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URBAN SOLUTIONS

Interview

Ahmed Aboutaleb
Benny Lim

Opinion

Emi Kiyota

Essay

Ratna Omidvar
Louisa-May Khoo

City Focus

Cape Town

Case Study

Singapore
Vienna
Tianjin



Living with
Diversity

A biannual magazine
published by

CENTRE for
LiveableCities
SINGAPORE

International Leaders in Urban Governance Programme

5-9 JUNE 2017 | SINGAPORE

The UN-Habitat and the Government of Singapore¹, under the ambit of the Singapore Co-operation Programme² are committed to supporting governments in activating their urban potential through the International Leaders in Urban Governance Programme (ILUGP). The programme will discuss urban policies, planning and legislations, urban financing, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda as well as Singapore's successful urban practices and model of urban transformation.



MOU signing between Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Ministry of National Development and Ministry of Home Affairs, Desmond Lee and UN-Habitat's Executive Director, Joan Clos, with support of African leaders to collaborate on capacity development programmes at the Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016.

featuring

The ILUGP will cover a number of modules related to high-density and high-liveability urban development. The programme brings experienced practitioners from both the UN and Singapore to discuss typical urban issues such as Integrated Master Planning, Dynamic Urban Governance, Sustainable Environment, Transport & Mobility, Parks / Waterways development, Financing a city, Housing, Land management and much more.

The ILUGP will:

- support cities to plan, innovate and implement projects to catalyse change;
- provide clarity on the SDGs and how to achieve them as well as share Singapore's Liveability Framework and best practice examples;
- assist cities to understand financing sources and models to execute projects;
- provide city leaders with the knowledge, skills and tools that will enable them to lead change in their cities' urban planning, thereby contributing directly to achievement of the SDGs;
- encourage cross sector knowledge exchange to develop sustainable cities through integrated long term planning and dynamic urban governance;
- support city leaders work through specific project challenges based on best practice;
- monitor and evaluate these projects for continuous improvement;
- promote peer-to-peer learning and networks among city leaders.

The sharing by practitioners will be complemented by Action Planning sessions when participants work on their city's priority urban challenge in consultation with mentors and practitioners from the Singapore government and the UN.

¹ Represented by the Technical Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development.

² The Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) was established in 1992 to serve as the primary platform through which Singapore offers technical assistance to other countries.

A joint programme by



programme details & requirements

The ILUGP is a 5-day residential urban governance programme in Singapore.

The inaugural programme is designed for city leaders and senior officials from African cities³.

selection criteria

- Cities undergoing rapid urbanisation and facing challenges related to mainstreaming and monitoring SDGs. Cities should submit a paper describing 1-3 specific problems related to urban management that they wish to tackle in their city over the next 12 months.
- Participants should be city leaders at the level of mayors, governors, and head of metropolitan areas, provincial governments with executive responsibilities in urban development and management.
- A strong interest in implementing change and willingness to commit to implementing a post-programme action plan.
- A good, working knowledge of English as all sessions will be conducted in English;

³ Eligible African cities from:

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

⁴ Includes accommodation, per diem, hospitalisation insurance, local airport transfers, and daily transfers to and from the training venue.

cost

Sponsorship for accepted applicants is available for programme fees and hospitality⁴ in Singapore. Participants need to only cover the cost of their return airfare and visa fees.

application

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URBAN SOLUTIONS is a bi-annual magazine published by the Centre for Liveable Cities. It aims to equip and inspire city leaders and allied professionals to make cities more liveable and sustainable.

Set up in 2008 by the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) has as its mission “to distil, create and share knowledge on liveable and sustainable cities”. CLC’s work spans four main areas—Research, Capability Development, Knowledge Platforms, and Advisory. Through these activities, CLC hopes to provide urban leaders and practitioners with the knowledge and support needed to make our cities better. www.clc.gov.sg



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Embracing Diverse Cities

Social diversity comes in many forms—ethnicity, religion, age, gender, ability, nationality or socio-economic status. This is something many cities grapple with. Singapore, for one, was plagued by inter-ethnic violence in the 1960s, but as CLC Special Advisor Benny Lim explains in his interview, it is now hailed as a model of social harmony.

Social diversity continues to evolve, brought about by fresh waves of immigration, an ageing population, heightened wealth and income inequality, and a growing sensitivity towards gender differences and disability. Through interviews with city leaders, case studies, guest articles and CLC's own research, this issue of *Urban Solutions* explores how cities can address the challenges and exploit the opportunities of living with diversity. Three themes emerge in our articles:

Equitable access: governments play a key role in providing physical and social infrastructure equitably to all. We profile Cape Town's use of urban planning, public transit and social housing to overcome apartheid's legacy. Our Vienna case study shows how design interventions can address the mobility needs of women, children and the elderly. And in his interview, Rotterdam's Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb shares how education creates opportunities for the children of migrant workers with little education.

Platforms for interaction: beyond equity, spaces and opportunities for interaction across diverse groups are also important. CLC researcher Louisa-May Khoo's essay shows how Singapore's deliberate efforts to mix residents of different income, ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics

in the same housing estates has been especially effective. Copenhagen's Superkilen park also shows that the gathering of diverse groups in shared spaces as equals can be powerful. Migrant integration programmes in Toronto and Wellington as shared by Canadian Senator Ratna Omidvar in her essay provide more examples, in the form of mentoring by local professionals or welcome ceremonies hosted by indigenous communities.

Empowerment: as Dr Emi Kiyota argues in her opinion piece, we should empower marginalised groups to contribute to the community, rather than making them dependent on aid. Canadian Senator Ratna Omidvar highlights how Munich encourages migrant entrepreneurs, who contribute to the city's economy. Singapore's Enabling Village and GoodLife! Makan both empower target groups to be autonomous. China's Universities for the Third Age and the Ibasho project from Japan encourage seniors to get involved in self-help—running courses in the former, or a cafe in the latter, to serve other seniors as well as the wider community.

We appear to live in more divisive times, but I hope this issue of *Urban Solutions* can help inspire us all to find ways to embrace the richness of our different communities. I wish you all an enjoyable read.

Khoo Teng Chye

Executive Director

Centre for Liveable Cities



Mayor Ahmed
Aboutaleb,
Rotterdam's first
Muslim mayor.



INTERVIEW

Ahmed Aboutaleb

The We Society: Giving Each Other Space and Care

Rotterdam's mayor **Ahmed Aboutaleb** moved to the Netherlands when he was 15. In this interview, Europe's first Muslim mayor of a non-Muslim majority city in modern times shares his vision of a "we" society, where people give each other space for even radical ideas while also looking out for one another.

What are the social issues that Rotterdam faces?

The major challenge of my city is education. Like all port cities, we had a lot of domestic migration, and then international migration. We now have 174 nationalities, with all the religions and cultures of the world. A lot of people come to Rotterdam to work in the port, and they are poorly educated.

If we want to compete with the other cities in Europe—as a knowledge-based economy—we have to invest in human capital.

I'm happy to work in a democracy. But if I were a dictator and I had 10 euros to spend, the first euro would be on education, the second also on education and the third too. It's really important for the future of the city.

“ If I were a dictator and I had 10 euros to spend, the first euro would be on education, the second also on education and the third too. It’s really important for the future of the city.”

What can other cities learn from Rotterdam when it comes to combatting poverty?

Cities cannot combat poverty if they don’t invest in human capital. I’m willing to accept, with pain in my heart, that a man in his 50s is living on the edge of poverty, with around 1,500 euros (US\$1,570) a month. We cannot change his social conditions, which could be due to poor education, mental illness or other reasons. But I cannot accept that his daughter, who is 13 years old, will fall into the gap of poverty. I can do nothing to change the situation of such a man, but I can do a lot to change the situation of his daughter.



The best thing we can do is invest in the talents of such a kid. The moment you know the talent of such a kid, you might trigger directed investments, say in sports or music if those are her talents, or in writing or math. In Rotterdam, we expanded the number of hours that children receive in math and language education. We go above the national curriculum of eight hours a week by keeping primary schools open for longer hours. There are a lot of projects in the world that keep schools open for longer periods for dance or music. We do it to invest in language and math. In some areas, we have organised six to 10 additional school hours in primary schools. We encourage parents to speak and practise Dutch at home more often.

Tell us more about the recently launched “we” society movement.

Our philosophy involves a “we” community, because “we” is strong, but “I” is weak. We have a debate in Europe about youngsters travelling to the Middle East to join ISIL to fight for the “right” cause. In an interview, I said the “we” society provides space for all citizens. I always do this [links hands with fingers intertwined] when I talk about “we” society. Rotterdam has space for everyone, even people with radical ideas. I welcome people with radical ideas. For many years in the Dutch parliament we had the “Political Party of Radicals”. Radical ideas can be of great importance to how society develops. The only group we do not welcome is people who believe they have the right to use violence.

01

01 Schoolchildren practise their language skills through games in a Taaltuin (language garden).

02 Mayor Aboutaleb talks about the “we” society during his World Cities Summit 2016 interview.

03 *Droom and Daad* (Dream and Deed), by Mayor Aboutaleb on the “We Society”.



02

The citizens of Rotterdam are striving for co-existence without social tensions, polarisation, violence or killing. We want to live in a “we” society, where people from different cultural backgrounds respect each other and have consideration for the circumstances of others.

So the “we” community is really a philosophy of how to create a community that takes care of each other. Imagine if I took care of my neighbours to my right and left. If we all did the same, then we would be covered—the entire city would be covered. There wouldn’t be a need for government intervention. There are a lot of government interventions to take care of our elderly. Why shouldn’t we ask citizens to do that? I’m now travelling with one of my assistants. He is taking care of his neighbour, a woman in her 80s. He has the key to her house, and he checks on her every day or two—he knocks on her door and asks “How are you today?”

I wrote a small book in Dutch about this “we” society. Within a few weeks it became a bestseller. There is a hunger in our society to examine the best options to organise more solidarity in our cities.



03

Why are citizens so important in the running of a city?

I cannot run the city without my citizens' support. Citizens have the ideas and they know what is needed in their own neighbourhood better. If you give them some power, they will come up with very interesting and sustainable solutions. I started engaging citizens in 2009. We would meet in public buildings, such as schools, and I would bring along the chief of the police, the chief prosecutor and the leaders of the services that we provide. We would ask the citizens, "This is what we know about your neighbourhood; these are the statistics. Do you agree with our interpretation of the statistics and what is going on in your neighbourhood? If not, tell us."

I have been working with the citizens in the west of the city, to come up with a plan for their neighbourhood. That took two years. The community did the designing, the writing, the math, and came up with the plan on their own. After some negotiation, we ended up with a plan for 10 million euros (US\$10.46 million). It was delivered to and accepted by the city government. We are about to enter into the implementation phase soon and my city council has asked me to start a new initiative in another neighbourhood.

If you design this plan yourself, you will spend three to four million euros, just for design, without laying a stone on the streets. That's the fascinating thing about running the city with citizens—they know far better what is needed, and they have better ideas. If you engage them, they will take care of the project because they have ownership of the project.

What is one issue that you would like to share with other city mayors?

There is one recent issue: how we deal with the refugee crisis. When an earthquake happens, there is always a system of response from the international community. For example, the Netherlands is part of the USRT system [Urban Search & Rescue Team]. Press a button and a lot of things happen. We charter an aeroplane; specialists go in; and firemen, searchers, dogs and a lot of support comes from around the world to affected places. Fantastic.

But when something happens that creates a huge group of a few million refugees, these places cannot handle that. It doesn't matter how rich the country is, as there is such a huge influx in such a short period.

