation strategies to guide development for the next 40-50 years, and is updated once every 10 years. Prepared in collaboration with many agencies, it adopts an integrated approach and ensures that there is sufficient land for population and economic growth, as well as providing a good quality of living. The Master Plan is the statutory land use plan which guides developments in Singapore for the next 10-15 years. Reviewed every 5 years, it translates the long term strategies of the Concept Plan into detailed plans based on land use and intensity.

URA takes on a multi-faceted role in turning plans into reality. On top of planning, it is also the main government land sales agent, where parcels of state land are sold to private developers for economic growth. URA is also the development agency for Marina Bay, the extension of the existing Central Business District (CBD). Lastly, to create an exciting cityscape and skyline, URA too promotes architectural and design excellence.

Figure 1 on the next page shows the organization chart. The legal basis of urban planning in Singapore is provided for in the Urban Redevelopment Authority Act and the Planning Act. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) generally oversees the operations of the entire organization, aided by two Deputy CEOs (DCEOs).

Table 2 outlines in detail the work that each department carries out, who they work with (other government agencies, developers, communities, etc) and how each department fits within the larger urban planning framework.



**Figure 1: Organizational Structure of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)**  
 (Source: URA website, retrieved from: <http://www.ura.gov.sg/corporate/docs/chart.pdf>)

Department/ Group	Sub-group	Job Scope	Who they work with	Role in planning framework
Physical planning	Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulates the Concept Plan, which is revised every 10 years</li> <li>Strategic research on macro issues such as sustainability, etc</li> </ul>	With external government agencies and departments within URA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides the broad and long term urban planning strategies</li> <li>Island-wide scale of study</li> </ul>
	Physical planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulates the Master Plan, which is revised every 5 years</li> <li>Policy studies on allocation of land use</li> <li>Site searches</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translation of broad strategies in the Concept Plan to detailed parameters (e.g. zoning and development intensity) for each parcel of land in the Master Plan</li> <li>Site-specific or regional scale of study</li> </ul>
Professional development	Urban planning excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works with overseas planning departments or governments to transfer expertise and knowledge</li> <li>Heavily involved in the Tianjin Eco-City project in China</li> </ul>	Other local government agencies and overseas planning departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not contribute to local planning, but through the transfer of planning expertise overseas, enhances the reputation of URA as a leading urban planning institution</li> </ul>
	Urban design & architecture excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works with both local and overseas architects and professional institutions to promote architectural and urban design excellence</li> </ul>	Local and overseas architects, architectural and urban design institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhances knowledge of good urban design and architectural practices both locally and overseas</li> </ul>
Conservation and urban design	Conservation & development services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation studies</li> <li>Processes conservation development applications</li> </ul>	With other departments within URA, external government agencies, as well as real estate developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation of historic buildings helps in preserving national identity, sense of belonging and identity</li> </ul>
	Urban planning & design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land use planning for Central Area and key growth areas</li> <li>Urban design studies and guidelines for Central Area and key growth areas</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides the detailed parameters for each parcel of land within the Central Area and key growth areas</li> <li>Urban design initiatives help to produce a distinctive skyline and a better built environment</li> </ul>

Land sales and administration	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales of land to meet the needs of the nation, be it residential, commercial, etc</li> <li>• Complies real estate information and crafts policies to regulate the real estate market</li> <li>• City marketing in overseas conventions</li> </ul>	Other departments within URA, local government agencies, real estate developers (both local and overseas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulates supply of land based on needs of the nation</li> <li>• Markets strategic developments to overseas investors and developers</li> </ul>
Development Control	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes development applications to ensure that developments are built in accordance with the Master Plan</li> </ul>	Mainly other departments within URA, architects and real estate developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to translate the strategies embodied in the Master Plan to built developments on ground</li> </ul>
Information Systems	-	Provides information technology and technical assistance for the organization	Mainly with other departments within URA	Provides information technology and technical assistance for the organization
Corporate Development	-	Provides broad direction for organization excellence, human resource and financial matters	Mainly with other departments within URA	Provides broad direction for organization excellence, human resource and financial matters

