

Urban Externalities: Improving Health, Congestion,
and Safety under Principles of Justice:
Applicability of the Singapore Model?

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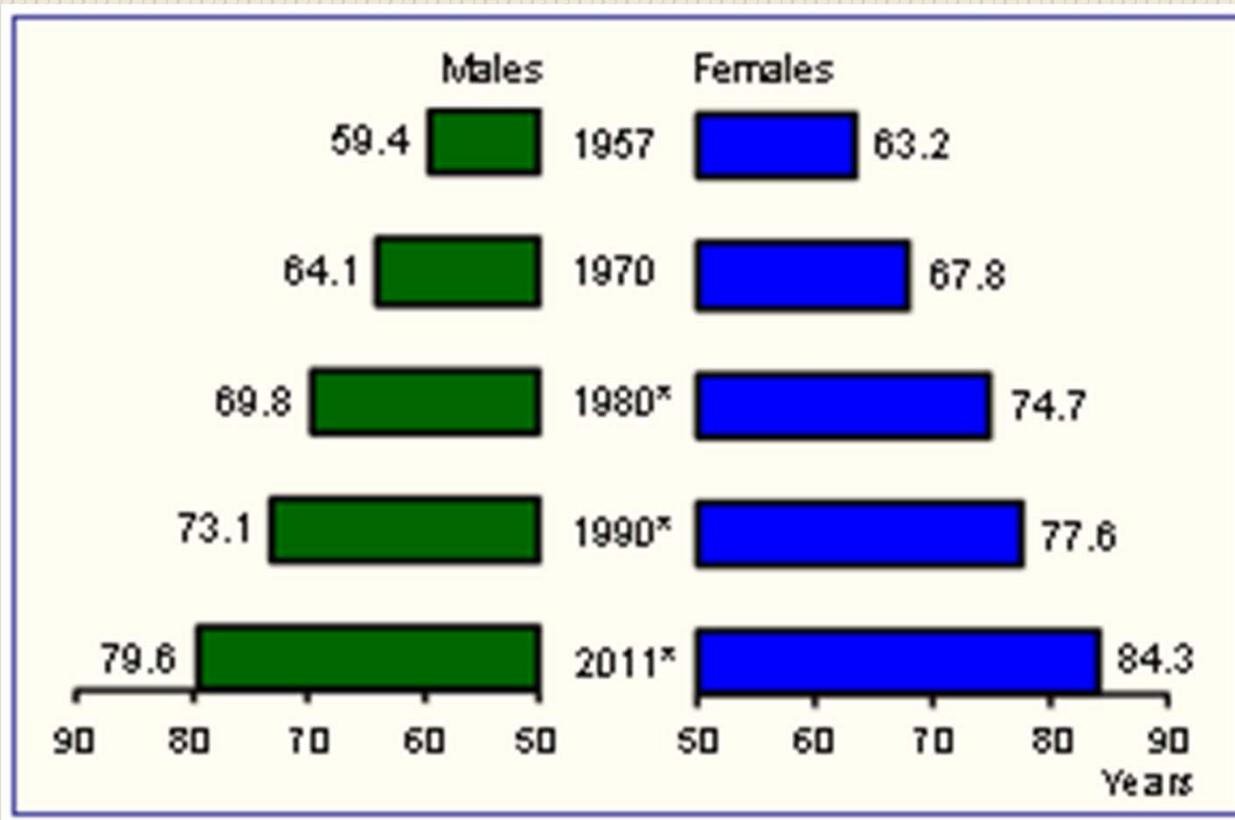
Urban justice

- Governing principles in developed countries:
 - Equity,
 - Diversity, and
 - Democracy
- How do these apply in cities of developing world? Can the example of Singapore provide a model?

Singapore's rise from abject poverty under state capitalism

- Absolutely no natural resources
- Upon independence, no hinterland (no need to balance rural interests)
- Main function as entrepot
- Broadening of economy through first low-level manufacturing then higher-level and great expansion of service sector (finance, tourism, but not culture)

Singapore: Life Expectancy at Birth



Key programs: forced savings and housing

- Low wages and individual savings accounts (Central Provident Fund [CPF])
- Public housing program: accessible developments; individual ownership of unit paid for by CPF (introduced by British in 1955); Housing Development Board (HDB) ownership of building. Constant reinvestment.
- All land owned by public; acquired through compulsory taking at low price; land banking utilized (as in Amsterdam, Stockholm). Public captured the unearned increment

HDB housing

- Nearly 1 million flats constructed since 1960, housing more than 80% of resident population
- Total demolition of pre-existing environment—hawkers removed to hawkers' markets. Now for renewal of early projects, building occupants are moved en bloc
- High rise/garden city
- Continuous reinvestment—very small rooms but high quality
- High quality landscaping, a lot of greenery

HDB housing



HDB housing



HDB housing—ecological new town



HDB housing—"The Pinnacle" + restored shop houses



Kampong housing



Kampong street



Interior of HDB apartment



Hawkers' market



High-end shopping mall



Issues raised by slum eradication program

- Ethnic integration policy—is this just?
- Highly rule-bound, even mosquito inspections within apartments
- Destruction of informal businesses
- Apartments are small, uniform

Health: Very high life expectancy, very low infant mortality

- CPF pays for insurance policies and can be drawn on for medical bills and to pay for health insurance.
- Strong public health measures.

Issues raised by CPF

- Relatively low returns for individuals—but results in high level of security, stability, high level of government investment in both infrastructure and productive enterprise through sovereign wealth funds.

Prevention of congestion

- High price of cars; high price of registration
- Congestion pricing
- Excellent and expanding mass transit

Lessons of Singapore for other cities: Is it just? Is it too unique to be a model?

- **Equity**

- Income inequality (relatively high Gini coefficient of 47.3) (US=45.0; Sweden=23.0) but housing provides floor and low housing costs results in higher disposable income
- Much amenity is publicly provided
- Costs of goods and food in hawkers centers much lower than in malls—although no a.c.
- Real inequity not in condition of citizens but for migrant labor. Strict restrictions on migration prevents entrenched misery but still not justifiable. No families, fixed period of stay.

Diversity

- 3 major ethnic groups co-exist, are integrated within HDB housing, hawkers centers.
- Critics see dominance of Chinese.
- Suppression of language—English and Mandarin are official languages. (Native language of Chinese population is Cantonese.)
- Some suppression of religion.

Democracy

- Limited but not non-existent (fair elections).
- Tame media, censorship, but access to Internet not blocked.
- Inactive civil society and self-censorship.
- A nascent preservationist movement.
- Government enjoys high legitimacy based on economic success. Will this continue as inequality grows, middle class wants a greater say?

Lessons for elsewhere?

- Public housing program depended on large-scale demolition, of kind we usually find unacceptable. Its combination with other programs legitimized it.
- Thus must simultaneously supply accessibility and nearby market structures, amenities, schools, etc. Requires public sector to acquire land that is well located. Can be done through land adjustment programs where property owners who might otherwise resist retain leasehold on a portion of their property and are permitted to build profitable structures.
- Old economic theory of “big push” applicable—not for simultaneous development of economic sectors but for combined program development: mobilization by government of capital; land banking; infrastructure development; massive building programs.