We have an international treaty for refugees, a very old-fashioned treaty to support an individual. If you flee from your country and you come to my country, we will host you, interview you and see if you have the right to use that article. That is meant for individuals; it was never meant to handle three million people at once. So we need something different to deal with refugees.

I would be happy if we try to find a system of response to help cities that are experiencing such a huge influx. We have the United Nations, but their response is always too late, too little and too political. Today, eastern Turkey, Amman, Lebanon and Athens desperately need support. Tomorrow it may be my city, Paris or Madrid. I would be happy to see whether there will be the discussion among cities to organise, not political, but practical support.

**“Citizens have the ideas
... if you give them some
power, they will come up
with very interesting and
sustainable solutions.”**



01



02



03



You've said that newcomers need to integrate and that "integrating is participating". How can we encourage refugees or any new migrants to integrate?

In a city like Rotterdam, which has so many different nationalities, it is vital to have an open dialogue. It is extremely important that we maintain this dialogue. Expressing our feelings of fear, irritation and frustration is the first step towards understanding each other. It is also the first step towards shared hopes, ideals and dreams. I have faith in the one thing that unites us all—the love for our city.

We can encourage refugees and other newcomers by organising such open dialogues: show them which opportunities we can offer for them to take part in society; and explain to them how our society works and what are the basic elements required to join the society. For example, learning Dutch is important. Being able to communicate in the native language opens doors to the labour market and speeds up social integration. There are lots of places they can learn the language quickly; every day on the streets in dialogue with the citizens is probably the best way.

Which city do you admire most, and why?

New York is really a good example when it comes to multi-culturalism. You could say that New York City is already practising the "we" society as it was built, over decades, on the shoulders of migrants. The open society, the welcoming hand, the warm feeling you get there makes you want to be part of it. It's where you can start selling cookies and end up as CEO of a company. I think that every city can learn from that. ●

-
- 01 Everyday interaction in public places such as markets will help newcomers integrate into society.
 - 02 The mayor's office organises Date je College annually, where citizens can engage government officials on any issue.
 - 03 Events like Rotterdam Unlimited are organised to celebrate Rotterdam's cultural diversity.



Benny Lim, former
Permanent Secretary
of the Ministry of
National Development.



INTERVIEW

Benny Lim

Rebooting Nation Building in Singapore

Benny Lim began his 37-year public service career in the Singapore Police Force and rose to become Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Security Coordination Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, and Ministry of National Development. In this interview, he reflects on the limits of Singapore's social harmony, and advocates rebooting nation building efforts to address the inevitable tensions of increasing diversity.

What key principles have guided Singapore's approach to living with diversity?

Singapore enjoys a level of racial harmony that many observers describe as exceptional. Without detracting any significance from this achievement, I think it is useful to locate this observation against both historical and living contexts.

Singapore's commitment to be a nation that belongs to all Singaporeans regardless of ethnicity is a product of

political ideology, choice and circumstance in history. From the outset, the concept of a multi-ethnic nation of citizens with equal citizenship rights has been a cornerstone of the national ideology.

Indeed, one may argue that this fundamental difference between Singapore and Malaysia made separation [into two nation-states] inevitable.

Generally speaking, in the first two decades of independence, nation building was prioritised. Initiatives such as



communal engagement, mass campaigns, National Service, and overarching symbols of unity and national values, such as the Pledge, weaved a common ideological fabric across diverse identities. English was chosen as the common language of administration and meritocracy enshrined as the organising principle in determining the advancement of citizens.

Singapore's governance framework was centred on a secular state, which offered protection through the rule of law to all citizens. Tough laws were applied robustly against those who threatened communal peace. On matters of well-being, however, the State was prepared to provide special support to the minorities like the creation of statutory bodies and special provisions in Constitution. This reflected a pragmatic appreciation of the difficulties of the minorities to otherwise compete against the dominance of the Chinese majority.

What our history tells us is that we did not arrive at this state of ethnic harmony without conscious design, perseverance and effort. Central to that effort is the creation and development of a national identity called the Singapore citizen and the development of a governance framework that has maintained ethnic peace by cultivating public acceptance and trust.

In the last three decades, with political stability and order, our priorities on nation building seemed to have taken a back seat. Racial and religious harmony continued to be prioritised—but discretely and not as an integral aspect or part of a larger purposive nation-building enterprise.

Where has Singapore done well and which area needs more work?

If you measure communal harmony by the number of inter-ethnic conflicts, then you could say we have succeeded.

Our justice system has played a crucial role. Surveys on public confidence in government institutions typically find the police and courts at the top of the list. Confidence in the integrity, impartiality and professionalism of our law enforcement agencies and judiciary is very high.

From my own experience as a police officer, conflict between actors of different races in Singapore seldom leads to serious violence or rioting. Instead what usually happens are calls to the police by both parties or an observer and, regardless of the ethnicity of the police officer who

01 Singapore introduced the compulsory conscription of male youths into national service in 1967.

02 Interactive public installations in 2012 featured lines from Singapore's national pledge.



“With political stability and order, our priorities on nation building seemed to have taken a back seat.”





01 Residents of a housing estate at a community durian party.

02 "Kallang Roar" refers to boisterous cheering by football fans of Singapore's football team.

arrives, there is trust and confidence in his or her intervention. This restraint rests on both the effectiveness of deterrence in strict laws against violence, especially race-based violence, and the trust in the authorities to dispense justice fairly.

Over time, the ideal and the value of ethnic harmony have come to be accepted and supported by most citizens. Polls consistently confirm this consensus.

However, I wonder if what undergirds this consensus is not radically different from why Singaporeans value the safe and secure low crime environment we have. Peace, safety, order and the danger of ethnic fault lines sparking tension and conflict are well appreciated by Singaporeans.

If this is so, and our ethnic harmony rests mainly at this level of consensus alone, and is not both anchored by deep personal bonds of trust, mutual understanding and by a strong national identity, then we need perhaps to think about the strength and resilience of this ethnic harmony and reflect on its limits.

In your opinion, what have been the most successful government initiatives in bringing different communities together?

In terms of urban and physical planning, I think the most important programme has been our public housing estates by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). I believe that the HDB heartland, where more than four out of five Singaporeans live, is a shared universe that is diverse in many ways and yet similar in so many concerns through the sharing of daily experiences in a common space.

For these reasons, I think we should focus our community building activities in the HDB heartland. Such activities should not dwell self-consciously on just promoting inter-ethnic bonding. We have to ask how we can get people to form real bonds of trust and friendship and cultivate reflexes for empathy and tolerance.

Crafting the right programmes that resonate with the ground is key. Grassroots leaders tell me that their durian parties are always over-subscribed by residents and certainly multi-ethnic in appeal. In the heyday of our Malaysia Cup [football] campaigns, the Kallang Roar was as spontaneous as it was multi-ethnic in voices! Such activities or programmes should engage the wider community, with multi-ethnic participation as one of its desired, but not necessarily declared outcomes.

Many perceive a backlash against immigration in the West. Do you see this happening in Singapore?

Singaporeans' concerns over foreigners arose when they perceived unfair treatment. Policy shifts in the last five years have done much to address such grievances. Jobs and job opportunities is the domain where such anxieties may still persist; crowdedness and congestion seem to have become less of a source of acute angst.

I don't think Singaporeans want to do away with foreign workers who build their homes and train lines, support their families with housework or take care of their frail elderly. Moreover, the proportion of citizens marrying foreign nationals has been consistent and is more than one in three in 2015.

01



Having said that, I believe we can do more in the integration of new citizens. We ought to give more thought to our engagement programmes, or even evaluate how integrated a person has become in our society, as a consideration for citizenship. For instance, we may want to consider a term Permanent Residency (PR) system where those who choose not to be citizens when eligible can be reverted to employment pass. In this case, they can continue to live and work here but with no right of permanent stay, and can leave when they retire or stop working. This is a tweak and formalises the current round-about-regime of fixed term Re-entry Permits. It calls a spade a spade and makes PR a commitment towards citizenship¹.

What are some of the difficulties in physically accommodating an increasingly diverse population, such as NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) sentiments, and how we can address them?



As a general principle, public interest should not be held hostage to self-centred individual interests, especially when there is no encroachment of the lawful space they own. We should be prepared to take a decision, agree to disagree and proceed.

At the community level, there is a real need for some kind of conflict resolution mechanism. Complaints about noise, for instance, are one of the most common complaints by residents to the police. However, unless it clearly breaches existing laws of nuisance or health codes, there is really little that the police can do when called upon. There is a practical need to boost our capability to mediate such conflicts in a community-centric way.

02

¹ Currently, Permanent Residents require Re-Entry Permits, which are renewed for up to five years each time, to return to the city-state from trips abroad.

A key issue of living with diversity is fostering social cohesion and resilience in the face of threats like terrorism. How did the initiatives you were involved in address this?

I was involved with establishing the Community Engagement Programme (CEP), the predecessor of the current SG Secure movement. The CEP was an effort to create an operational structure across various key domains to coordinate and manage response so that social cohesion is maintained during crises. One of its aims is to identify and train an activist cadre in each domain—workplace, schools, constituencies—to be the first responders when an incident occurs. This was based on the observation that in most disasters, it was always the people on site who saved the most lives, because no matter how fast the firefighters or police can arrive, they would always be slower than those already there.

Another objective was that through the frequent emergency exercises, we would be able to build a network of trust and mutual confidence among the key actors, who can be relied on to maintain calm in their respective domains following an incident.

The idea for the recently opened Harmony in Diversity Gallery came from the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), a body that has worked to promote inter-faith dialogue for peace and understanding since 1949. The gallery showcases the common strands that are found in all the religions in Singapore and also succinctly explains how the framework of maintaining religious harmony works in Singapore.

Its real potential resides in the engagement programmes that will be developed in partnership with others in the community and in the public service.

“When class and ethnic lines coincide and reinforce each other, the challenge will be compounded.”

Looking ahead, what are the key challenges to integration facing Singapore in the next 20 to 30 years?

The challenges to social cohesion in the future may not just come from the latent cleavages of multi-ethnicity but also from the fault lines of class. When class and ethnic lines coincide and reinforce each other, the challenge will be compounded.

Also, race today may be less salient than religion as a source of potential divisiveness. The rise of religiosity has been observed in many countries. In Singapore, it has led to an even more plural religious landscape, with differentiation occurring within religious communities.

This diverse terrain has reduced the reach of the traditional religious elite’s authority. In turn, their effectiveness as mediators in inter-religious conflict may decline.

The State will have to be relied on even more to hold the ring. It needs to step up its resources and capabilities to manage this complexity. The challenge will not just be to manage competition between groups but more their demands against the State and society for concessions to their interests interpreted as their fundamental rights.

01 Mr Lim (second from right) at a typical hawker centre exhibit in the Harmony in Diversity Gallery.

02 Block parties are organised to welcome residents to newly built public housing.



01

How can Singapore be better equipped to deal with these?

“Dialogic” conflict resolution requires the parties to be able to define their interests and then negotiate and come to an acceptable solution rationally. However, when interests are pursued as rights based on ideological-religious grounds, the dispute is more deep-seated and needs to be resolved either

by “imperative” or “ideological” conflict resolution means.

Imperative conflict resolution requires contending parties to respect an authority to judge and to accept his verdict. The courts work this way; respected patriarchs too. Ideological conflict resolution requires a supra-ideology to which contending parties subscribe to. Civic nationalism is the most common form of this in the modern state.

01 Graphic recording of issues discussed at the National CEP Dialogue 2015.
 02 To Benny Lim, founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's death triggered a reflection of what it meant to be Singaporean.



02

Hence, maintaining public confidence in the justice system and cultivating national identity, pride and loyalty are ways to develop resilience in the face of our growing diversity and the tensions that come with it.