**Table 2: Broad overview of the job scope of the various departments within the URA**  
(Compiled with data taken from the URA website, [www.ura.gov.sg](http://www.ura.gov.sg))

## **Appendix B: Guidelines for workers' dormitory taken from the URA Development Control Handbook**

### **WORKERS' DORMITORY**

Quick guide in submitting workers' dormitories application  
(<http://www.ura.gov.sg/dc/brochure-workers-dorm-appln.pdf>)

**30** A workers' dormitory is defined as premises used primarily as lodging for workers unrelated by blood, marriage or adoption or legal guardianship. A residential premises shall be deemed to be a workers' dormitory if the total number of workers staying in the residential premises exceed 8 workers.

**31** Workers' dormitories can be:

- (a) in the form of a free standing development;
- (b) as an extension to an existing development within B1 / B2 zone; or
- (c) be converted from the existing space of the development within B1 / B2 zone.

**32** No land and strata subdivision is allowed for workers' dormitories.

### **LOCATION**

**33** Workers' dormitories can be considered on:

- (a) sites within an industrial estate which are outside hazard zones as defined by Pollution Control Department (PCD, NEA);
- (b) sites within an area earmarked for such development;
- (c) sites within an existing development within B1 / B2 zone.

**34** The location for proposed workers' dormitory should also be located away from residential area and areas where the use is likely to cause amenity problems. Workers' dormitories are not allowed in the Central Area.

**35** Independent workers' dormitories are to be rezoned to Civic & Community Institutions upon approval.

**36** If the workers' dormitories are located within multiple-unit industrial and warehouse developments, they should be located in a separate whole block within the development site.

**37** Within industrial estate that are safeguarded by JTC or HDB for strategic industries or where the workers' dormitories may be incompatible with the surrounding landuse, only ancillary workers' dormitories (i.e. housing on-site workers) are allowed. Secondary workers' dormitories (i.e. housing off-site workers) are not allowed within these areas. These areas are shown in **Appendix A** (<http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dc10-13.htm#appB>) and will be subject to review by the agencies from time to time.

**38** Workers' dormitories within single-user industrial and warehouse developments that are located outside the areas shown in **Appendix A** (<http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dc10-13.htm#appB>) are allowed to house both on-site and off-site workers.

## PARAMETERS

39 The development control parameters for the various workers' dormitories are shown in Figure 2.4.1.

**Figure 2.4.1: Guidelines for Workers' Dormitories**

Type of Workers' Dormitories	Located within an Industrial/Warehouse development		Independent Workers' Dormitories
	Ancillary Workers' Dormitories	Secondary Workers' Dormitories	
Type of Workers Housed	Only for on-site workers (i.e. employed by the owner or lessee of the factory)	For both on-site and off-site workers (i.e. employed by other companies or who do not work in the subject development)	For all workers.
Gross Plot Ratio	Overall plot ratio of the site including worker's dormitories shall not exceed the Master Plan Gross Plot Ratio (GPR) of the site.		1.0 (GPR in excess may be allowed on a case-by-case basis).
Use Quantum Control	Use quantum of the workers' dormitories (either ancillary or secondary) and other ancillary and secondary uses shall not exceed <u>49%</u> of the overall gross floor area (GFA) of the development.		100% of GFA for dormitory use.
Duration	A 3-year Temporary Permission (TP) subject to the use not causing any amenity problems. Renewal of the TP will be subject to compliance with the prevailing guidelines.		Permanent Permission (Temporary Permission may be issued on a case-by-case basis)
Number of Workers	The number of workers that can be housed in the workers' dormitory will be subjected to compliance with technical requirements of other agencies (e.g. FSSD, NEA).		Subject to compliance with technical requirements of other agencies (e.g. FSSD, NEA) and the total number of workers shall not exceed 3000 (max).
Applicable DC rate for Development Charge or Temporary Development Levy purposes	Industrial use rate.	Civic & Community Institution use rate.	Civic & Community Institution use rate.
Building setbacks	<p>a) For conversion of space within existing developments to workers' dormitories, the existing industrial setback requirements will apply.</p> <p>b) For new workers' dormitories blocks within existing developments, front setback (from road) of 7.5m or road buffer (green and physical buffer) will apply, whichever is greater. Side and rear setbacks of 3m (min) will apply.</p>		Front setback (from road) of 7.5m or road buffer (green and physical buffer) will apply, whichever is greater. Side and rear setbacks of 3m (min) will apply.
Building Height	Subject to height control for the area.		



