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## Thesis title: Local heritage and place-making in residential heartlands in Singapore

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## Summary

This thesis explores the topic of local heritage and its impact on place-making. In literature and in practice, there is growing focus on heritage at the local level and how it would give voice to residents and community stakeholders to interpret and express what they value in their lived environments. It also allows for a greater variety of ordinary, everyday elements to be considered in this broadened definition of heritage.

Situated in the context of residential heartlands in Singapore, the age-old tension between redevelopment and heritage conservation, the growing civic awareness and interest in local heritage issues, and the large-scale redevelopment on the horizon form the impetus for this research. The research aims to understand what people consider as local heritage in residential heartlands (using the categories of ‘Physical elements’, ‘Events/ activities’, ‘Food’ and ‘People’), whether different local heritage elements influence place identity, place attachment and community spirit differently, and key factors that are influencing this relationship.

The research was structured into two main phases. Phase 1 involved the use of an online survey questionnaire to gather opinions from the general public on their views of local heritage. Phase 2 involved a series of focus group discussions with residents from mature, middle-aged and young towns and semi-structured interviews with high-level officers from three relevant government agencies and a heritage group.

The research findings show that residents’ perception of local heritage is mainly driven by social memories whereas the government agencies are mainly guided by a formal set of criteria. There is a wide variety of things which residents assign meaning to, especially for ‘Physical elements’ and ‘Food’. Residents however found it more challenging to identify ‘Events/activities’ and ‘People’ that are significant to their towns. ‘Physical elements’ were also found to have the strongest association with the different dimensions of place-making, underscoring its importance in place-making. ‘Food’ had a moderate association, and ‘Events/activities’ and ‘People’ showed up to be the weakest. Four key factors were identified that shed some light into these relationships, namely, *perceived ubiquity* and *pragmatism* which add challenges to the relationship, and *awareness* and *participation* which can strengthen the relationship.

From the findings, further research is recommended to investigate the broader forces that lead to perceived ubiquity and pragmatism. The notion of ‘place insideness’ can also be explored further to understand how people conceive themselves as ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of a place and whether factors such as scale matters. Practical recommendations to planners include leveraging on technology and social media to raise awareness and encourage community participation and organising more town-based programmes and initiatives focusing on opportunities for collective involvement, relevance to different generations and exchange of knowledge and stories amongst long-time and new residents.

## Keywords

Local heritage, place-making, place identity, place attachment, community spirit, HDB heartlands, Singapore

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## Abbreviations

CC	Community Club
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DOS	Department of Statistics Singapore
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GRC	Group Representation Constituency
HDB	Housing & Development Board
IHS	Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies
MP	Member of Parliament
NHB	National Heritage Board
NLB	National Library Board
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RC	Residents' Committee
SEAP Games	South-East Asian Peninsular Games
SERS	Selective En-bloc Redevelopment Scheme
SHS	Singapore Heritage Society
SIT	Singapore Improvement Trust
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority
VERS	Voluntary Early Redevelopment Scheme
WP	Workers' Party

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Cities around the world face a range of complex urban planning dilemmas (Khakee, 2020). With the need to continually rejuvenate and reinvent themselves to meet evolving times and demands, cities will inevitably experience some extent of redevelopment and physical change over time (Sim, 1996). In the process however, many historic buildings or vernacular ones that have gained heritage attention over time (Wang, Yamaguchi, & Wong, 2020) are torn down in favour of newer and more modern developments. While some may be spared, they could pose developmental constraints to the surrounding areas or struggle to be adaptively re-used in a relevant and meaningful way (Strange & Whitney, 2003).

The pace and scale of change can also lead to ‘placelessness’, characterised by a loss of meaning and weakening of ties between people and place (Arefi, 1999; Chang & Huang, 2008; Friedmann, 2010). Although redevelopment often seeks to improve the built environment in some way, when familiar buildings and structures are demolished and the spatial environment is significantly altered, the place could become less recognisable. Over time, this leads to a feeling of alienation and detachment from the place (Relph, 2016). Further, the uprooting and displacement of people in the process could destabilise their sense of belonging to a place (Relph, 2016) and break apart community ties built up over the decades.

Indeed, it is often this sense of erasure (Friedmann, 2010) and irreversibility that triggers public reaction towards redevelopment projects, especially residential redevelopment as it impacts people on a very intimate level (Schofield & Szymanski, 2011). The places that they have come to call ‘home’ and the everyday lived experiences and familiar social settings (Scannell & Gifford, 2010) in their neighbourhoods would be impacted.

To “redress the creation of tabula rasa” (Yuen, 2006, p. 830) and the dilution of sense of place, cities have been relooking into the relationship between redevelopment and heritage conservation and for heritage to be leveraged as a means of place-making (Lashua & Baker, 2016; Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2017). While the challenges in balancing redevelopment and heritage conservation does not disappear, there is greater recognition that heritage can play a positive role in creating a sense of place and continuity amidst spatial change (Ginting & Wahid, 2015; Wheeler, 2017).

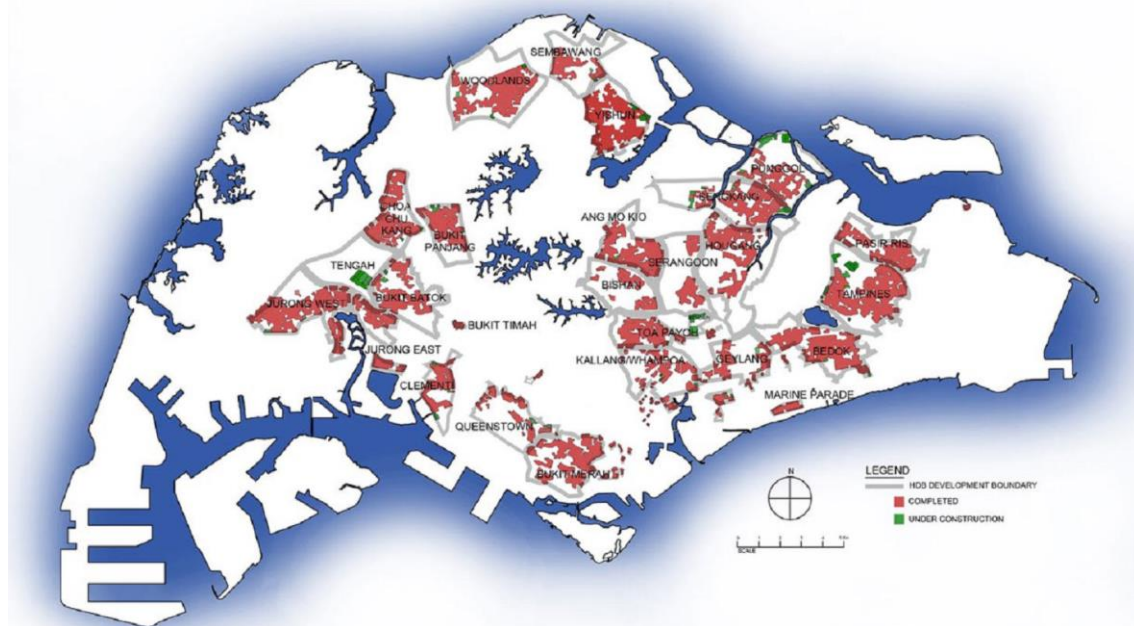
At the national level, most cities would have government-led processes to identify and conserve valuable heritage assets for national identity and nation building purposes. At the local level, however, elements that are valued by local communities and could potentially contribute to the character and distinctiveness of an area (Schofield & Szymanski, 2011; Bromsgrove District Council, 2016) are often less considered (Smith, 2006). While ordinary, mundane and commonplace from a national perspective, these local heritage elements are significant to the communities who live in these areas and have the ability of evoking personal or collective memories and spatial impressions (Schofield & Szymanski, 2011). Hence, it is important to consider how local heritage can be identified and how local knowledge and voices can be factored into place-making efforts (Clifford, 2011).