While we have paid much attention to good governance, I think we can do more for nation building. If the ideal of a multi-ethnic Singapore citizenry is to remain a cornerstone of our national ideology, we need to promote it as an integral part of nation building, of a unitary national identity based on citizenship. It is a good time to reboot our nation building efforts: on the ground, SG 50 [Singapore's year-long celebration of 50 years of independence] and the passing of our founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew have already given this process of self-discovery and re-discovery for our younger and older generations respectively, a jump-start. ●

“Confidence in the justice system ... national identity, pride and loyalty are ways to develop resilience in the face of our growing diversity...”



OPINION

Viewpoint: Emi Kiyota

Loneliness Cannot be Solved with Accessible Ramps



By focusing on providing care or physical infrastructure for the elderly, we lead the elderly to feel even more dependent on others.



The elderly are a marginalised group in many cities. **Dr Emi Kiyota** argues that over-reliance on government help increases the sense of isolation and helplessness in the elderly. She believes instead that civil society is best placed to provide the social infrastructure needed to integrate the elderly, an approach that can apply to other groups as well. Dr Kiyota is the founder of the not-for-profit organisation *Ibasho*, which works to create sustainable communities that value their elders.

Issues such as integration are both a political and a community issue. Most of the time, we focus on physical infrastructure, but infrastructure can also be social in nature, and we have not invested enough in that. This is where civil society can play a key role.

For example, we currently have physical infrastructure like elevators or institutional care like adult day care for the elderly. The government should provide the physical infrastructure, because this is something the community cannot provide by themselves. But in some cities, ageing hits before the economy can grow, and so some governments may not have the resources. Long-term institutional care is also not possible financially because it is so expensive.

More importantly, by focusing on providing care or physical infrastructure for the elderly, we lead the elderly to feel even more dependent on others. People also begin to expect the government to provide for everyone, but each person should take the initiative to be independent and create their own community—this is something that the government cannot do. A lot of the elderly say: “I’m lonely, the government will have to do something.” This is not the government’s role—loneliness cannot be solved with accessible ramps. Moreover, this attitude perpetuates the stigma that the elderly are a burden and cannot contribute to society.

Current eldercare is also very healthcare-related and “top-down,” with younger professionals telling elders what to do and treating them like broken human beings. The reality is that the elderly do not like this, so we are basically providing expensive care that nobody appreciates. This is horrible from a government’s point of view.

The elderly know their own issues and challenges best—we should be seeking their input, or even engaging them as experts, to provide them with the care they need. This also shows them how they can play a part in taking care of themselves.

In some Asian countries, villagers may be poor but they are much happier, especially the older people, because they are well respected. They have a very strong sense of community and role in society for the elderly. As they have lower expectations of the government, they are also more self-organised. So this is something that we can learn.

Disability is not just due to an inability to do something; it is also determined by our physical environment and social norms. To integrate the elderly—and other marginalised groups—social perceptions must change.

Civil society can play a significant role in educating people on this. At Ibasho, we seek to integrate the elderly into the community by empowering them. Older people tend to be satisfied with receiving their pension and

“The key contribution of civil society in integrating the elderly is not in constructing buildings, but in changing social perceptions.”

relying on their children. So we encourage the elderly to want to do more in society, and show them how they can be role models. We give them concrete examples, because it is hard for them to imagine anything else—they have been conditioned to believe that they are helpless.

It is very important that a third party such as civil society does this. It is tricky if the government promotes empowerment, because some think “the government has money, and has done this before, so they should do more,” and do not feel they have to work on it.

Civil society can also bring in the participation of the people. I like to challenge people about “PPP” (public-private partnerships). It should be “PPPP”, with “people” in the equation. I also like to encourage developers and the government to leave spaces in developments for the community to be creative. Design will always become obsolete, but with a space where people can change things, their needs will always be met. This also enables the elderly to actively come up with solutions.

I started Ibasho by applying my previous practical experience in nursing home and hospital design. We work with the government to provide more care and services, and help identify opportunities where the elderly can

be better engaged to meet their psychosocial needs. We also work with the community so they can create their own support systems, and help them realise that caregiving for one’s parents can be a positive experience, not a burden.

The key contribution of civil society in integrating the elderly is not in constructing buildings, but in changing social perceptions. Seeing elders as assets is a principle that can be applied anywhere. Yet, how we use the wisdom and experience of elders differs from place to place, because each has different skills and talents. It starts with pilot projects, research, training the elders and wider community, and creating toolkits for them to spread the concepts. That is the role of civil society. We can be very effective in leading small projects; the local community will then scale up. This is what is happening for our projects in the Philippines and Nepal.

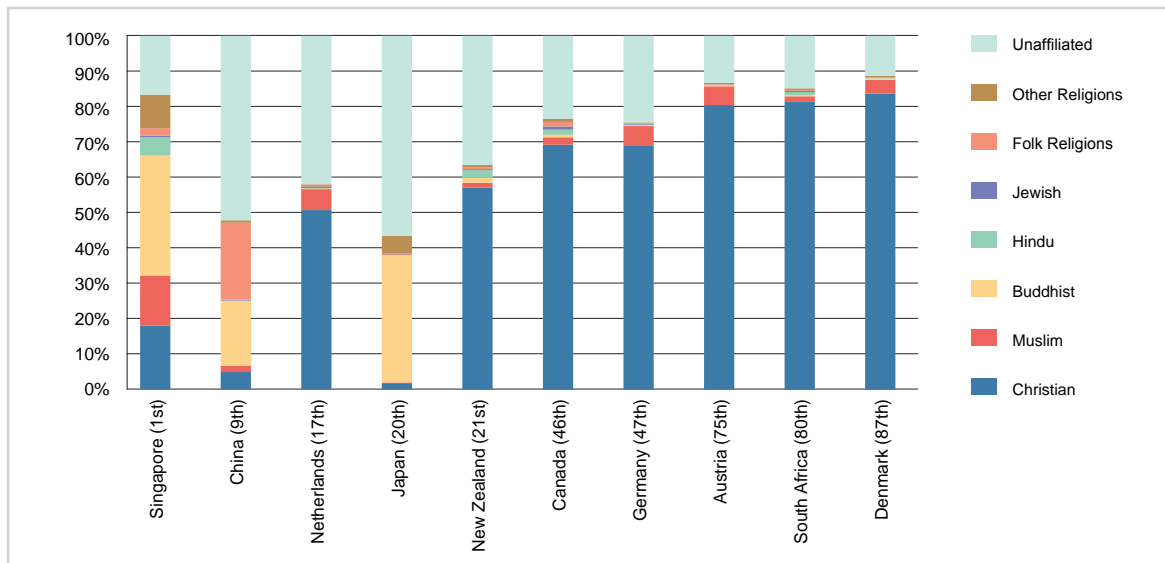
Similarly, this can be applied to all who tend to be marginalised: people with disabilities, minority groups or refugees. Civil society can help set up completely different types of “Ibasho” throughout the world for all groups of people. They just need to be centred on a core belief—that each group can be an asset to the community. ●



Social Diversity Indicators

A World of Differences

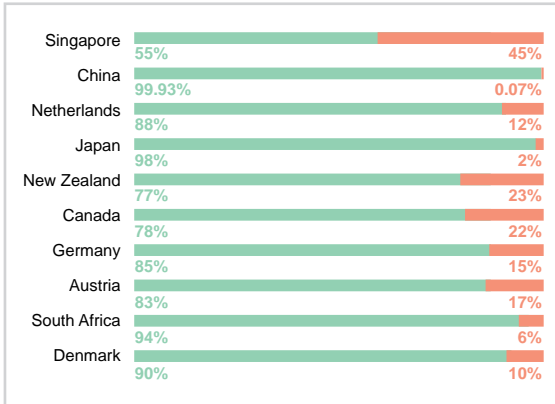
Diversity takes many shapes and forms. Issue 10 of *Urban Solutions* looks at what living with diversity means for cities. A city's social diversity can refer to ethnicity, religion, nationality, age, disability, gender or income, among other indicators. The following charts survey different aspects of social diversity in the 10 countries featured in this issue of *Urban Solutions*.



Religious Diversity by % of Population

The Pew Research Center's *Religious Diversity Index* (RDI), published in 2014, ranked over 200 countries and territories by looking at the percentage of each country's population that belong to eight major religious categories. The closer a country came to having equal shares of the eight categories, the higher its score on the RDI.

Source
Pew Research Center's *Religious Diversity Index* (RDI), 2014. Based on 2010 data. The countries' RDI ranking is indicated in brackets.

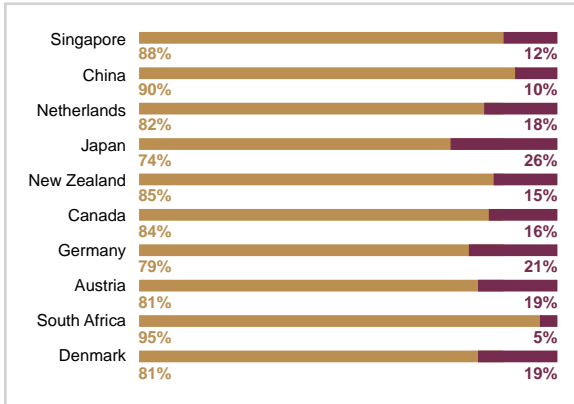


Migrant Diversity by % of Population

The United Nation's latest International Migration Report, published in 2016, provided estimates of 232 countries' proportion of foreign-born population, based on official figures on country of birth.

Source
UN International Migration Report 2015.

■ Non-Migrants ■ Migrants

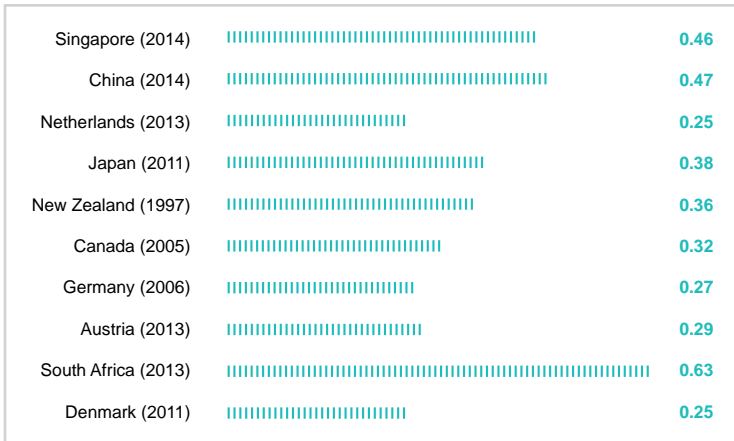


Age Diversity by % of Population

The World Bank estimated the age distributions of 200 countries based on the United Nations Population Division's *World Population Prospects* report, published in 2015.

Source
The World Bank. Based on 2015 data.

■ Below 65 years ■ 65 years and above



Income Inequality

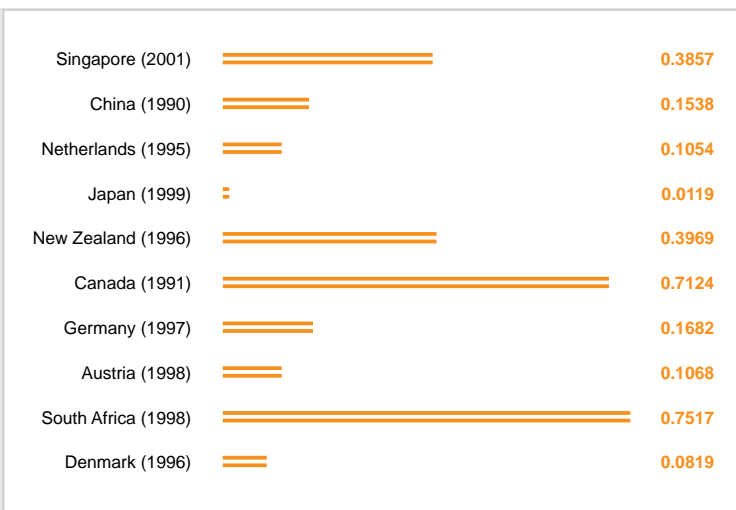
The World Factbook tabulated the Gini Coefficient of 145 countries, which measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. The closer the coefficient is to 1, the more unequal a country's income distribution.