<b>Floor to floor height</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) For conversion of space within existing developments to workers' dormitories, there are no controls on floor to floor height.</li> <li>b) For new workers' dormitories blocks within existing developments, 3.6m (max) floor to floor height control will apply.</li> </ul>	3.6m (max).
<b>Other requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To comply with pollution control and other health and safety requirements by NEA. Applicants are to obtain NEA's prior clearance before submission to URA.</li> <li>b) To ensure the availability or adequacy of sewerage system serving the WD development, applicants are to obtain PUB's prior clearance before submission to URA.</li> <li>c) No land or strata subdivision of the dormitories.</li> <li>d) All proposals will require landowners' endorsement.</li> <li>e) Worker's dormitories should cater for the needs and well-being of the residents. Operators are encouraged to provide adequate recreational facilities and amenities within the premises for the workers' use, e.g. TV lounge, fitness facilities, games room etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To comply with pollution control and other health and safety requirements by NEA. Applicants are to obtain NEA's prior clearance before submission to URA.</li> <li>b) To ensure the availability or adequacy of sewerage system serving the WD development, applicants are to obtain PUB's prior clearance before submission to URA.</li> <li>c) No land or strata subdivision of the dormitories.</li> <li>d) All proposals will require landowners' endorsement.</li> <li>e) Worker's dormitories should cater for the needs and well-being of the residents. Operators are encouraged to provide adequate recreational facilities and amenities within the premises for the workers' use, e.g. TV lounge, fitness facilities, games room etc.</li> </ul>

40 Ancillary and secondary workers' dormitories in industrial developments are required to comply with Amenity Provision Guidelines as shown in Figure 2.4.2.

Figure 2.4.2

<b>Amenity Provision Guidelines for Workers' Dormitories within an Industrial or Warehouse Development</b>	
<b>Basic facilities</b>	<p>Basic amenities such as living quarters, common toilets and dining areas are required to be provided. The design, construction and provision of such basic facilities and amenities for the workers' dormitory shall meet the relevant authorities' requirements. (PUB, NEA, FSSB etc.).</p> <p>The developer is strongly encouraged to construct and provide additional amenities such as sickbay, laundry washing, drying area and collection point within the development.</p>
<b>Recreational amenities</b>	<p>In addition to the basic amenities, the developer is also required to provide recreational amenities within the development. The minimum GFA for the recreational amenities, which depends on the number of workers housed in a dormitory, is as follows:</p>