## 1.2 Problem statement

Singapore is no exception to this urban (re)development challenge. As a small city state of around 728 sq km with a population of about 5.69 million (Department of Statistics Singapore [DOS], 2021), Singapore faces the perennial challenge of land scarcity and the need to recycle land and optimise land use to meet evolving socio-economic needs (Singapore Land Authority, 2020).

Singapore also has a unique housing landscape where more than 80% of its resident population live in public housing flats built by the Housing & Development Board (HDB, 2020c). There are currently close to 1.1 million HDB flats and they are located across 26 HDB towns/estates (see Figure 1) (HDB, 2020d). Therefore, any redevelopment in these residential heartlands<sup>1</sup> would have an impact on a significant proportion of the population.



*Figure 1 Map showing the HDB towns/estates across Singapore (Source: HDB Annual Report 2019/2020)*

In the recent decade or so, the tension between redevelopment and heritage conservation is increasingly being felt in the residential heartlands of Singapore as the public become more interested in and vocal about the impacts of redevelopment on both tangible and intangible heritage of the place (Loo, 2020). Various civil society groups and individuals have also sprung up to lobby for conservation of specific buildings or structures (e.g. HDB blocks of architectural interest, unique playgrounds) and organise ground-up initiatives (e.g. guided tours, community museums, cultural mapping) to capture and recount local heritage within the residential heartlands amidst the redevelopment process, in hope to preserve social memories and strengthen place identity.

Several of these buildings and structures were not originally planned for conservation but government plans were subsequently revised following ground-up appeals (see Figures 2

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<sup>1</sup> HDB towns/estates in Singapore are commonly and endearingly referred to as “residential heartlands” or “HDB heartlands”.

and 3). While this is not to say that the government does not care about heritage, such movements signal a gap in the understanding of what people value in HDB heartlands and in the trade-offs that people are willing to accept in the process of redevelopment and rejuvenation. It also signifies differences in opinions on what makes a place and what is important to be kept in the process of change for current and future generations.



*Figure 2 Six blocks (out of 17 blocks originally planned for redevelopment) along with the iconic dove playground at Dakota Crescent will be retained and repurposed for civic and community use (Source: Minister Lawrence Wong's Facebook)*



*Figure 3 The former boxing gym and the iconic swimming pool (not featured in this photo) will be retained to preserve the sporting heritage of Farrer Park (Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission)*

While there have been increasing discussions in literature on the importance of local heritage and of involving local communities in the process (e.g. Giombini, 2020a;

Mydland & Grahn, 2012; Schofield & Rosy Szymanski, 2011) as well as how place-making can transform places to serve people better (e.g. Silberberg, Lorah, Disbrow & Messing, 2013; Hes, Mateo-Babiano & Lee, 2020), there are limited studies on how to identify local heritage and how both concepts can be brought to bear within residential townships. Given that redevelopment in HDB heartlands will continue to take place and at an increasing pace and scale in the coming decades as HDB looks to renew their ageing 99-year leasehold housing stock (Au-Yong, 2018), there is a need to think through how local heritage can serve as a means of place-making to preserve a sense of place in residential heartlands even as they experience spatial transformation over time (Yuen, 2005).

### **1.3 Research objective**

The age-old tension between redevelopment and heritage conservation, the growing civic awareness and interest in local heritage issues, and the large-scale redevelopment on the horizon form the impetus for this research. The objective of the research is to venture into the less researched concept of local heritage and to explain the role and impact of local heritage on place-making in residential areas.

Situated in the context of Singapore, the research findings aim to shed light on:

- The local elements within residential areas that are valued by the community;
- How different (perceived) local heritage elements may influence place-making differently;
- Whether there are certain factors that may influence this relationship; and
- Potential ways to further harness local heritage to contribute to place-making.

### **1.4 Research question**

How does local heritage influence place-making in residential heartlands in Singapore?

Sub-questions:

- a) What do people consider as local heritage in residential heartlands?
- b) Do different local heritage elements influence place-making differently?
- c) Are there certain factors that influence the relationship between local heritage and place-making?

### **1.5 Relevance**

#### **1.5.1 Scientific relevance**

Despite the general recognition of heritage having an identity-conferring status (Urry, 1995; McLean, 2006), there are still wide-ranging discussions on the relationship between heritage and identity (McLean, 2006), especially since these concepts are not without its complications and tensions, such as whose perspective of heritage prevails and the politics involved in both concepts (Crooke, 2010). This research therefore aims to contribute further to these conversations by studying the relationship between heritage and place-making at the local scale of residential heartlands in Singapore and focusing on local heritage which carries a vernacular quality as opposed to national heritage that have a more public or monumental characteristic.

Place-making as a concept is still being studied to gain some form of theoretical clarity on what it entails and how it works (e.g. Arefi, 2014; Ellery, Ellery, & Borkowsky, 2021). This research therefore seeks to contribute to the growing literature on place-making by studying how it could be approached through harnessing local heritage and interpretations of the everyday, quotidian spaces by its users.

### **1.5.2 Social relevance**

Local heritage is an appealing concept to many despite fuzziness in what it encapsulates. This research presents an attempt to draw out a kaleidoscope of opinions on what people consider as local heritage and how they appraise these elements within their towns. With the traditionally top-down government gradually embracing more participatory approaches (Ong, See, & Tan, 2020), the different perspectives gleaned through the research can inform future ways to enhance collaboration and understanding between the different actors in society.

Moreover, tensions and discordant voices can be expected to heighten in the coming decades when HDB rolls out the new Voluntary Early Redevelopment Scheme (VERS). Announced in 2018, VERS will start in about 20 years' time to systematically redevelop ageing HDB blocks as their 99-year leases diminish (Prime Minister's Office [PMO], 2018). Residents living in the selected HDB precincts will be able to vote if they want the Government to buy back their flats ahead of lease expiry for early redevelopment. Thus, this research will take place in relative 'peace time', before the large-scale redevelopment sets in, to flesh out the relationship between local heritage and the different dimensions of place-making. The findings from the research will be timely and useful to planners, architects, heritage groups, local communities, etc. who are exploring ways to harness local heritage to support place-making that endures through redevelopment.

This thesis is structured as follows. First, it will look into the theoretical literature regarding the concepts of and relationships between (local) heritage and place-making under Chapter 2. Next, the research methodology, including the research design, sampling methods, data collection and limitations, will be outlined in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the findings will be presented and discussed. Lastly, Chapter 5 will conclude with answering the research question, theoretical reflections and recommendations.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section on literature review introduces the two main concepts of place-making and local heritage. A conceptual framework is also drawn to illustrate the expected relationship between the concepts.

### 2.1 Place-making

Place-making as a concept is gaining popularity globally, both in academic research and in practice. Many view it as an innovative approach to urban planning and design as it involves some degree of paradigm shift in how we view and shape our built environment (Palermo & Ponzini, 2015).

Mateo-Babiano & Lee (2020) describes place-making as a “continuous process of shaping, experiencing and contributing to ‘place’” (p. 15). This echoes other views, such as that of Silberberg et al. (2013) who refer to this process as “places in the making” (p. 1) and Pred (1984) who views it as a continuous process of becoming. These views imply that place-making is not a static or deterministic outcome, but is historically contingent (Pred, 1984) and occurs progressively over time. On this note, Silberberg et al. (2013) and Fincher, Pardy & Shaw (2016) also highlighted the importance of process over product, especially after seeing trends where place-making is used as a mere branding for urban (re)development projects or viewed as an end product.

From Palermo & Ponzini’s (2015) perspective, in order for planners to make better places, policy, planning and design rules will need to be re-oriented to focus on the “specific characteristics of form and place” (p. 33). This reminds planners to be sensitive to the intricacies of local contexts, especially when translating strategic spatial visions and planning regulations from the national to the local level (Palermo & Ponzini, 2015).

Place-making also “places people at its core”, with participatory processes commonly employed to understand people’s perceptions and aspirations and to cultivate in them the capacity to engage meaningfully with the built environment (Mateo-Babiano & Lee, 2020, p. 15). It can take place along a continuum of unintentional, organic change through local, bottom-up approaches on one end to intentional, imposed change through top-down initiatives (e.g. master planning and urban design guidelines) on the other end (Lew, 2017).