Source
CIA's *The World Factbook 2016*. The year from which the data is obtained from is indicated in brackets.

Ethnic Diversity by Fractionalization

In 2002, the Harvard Institute of Economic Research published a paper on "ethnic fractionalization" (EF) in 190 countries. EF refers to the probability that two random people drawn from the population belong to different ethnic groups. Probability is measured on a scale of 0 to 1. The higher the probability, the more diverse the country's population.

Source
Harvard Institute of Economic Research *Discussion Paper No. 1959 - Fractionalization*. The year from which the data is obtained from is indicated in brackets.





ESSAY

Immigration

Prospering Together

Cities with large migrant populations have shown that they can achieve shared prosperity and economic growth when they embrace and integrate newcomers. The Cities of Migration programme has been collecting case studies from around the world to showcase innovative and practical solutions so that other cities can adapt and replicate these good integration ideas.

Immigrants overwhelmingly choose to migrate to cities; consequently, the local experience plays a defining role in their settlement. Yet, too often, the immigration discourse focuses solely on the levers of national policy as key instruments in selection and integration. National governments play a major role in setting the terms of immigration and citizenship, selecting potential immigrants and developing strategies about how immigration will build the nation, both socially and economically. But too often, national policy informs an abstract public discourse that fails to account for the realities of lived experience.

Local policymakers have a critical role to play. As the famed urban theorist Jane Jacobs wisely observed, the level of government closest to the people is best positioned to serve the people. Indeed, around the world, cities are on the front lines of immigrant integration. Indeed, as our research at Global Diversity Exchange and Cities of Migration have shown, many municipal governments are already leading the way with innovative policies and programmes that ensure that immigrants are welcomed and integrated into their new hometowns, where they can contribute to the local economy and culture.



Ratna Omidvar is a Senator of Canada, as well as the founding Executive Director and currently Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Global Diversity Exchange (GDx).





A DiverseCity onBoard consultation session to identify board and committee candidates from under-represented migrant communities.



“Recognising that diversity without equity would not create the inclusive city they wanted, the city challenged itself to reflect the city’s diversity across all areas, and levels, of work.”

Welcoming Diverse Leadership

The suburban community of Richmond Hill, north of Toronto, attained its multicultural identity and urban status almost overnight. Once a small town, its population not only doubled to 185,000 within 20 years, but the proportion of visible minorities increased to constitute almost half of the community. This rapid change created challenges both for long-time residents (some of whom resisted the change), and for newcomers (who often reported feeling unwelcome).

The response of the town’s leaders was direct: in 2007, they embarked on a new strategic plan guided by the motto, “We are a welcoming community.” To ensure all voices in the community were heard, the town held consultations including open houses, ethnic forums, youth contests and surveys, as well as informal conversations with leaders from diverse communities.

However, the leaders recognised that more work would be needed to make the town and its governance more inclusive. To ensure its citizen committees reflected the area’s varied demographic, the town approached the DiverseCity onBoard programme to discuss how it could progress towards its goal.

Launched in 2005, DiverseCity onBoard is a social enterprise that bridges the diversity gap in governance by connecting public institutions to the talent they need for competitive growth and urban prosperity. This is done by identifying qualified candidates from under-represented immigrant communities for appointments on the governance bodies of public agencies, boards, commissions, committees and voluntary organisations. From a pool of more than 1,700 candidates, DiverseCity onBoard has matched over 800 individuals to board and committee positions at more than 700 organisations to date.

Eager to replicate this successful community engagement process, Richmond Hill partnered with DiverseCity onBoard early on in its citizens’ committees appointment process. The new appointments process opened doors to citizens who might otherwise have never become involved in municipal governance. Visible minorities now account for nearly 25% of the membership of all citizen committees. In 2010, DiverseCity onBoard recognised Richmond Hill with a Diversity in Governance award for embracing diversity in board governance and making it a priority to recruit board members from diverse backgrounds.

01 Diversity Day Celebration at Redstone Public School in Richmond Hill, Toronto.

02 The diversity charter for Copenhagen’s inclusion policy, *Engage in Copenhagen*.

03 Copenhagen’s Diversity Charter organises several events such as the Eid festival for Muslims.

Creating More Opportunities

A 2010 analysis by the City of Copenhagen showed that while the City's public service sector had grown in tandem with the increased number of Copenhageners with an immigrant background over the previous decade (from 11.5% to 22.2%), the majority of these public employees held low-skilled jobs.

Recognising that diversity without equity would not create the inclusive city they wanted, the city challenged itself to reflect the city's diversity across all areas, and levels, of work.

Inspired by the diversity agenda set by the City of London for the 2012 Olympic Games, as well as the seminal French Charte de la diversité, now replicated in Germany and Spain, the City of Copenhagen developed its own Diversity Charter in 2011. The Charter actively engages the business community to affirm the campaign's three guiding principles and make Copenhagen the "most inclusive city in Europe"

Companies, educational institutions and non-profit organisations that sign the charter pledge to "promote the quality of life and growth in Copenhagen" by:

- making diversity the norm in their organisation;
- contributing to the public conversation so that diversity is seen as an asset; and
- supporting initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion and fight discrimination.

Cities are not only major employers, but also major buyers in local economies. So in 2007, when a City of Copenhagen audit revealed that 15,000 private sector suppliers with a total turnover of approximately 6.5 billion Danish kroner (US\$913 million) were accounted for in sales to the council, the city responded with a proactive procurement policy. The municipality introduced mandatory "social clauses" in any municipal contract with suppliers of goods and services that exceed the value of half a million kroner (US\$70,204), in order to prioritise suppliers that employ targeted categories of disadvantaged workers. As the country's largest employer, the City of Copenhagen models a positive approach to diversity at home and nationally, providing leadership through good recruitment and diversity management practices in its own offices.





01

Mentoring Skilled Immigrants

Without professional networks or contacts, many new immigrants struggle to find work that reflects their experience, skills and education. In the eyes of Canadian employers, job applicants with foreign credentials and work experience may come across as untested and pose a potential hiring risk.

With more than half of Toronto's population made up of immigrants, labour market inclusion is vital to the prosperity of Canada's largest city. So talking about the importance of immigrants to the region's economy is not enough for the City of Toronto—the administration is leading by example. Since 2004, the City has invited members of the Toronto Public Service to volunteer as mentors to skilled immigrants through its Profession to Profession mentoring programme.

The programme matches city staff with skilled immigrants in similar professions for a four-month mentoring experience that focuses on building professional networks so that the immigrants can learn more about their profession and workplace culture in Canada. Providing

job search advice and support through mentoring helps to ease newcomers' transition into the job market.

The City of Toronto's senior management have championed the programme and opened the workplace to skilled immigrant mentees. Mentors volunteer on "company time" and are encouraged to invite their mentees to attend professional development sessions with them. The mentors, many of them immigrants themselves, have found the programme useful, with some mentoring more than 10 skilled immigrants. Some mentees also move on to become mentors to new immigrants. The City hosts an annual recognition event, as well as mentor networking sessions to further enhance the mentor and mentee experiences.

The City developed its mentoring programme with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and its mentoring partnership, a collaboration of 13 community delivery organisations and 27 active employer partners. As of March 2016, the Mentoring Partnership has matched over 13,000 skilled immigrants with 8,000 Canadian mentors across the city.

01 An orientation on mentoring for City of Toronto employees.

02 Senator Ratna Omidvar (second from left) with Toronto Public Service mentors (holding plaques) who have mentored 10 or more skilled immigrants.



“Mentors volunteer on ‘company time’ and are encouraged to invite their mentees to attend professional development sessions with them.”





01

Connecting with New Migrants

The Marae Welcome Programme offered new immigrants a chance to connect with the culture and people of their new home at their local *marae*, or Maori meeting house courtyard. The programme was offered through Wellington's newcomer services to people who had lived in New Zealand for less than five years and was a key strand of the broader Wellington Regional Settlement Strategy (WRSS).

The programme connected newcomers to New Zealand's indigenous people and helped them understand the significance of Maori culture. Activities included educational workshops on the Treaty of Waitangi (the founding document of New Zealand as a nation), and on Maori culture, language and history. Interpreters were on hand to bridge the language barrier among participants.

The Marae Welcome Programme was delivered through partnerships between local government and Maori *iwi* (tribes) in each of five participating municipalities. *Marae* leaders worked with WRSS government advisors to ensure an optimal experience for newcomers and meaningful dialogue with the Maori people. Municipalities provided publicity and recruited participants through local settlement support coordinators working within each city council.



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The programme connected newcomers to New Zealand's indigenous people and helped them understand the significance of Maori culture.

Feedback from participants and their Maori hosts had been enthusiastic. Local *marae* reported that their experience had helped connect them with newcomer communities.

The partnership model also strengthened connections between municipalities and local *marae*, and created a valuable context in which all parties could come together to discuss the impacts of migration and the changing demographics of local communities. After three years of funding, the Marae Welcome Programme has ceased, but five *marae* continue to welcome newcomers by incorporating citizenship ceremonies into their annual Waitangi Day activities annually, which commemorates the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Reaching Out to Migrant Entrepreneurs

Munich, the third largest city in Germany, takes its economic success seriously. In a city of 1.45 million residents with over 35%

01 *Marae* visit as part of the WRSS Marae Welcome Programme.

02 New migrants sampling traditional Maori food during a *marae* welcome visit.

03 City of Munich's Phoenix Prize award ceremony.

04 Saina Bayatpour, recipient of the Phoenix Prize in 2015.



03

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of migrant background, this also means recognising the importance of migrant enterprises. The city estimates that the more than 12,000 migrant-run businesses have contributed to the employment of over 100,000 people from all walks of life.

Since 2010, the City of Munich has awarded the Phoenix Prize at an annual gala to recognise five winners who exemplify “outstanding economic achievements and social responsibility efforts of migrant enterprises”. The Phoenix Prize is one of four components of the Migrant Entrepreneurs in Munich (MEM) programme, run by the city’s Department of Labour and Economic Development.

MEM’s migrant entrepreneurship programme has four pillars: providing assistance; helping with qualifications; creating dialogue; and promoting recognition. Launched in 1999 to provide training for established migrant entrepreneurs and their employees, the programme has grown to include specialised services to help new and emerging entrepreneurs get started, develop business plans, or help them assess their qualifications and further training needs. Other offerings include a training course on how established entrepreneurs or business leaders can mentor young entrepreneurs and pass on the required knowledge and relevant skills needed to succeed in the labour market.

Outreach remains a critical part of MEM’s ongoing success. This includes growing a

network of successful migrant organisations, businesses and leaders who are keen to foster migrant entrepreneurship in Munich. The diversity of MEM’s office staff provides ready access to a pool of foreign language skills and knowledge about informal communities and networks. This helps them recruit new clients from districts that have a high percentage of people with migrant background.

MEM is now considered Munich’s information and counselling hub for business development in the city’s migrant communities. It helps small business operators, employers and future entrepreneurs to build bridges with mainstream institutions. MEM team members are increasingly sought after to share good practices on migrant entrepreneurship at local and international conferences and seminars.