<b>Amenity Provision Guidelines for Workers' Dormitories within an Industrial or Warehouse Development</b>									
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>No. of workers housed in a dormitory</th> <th>Minimum recreational amenities GFA [not including outdoor recreational facilities]</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>50 to 300</td> <td>50 sqm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>301 to 500</td> <td>75 sqm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More than 500</td> <td>100 sqm</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The recreational amenities shall form part of the ancillary quantum control within industrial developments.</p> <p>Examples of indoor recreational amenities are multi-purpose room, gymnasium, reading room, TV rooms and basketball court. The reasonable sizes of a TV room and a gymnasium are 24 sqm and 40 sqm respectively.</p> <p>In addition, the developer is strongly encouraged to construct and provide outdoor games court, recreation and socializing area within the development.</p>	No. of workers housed in a dormitory	Minimum recreational amenities GFA [not including outdoor recreational facilities]	50 to 300	50 sqm	301 to 500	75 sqm	More than 500	100 sqm
No. of workers housed in a dormitory	Minimum recreational amenities GFA [not including outdoor recreational facilities]								
50 to 300	50 sqm								
301 to 500	75 sqm								
More than 500	100 sqm								
<b>Commercial amenities</b>	<p>The developer is allowed to provide up to 20 sqm of GFA in the development for commercial amenities if there are more than 100 workers housed in the dormitory.</p> <p>The commercial amenities shall form part of the ancillary quantum control within industrial developments.</p> <p>Examples of commercial amenities are mini-mart, barber shop, bicycle repair shop, telecommunications shop, internet shop, remittance shop, postal service shop and ATM.</p>								
<b>Applicable DC rate for Recreational and Commercial amenities</b>	<p>The relevant DC rates for temporary development levy (TDL) or differential premium (DP) by SLA are as follows:</p> <p><u>Recreational amenities</u></p> <p>Recreational amenities are to be computed under Industrial use rate, i.e. Group D for Ancillary workers' dormitories (for housing own workers), and under Civic &amp; Community Institution use rate, i.e. Group E for Secondary workers' dormitories (for housing off-site workers).</p> <p><u>Commercial amenities</u></p> <p>Commercial amenities are to be computed under Commercial use rate, i.e. Group A.</p>								

## Appendix C: URA's brochure on submitting applications for workers' dormitory

### Introduction

If you intend to convert part of your factory or warehouse premises for use as a workers' dormitory or add a new extension building for workers' dormitory, you will need to obtain planning approval from the Urban Redevelopment Authority. A 3-year temporary permission may be granted if you fulfill all the requirements.

This quick guide helps you to understand URA's requirements better should you decide to submit a workers' dormitory proposal to URA for planning consideration.

### Workers' Dormitory in Factories or Warehouse Buildings

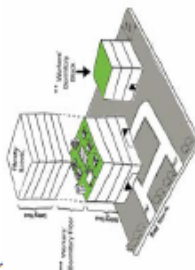
There are 2 different types of workers' dormitories that can be considered in factory/warehouse buildings. They are the Ancillary Workers' Dormitory and the Secondary Workers' Dormitory. They can be accommodated in a new separate building within an industrial/warehouse development, or they can occupy factory/warehouse space converted to dormitory use within the existing development.

#### Ancillary Workers' Dormitory

- House on-site workers (i.e. workers who are working at the factory.)

#### Secondary Workers' Dormitory

- House on-site and off-site workers (off-site workers do not work at the factory.)



Workers' dormitory can be located within a single-user industrial/warehouse development. For a multiple-unit industrial/warehouse development, it should be located as a separate whole block within the site.

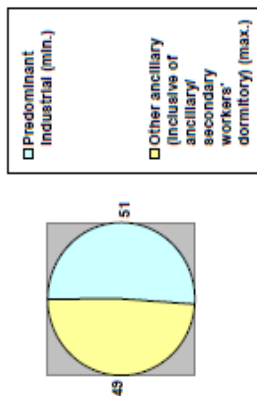
### Floor Area Quantum

For industrial/warehouse developments, 49% of the gross floor area can be used for ancillary uses such as offices, toilets, canteen or workers' dormitories.

Example:

- Proposed Ancillary Office Gross Floor Area (GFA): 500 sqm
- Proposed Ancillary/ Secondary Workers' Dormitory GFA: 480 sqm
- Proposed Predominant Production GFA: 1020 sqm
- Total Proposed Gross Floor Area: (a) + (b) + (c) = 2000 sqm

### Allowable Quantum



$$(e) \text{ Ancillary Quantum} = \frac{(a) + (b)}{(a) + (b) + (c)} \times 100\% \leq 49\%$$

### Where Can Workers' Dormitory be Located?

- Subject to planning evaluation.
- Secondary workers' dormitories are not allowed within 8 areas (Refer to <http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dc10-13.htm#appB> for details).

### How Many Workers can I House?

The maximum number of workers to be housed in a dormitory is subject to FSSB's technical requirements.

