

Urban Insiders: Joint Efforts for Cities Research



Singapore-based researchers on city living had a chance to meet and share ideas at a Roundtable on Cities Research hosted by the CLC in December. Chaired by CLC Executive Director Khoo Teng Chye, the roundtable saw the participation of 22 centres including research institutes, universities and research divisions in Singapore agencies, each represented by centre directors or other senior representatives.

The main impetus for the meeting was to gather research centres whose work focuses on cities. While some centres engage in research that are relatively specialised and technical – such as climate change, building efficiency, sustainable urban development, high-density typologies, there are others such as the CLC and the NTU complexity programme which look at broader integrated urban solutions for cities. These latter provide general frameworks to understand the synergies and dynamics of ideas, solutions and policies.

Some observations from the three discussion sessions at the roundtable are:

Common Platforms for Research

Many research institutes and agencies point out that research data is not easily accessible, with cost and time required in data extraction, updating and sharing. At the same time, cities that have accessible data are often high up on the competitive

cities ranking. With proven benefits from data sharing, research institutes can work with agencies to develop accessible data and common platforms for such sharing.

The two main sharing components include research methodologies used in the various studies (e.g. the competitive ranking methodologies) as well as more general knowledge and information sharing. Sharing platforms include conferences, webinars and research study trips. Workshops or conference information can also be disseminated through a mailing list or newsletters.

Research on Quality of Life in Cities

The Roundtable observed that there is more scope for research on culture and liveability, as there is a gap between knowledge on physical dimensions on liveable cities versus the social and cultural dimensions. Institutes such as the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), NUS Asia Research Institute (ARI) and Resilience Policy and Research Unit, and National Security Co-ordination Centre (NSCC) are working on social research on cities.



With the ongoing Population Debate and Our Singapore Conversation, it is also clear that issues of higher density and liveability are increasingly important and relevant to the Singapore context. CLC, Centre for Sustainable Asian Cities (CSAC) at the School of Design and Environment and LKY Centre for Innovative Cities (CIC) are particularly focused on the topic of density and liveability.

Whole-of-Singapore approach to an Innovative City

The Roundtable concluded with members commending CLC for initiating the Roundtable. All agreed that there is a need to link governance and social policies with sound technical and design solutions.

In particular, Singapore has made deliberate, conscious efforts at being a hub for urban solutions. While the research centres vary in their work - from being Government-focused, Singapore-focused, to working on regional and international

studies of cities - a whole-of-Singapore approach towards sharing of knowledge is necessary to achieve creative and innovative urban solutions for cities.

Moving forward, future Roundtables on Cities Research will be rotated among research institutes, with Future Cities Lab (FCL) of Singapore-ETH Centre (SEC) hosting the next in 6 months' time.

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