We know that civic leadership matters. Where you see a newcomer population thriving in an inclusive way, you see leaders in city government, in local business, in community organisations and institutions showing the way. For there is no doubt that leadership matters, whether it comes from the head of the city government or from other, sometimes surprising, places in the community.

As the examples in this article demonstrate, local governments in leading cities are taking action to encourage conditions that welcome and integrate immigrants into economic, social, and political life. Drawing on these analyses, we hope you will find new ideas to inspire your work in your own city. ○



Inclusion through Intervention

Living with Diversity the Singapore Way

When it comes to ensuring the harmonious integration of Singapore's diverse ethnic, religious, nationality, income, age or disability groups, nothing is left to chance.

Singapore is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multiple. As a small sovereign city state without a hinterland nor natural resources, galvanising the people to gel as a community has been fundamental to Singapore's success story. As the founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew shared in his memoir *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story*, his biggest challenge was “how to build a nation out of a disparate collection of immigrants from China, British India and the Dutch East Indies.” This, coupled with a significant foreign population that has been attracted to Singapore to live, work and study, has created super-diversity in today's Singapore.

Like many modern cities, Singapore also faces the issues of an ageing population and growing income disparities. These test the resilience of its social fabric. But unlike many cities where instances of cultural intolerances are rife, and different social groups lead separate, seemingly “parallel lives”, Singapore has managed to foster a community of togetherness—a *Singaporean intercultural “habitus”* (how people tend to think and act based on socialisation)—despite the differences. What are some of the key principles that have guided Singapore's model of living with diversity?



Louisa-May Khoo is adjunct researcher at the Centre for Liveable Cities.





Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan Jin (far right in green) at the opening of Bishan-Ang Mo Kio's inclusive playground.



Setting the Frame, Building Bridges

The 1960s and 1970s were tumultuous times for Singapore. Beleaguered by an Independence precipitated by racial politics, and founding years embroiled in ethnic riots, Singapore verges on the obsessive when it comes to managing ethnic relations with institutional measures. Singapore's constitution was thus founded on the concept of equal rights, where rights and freedoms cannot be classified, defined and distinguished in terms of race, language or religion. Mr S. Rajaratnam, in his speech to Parliament on the Report of the Constitutional Commission in 1967, reiterated that since rights and freedoms are the same for all citizens, minorities need not shield themselves with so-called minority rights, and that the democratic principle of equal rights is the most practical safeguard against tyranny by the majority. Multiracialism, meritocracy, the use of English as a lingua franca, compulsory primary school education in a secular public

school system, and national service for males at 18 years serve as the pillars to build bridges across divides. While these pillars set the frame, strategies had to be put in place to ensure that living across difference was not just about high-level policies and political discourse, but also translated in concrete ways that have become internalised as part and parcel of everyday life in Singapore.

Embedding “Software” in “Hardware” to Achieve Social Goals

The public housing programme, which houses 80% of Singapore's citizen population, became the key vehicle through which this was achieved. In *A Chance of a Lifetime: Lee Kuan Yew and the Physical Transformation of Singapore*, Professor Chua Beng Huat, a sociologist who worked with the Housing and Development Board (HDB) when early flats were being built, recalled: “My personal story is a testament to the idea that the HDB has heart, and has always been concerned about people's everyday lives ...



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“I saw an ad in *The Straits Times* that the HDB was looking for a sociologist. So I went to see Liu Thai Ker (then CEO of HDB). I asked: ‘Why do you need a sociologist?’ ... he said, ‘I don’t know what the sociologist would do but I know I need one’ ... obviously, he knew he was building housing for the whole nation, but it wasn’t just a physical structure that was being built. The HDB had to consider the everyday lives of Singaporeans, because the physical environment was going to influence their lives in very serious ways. So, he knew he needed to worry about that, even though he didn’t necessarily know where to begin.”

Thus, in building flats, it was not just about the physical structure but how the environment affected people’s way of life. The mix of housing types (rental and owner-occupied flats ranging from 1-room to 5-room units) within each HDB town was important. It encompassed the spectrum of the poor and middle classes to prevent ghettoisation.

“Singapore verges on the obsessive when it comes to managing ethnic relations with institutional measures.”

In contrast to many cities where public housing tends to concentrate the socially disadvantaged groups, Singapore’s housing estates—while predominantly designed for public housing—have some private housing developments. Everyone, regardless of type of housing they live in, has equal access to public transportation and facilities such as shops, markets and parks. This principle of spatial equity underpins the quality of everyday life and public spaces necessary for a fair society.

01 The racial riot in 1964 highlighted the need for tolerance and acceptance in Singapore.

02 Public (left) and private housing (right) surround a school in a residential estate.

“Everyone, regardless of type of housing they live in, has equal access to public transportation and facilities such as shops, markets and parks.”



Every town's full range of facilities provides porosity for people living within and at the fringes of the HDB estate to inadvertently encounter each other when they access these facilities. Schools, clinics, libraries, *kopitiams* (local cafes), markets, shops, hawker centres, playgrounds and parks have become "third-places"—spaces outside the home and work that people are familiar with and which help them get through the day.

Singapore's varied ethnic cuisines are also co-located at hawker centres, local coffee shops and markets. Not only does this ensure that people of all races have convenient and equitable access to the food they like, it also encourages the act of eating together while sharing a table despite dietary differences.

These shared spaces are the everyday anchors that foster the convivial spirit and enable diversity to become commonplace through the opportunities made available for inter-group mixing.

The most far-reaching of Singapore's social interventions is the Ethnic Integration Policy, which leaves nothing to chance. It ensures that each neighbourhood and block is racially mixed by stipulating racial quotas that correspond to the ethnic composition at the national level. The aim is to prevent ethnic enclaves from forming. Thus, a particular ethnic group would not be able to buy a flat if their quota has been reached for that particular block and neighbourhood.

As then PM Lee Kuan Yew explained: "We had to mix them up. Those who say we should cancel these restrictions ... just don't understand what our fault lines are and what the consequences can be.

These are safeguards we have put in, which have prevented the communities from fragmenting and being alienated from one another." The belief was, and continues to be, that putting people of different races together would compel them to interact, and hence understand one another better.

Schools in HDB towns have naturally become integrative spaces as most children from different races and backgrounds go to schools close to their homes where they learn to interact across diversity from a young age. These attitudes carry over into the spaces of everyday life. Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam considers Singapore's education and housing policies the lynchpins of social cohesion and equity. In an interview at the St Gallen Symposium in 2015, Mr Tharman noted that "once people live together, they're not just walking the corridors everyday ... Their kids go to the same kindergarten, they go to the same primary school ... and they grow up together ... where you live matters ... it matters tremendously in the daily influences that shape your life".



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01 Children playing together at a playground.

02 A wide range of hawker centre stalls caters to all dietary needs.

The design of micro-spaces takes the effort to foster integrative communities a step further. The ground floors (“void decks”) of HDB blocks are designed as informal social spaces for residents to chat and for children to play. They are important social sites that have become quintessentially Singaporean—it is common to see Chinese funerals and Malay weddings held at void decks, sometimes even simultaneously. The proliferation of kindergartens, student care centres, senior citizen clubs that occupy part of void deck spaces further encourage chance encounters between residents. Beyond the ground level spaces, “courtyards in the sky”, which are common corridors that link neighbours, and rooftop gardens introduce more communal spaces for interaction.

Promulgating the “Kampong Spirit”

Whilst the State can envisage and institute a framework of harmonious co-existence with policies, tools and props, it is up to people to foster the “kampong spirit”—a term that refers to the neighbourliness and community cohesion that often marked *kampongs* (local villages) of yesteryear. As Dr Liu Thai Ker, former CEO of HDB and Chief Planner of Singapore put it: “I have built you the kampong, show me the kampong spirit.”

The Community In Bloom scheme is one example that has fostered this spirit. NParks, the national agency responsible for parks and gardens, established frameworks and guidelines to make it easier for groups to set up community gardens. To date, some 1,000 community gardens have fostered community spirit and brought 25,000 residents of diverse backgrounds together as recreational gardeners.

Fostering Collective Identity and its Challenges

In cities where differences among classes and ethnicities are so stark that it makes communal living impossible, Singapore has managed to craft a model that has enabled people of different backgrounds to co-exist in harmony. Managing diversity in the Singapore context is deliberate and concerted—backed by an institutional apparatus supportive of equity across difference. A good distribution of public amenities and the provision of communal spaces have served as social levellers that have ameliorated differences, leaving no group feeling like the underclass.

Despite these measures, a survey in August 2016 on race and racism in Singapore, conducted by Channel NewsAsia and the Institute of Policy Studies, reported that nearly 50% of respondents recognised that racism can be a problem and judged new immigrants as more racist than Singaporeans.

Alongside racial cleavages, diversity has now taken on cultural and local/foreign dimensions. As new and old sit uneasily together, cultural adjustments can become flashpoints for conflict.

In 2011, a “curry war” erupted when a migrant family from China complained about the wafts of curry emanating from an Indian Singaporean neighbour’s apartment. The mutually-agreed mediation outcome was that the Indian family would cook the aromatic dish when their neighbours were not home. When this was reported, the issue bubbled over into one of nationalistic pride as Singaporeans perceived the outcome as unfair. Amidst the negativity, a Singaporean rallied others to “Cook and Share a Pot of Curry” to help newcomers appreciate local cultures.

01 Events at void decks of public housing range from funerals to weddings.

02 Five families gather along the corridor of their flats to break fast.

03 Programmes like Community in Bloom bring neighbours together for a common purpose.



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These incidences and the survey on racism are reminders that the work on diversity and inclusion are never quite done.

As a global city that attracts migrants from the world over and has an increasing number of inter-ethnic marriages, Singapore will need to build on the foundations it has put in place to manage an increasingly diverse society.

The transnational challenges of security threats and unemployment woes due to disruptions in the economy will test Singapore's social resilience. And as people direct their anxieties at the foreigner

stranger, xenophobia might rear its ugly head. Nonetheless, there are everyday delightful examples that remind us that the “kampong spirit” is very much alive in Singapore—such as Muslim families inviting their non-Muslim neighbours to “break fast” with them during Ramadan season at their common corridor outside their homes.

Amid the fast paced city life where routines can grate, taking individual responsibility to promulgate a curiosity towards learning about others, a spirit of inclusivity, and a practice of everyday conviviality can shape a collective culture that engenders a more socially progressive society and liveable city for all. ●



CITY FOCUS

Cape Town



Reintegrating a Post-Apartheid City





Worlds apart: crowded informal settlement (right) alongside Hout Bay's wealthy homes (left).

For 50 years, apartheid rule cleaved Cape Town along ethnic lines, resulting in a physically and socially divided city. Today, the city is working to overcome the legacy of a highly oppressive and discriminatory administration in myriad ways, including urban design and public investments.

Some months ago, American photographer Johnny Miller published aerial images of Cape Town that evoked strong reactions. Each showed a contrast between housing types and income groups. On one side were clusters of small, tightly packed homes in dusty, squalid conditions; on the other side—buffered by scrubland, a sliver of a highway or a park—were beautifully designed condominiums and large homes, bathed in leafy, lush environs.

The aerial images bear out the legacy of South Africa's apartheid policy, which displaced non-white people to peripheral townships where access to public services and jobs was poor. Apartheid may have ended 20 years ago but today, it continues to impact the city's spatial planning.

“The apartheid legacy continues to impact the [people's] opportunities. The face of poverty largely remains black,” said Cape Town Mayor Patricia de Lille. “[Apartheid] also impacts integration because many people lived most of their lives hating each other because of institutionalised racism. This intensifies the challenge already posed by urbanisation.”