### Other Requirements

- Compliance with NEA's pollution control and other health & safety requirements, PUB's requirements on water and sewerage discharge and FSSB's technical requirements. Applicants are to obtain NEA's, PUB's and SCDF's prior clearance before submission to URA.
- No land or strata subdivision of the dormitories.
- Landowners' endorsement (e.g. JTC/HDB).
- Operators are required to provide basic amenities (such as living quarters, common toilets and dining areas) that meet the relevant authorities' requirements (PUB, NEA, FSSD, etc)
- For workers' dormitories within industrial or warehouse developments, operators are required to provide recreation amenities (e.g. multi-purpose room, gymnasium, reading/TV room and basketball court) based on the number of workers housed in a dormitory as shown below:

No. of workers housed in a dormitory	Minimum recreational amenities GFA (excluding outdoor recreational facilities)
50 to 300	50 sqm
301 to 500	76 sqm
More than 500	100 sqm
More than 100	Up to 20m <sup>2</sup> of GFA in the development may be allowed for commercial amenities eg. minimart, barber shop, ATM, etc

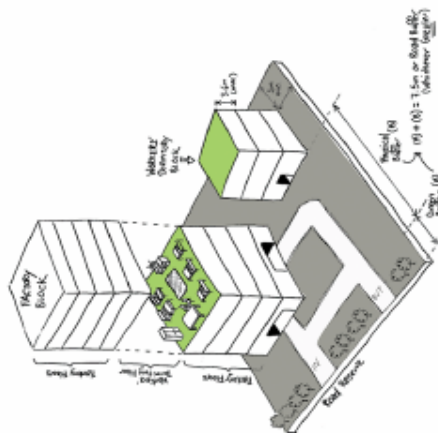
### What are the Main Development Control Planning Parameters to look out for?

For conversion of space within existing factory/warehouse developments to workers' dormitories, the existing industrial requirements will apply.

For new workers' dormitories blocks within existing developments –

Floor to Floor height: 3.6m (max.)

Building Setback: Front setback of 7.5m or road buffer (green and physical buffer) will apply, whichever is greater. Side and rear setbacks of 3m (min.) will apply.



For other planning parameters, please refer to the Workers' Dormitory Guidelines in the Handbook for Non-Residential Developments at [http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dcdmhb\\_00e4.htm](http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dcdmhb_00e4.htm)

### Key Agencies to Consult

National Environment Agency  
Hotline: 1800-2255 632  
<http://www.nea.gov.sg>

PUB  
Hotline: 1800-2846800  
<http://www.pub.gov.sg>

Fire Safety & Shelter Department  
Hotline: 1800-734-4308  
<http://www.scdf.gov.sg>

Ministry of Manpower  
Hotline: 6438 5122  
<http://www.mom.gov.sg>

Pre-submission checklist:

### In My Submission to URA, Have I...

	Yes/ No
Provided Landowner's Consent?	
Satisfied the Locational Criteria?	
Provided NEA, PUB & SCDF clearance?	
Given a clear floor area quantum breakdown?	
Complied with the relevant Development Control Planning Parameters?	
Indicated Ancillary/Secondary Workers' Dormitory in the Project Caption, Plans and EDA form?	
Indicated the number of workers?	

### Useful Links

Circular On Workers' Dormitories Within Industrial/Warehouse Developments  
<http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dcds-23.htm>

Making EDA submissions  
[http://edatool.ura.gov.sg/startnet\\_URASubmissionmake\\_submission.jsp](http://edatool.ura.gov.sg/startnet_URASubmissionmake_submission.jsp)

Applying for Change of Use  
<http://www.ura.gov.sg/oc/cou/coues/coues-index.htm>

Dec 2010

# Quick Guide In Submitting Workers' Dormitory Applications

Within Factory/ Warehouse Developments on Business 1/ Business 2 Zones

Brought to you by:



To make Singapore a great city to live, work and play in

Contact us at:  
45 Maxwell Road, The URA Centre  
Singapore 069118  
Hotline : 6223-4811  
Email : [ura\\_dcd@ura.gov.sg](mailto:ura_dcd@ura.gov.sg)  
Visit our website at : [www.ura.gov.sg](http://www.ura.gov.sg)

## **Appendix D: Disciplinary & surveillance measures within foreign worker dormitories**

“Paragraph 3.4.1

...