#### 2.1.1 Notion of place

The concept of place-making entails a need to understand what ‘place’ means. Gieryn (2000) defines three key features that constitute ‘place’. First, “places have geographical fixity” (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009, p. 902) and occupies a unique spot on earth. It allows one to distinguish between ‘here’ and ‘there’ and to gauge between ‘near’ and ‘far’. Places are also bounded, such as how a city’s boundary could be demarcated based on major highways or waterbodies, and can exist on different scales, such as a home, precinct, neighbourhood, town, city, region or country.

Secondly, places have physicality. They comprise an assemblage of things in material, tangible form, which could be natural or man-made. These are the things and objects that we see, hear, taste, feel and touch in our material environment around us.

The third feature represents a common distinction made between ‘place’ and ‘space’. Unlike ‘space’ which is more abstract and amorphous, places are invested with meaning and value, and are intertwined with social and cultural contexts (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009).

‘Place’ is also a complex and multi-dimensional construct (Arefi, 2014; Mateo-Babiano & Lee, 2020). This is fleshed out in Lefebvre’s (1974) influential writings on ‘The Production of Space’, where he described the spatial triad of conceived space, perceived space and lived space. Conceived space refers to “the authoritative intentions of designers and planners” (Pang, Seah & Wong, 2019, p. 8), concerned with the technical aspects of spatial planning and physical properties of space (Brown, 2020). Perceived space refers to how general individuals in society interpret and decipher spaces based on prior understandings and experiences (Lefebvre, 1974). Lived space refers to the interpretations and experiences of space by its inhabitants or users (Lefebvre, 1974). This implies the need to acknowledge that each place has multiple stakeholders who attribute different values and meanings to the place for different reasons (Torre, 2013). A more holistic understanding of a place will therefore need to encompass the varying perspectives of the psychosocial environment.

### **2.1.2 Place identity, place attachment and community spirit**

Based on the above, it can be inferred that there are several dimensions of sense of place that need to be considered in place-making processes. It can be broadly described through (i) place identity – tied to the spatial aspects of a place, (ii) place attachment – tied to the emotive aspects between people and place, and (iii) community spirit – the social ties and interactions between people in a place. Discussions in literature expound on these dimensions, which will be further described in this section.

#### *Place identity*

Along with the patterns of rapid urbanisation, globalisation and the desire to be the best in the world in terms of advanced infrastructure and branding of cities, places are at risk of becoming too homogenised, a geography of everywhere and nowhere at all (Chang & Huang, 2008; Friedmann, 2010; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Against such a backdrop, rethinking place identity becomes important.

Place identity entails being able to differentiate one place from another and is related to people’s cognitive interpretation and understanding of the place. This is often facilitated by the presence of a set of features that define and characterises the spatial setting, making the place recognisable and imageable (Montgomery, 1998; Lynch, 1960) as both physical and mental constructs. Norberg-Schulz (1980) describes this as *genius loci*, the prevailing spirit and character of a place, becoming “manifest as location, spatial configuration and characterizing articulation” (p. 180), allowing people to orientate and identify a place.

Nonetheless, changes do happen over time due to practical, economic, social, political, cultural, or other reasons (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). To avoid a place losing its identity, spatial transformation needs to be done in a way that “respects the *genius loci*”, not simply by reiterating old models but “to determine the identity of the place and interpret it in ever new ways” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p. 182).

### *Place attachment*

Place attachment is an emotional bond that develops between individuals or groups of people and their environment (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Lewicka, 2008). It is often described in affective terms, such as ‘topophilia’ (‘love of place’) (Tuan, 1974), sense of belonging (Abbott-Chapman, Johnston & Jetson, 2013; Lalli, 1992), or feelings of pride (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003).

There are different processes through which people form attachment to places, such as through sensory experiences of the place, narrating stories about the place to others, assessing the presence of desirable traits within the place from a commodity perspective and material dependence on the place to fulfil their needs (Cross, 2015). People who feel more attached to a place may also be more interested to find out about the place’s history (Lewicka, 2005).

Place attachment is an affective attribute that is not easily sussed out, as it is usually not visible in normal circumstances until something is threatened or at stake, such as when a neighbourhood is identified for redevelopment or when the social fabric is being altered at an uncomfortable pace or extent (Friedmann, 2010). In such scenarios, place attachment could manifest itself in the reminiscing of fond memories of place and people (Chang & Mah, 2021), the reluctance to move out of the place or symptoms of grief expressed towards what will disappear (Fried, 1966; Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

### *Community spirit*

Place-making involves strengthening community spirit through enabling and encouraging social interactions to take place (Friedmann, 2010). This sense of community can be seen “as a spirit of belonging together” (McMillan, 1996, p. 315). Gusfield (1975) differentiates between two types of community, territorial communities (e.g. neighbourhood, town, city) and relational communities (e.g. professional, interest). This means that a sense of community can be formed among residents interacting and building relationships with one another. It could also be formed with people outside of a geographical territory, for purposes such as pursuing shared interests or goals.

Community spirit can also develop organically or be fostered purposefully. For example, Francis, Giles-Corti, Wood, & Knuiman (2012) describe how public spaces are a key component of the built environment that facilitate chance encounters between neighbours and provide a gathering space for people. Public spaces can take on different forms and scales, ranging from informal spaces such as sidewalks to larger open spaces such as plazas and parks, to institutional spaces such as community centres and schools, and large enclosed developments such as shopping malls (Francis et al., 2012).

Besides greater social interaction, community spirit can also be reflected in how people choose to play a more active role in the community or the locality that they are based in. This could be in the form of increased civic participation in non-governmental organisations and initiatives and greater stewardship of their environments (Derrett, 2003; Lewicka, 2005).

## 2.2 Local heritage

The English word, 'heritage' has its roots in the Old French 'eritage' and Latin 'hereditare' and 'heres', which mean 'that which may be inherited' or 'heir' (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021). This assumes that there is something to be passed down and that there is an heir who will inherit it (Ting, 2015).

Traditionally focused on "land, property, rights ... and inheritance" (Ting, 2015, p. 17), the scope of heritage has expanded over time to include a wider variety of heritage types and scales (Torre, 2013). Since UNESCO's 1972 General Conference in Paris, France, where "cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value" were officially acknowledged as important to be protected (UNESCO, 1972), additional recommendations and conventions have been introduced to include other forms of heritage and finer terminologies such as movable cultural property, traditional culture and folklore and intangible cultural heritage (Ahmad, 2006; Ting, 2015).

Internationally, there is general agreement that the scope of heritage includes tangible and intangible heritage (Ahmad, 2006). Taking reference from UNESCO's definitions, tangible heritage can be defined as cultural properties that include "monuments, groups of buildings and site[s]" and intangible heritage as "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills ... that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage" (Ahmad, 2006, p. 298).

### 2.2.1 Broadening of heritage definition to include the 'local'

Scholars have however argued that such so-called heritage sites and objects do not have an intrinsic 'heritage' value in and of itself (e.g. Chang & Mah, 2021; Harvey, 2008; Torre, 2013). Many of the so-called tangible heritage are made significant because of the "intangible web of meanings" that surrounds it and the meanings that people ascribe to it (Muñoz-Viñas, 2009, p. 160; Giaccardi & Palen, 2008). The act of heritage packaging also selects, compiles and confers upon a set of elements a kind of heritage value to be recognised and celebrated, often wrapped within certain carefully prepared narratives (Low, 2017). These suggest that heritage is very much socially constructed and that there are multiple actors, values and perspectives involved when it comes to what and whose heritage to conserve/capture and for what and whom these things are being conserved/captured (Ting, 2015; Torre, 2013).

Official discourses on heritage underscore the hierarchy in play where expert knowledge and skills are prioritised in the identification, assessment and decision-making on what constitutes heritage and how it should be commemorated and experienced (Pang, Seah, & Wong, 2019). Values that are often most readily recognised, such as historical significance, national significance, aesthetics and authenticity, are those that are important to professionals and experts in the heritage field (Torre, 2013). While the community may be consulted in the process, it is not easy to elicit the social values attach to an element as these "tend to be contemporary, locally held, and not always evident in the physical fabric" (Torre, 2013, p. 160), possibly needing some form of triggers for these to surface.