Fifty years of racism, discrimination and inequality have affected not just the city's landscape, but crucially, its psyche. Today the city is working hard to overcome its past.

One way has been to tap urban design—the very thing exploited to segregate people. Cape Town's central train station, built in 1966, was designed to segregate white commuters from non-whites. In 2010, the architectural barriers were demolished, resulting in an open and naturally lit space that represented the democratisation of the station.

In June 2016, seven footbridges were named after local heroes who not only influenced the culture and character of the city, but also bridged divides across communities in their fight to end apartheid. Capetonians were also invited to propose names of people whom they felt enriched the city's cultural and historical heritage.

Beyond the symbolic, the city aims to become an inclusive city, where every resident feels they have a legitimate stake in the city's future.

“Given South Africa's fractured history of entrenched discrimination and oppression, the need to emphasise the importance of our diversity and employ means to bring different communities together is critical for a thriving society,” said Mayor de Lille.

One way of breaking down barriers is to physically link the city and allow people to move freely and connect with each other. To enhance mobility, the city is investing in public transportation systems, such as the new Integrated Rapid Transit bus system called MyCiTi.





Apartheid-era segregation between white and non-white commuters at Cape Town Train Station.



Now, the forecourt of Cape Town Train Station is a pedestrian-only, all-day accessible public space.



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“[P]oor residents spend up to 40% of their salaries on travelling to work,” said Mayor de Lille. “[It gives] the previously disadvantaged a safe and affordable way to travel across the city to economic opportunities.”

The service, which is seeing increasing usage, now has 40 routes, 42 stations and more than 700 bus stops. “This service is used by the rich as well as the working class,” added the Mayor.

The city is also moving to help the disenfranchised own property for the first time. During apartheid rule, non-white residents were not allowed to buy property.

“[T]his would be empowering and also give residents a sense of belonging, which is the central tenet to creating an inclusive city,” said the Mayor.

Eight large-scale social housing projects will be built between 2017 and 2019, at an estimated cost of over R250 million (US\$17.8 million). Considerable investment has also gone into improving and extending free or highly subsidised services like clean water, electricity, public

toilets, sanitation, and refuse removal into informal settlements.

Going further, the city council adopted the Transit-Orientated Development (TOD) Strategic Framework in March 2016. This prescribes all new developments to address apartheid spatial inequality, urbanisation and the high cost of public transport, while stimulating economic growth.

“Essentially, we are reimagining a Cape Town ... that works more efficiently and effectively, for all our residents. This is definitely going to be a legacy which continues to exist ... well into the future,” said Mayor de Lille.

An inclusive city also means a city where people are not economically excluded.

“The sad reality of the apartheid legacy is that it’s left large sections of the population unemployable,” said Mayor de Lille. “They now lack the basic education and skills denied to them in apartheid. As much as we want gainful employment from the private sector, that cannot be the reality for many.”

01 Mayor de Lille at a ceremony in which footbridges were named after local Cape Town heroes.

02 MyCiTi provides accessible, affordable transport for all Capetonians.

03 An all-female road repair team under the EPWP’s Women at Work programme.



“Beyond the symbolic, the city aims to become an inclusive city, where every resident feels they have a legitimate stake in the city’s future.”





Among the measures to address employability is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which hires unemployed residents for public works projects. Since 2011, Cape Town has created almost 16,000 EPWP work opportunities, paying R555 million (US\$40 million) in direct wages.

“Our research indicates that these wages are ploughed directly into local businesses, creating local economic development within their communities,” added the Mayor.


Like many big cities, homeless people live on Cape Town’s streets. The city, together with NGOs, has increased its support to street people over the years, from running shelters and soup kitchens to providing supplies. Two Capetonians collaborated with the Napier Haven Night Shelter to set up the Street Store, which lets the homeless pick out free donated outfits. The pop-up store concept has since been replicated globally.

Last October, the city hosted its second conference on World Homeless Day that brought social workers, city officials and street people together. There, the

homeless were given the stage to voice their needs. The city responded with a timeline to equip street people with skills to raise employability.

The journey to becoming an inclusive city cannot be achieved without its residents. Last year on Human Rights Day, Cape Town launched its Inclusive City Campaign with a tagline “Don’t let racists speak for you”. It urged residents to call out racism when they see it. The Inclusive City desk would then investigate and offer to mediate between conflicting parties.

“We know that the majority of residents are not racists and we mobilised them to drown out the racist individuals who were being given the power to shape wider perception,” said Mayor de Lille. The campaign also promoted residents’ rights and organised dialogues to talk openly about racism.

With increased awareness on rights and of existing prejudices, Cape Town hopes it can emerge from the darkness of apartheid to realise its vision of becoming an Inclusive City. 

01 The Street Store gives homeless people a dignified shopping experience.

02 Mayor de Lille speaking at the launch of the Inclusive City campaign.

03 Events such as the Cape Town Carnival celebrate the city’s rich cultural diversity.





CASE STUDY

Singapore | GoodLife! Makan

Cooking Up a Community

Delivering social services to the doorsteps of seniors who live alone may increase their sense of helplessness and isolation. To draw the elderly out of their homes and to give them a sense of purpose, voluntary welfare organisation Montfort Care set up the GoodLife! Makan community kitchen where seniors come together to help themselves and others.

The Challenge

It might seem surprising that a relatively youthful city-state, which recently celebrated 50 years of independence, should already be concerned about a rapidly ageing population. Yet, Singapore's population has aged at a rate faster than most cities. Today, the elderly (residents aged 65 years and over) forms 12.4% of the resident population and the total number of seniors is projected to more than double to 900,000 in 2030.

What is equally troubling is the growing number of elderly living alone, which is estimated to increase threefold from 29,000 in 2011 to 92,000 by 2030. An increasing number of singles and the

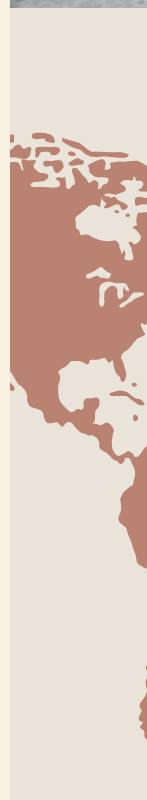
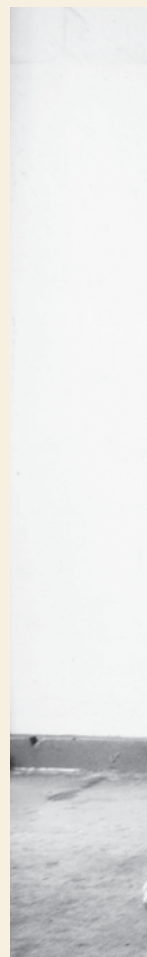
preference to maintain independence from children have contributed to the surge in seniors living alone.

Gerontological studies have emphasised the negative impacts of living alone, citing associations to increased mortality, independent of health statuses. Elderly living alone may also face social isolation and perceived loneliness which in turn, also increases mortality risks.

Social support for seniors living alone in Singapore—organised meal deliveries, home help and befriending services for example—often comes from the community. However, these services



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To prevent social isolation, the elderly who stay alone should engage in activities outside their home more.





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are often delivered right to the elderly's doorstep, leading to concerns that they would become even more cocooned in their flats.

Although there are dedicated Senior Activity Centres (SAC) that provide information, assistance and social activities for seniors living in rental flats, their efficacy depends on the frequency of usage by the individual.

Some studies have highlighted that extensive help and support given to the elderly may even result in a sense of helplessness, in turn increasing depressive symptoms.

Thus, the challenge is to find ways to support these seniors who live alone, without increasing their sense of dependency and allowing them to maintain a sense of autonomy.

The Solution

The Marine Parade neighbourhood is a mature estate with a high senior population. The rental flats, especially, have a large number of seniors who live alone. Montfort Care, a voluntary welfare organisation, which has been providing community-based support to the Marine Parade community for 16 years, reaches out to these seniors by providing assistance and healthcare to those with one or more chronic illnesses.

However, there were concerns that the seniors would be at risk of social isolation given their limited interaction with fellow seniors and residents in the neighbourhood. In 2015, hoping to go beyond the traditional forms of support for elderly living alone, Montfort Care (supported by the Ministry of Health,

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- 01 Seniors help to dry plates and cutlery before their meal.
 - 02 Full-height glass doors allow natural light into the kitchen while heightening the sense of transparency.
 - 03 The kitchen's open concept showcases the active seniors interacting and learning new skills.



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the Agency for Integrated Care and the Tote Board Community Health Fund) decided to change the approach towards social support for these seniors. Instead of treating them as passive recipients of help, it began to cultivate a social environment of self-help where seniors are empowered and encouraged to contribute to the community.

GoodLife! Makan (the Malay term for “eating”) community kitchen was thus born out of this desire to empower and to draw out seniors who are isolated from the community. Situated conveniently at the void deck of a block of rental flats, it is an open kitchen with full-height glass doors that are opened completely during the day. This borderless concept is a significant shift away from conventional elderly centres that are gated. The open kitchen showcases what the seniors get up to daily – highlighting them as active contributors and not passive recipients.

Every morning at 10am, 40–50 seniors would stream into the 360-square-metre kitchen to prepare the day’s meal for themselves. They would decide what they will have for lunch, who will go shopping at the nearby market and who will take charge of the different stages of preparation. Only two or three Montfort staff would be present to assist them so as to give the seniors a greater sense of ownership. The kitchen was designed for seniors of different backgrounds and profiles, with designated cooking stations for Muslims and non-Muslims.

Bright, airy and colourful, the open kitchen is a vibrant and welcoming space that encourages curious passers-by to find out more about the place, and draws other residents to interact with the seniors. Not only does it encourage seniors to take ownership of the space, it also reduces the social stigma associated with going to an elderly centre.

**“Bright, airy and colourful,
the open kitchen is a vibrant
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encourages curious passers-by
to find out more about the place,
and draws other residents to
interact with the seniors.”**





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The Outcome

What might have been another typical, gated elderly centre where seniors passively receive their meals—unseen by others—has been redesigned to become a vibrant, active space for the elderly to interact and build friendships, learn new skills and rediscover a sense of purpose. It has also transformed the way the community lives and interacts with the seniors: senior volunteers have been actively baking goods for the needy seniors at GoodLife! Makan and some stallholders from an adjacent food centre voluntarily supply fresh produce free of charge to the kitchen.

As a testimony to the refreshing and innovative design, GoodLife! Makan was recently conferred “Best Project constructed under S\$2 million” at the 2016 SIA Architectural Design Awards by the Singapore Institute of Architects.

GoodLife! Makan has inspired other neighbourhoods in Singapore, such as Tampines and Hong Kah North, to start their own ground-up initiatives for the elderly in the community, using similar concepts of providing open



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and empowering spaces for seniors. The programming and design of GoodLife! Makan has instilled a confidence that our community spaces can support seniors as they age in place. As the CEO of Montfort Care, Mr Samuel Ng, puts it, we can create “a community that is redefining ageing and living”. ○

01 Seniors are eager to take charge of cooking, with minimal help from the volunteers.

02 The kitchen provides seniors with a space to engage in activities, such as colouring.

03 GoodLife! Makan has designated cooking stations for Muslims and non-Muslims, but seniors eat together at the same table.



CASE STUDY

Vienna | Gender Mainstreaming

Sharing a Fair City

Twenty five years ago, Vienna's urban planning landscape was dominated by male urban planners and architects. As such, the concerns of women, children and minority groups were not adequately reflected in the city's urban design and architecture. This imbalance began to change when the city adopted gender mainstreaming as a way to create a fair city shared by all.