(f) There shall be reasonable access control measures to ensure that only persons who have been issued with identification passes are allowed within the premises of the dormitory. One of the measures would include deployment of security officers at all access points...They are to perform the following functions:

- (i) Regular patrols around the fencing to check on the state of the fencing
- (ii) 100% checks on workers leaving and returning to the dormitory for contraband items
- (iii) Enforce house rules stipulated by dormitory operator

(g) CCTV surveillance cameras are to be installed along the perimeter fencing, at entry and exit points, and at communal areas within the dormitory

...

(j) No activities in the dormitory that will cause disturbance to the residents staying near the dormitory are to be organized from 10.30pm to 7am

...

(l) The subtenant is to work with the respective Neighborhood Police Centers to conduct orientation talks on local laws and crime prevention tips for occupants of the dormitory

(m) Police are to be alerted promptly if a civil disturbance, inter-ethnic group clash or potential law and order situation is imminent

(n) The dormitory design shall avoid having dark and isolated corners

(o) The dormitory design shall allow housing units to be isolated by individual housing blocks (For example, while there can be sheltered walkways on the ground floor, there should be no sky-links between buildings). The stretch of corridors shall be kept within view at any point along each floor.

...

(r) The subtenant is to issue an identification pass to every worker residing at the dormitory. The pass shall have a serial number and the worker's photograph

...

(t) The subtenant shall devise a set of house rules to manage the occupants. The house rules should explore ways to minimize disturbance to the residents staying near the dormitory. The house rules shall include but not limited to the following rules:

- (i) Workers are to keep their volume low between 10.30pm to 7am daily
- (ii) Workers are not to litter or urinate at any public spaces both within and outside the dormitory
- (iii) Workers are to avoid congregating at void decks or near residential estates
- (iv) Workers who contravene house rules will be penalized. The operator will also inform the employers of the worker's transgression
- (v) No loitering in the vicinity of the dormitory
- (vi) Filming and photo-taking of the areas surrounding the dormitory are prohibited”

(Taken from Appendix III of the Kranji Lodge tender documents;  
Obtained via personal correspondence)

## Appendix E: Highlights of Master Plan 2008 (MP 08)

There are three highlights of the MP 08: conservation and identity nodes; the introduction of key growth areas, and the island-wide Leisure Plan. Each is discussed separately below.

### Conservation and Identity Nodes

Urban planning is ultimately about planning a home for people. Hence, heritage and identity play significant roles in retaining memories and sense of belonging for the people. With this in mind, URA's conservation program has helped to conserve more than 6800 buildings island-wide.

To move such efforts forward, the URA launched the Identity Plan in 2002, where local areas of significance to people were identified and improvements made to them. One key strategy of the MP 08 is to continue with conservation efforts and to build upon the Identity Plan to further endear the island to the local population.

### Key Growth Areas

One of the key highlights of the MP 08 is the introduction of the four key growth areas:

- 1) City Center, comprising of Tanjong Pagar, Rochor-Ophir and Marina Bay
- 2) Jurong Lake District (JLD)
- 3) Kallang Riverside
- 4) Paya Lebar Central



(Image taken from URA's website: [http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/growth\\_areas.htm](http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/growth_areas.htm), accessed on 16 Dec 2011)

Although there are multiple growth areas within the city center, Marina Bay is slated to be the 'crown jewel' of the nation, and the largest urban transformation of the city-state so far. Hence, information regarding the city center growth area will be limited to that of Marina Bay here.

The remaining key growth areas (JLD, Kallang Riverside and Paya Lebar Central) are all part of the state's strategy of de-centralization. De-centralization is seen as beneficial as it brings jobs and entertainment facilities closer to people, and balances economic growth throughout the island. Furthermore, reducing the need for people to commute will result in a more sustainable transport infrastructure.

The following table highlights the vision and other related information for each growth area.