Roping in the voices of the community has its challenges too. Croke (2010) and Waterton & Smith (2010) have spoken critically about the elusiveness of 'community',



highlighting that ‘community’ is not a monolithic construct where all members of the supposed ‘community’ conform to certain ways. Given the diversity of experiences and viewpoints, different people would attach different meanings to different things in their lived environments and establishing heritage significance would mean certain values will be promoted over others (Torre, 2013). Confounding this, heritage values are mutable and can change over time as societal contexts and priorities evolve (Harvey, 2001; Torre, 2013). Each generation will have to constantly review, assess and negotiate for themselves what has been kept and what is important to keep for the future generations.

Notwithstanding, Mydland & Grahn (2012) noted that in recent times, the research focus within the field of heritage seems to be gravitating from the national towards the regional and local, broadening the perspective on heritage to consider “the lived experiences of a wider spectrum of the populace” (Yeoh & Kong, 1996, p. 59). More than just consulting the public as an administrative step in top-down heritage processes, this opens up opportunities for discussion and participation in heritage by a wider range of people on a broader variety of sites and elements.

Schofield & Szymanski (2011) offer further insight into the growing momentum of this concept of localness and bottom-up approach to heritage. While acknowledging that change is inevitable, the authors commented that it is the suddenness, the extent and the pace of change that could significantly alter the meaning and sense of place. This is because the “elements in the landscape and known architectural spaces” which people have grown familiar with over time (Giombini, 2020a, p. 56) function as a kind of “stabilizing factor” in the rhythm of everyday routines (Haapala, 2017, p. 171), and are “deeply ingrained with local significance and special to those who live there” (Schofield & Szymanski, 2011, p. 2).

As such, it is crucial to recognise, document and understand what people cherish or depend on in their everyday lived environments and explore “the degree to which these ‘special’ things can be retained” amidst change (Schofield & Szymanski, 2011 p. 2; Giombini, 2020b). These local elements which speak of the everyday heritage of the area and its inhabitants can in turn help to “enhance place identity, and spatial and historic connectivity of the urban landscape” (Mosler, 2019, p. 778). Places also develop greater depth and meaning when layers of personal biographies and collective history are compounded and written over time into the built environment (Goss, 1988; Yeoh & Kong, 1996).

The broadening of heritage to include local places and local people also promotes “greater democratization in heritage practices” and allow for an “alternative discourse to the authorized way of talking about heritage” (Mydland & Grahn, 2012, p. 583 and p. 568; Waterton & Smith, 2010). Nevertheless, one need not hold an antagonistic view of authorised versus alternative, official versus unofficial, top-down versus bottom-up, or professionals and experts versus laypeople. Both processes of heritage creation can complement each other (Giombini, 2020b) to represent a richer perspective and appreciation of the complex, multi-dimensional environment that we live in.

### 2.2.2 Impact of heritage on place-making

Heritage is closely associated with place and is often “seen as a mechanism of place-making” (Giombini, 2020a, p. 53). Heritage has been known for its strong association with identity (McLean, 2006), and has been used by countries and cities as a means to create or strengthen national or place identity. Especially in its built form, heritage elements often serve as urban reminders to recall a place’s history (Lewicka, 2008) and to reinforce or bring out the unique character of the place. Urban redevelopment is “frequently accused of erasing pasts and creating bland spaces with little connection to the locale”, and such heritage experiences therefore offer “an opportunity to reimagine and reinvigorate public spaces” (Rogae et al., 2021, p. 1031).

In the emotional aspect, symbolic heritage sites and elements evoke a sense of connection, recognition and belonging, especially where there are specific events or people who are associated with it or to the continued usage of the element in the area (Mydland & Grahn, 2012; Yuen, 2005). Facilitating and encouraging public awareness, participation and discovery of heritage value in people’s everyday spaces also fosters local pride and knowledge (Endere, Chaparro, & Conforti, 2018).

Socially, heritage has the potential to bring communities in a place together. This is seen in examples of how local communities and stakeholders come together in reconstructing heritage sites post disaster (e.g. the case of Patan, Nepal in Brosius & Michaels, 2020), residents and non-profit organisations joining efforts in local heritage projects and how the heritage element itself (e.g. restored schoolhouse buildings in Mydland & Grahn, 2012) serves as a gathering place for local residents.

## 2.3 Situating the research

To date, literature relating to “the attachment of heritage value to everyday spaces tends to be in the context of Europe” (Chang & Mah, 2021, p. 501). Although there are some attempts to expand research into these aspects in the context of Singapore, such as Chang & Mah (2021) on mosaic playgrounds in residential heartlands, Low (2017) on heritage trails and Asmira & Tay (2021) on incorporating everyday spaces in historical fieldtrips as part of humanities education in Singapore, the outcomes hitherto are rather modest, with many choosing to still focus their research on the high-profile sites and scenes in Singapore, such as the civic and cultural district, World War II-related structures and sites, heritage tourism, etc. (e.g. Chang & Teo, 2009; Muzaini, 2013; Muzaini, 2016; Yeoh & Huang, 1996).

Given how (local) heritage has generally demonstrated a positive relationship with place and place-making in literature, and how the widening of the definition of heritage allows room for alternative understandings and expressions of local heritage beyond the authorised heritage discourse steered by the professionals and experts (Smith, 2006; Waterton & Smith, 2010), this research will build on these conversations by exploring public perceptions on local heritage and studying the relationship between local heritage and the dimensions of place-making in the context of HDB heartlands in Singapore where majority of Singaporeans call home. This will also serve to contribute to the currently under-researched area regarding “the quotidian spatialities of heritage in Singapore” (Chang & Mah, 2021, p. 501). Also, to note, the term ‘local’ in ‘local heritage’ will refer not to local versus global but local versus national in the context of this research.

### **2.3.1 Selection of four local heritage categories for study**

To facilitate this, some ideas can be drawn from literature on the possible categories of things that people may associate with local heritage, starting with thinking about tangible and intangible heritage.

Heritage in its physical form, such as buildings, structures and spaces (Bond & Worthing, 2016), would form the most common category to be studied at any geographical scale. This would typically involve aspects of the physical environment that are designed and developed by people (Pang, Seah, & Wong, 2019).

Intangible forms of heritage “do not occupy physical space but have to be experienced in time” (Ting, 2015, p 28). They could also be “ephemeral and fleeting” (Ting, 2015, p 28), due to various factors that encourage or hinder their continued presence or their continuation in its original form. Historical events, rituals, festivals, practices, special events or activities, and daily routines are some of the commonly considered aspects of intangible heritage at the local level (e.g. Al-Hinkawi & Al-Saadawi, 2019; Brosius & Michaels, 2020; Friedmann, 2010; Giaccardi & Palen, 2008; Wu & Hou, 2019).

Another interesting category of intangible heritage to look into would be the food heritage. Food reflects the “cultural norms and values of people, places and times” (Timothy, 2016, p. 4). It is also affective in its ability to evoke memories of previously consuming these food and the communal experiences of dining that frequently accompanies it (Giovine & Brulotte, 2016). This is particularly timely in Singapore’s context, as Singapore’s hawker culture was recently inscribed onto UNESCO’s list of intangible cultural heritage in December 2020 (National Heritage Board [NHB], 2021).