The Challenge

In the mid 1980s, "gender mainstreaming" was adopted as a gender equality policy tool for the United Nations and the European Union. This meant considering the situations of both genders, and changing frameworks and structures that led to inequality.

At that time, urban planning in Vienna was still dominated by men. Although female architects were involved in designing and planning housing projects to a modest degree, they had never been invited to participate at the urban planning level.

But as awareness of gender mainstreaming increased, change began to happen. In 1991, Eva Kail, a young urban planner in Vienna, was invited by a women's

organisation to hold an urban planning workshop. She asked participants to describe their housing situation, how they moved in the city, the places they liked as well as the places they feared.

"The importance and significance of public space became evident in the workshop," recalled Kail, in an email interview with *Urban Solutions*. Their sharing led to the exhibition, "Who owns public space?—Women's Everyday Life in the City," by the Viennese planning department. This showcase highlighted women's concerns, such as safety and ease of movement, at the official city planning level for the first time. It generated considerable media coverage and public interest.





The streets of Mariahilf district in the 1980s with their narrow sidewalks.





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The Solution

Following the seminal exhibition, the city set up a Women's Office in 1992, with Kail as head to look into gender-specific planning issues. Six years later, a Coordination Office, again headed by Kail, was set up to work across 12 planning and traffic departments to ensure fairer urban development.

The Women's Office addressed the issue of gender-sensitive housing first by assembling a team of female architects to draw up requirements for the first women-friendly public housing project in 1993. It then held the first "women-only" design competition to select a female architect for the job. The result was the first

Women-Work-City (*Frauen-Werk-Stadt*) housing estate designed by Franziska Ullmann.

Completed in 1997, the model project, which had 360 units, was designed to be car-free with underground parking lots while kitchens or family rooms faced the courtyards or play streets. These features gave parents peace of mind about their children's safety as they played outdoors. A kindergarten, daycare nursery, clinic and shops in the estate added to the convenience for both working and stay-at-home mothers. A second Women-Work-City project, completed in 2004, focused more on intergenerational living with assisted living units for the elderly.

01 Women-Work-City's courtyards are visible from the surrounding units.

02 Resselpark's fully-illuminated bicycle stands provide greater safety for women after dark.

“This showcase (*Women’s Everyday Life in the City*) highlighted women’s concerns, such as safety and ease of movement, at the official city planning level for the first time.”





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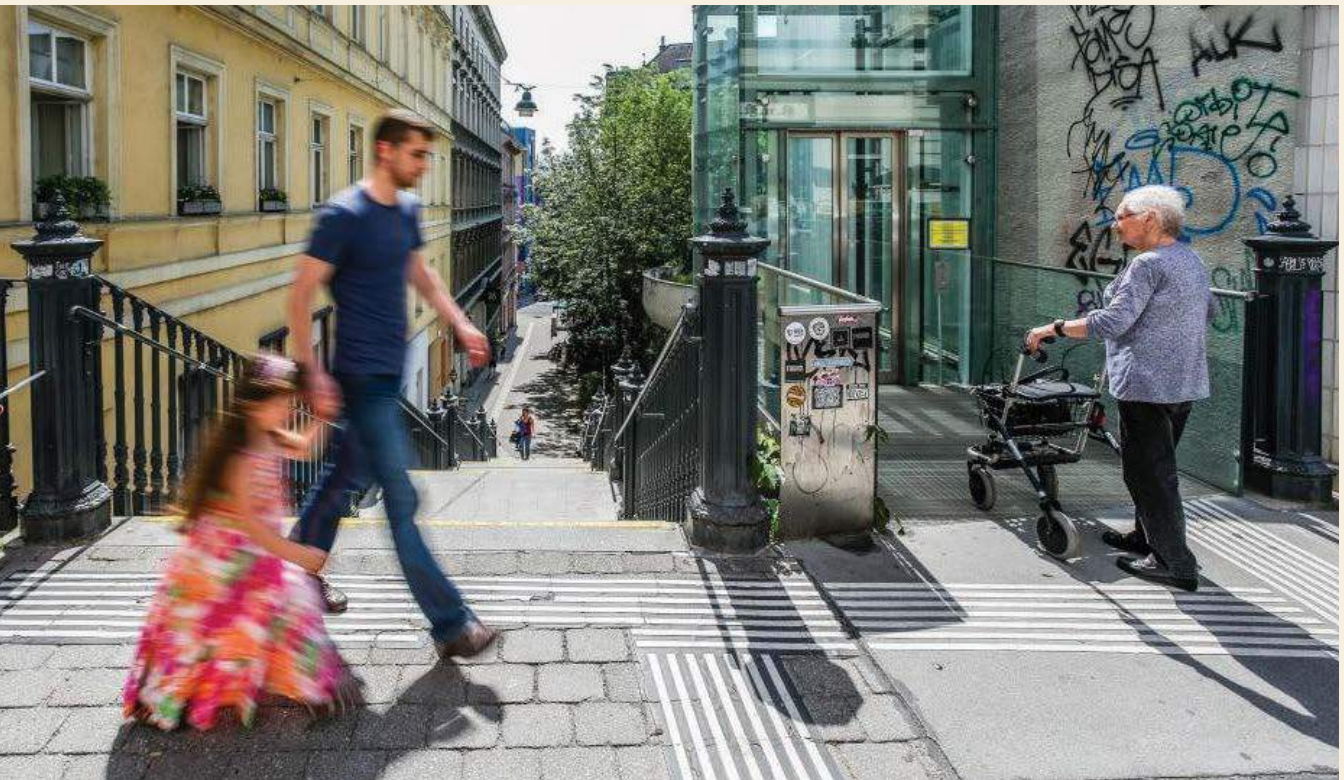
The city then went on to look at how men and women used parks and playgrounds differently. A 1997 study found that by the age of nine, girls used these public spaces a lot less than boys. They were often crowded out by larger groups of boisterous and assertive boys. Many girls who made attempts to share spaces occupied by older boys were turned away, often by sexual insults.

Between 2000 to 2006, the city created six model parks to see how they could get more girls to play outdoors. The changes included well-lit footpaths to make parks safer and more accessible, as well as high perches, smaller play niches, volleyball and badminton courts that girls had indicated a preference for. Today, the city has a set of gender-sensitive planning guidelines for its parks.

When it came to traffic and transport planning, the city looked at the habits of

men and women. It found that Viennese women walked more than men, who typically commuted to and from work in cars. Women, in contrast, used the city's network of sidewalks, trams, buses and subway lines in more varied patterns as they juggled work with family duties such as sending children to school, buying supplies or caring for elderly parents. The city also found that walking was the main mobility option for children and seniors.

The city nominated the Mariahilf district as a pilot district to introduce fair traffic planning. Between 2003 and 2005, 1,000 metres of pavements were widened while 40 street crossings and five barrier-free ramps were created. In addition, 26 lighting projects were installed to make streets safer for women after dark. In 2006, the city used its experience in Mariahilf to create a set of gender mainstreaming instruments for the planning of future public street space.



03 The streets of Mariahilf today.

04 Wider, barrier-free sidewalks in Mariahilf pilot district.



01 Gender mainstreaming efforts used across Vienna such as in everyday signages.

02 Gender-sensitive early childhood education.

The Outcome

Since the two city-led Women-Work-City projects, three other gender-sensitive co-housing projects in Vienna, which were supported but not initiated by the city, have been built.

Vienna has gone on to introduce many initiatives with the aim of becoming an equitable city. For instance, gender budgeting requires policymakers to consider gender perspectives so that funds are equally distributed among women and men.

Gender mainstreaming has gone beyond the realm of physical infrastructure. “Gender-sensitive” kindergartens now consciously expose children to non-conventional roles. For example, boys are taught how to change diapers, while girls are encouraged to build skyscrapers. The teachers also choose books and songs that do not perpetuate the stereotypical roles of mothers as homemakers and fathers as the serious breadwinner. Kindergartens are actively recruiting more men to be teachers.

As an indication of how tough it is to be truly inclusive, Kail said that taking a gender perspective is still not second nature despite 25 years of gender mainstreaming efforts. “But I think, that most planners have become more sensitive and aware that there are different groups with different needs,” she qualified.

To gain further acceptance, the city uses the slogan of “Fair Shared City” and is now “speaking about the different needs of target groups [such as children, elderly and disabled] without neglecting the men-women perspective,” she said. ○

“The city used its experience in Mariahilf to create a set of gender mainstreaming instruments for the planning of future public street space.”



CASE STUDY

Tianjin | Universities for the Third Age

Lifelong Learning for Seniors, by Seniors

With seniors receiving better education, “retirement” no longer means the end of a person’s active contributions to the economy and community. As Tianjin’s University for the Elderly shows, seniors still have much to learn and to teach.

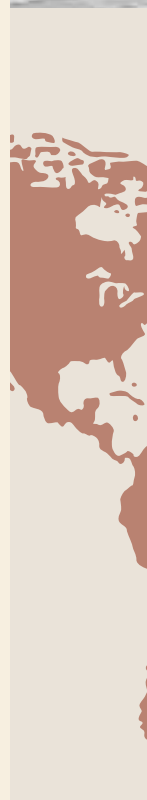
The Challenge

The worldwide surge in ageing populations has pressured cities to up their game in providing for the elderly. In China, one in five persons will be aged 65 years and above by 2030—double the ratio of one in 10 in 2010. Most ageing-related urban solutions, such as universal design, focus on

physical infrastructure or healthcare. But with seniors receiving better education and living longer, there is an increasing recognition that they have the capacity to contribute to the community. How then can the elderly continue to be active citizens in their retirement years?



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China needs to ensure that her ageing population stays active for as long as possible.



The Solution

China's Universities for the Third Age (UTA, or "Universities for the Elderly") promote happiness, health, social contribution and further education among seniors. Not only do the seniors learn new skills and become more engaged with the community, they can also take on teaching and administrative roles. To this end, UTAs create an ecosystem where seniors are respected as repositories of expertise and are able to be economically active, while contributing to building social networks and community bonding.

China has led in the development of UTAs since the early 1980s, with ageing-specific policies led by the Chinese National Committee on Ageing Problems, which was formed in 1982. The first UTA was set up in Shandong province in 1983 mainly for retired Communist Party cadres. The Reform and Development of Education initiative, launched in 1993, proposed adult education as a new focus and emphasised the need to develop traditional school education into lifelong education. In 1996, the Government enacted a law to give older persons the right to receive continuing education and to open up enrolment in UTAs to the public.

From 1988, the UTA network expanded beyond cities, becoming more accessible as more local branches developed. Community education is largely provided by local volunteers. Extending beyond a physical campus also complements a broader approach to ageing-in-place, which enables seniors to age in their communities

“Extending beyond a physical campus ... enables seniors to age in their communities and residences of their choice while improving quality of life and ensuring access to old-age needs.”

and residences of their choice while improving quality of life and ensuring access to old-age needs. Learning over the computer or TV allows seniors to continue lifelong learning without having to travel to a physical campus.

The development of UTAs became even more systematic in 2000, with a new directive that strengthened the national focus on the elderly, including elderly education. Private and social entities were invited to set up UTAs, and elderly education was broadened to include knowledge-based and skill-based programmes. In 2010, the National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development finalised the policy framework for comprehensive lifelong learning, and education for the elderly was officially incorporated into the national education system. The Central Government introduced a five-year plan spanning 2011 to 2015, pledging to increase investment in colleges for retirees, expand the scale of schools, and encourage social groups to jointly develop educational programmes for retirees.



“UTAs create an eco-system where seniors are respected as repositories of expertise ... while contributing to building social networks and community bonding.”





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“Senior students and graduates also form clubs to teach other seniors and run free community classes such as for *taiji* in public parks.”