Growth Area	Vision of the area	Key Components	Planning Strategies	Unique qualities
Marina Bay	A unique waterfront district that is a seamless extension of the existing Central Business District (CBD). It provides opportunities for both financial services, but also recreational and entertainment facilities.	<p>All developments surrounding the day constitute part of the growth area. However, key highlights include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Marina Bay Sands, an integrated resort comprising of hotels, retail, and convention centers.</li> <li>b) Marina Bay Financial Center (MBFC), a Grade A office development</li> <li>c) The Sail, a high-end residential development</li> <li>d) Gardens by the Bay, three waterfront gardens comprising 100 ha in total, set aside for enjoyment and recreational options</li> <li>e) Waterfront promenade</li> </ul>	<p>Urban grid pattern to ensure good connectivity and flexible amalgamation of land parcels</p> <p>Zoning strategic parcels of land 'White' to provide flexibility to developers for mixed-use developments</p> <p>Stringent urban design requirements such as night lighting plan and urban vistas</p> <p>State of the art infrastructure, comprising of 24/7 district cooling system and a comprehensive underground Common Services Tunnel (CST)</p>	<p>The bay forms the focus of redevelopment efforts</p> <p>Distinctive city skyline</p>
Jurong Lake District (JLD)	A lakeside destination for business and leisure	<p>Made up of two precincts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Jurong Gateway, a vibrant commercial area, comprising of office, hotels and retail</li> <li>b) Lakeside, a waterfront leisure destination comprising of boutique hotels, shopping, retail, dining, public parks and entertainment facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Creating new edutainment (education and entertainment) facilities</p> <p>Bringing the lake closer to people through waterways</p> <p>Lush landscaping</p> <p>Seamless commuter networks</p>	<p>The lake forms the focus of redevelopment efforts</p>

Kallang Riverside	Slated to be a residential and lifestyle hub	Area developed to take advantage of the following: a) Kallang River and its beach provide great opportunities for leisure and recreation b) Its proximity to the upcoming Sports Hub creates synergy for the development of a lifestyle hub c) Conservation of old Kallang airport for commercial and entertainment purposes	To capitalize on Kallang River, the existing beaches and public parks to create greater leisure and entertainment options  Conservation of old Kallang Airport for adaptive reuse	Kallang River  Conservation of old Kallang Airport
Paya Lebar Central	Bustling commercial center with a civic space highlighting the local Malay heritage	Predominantly commercial in nature, with a focus on providing alternative locations for offices  However, planners also seek to capitalize on the existing Malay heritage of the area. Hence, a civic center is slated to be developed with Malay architectural motifs and a possible gallery showcasing the history of the area	Provision of community spaces to enhance local identity and activities  Seamless connectivity by provision of covered walkways and pedestrian malls  Possible integration of Geylang River into developments and public spaces	Malay heritage and local identity

(Information collated from URA's website: [http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/growth\\_areas.htm](http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/growth_areas.htm), accessed on 16 Dec 2011)



### Leisure Plan

One of the key qualities of being a vibrant global city is the provision of quality leisure options. To achieve this objective, the MP 08 introduced the island-wide Leisure Plan, which covers recreational opportunities for peoples of all ages and interests. Three segments are identified:

- 1) The great outdoors: Here, the focus is on enhancing existing parks, building more park connectors and developing a round-island route which allows people to cycle or jog around the island in one day. Similarly, attempts are also made to integrate water bodies into recreational options, such as the use of Marina Bay or Kallang Riverside for sporting events (e.g. swimming, wakeboarding, etc)
- 2) 24/7 buzz: The provision of entertainment options in the city center, and the development of an arts and culture district in Bras Basah - Bugis area. The hope is that these facilities will rev up the night economy and rejuvenate the image of Singapore being an exciting, vibrant global city.
- 3) Unique destinations: Unique destinations such as the Southern Ridges (a network of trails leading from the hills to the waterfront) are also identified as leisure options for people to enjoy.



(Island-wide Leisure Plan, taken from URA's website:

[http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/playground/Leisure\\_plan.html](http://www.ura.gov.sg/MP2008/playground/Leisure_plan.html), accessed on 16 Dec 2011)

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