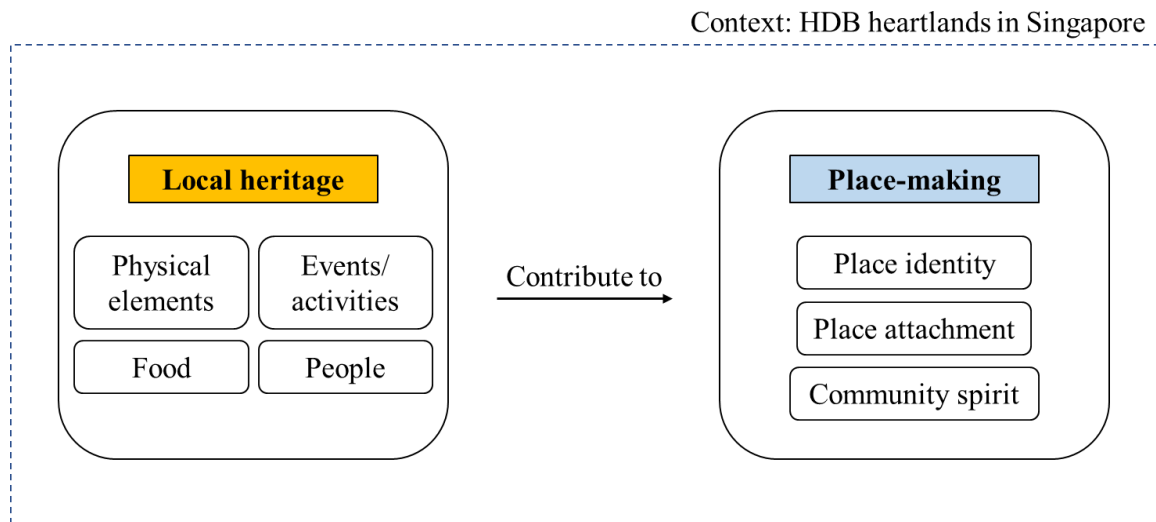
There could be different people who form part of a place’s heritage, be it in big or small ways. Historical figures for instance are commonly used by the state or political authorities to name streets, in an effort to bring to consciousness aspects of history related to these people (Alderman, 2002). To local residents, there could also be smaller characters in their everyday environment who have made an impact on their lives or the lives of the community living in the area. Some of such smaller local characters are also beginning to emerge in HDB heartlands, such as when an area undergoes redevelopment and residents share about how much a certain figure in the community meant to them (Chia & Smalley, 2021). Being able to recall such significant people related to a place can be seen as indicative of people’s knowledge about and attachment to the place (Lewicka, 2008).

These four categories of local heritage elements, namely physical elements, events/activities, food and people will thus be looked into to see whether and how they influence place identity, residents’ attachment to place and community spirit in HDB heartlands.

## **2.4 Conceptual framework**

The theoretical expectation that local heritage contributes to place identity, place attachment and community spirit is represented in the conceptual framework below (see Figure 4). The independent variable, local heritage, will cover the four selected categories described above. The perceived local heritage elements under these four categories will

then be studied in terms of its relationship with the dependent variable, i.e. place-making and its three dimensions, to see whether and how the relationship plays out at the scale of HDB heartlands in Singapore. Since context and public perceptions are involved, there are also likely to be some factors that may influence the strength of the relationship which could be unveiled through the research.



*Figure 4 Conceptual framework*

Above all, it is to be understood that neither heritage nor place-making is static. However, if residents are given opportunities to play a part in “defining and realising ‘heritage’” for themselves (Lashua & Baker, 2016, p. 134), and redevelopment plans and processes give due attention to the spatial, emotive and social aspects relating to people and place, it could potentially ameliorate the tension between local heritage and redevelopment and elevate the discourse above the seeming dichotomy of one or the other, all or nothing.

## Chapter 3: Research Design, Methods and Limitations

### 3.1 Research strategy and methods

As this research seeks to understand what people value in HDB heartlands and how these elements make them feel about their towns, qualitative approaches were adopted to allow the researcher to better understand the opinions and experiences of the target population. A survey research strategy was employed, in the form of a survey questionnaire, with focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Secondary data was also cross-referenced in the process of the research for verification and analysis.

#### 3.1.1 Phase 1 – Survey questionnaire

The research was structured into two main phases. Phase 1 involved the use of a broad survey questionnaire to gather opinions from the general public on what they consider as local heritage in HDB heartlands.

The questionnaire comprised four sections (see Annex 1-A). The first section collected data on demographic information, such as age, which town they lived in and length of residence.

The second section asked respondents on their opinions about the qualities associated with ‘local heritage’ in the heartlands and whether local heritage contributes to the different indicators of place-making.

In the third section, based on the pre-determined categories of ‘Physical elements’, ‘Events/activities’, ‘Food’ and ‘People’, the respondents were asked to name items which they feel represent or are unique to their towns. They were then asked to rate the degree of knowledge, associated memories, physical appeal and importance of the listed items to them on a Likert scale<sup>2</sup>. This was to get a snapshot understanding of possible reasons why these items were listed.

The final section was an invitation to the respondents to participate in the follow-up FGDs.

The rationale for starting off the research with a broad survey was because what constitutes local heritage and how people appraise the value of heritage is subjective and a large-scale approach was needed to gather a variety of fresh feedback (Van Thiel, 2014). Unlike national heritage which is officially conserved or gazetted as national monuments, there is no pre-determined list of local heritage elements to which people could provide their views on. Hence, Phase 1 was important to crowdsource an extensive list of perceived local heritage elements to aid further in-depth discussion.

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<sup>2</sup> The rating questions will be customised to the categories of local heritage. For example, physical appeal only applies to physical elements and not the other categories. These four aspects were referenced from the findings of a relevant research carried out in Singapore in 2017, regarding perceptions of Singapore’s built heritage and landmarks.

### 3.1.2 Phase 2 – FGDs and semi-structured interviews

Phase 2 involved a series of FGDs and semi-structured interviews.

Based on the survey data collected under Phase 1, key patterns were distilled and used to facilitate deeper discussion at the FGDs on why certain elements were valued by residents and how these relate to the different dimensions of place-making (see Annex 1-B for FGD guide). The preference for FGDs over interviews took into consideration that a more interactive environment could encourage cross-pollination of ideas and views (Bryman, 2016), which may be helpful in eliciting more perspectives.

Considering that people living in different categories of towns, i.e. mature, middle-aged or young towns (see Figure 5), may have different views due to the varying lengths of town development history and nature of the built environment (e.g. different building typologies and architectural expressions in different decades), three separate FGDs were conducted to see if there might be differences in perceptions across town categories and to prevent a situation where participants from mature towns overpower the discussion by virtue that they may have more ‘content’ within their towns to share.

#### Towns and Estates by Category

Mature Towns/Estates	Middle-Aged Towns/Estate	Young Towns
1. Queenstown	1. Bukit Batok	1. Punggol
2. Bukit Merah	2. Bukit Panjang	2. Sengkang
3. Toa Payoh	3. Choa Chu Kang	3. Sembawang
4. Ang Mo Kio	4. Jurong East	
5. Bedok	5. Jurong West	
6. Clementi	6. Bishan	
7. Kallang/Whampoa	7. Hougang	
8. Geylang	8. Serangoon	
<b>Estates:</b>	9. Tampines	
1. Marine Parade	10. Pasir Ris	
2. Central Area*	11. Woodlands	
	12. Yishun	
	<b>Estate:</b>	
	1. Bukit Timah	

\* Covering areas such as Tanjong Pagar Plaza, Cantonment Road, Jalan Kukoh, Chin Swee Road, York Hill, Upper Cross Street, Sago Lane, Selegie Road

Figure 5 HDB towns/estates<sup>3</sup> by age category  
(Source: HDB Sample Household Survey 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Towns are larger in size and comprehensively planned from the onset, with the exception of Queenstown and Bukit Merah which are an amalgamation of estates due to legacy reasons. Estates on the other hand are much smaller and the locations of the HDB developments are typically more sporadic. Notwithstanding, for ease of writing/reading, all 26 towns/estates have been referred to as ‘towns’ in this paper.

In addition, the researcher approached several relevant government agencies and heritage groups to seek their expert views on aspects such as the current local heritage scene in HDB heartlands, their experiences in dealing with local heritage in HDB heartlands and how these elements were observed to influence the dimensions of place-making, etc. (see Annex 1-C for interview guides).

### 3.2 Operationalisation

Tables 1 and 2 below show the operationalisation tables for the two concepts. The variables and indicators are informed by literature and consistent with the definitions for local heritage and place-making used in this research.