A good example of a UTA is Tianjin University for the Elderly, founded in 1985 and named China’s “Most Advanced University for the Elderly” in 2011. The university has nine faculties for foreign languages, calligraphy, painting, life skills, health and fitness, medicine and healthcare, dance and drama, music and information technology. Courses are organised into basic, intermediate, advanced and professional levels. It can take up to two years to master each level.

Its current enrolment is about 26,000 students. Courses are so sought after that enrolment queues often begin a day before registration day. To meet the high demand from 18,000 seniors, the university has accredited 77 district-level UTA affiliates, with plans to expand to 150 affiliates over

01 The production of videos for distance learning.

02 Screenshot of a lesson on acupuncture, hosted on the Tianjin University website.



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five years, to cater for up to 30,000 seniors. Online courses will increase from the current 50 courses for 64,000 seniors to 200 courses for one million users over five years.

Tianjin University also serves a social function as a learning community for seniors, by seniors. Seniors make up all 358 employees, of whom about 70% are faculty staff. Instructors are usually leaders in their fields (heads of professional societies or industry leaders) and serve as positive role models. Student work and interests are shared with the public in exhibitions and performances on local and national TV, public events and competitions. Senior students and graduates also form clubs to teach other seniors and run free community classes such as for *taiji* in public parks.

The Outcome

Lifelong learning has become an integral part of ageing policies in China based on the strong belief that the elderly can be equipped to contribute more to society while ageing with dignity. In 2014, there were 59,700 UTAs and 6.77 million registered students. Flexible short-term to three-year courses are heavily subsidised by the government, supplemented by donations from private sponsors and donors. Students pay a minimum fee, ranging from RMB300 to 600 (US\$43 to US\$87), per year per course. Currently, 28 pilot zones in provinces, municipalities and specially planned cities ensure that community education is integrated with other local facilities such as libraries and cultural centres. ○



CASE STUDY

Singapore | Enabling Village

A Space for All

To support persons with disabilities in their bid to lead independent and fulfilling lives, Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development and SG Enable created the Enabling Village. But instead of creating an exclusive space, they designed and built a village that is open and inclusive to all.

The Challenge

Singapore launched its first Enabling Masterplan in 2007. This is a five-year roadmap that guides the development of policies, programmes, services and other support for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Since then, it has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and is now drafting the Masterplan's third edition.

These commitments have led to greater inclusion changes. For instance, all new developments must now have "universal design" (UD) features like wider corridors, ramp access or toilets with grab bars. Hearing-impaired students who can sign will also be eligible for mainstream education from 2018. Government funds are available for employers to defray the costs of purchasing equipment such as assistive

technology and adapt the workplace for PWDs.

While there are no national statistics on employment, two organisations that help PWDs find work say they saw an improvement in 2015. Anecdotally however, PWDs still face challenges: difficulty in securing interviews when disabilities are declared; challenges in getting around; being hired for unsuitable jobs; and receiving salaries that are lower than able-bodied colleagues or have stagnated for years. Two recent surveys—*People with Physical Disabilities in Singapore* (Lien Centre for Social Innovation) and "*Are Singapore companies ready to hire people with disabilities?*" (Spire Research and Consulting)—indicate that more could definitely be done to support PWDs in leading independent lives.





Children from the Special Education Unit at the National Institute of Education (NIE) are seen in a classroom. The children are seen interacting with their peers and teachers. The children are seen sitting on the ground, possibly in a school or community setting, engaged in an activity.

S'poreans 'don't walk the talk' on special needs kids

Poll findings show they are tolerant towards, rather than accepting of, these children

Jasvje Tai

Singaporeans support the idea of inclusion but do not walk the talk, a survey has found.

While most people believe that children with and without disabilities can study together, only half of parents polled are comfortable with having a special needs child sitting next to their own child in class.

Furthermore, only one in 10 Singaporeans is comfortable interacting with special needs children.

These were some of the findings of a survey, released yesterday at a press conference, which asked more than 1,200 people for their perceptions of inclusion in daily life and study situations. The survey

was commissioned by local philanthropic house Lien Foundation.

The findings suggest that Singaporeans are tolerant towards, rather than accepting of, special needs people, said Lien Foundation programme manager Ng Tai Yong.

"Singaporeans embrace the idea of inclusion, but there is a gap between what we think and what we do," he said.

Teaching rooms remaining shut for years, including those with disabilities, is given opportunities to be built potential in the same environment.

"Building handicapped ramps, parking spaces and elevators is the easy part. The more desirable cases beyond that to dismantle the obstacles in our roads and the barriers in

our hearts," he explained. Asked about the current level of acceptance and degree of social interaction between the public and special needs children, more than half of the respondents said Singaporeans are willing to share public spaces with such children, but not to interact with them.

Only 8 per cent of those polled feel that Singaporeans are willing to go the extra mile to make a special needs child feel welcome.

Yet nearly half of them believe that new laws are needed to protect the rights of such children.

For instance, eight in 10 of them believe it should be compulsory for such children to go to school. They are now exempt from the Compulsory Education Act.

One possible reason why special needs children, such as those with learning and behavioural difficulties or physical disabilities, are not accepted fully in society is the lack

of interaction between the public and such children.

For just a third of respondents, such children are not part of their social circles. Only a quarter of parents surveyed report that their children are friends with them.

However, the survey also found that Singaporeans' uncertainty about interacting with special needs children falls when the frequency of interactions rises.

Given this correlation, Dr Kenneth Poan, a clinical psychologist and researcher, said there should be more opportunities for interaction so that friendships and shared interests can form, he said. "Psychosocial is a great starting point to build the process of change."

Mr Tang Kai Nee, assistant director and head of community services at EE Women's and Children's Hospital, said that it would help if there was more public education, and people had more exposure

Key findings

- 30 per cent agree that Singapore is an inclusive society.
- 64 per cent believe Singaporeans are willing to share public spaces but not interact with the special needs community.
- 50 per cent of parents are comfortable with having a child with special needs sit next to their own child in class.
- 48 per cent believe new laws are necessary to better protect the rights of children with special needs.
- 10 per cent are confident of interacting with children with special needs.

to such children. Three in four respondents said being informed in advance about the special needs of a child will help them be more understanding when alternative behaviour happens.

To better understand the needs and challenges of a special needs community, a separate survey of 704 parents of children with special needs is being done and the findings will be released in a month.

jen@straitstimes.com



The Straits Times report (31 May 2016) on attitudes towards the special needs population.





01

The Solution

The idea of creating a dedicated space to further support PWDs was mooted in 2013.

Ms Ku Geok Boon, CEO of SG Enable, said: “Our vision was not just to transform the physical environment into one that is accessible to PWDs. More importantly, we wanted to create a focal point of services that puts information, resources, training and employment opportunities within reach of PWDs to enable them to lead independent lives.”

The Enabling Village would also showcase how UD, assistive technology and infocomm technology can enable PWDs to lead more independent lives.

Some of the key services at the Village include an Information and Career

Centre that gives PWDs employment advice and referrals, and a specialised training centre that prepares persons with autism for employment. Other training and job opportunities that are on site include an architectural design studio, F&B outlets, a supermarket, and a retail art gallery, which features works by artists with special needs.

The Village also has an assistive technology resource centre called Tech Able, which comprises a lab that trains PWDs in communications and technology; an experiential room where light and sound are drastically reduced so users can experience challenges faced by persons with sight or hearing loss; and a showroom that enables PWDs to borrow and try assistive tech devices to make informed purchase decisions.

01 The supermarket in the Village has wider aisles that accommodate wheelchair users.

02 The Village has an accessible amphitheater with an uninterrupted ramp.

“SG Enable was conscious of the need to create an inclusive space that would promote integration and interaction among people of all abilities, instead of creating an isolated enclave.”





01

SG Enable was conscious of the need to create an inclusive space that would promote integration and interaction among people of all abilities, instead of creating an isolated enclave. So it chose the grounds of a former school, in central Singapore, as the Village site. Conveniently located, the 30,000-square-metre compound is near to a mass rapid transit station, and surrounded by schools, homes, offices and senior activity centres.

Making sure that the entire Village was accessible for all was a key building principle. But this was not easy to achieve given the existing infrastructure and uneven terrain. “Behind a perimeter fence, a huge carpark and driveway separated the buildings from the surroundings ... there were multiple level changes ... between buildings and within buildings,” recalled Mr Phua Hong Wei, Associate of architectural firm WOHA. Spaces had to be extensively redesigned to link every

01 Tech Able showcases the use of assistive technology in a home office environment.

02 The Village hosts programmes like Superhero Me, an initiative that brings less privileged and special needs children into a cross-community for a more inclusive Singapore.



02

building seamlessly and accessibly. All steps and thresholds were replaced with ramps, while lifts were installed. WOHA converted a courtyard with a steep slope into an amphitheatre by overlaying the terrain with a timber terrace. A gentle, uninterrupted ramp now weaves through the amphitheatre, allowing wheelchair users to navigate the slope easily.

Amenities have been designed to be inclusive too. For instance, event spaces, as well as the gym, are equipped with a “hearing induction loop” system, which transmits signals directly to hearing aids. Key signage such as toilet doors and staircase handrails have Braille lettering to help blind users move about independently.



01

The Outcome

Even before the Village was built, SG Enable and its partners had already been offering training and employment to PWDs. But now, the physical premises have brought SG Enable's more than 20 private and public partners and their services under one roof. This means that PWDs seeking information and resources, such as grants, no longer have to travel to disparate locations. Deaf photographer Isabelle Lim says: "It's like a one-stop centre for persons with special needs."

Mr Timothy Ang manages BIM Studio, a non-profit architectural design and training studio for PWDs. He says the Village's location is a boon for PWDs who often decline training or employment due to inaccessibility. PWDs using motorised wheelchairs can reach the train station

in 15 minutes, via an unobstructed and sheltered pathway. SG Enable also has a free shuttle service to and from the station, which encourages trainees to attend BIM's classes, as well as those conducted by other providers.

True to its original intention, the Village's lush gardens, ponds, gazebos and activity spaces are now enjoyed by the public. Sheltered linkways to the train station and wet market encourage the public to walk through the Village, promoting integration and interaction.

With its mix of inclusive facilities such as the supermarket, pre-school and fitness centre, as well as special events like weekend markets, the Village is slowly but surely becoming a space for all. ○

01 Family and ability-friendly public events are frequently held at the Village.

02 Mr Ang demonstrates how to use software in his BIM Studio.

03 Participants (some in wheelchairs) of the Australia-based Enabled Futures immersion programme tour the Village.





02



03



ILLUSTRATION

Inclusive Spaces

Social Integration by Design

Thoughtful planning, design and programming of everyday spaces like parks or cafes can transform them into inclusive and empowering places where diverse communities can thrive and participate in society. Target communities were also often involved in the design, set up and sometimes even running of these places.



Inclusive Playground, Singapore

Singapore's National Council of Social Service is working with the country's national parks board, town councils and voluntary welfare organisations to build public inclusive playgrounds across the city.

These playgrounds will feature accessibility-friendly swings, merry-go-rounds and slides, alongside usual playground fare to allow children of all abilities to interact with each other.





Superkilen, Copenhagen


Riots frequently broke out in the empty urban space between the Nørrebro and Tagensvej neighbourhoods of Denmark, before it was converted into a public park.

To celebrate one of Denmark's most diverse districts, planners incorporated elements from the 60 nationalities living in the area.

Ibashi Cafe, Ofunato

Ibashi, a not-for-profit organisation, worked with the community of Ofunato, Japan to create a place where the elderly are involved in everyday community life, interact daily and are well respected by the younger generations.





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