*Table 1 Operationalisation table for local heritage*

Concept	Variable	Sub-variable	Indicator	Source of data
Local heritage	Types of elements	Physical elements	Whether there are buildings, structures or spaces that are perceived as representative of the town	Survey, FGD, interview
		Events/ activities	Whether there are events or activities that are perceived as contributing to the town's history or character	
		Food	Whether there are certain food in the town that is well-known	
		People	Whether there are any significant people (past or present) who are related to the town	
<i>Working definition for local heritage: Elements that are valued by local communities and positively contribute to the character and distinctiveness of an area.</i>				

*Table 2 Operationalisation table for place-making*

Concept	Variable	Indicator	Source of data
Place-making	Place identity	Whether the town is identifiable/ recognisable	Survey, FGD, interview
		Whether people find the town charming	
	Place attachment	Gain knowledge about the town	Survey, FGD, interview
		Feel a sense of pride towards the town	
		Feel a sense of belonging towards the town	
		Do not wish to move out of the town	
	Community spirit	Supports social interaction	Survey, FGD, interview
Encourages civic participation			
<i>Working definition for place-making: Continuous process to foster place identity, place attachment and community spirit.</i>			

### 3.3 Sampling and data collection

#### *Survey questionnaire*

The target population includes people living in HDB towns. Based on HDB's Annual Report 2019/2020, there are about 3,240,000 Singapore residents (i.e. Singapore Citizens

and Permanent Residents) living in HDB flats across the 26 HDB towns (HDB, 2020d). Of which, 30% live in mature towns, 57% in middle-aged towns and 14% in young towns (percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding).

The survey was hosted on a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant online survey platform, Qualtrics, and the survey link was disseminated via snowball method over a period of three weeks. The digital platform and snowball method were used to allow the researcher to reach out to a wider audience within a limited research timeframe and under the ongoing COVID-19 constraints.

In total, 251 survey responses were received. After filtering for residents who are for certain living in HDB towns (i.e. those living in HDB flats), there are 186 survey responses which are used in the analysis. The proportion of respondents living in mature, middle-aged and young towns was 27%, 60% and 12% respectively (percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding), which is similar to the distribution of the target population (see Annex 2-A for survey demographic data).

#### *FGDs*

The FGD participants were sought through convenience (volunteer) sampling, by inviting survey respondents who were interested to participate in the follow-up FGDs to leave their name and contact details at the end of the survey form.

The FGDs was conducted via the virtual meeting platform, Zoom, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and associated physical gathering restrictions. Three FGD sessions for the three categories of towns (i.e. stratifying criteria) were held over three days during the weekends, each lasting about 1.5 hours, in consideration that screentime fatigue may set in beyond this timeframe. Some challenges were faced in coordinating the attendance and managing last minute drop-outs. Eventually, there were four participants for mature towns, seven for middle-aged towns, and two for young towns (see Annex 2-B for profile of FGD participants).

PowerPoint slides were prepared to guide the participants in discussing their views and experiences. Questions were displayed on screen with accompanying graphs and images to aid in visualisation.

#### *Semi-structured interviews*

Purposive sampling was used in identifying relevant subjects for expert interviews (Bryman, 2016). Three interviews were conducted with high-level officers from the relevant government agencies, namely, HDB, NHB and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA).

One interview was conducted with the Co-founder and Executive Director of My Community, an active and prominent heritage group who works closely with local communities in and around Queenstown. The researcher also approached Singapore Heritage Society (SHS), an experienced heritage non-governmental organisation in Singapore established since 1987. Unfortunately, SHS replied that they did not have a suitable candidate for the interview.

All four interviews were held on Zoom, each lasting about an hour. Profile of the interviewees are shown in Annex 2-C.



### **3.4 Data analysis**

The survey data was tabulated and analysed via Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel. Miro, an online whiteboard, was also used to organise the myriad of qualitative data into sub-categories under the different categories of local heritage elements. Inputs under ‘Others’ were also re-classified to the respective pre-defined categories.

The FGDs and interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and interviewees and transcribed for analysis. ATLAS.ti was used to code the transcripts and search for patterns and relationships (e.g. using query tools and co-occurrence tables) for analysis.

### **3.5 Validity and reliability**

As qualitative research is more explorative in character and holds that there is no single account of social reality, the way validity and reliability are managed is slightly different from that in quantitative research (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Bryman, 2016).

To ensure internal validity, the selection of variables and the corresponding indicators took reference from literature and was verified regarding their relevance to the study context. A pilot survey was also carried out to check that the questions were formulated in a way that is understandable to the target population.

Regarding external validity, as qualitative research is often context specific and involves smaller sample sizes, it may not be easily transferable to other contexts (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Bryman, 2016). Nonetheless, as suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), description of the study context was provided so that ‘receiving’ researchers can assess the transferability of the constructs and findings to their contexts. Additionally, triangulation was adopted to strengthen credibility (Baxter & Eyles, 1997), by combining different data collection methods and obtaining views from a range of sources.

Reliability is concerned with the repeatability of a study (Bryman, 2016). While this is challenging for qualitative research as it is not possible to freeze the social context, circumstances and setting in which the research was originally carried out (Bryman, 2016), Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) suggestion of having good data records was adopted. For example, research instruments, transcripts, and analytical and methodological memos on ATLAS.ti were properly documented to keep a good audit trail (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Bryman, 2016).

Care was also taken in the formulation of survey questions and the conducting of interviews and FGDs to remain as objective as possible, so as not to sway the findings towards certain outcomes (Bryman, 2016).

### **3.6 Challenges and limitations**

One of the key limitations to carrying out research during this period was the uncertain COVID-19 situation and its associated restrictive measures, which would limit opportunities for on-site observations and face-to-face interactions. As such, this was considered upfront in the research design and the chosen research methods had the ability of being conducted online.

Some challenges faced in the research include managing the two phases of data collection within the limited timeframe and the administrative and logistical aspects of conducting interviews and FGDs online and across different time zones.

While majority of the Singapore residents have access to internet and are literate in the English language (DOS, 2021), there will inevitably be a small segment of the population such as the elderly who may not be reached. Non-probability snowball sampling also meant that the sample would not be statistically representative of the population. Acknowledging this, intentional effort was made to disseminate the survey as widely as possible to capture responses from the different age bands and towns.

Also, there was little to no control over the demographic profile of the FGD participants as it was dependent on who was willing to participate, comfortable with using the Zoom platform and available on the dates that the FGDs were conducted. Although the FGD participants being mostly within the 21-40 age group meant that the older generations and the teenagers were not well-represented, the researcher managed to gather participants from a good mix of towns (12 different towns) from different regions of Singapore.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

In this chapter, the main findings derived from the survey, FGDs and interviews will be analysed and presented. The chapter is organised into the following parts – brief description of the study context, the different perspectives on local heritage, the impact of local heritage on the different dimensions of place-making and key influencing factors.

### 4.1 Study context

Singapore is a young nation with just 56 years of independence. Being a former British colony for almost 150 years, traces of her colonial history can be seen in the network of British street and place names and colonial-era architecture (Ting, 2015; Yeoh, 1996). Singapore is also a multi-racial and multi-religious country, and this cultural diversity is carefully managed through policy and planning to ensure a harmonious society (Public Service Division, 2015).

Formed in 1960, HDB took over its predecessor, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) to solve Singapore's housing crisis (HDB, 2020b). Today, there are 26 existing HDB towns across Singapore, ranging between 380ha to 1,300ha in land area and housing between 60,000 to 254,000 HDB residents per town (HDB, 2020d). Development of HDB townships started around the city centre in the south and radiated towards the fringes of the city state. HDB towns are designed to be self-sufficient, with a wide range of amenities such as shops, schools, parks, and social and recreational facilities to serve the residents (HDB, 2019).

Despite the relatively short history, growing voices in the public domain demonstrate a desire for greater participation in heritage matters. These voices could range from established heritage groups such as SHS and My Community to more spontaneous ones such as Friends of Farrer Park and Save Dakota Crescent and include residents who live in the area.

Currently, the main redevelopment programme in place is the Selective En-bloc Redevelopment Scheme (SERS) launched in 1995, where HDB precincts are redeveloped as part of efforts to renew ageing estates and optimise land use (Tay, 2008). Through SERS, precincts assessed to have high redevelopment potential, such as those located in prime locations near train stations, were “acquired, demolished and rebuilt for higher density living” (National Library Board [NLB], 1995), injecting new vitality and bringing new residents into the estate (PMO, 2018). To date, 78 SERS projects have been completed and another three are ongoing (HDB, 2020a), with only a few more to come (PMO, 2018).

Looking ahead, redevelopment of public housing will take place on a larger scale when HDB blocks are progressively redeveloped upon lease expiry or when residents vote for early redevelopment through VERS. It is against this overall backdrop that the research topic is being studied.

## 4.2 Local heritage in HDB heartlands

This section will first discuss the local heritage elements cited by residents according to the four categories, ‘Physical elements’, ‘Events/activities’, ‘Food’ and ‘People’. Next, the views of the government agencies and My Community on local heritage will be summarised. Lastly, broader findings will be discussed.

### 4.2.1 Residents’ perspective of local heritage

#### *Physical elements*

Comparing across the four pre-defined categories of local heritage, ‘Physical elements’ received the most responses, with 130 (out of 186) survey respondents citing a wide variety of buildings, structures or spaces which they value and felt were representative of their towns. This could be due to the nature of physical elements being more tangible, visible and commonly associated with what people would think of as a heritage element.

Among the range of physical elements listed (see Table 3), the top few sub-categories that emerged were ‘parks and waterbodies’, ‘shopping malls’, ‘places of worship’, ‘markets and hawker centres’, and ‘infrastructure elements’.

*Table 3 Sub-categories and examples of ‘Physical elements’ cited*

Physical elements	
Sub-categories	Examples
Parks and waterbodies	Bedok Reservoir Park, Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park, Jurong Lake Garden, Mount Faber, Pang Sua Pond, Pasir Ris Beach, Punggol Waterway, Sembawang Hot Spring Park
Shopping malls	Junction 8, IMM, Parkway Parade
Places of worship	Central Sikh Temple, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (Bright Hill Temple)
Markets and hawker centres	Chong Pang Market and Food Centre, Clementi Central Market and Hawker Centre, Bedok 85 hawker centre, former dome-shaped Commonwealth Avenue Wet Market, Tampines Round Market and Food Centre
Infrastructure elements	Bukit Panjang Light Rail Transit system, Causeway bridge between Singapore and Malaysia, Henderson Waves, Old Punggol Road, Sunrise Bridge and Jewel Bridge along Punggol Waterway
Historical buildings and structures	Black and white colonial houses in Sembawang, Peranakan houses in Joo Chiat/ Katong, Matilda House in Punggol, World War II bunkers in Woodlands

Sports and recreational facilities	Aloha Loyang chalets in Pasir Ris, Clementi stadium & swimming complex, Downtown East in Pasir Ris, fishing pond at Pasir Ris, ORTO park in Yishun, Superbowl Jurong
HDB blocks	Circular HDB flats at Ang Mo Kio, conserved SIT walk-ups at Tiong Bahru, sloped roofs at Potong Pasir, red-brick HDB blocks at Bishan, Pinnacle @ Duxton
Civic and community institutions	Jurong Regional Library, Kampung Admiralty, Marine Parade Community Club, Toa Payoh Public Library
Playgrounds and structures	Army-themed playgrounds in Keat Hong, clock tower in Bedok, dragon playground in Toa Payoh, fruit-themed playgrounds in Tampines, Merlion statues in Ang Mo Kio
Schools	Famous schools in Bishan, National University of Singapore, Singapore Sports School
Offices	CPF building in Bishan, DSTA building in Bukit Merah, HDB Hub in Toa Payoh
Others	Four beauties portraits in Simei, Kebun Baru bird-singing corner in Ang Mo Kio, The Punggol Settlement, The Salvation Army Headquarters at Bishan

From residents' sharing during the FGDs, key reasons why they value certain buildings, structures or spaces in their towns are because these physical elements hold personal memories and are familiar icons to them. This matches the survey feedback where close to 75% of the 130 respondents 'Somewhat agree' or 'Strongly agree' that they had memories of the physical elements they listed, and about 61% who 'Somewhat agree' or 'Strongly agree' that the physical elements they listed were important to them. Explaining why the different physical elements were well-loved, residents recounted fond memories of visiting these places with their families and friends, especially in their growing up years, and how some of these places are also frequented by those who live within and beyond the town. The physical elements cited also tend to be permanent, non-interim features that have become a familiar and comforting sight to them.

Residents also cited elements which they felt were quite special. Examples include the Loyang Tua Pek Kong Temple which is a one-of-its-kind mixed-religion temple comprising "Buddhist, Hindu and Taoist deities, and a Muslim *kramat* (shrine) within its premises" (NLB, 2016a), the one-and-only natural Sembawang Hot Spring on mainland Singapore (NLB, 2016b), the conserved SIT blocks at Tiong Bahru (see Figure 6) and charming colonial houses at Sembawang.



*Figure 6 Conserved pre- and post-war SIT blocks at Tiong Bahru  
(Source: Author's own)*

Prominence also surfaced as one of the main reasons, such as infrastructure elements and HDB block designs (see Figure 7) which are visually prominent or were featured as photogenic spots on social media.



*Figure 7 Iconic red-brick HDB blocks with pitched roofs in Bishan and the well-loved Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park in the foreground  
(Courtesy of Edwin Chua)*

There appears to be some temporal considerations, as some residents felt more comfortable with terming a physical element as a ‘local heritage’ when it has existed for some time, i.e. not a brand new development. Even if they do value some of these recently completed buildings, they felt that these were probably heritage-in-the-making or future heritage that the younger generations who would grow up with these developments may come to cherish as their local heritage in the future.

### *Events/activities*

A modest number of 34 survey respondents cited events/activities which they felt contribute to their town's history or character. These were classified into six sub-categories (see Table 4).

*Table 4 Sub-categories and examples of 'Events/activities' cited*

Events/ activities	
Sub-categories	Examples
Political	Workers' Party's (opposition party) election rallies and victory celebrations in Hougang
Religious	Temple events during Hungry Ghost Festival, Thaipusam processions
Festive	Festive lighting and decorations during festivals such as Chinese New Year and Mooncake festival, National Day fireworks
Community	Running events at Bedok Reservoir Park and Punggol Waterway, sports and community events organised by the Community Clubs and Residents' Committees
Historical	1973 South-East Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games at Toa Payoh, Queen Elizabeth's visit to Toa Payoh in 1972
Everyday life	Elderly folks engaging in routine morning exercises, fishing at Punggol, neighbours gathering for potlucks

While residents at the FGDs do not personally participate much in these local events/activities, they acknowledge that these are important to others in the community, such as *getai* (song stage) which is performed in the Chinese dialect during the annual Hungry Ghost Festival and attended mainly by the older population (NHB, 2019).

Some also felt that the political and historical events/activities tell a story about their towns and the residents living in. For instance, amidst the political dominance of the ruling party, People's Action Party, over the other constituencies, Hougang is well-known as the Workers' Party's (WP; opposition party) stronghold and their rallies and victory celebrations have attracted large crowds of supporters (Cheng, 2020; Ong & Lee, 2015; see Figure 8).





*Figure 8 WP supporters waiting for the election result for Aljunied GRC at Hougang Stadium in 2011 (Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission)*

One interesting observation is how residents go beyond the more conventional forms of events/activities to also value those of a more ordinary, routine, everyday nature. While these may not be of national or historical significance, they represent a familiar and comfortable rhythm for those who are used to seeing these activities take place at expected times in their surroundings:

*“So the only thing that I can think of is the army boys. Because Pasir Ris interchange is where they go when they book in. All the buses are there every Sunday night, it’s like super packed with all the parents and the guys in green, and we all accept that it’s part of life. Even when we go to the supermarkets and all that, when we see these guys queueing up, we will let them go first, because we know they are going to book in. And then of course Friday night when everybody comes back.” – Male, >60 years old, resident of Pasir Ris (middle-aged town) for 26-30 years*



## Food

86 survey respondents listed different kinds of food that their towns were known for, most of which were local hawker fare and only a few were restaurants. This is not surprising given how hawker culture and hawker food are “at the heart of everyday life in Singapore” (NHB, 2021), as well as the recent inscription of the hawker culture in Singapore onto UNESCO’s list of intangible cultural heritage (see Figure 9). Table 5 shows the survey feedback classified according to different levels of abstraction, from the dish itself to the hawker centres/*kopitiam*s (coffee shops) and to the overall quality of food at the town level.



Figure 9 Tabletop sticker to promote SG HawkerFest and celebrate the UNESCO inscription of Singapore's hawker culture

(Source: National Environment Agency)

*Table 5 Sub-categories and examples of 'Food' cited*

Food	
Sub-categories	Examples
Food	Hainanese curry rice at Clementi, Chong Pang nasi lemak, Punggol nasi lemak, Katong laksa, <i>bak chor mee</i> (minced meat noodles) at Bedok 85 hawker centre, <i>ke kou mian</i> (Koka instant noodles) at Bukit Panjang, Sembawang White Beehoon, BBQ seafood at Jurong West
Hawker centres/ <i>kopitiam</i> s	Block 302 <i>kopitiam</i> in Choa Chu Kang, Block 216 hawker centre in Bedok, Bedok 85 hawker centre, Chomp Chomp Food Centre in Serangoon
Town	Café belt along Upper Thomson Road in Bishan, good food in Hougang and Bedok
Others	Balmoral Bakery at Clementi, Mirana Cake House at Tampines, Basil Inn at Pasir Ris

The main reason residents cited these food as part of their town's food heritage is because of its great taste and popularity. Some are 'local secrets' while others have become so well-known that they attract people from all over Singapore to queue for the food.

There is also an element of subjectivity involved, as several FGD participants described how their personal memories and emotional connection with the food, having eaten them since young and gotten accustomed to the taste, make them feel that these food are the best.

### *People*

Similar to 'Events/activities', the section on 'People' received modest input, with only 36 survey respondents mentioning political figures who previously served or are currently serving in their constituencies, historical figures related to the town and people in the community (see Table 6).

*Table 6 Sub-categories and examples of 'People' cited*

People	
Sub-categories	Examples
Political figures	Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Mr Goh Chok Tong, Dr Ng Eng Hen, Mr Low Thia Kiang
Historical figures	Lim Nee Soon, Lim Chong Pang, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith
People in the community	School teachers, stallholders at the market, HDB estate cleaners

In general, it is observed from the FGDs that acknowledging political and historical figures in their towns was very much a 'head knowledge' exercise. For instance,

participants felt that it would be logical for their Members of Parliament (MPs) to be mentioned as significant people related to their towns, even if they do not know much about or feel much towards these MPs. This is also reflected in the survey feedback where about 78% of the 36 respondents indicated ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Somewhat disagree’ or ‘Neutral’ regarding their knowledge about the people they listed.

What emerged as a newer aspect was the social ties formed at the local community level or local personalities who have contributed in a significant way to the community. Although these people are unlikely to be significant at the national level and may only be known by a segment of the residents, to the average resident, these are social bonds that are meaningful to them.

*“I posted a photo of Simei and it just happened that there was an old man riding a bicycle in the photo. And someone commented that, ‘Oh, that is a legend in Simei [neighbourhood in Tampines]’. I was like, ‘Whoa, who is that?’ ... Apparently that person used to help out for different Residents’ Committees. And what he does now after he retired is that he goes around Simei taking care of trees, etc., like completely out by himself. And he’s called like the caretaker or the legend of Simei.” – Male, 21-30 years old, resident of Tampines (middle-aged town) for 21-25 years*

#### **4.2.2 Government’s perspective of local heritage**

*Role, factors of consideration and examples*

Overall, NHB, URA and HDB share similar views on what constitutes local heritage in HDB heartlands, with slight differences in scope due mainly to their different mandates.

As the custodian of Singapore’s heritage, NHB holds the broadest view among the three agencies on the range of heritage elements they look at. The Director of Heritage Research and Assessment at NHB shared that there are different ways that one could categorise heritage. In the context of HDB heartlands, heritage could be broadly categorised into tangible/built heritage (e.g. dragon playground in Toa Payoh), intangible cultural heritage (e.g. funerals at the void decks (open ground floor space) of HDB blocks, religious events) and memories (e.g. people’s experience of growing up, attending schools and living in HDB heartlands). Factors that NHB considers in identifying and assessing heritage elements, particularly for built heritage, include history, architectural value, social/community value, distinctiveness/rarity and authenticity (more relevant for non-HDB heritage buildings such as places of worship).

As the national planning authority whose role includes overseeing conservation of built heritage, URA focuses on buildings and districts and considers factors similar to NHB’s, e.g. history, architecture, rarity and representation that tells a story. Recent examples of built heritage that URA has worked with in HDB heartlands include the retention of a swimming pool and a former boxing gym to preserve the sporting heritage of the Farrer Park area, and the SIT blocks and dove playground at Dakota Crescent (URA, 2019).

While HDB is not a heritage agency per se, as the master planner and developer of HDB towns/estates, it seeks out “what was significant about the past that needs to be

commemorated or to be incorporated into the present” (Group Director, Research and Planning Group, HDB) to enrich current-day planning and design and raise awareness of a place’s history. Some examples include the under construction Alkaff Lake at Bidadari reminiscent of the former Japanese-style Alkaff Lake Gardens in the area (Channel NewsAsia, 2019) and the pedestrianisation of Old Punggol Road, a key transportation route in the past for farm and fishing goods, into a heritage trail (NHB, 2018).

*Opening up to broader definitions of heritage*

Through the interviews, there are indications that the government agencies are broadening their definitions of heritage. These include the acknowledgement that heritage could also be living and contemporary (i.e. not limited to past historical elements) and that ordinary daily encounters, places and stories that are significant to the man on the street are important ingredients of local heritage. Although the current focus is still on history and built heritage, the interviewees agreed that aspects such as events/activities, food and people are also important forms of local heritage that contribute to the “software behind places where people gather and form memories” (Director from NHB) and “give the soul to a place” (Director from URA).

As noted by Ting (2015, p. 35), such a shift to consider the everyday heritage, which includes social memories viewed from the lens of the local communities, is likely “precipitated by popular sentiment” and the increasing public awareness, interest and desire to be engaged in local heritage matters. While this indicates a positive step forward, “how the diverse layers of heritage can be emplaced and fully legitimised in planning settings” needs to be further studied (Ludwig, 2016, p. 824). But one thing for certain is that more engagement and dialogues can be expected, as expressed by the interviewees:

*“So through their eyes, we see the town in a more significant way. We’ll develop better insights to help us plan better ... I would think that going forward, there will be a lot more of such Singapore Agenda conversation. Together we discuss, we talk about it, we co-create what matters to us, have a collective conversation, and to be clear what is it that matters to all and then we chart the future together.” – Group Director, Research and Planning Group, HDB*

*“It’s important to have that engagement. And sometimes, not all their hopes or expectations can be met and if we can share with them and communicate with them and explain the considerations behind why we cannot do all the things expected, in my opinion, they are generally understanding. They want to work with you, not against you. We also don’t want to work against them. And it’s important. I think that the ground has really shifted, and we really have to work like that moving forward.” – Director, Conservation Planning Department, URA*

### 4.2.3 Heritage groups' perspective of local heritage

The heritage group, My Community, seems more experienced with the concept of local heritage in HDB heartlands. Since its inception in 2010, they have been working primarily within Queenstown “to capture and preserve community stories, reconnect people to places and social networks, and deepen heritage appreciation and expression” (My Community, n.d.). They also adopt “a common-man approach to history where everyday experiences of Singaporeans are chronicled and celebrated” (My Community, n.d.).

The Co-founder and Executive Director of My Community explained that “heritage belongs to the community” and what matters is the meaning and significance that these everyday sites and scenes hold for the everyday people living in the town:

*“It doesn't have to be something that, to the architects or to the researchers or to the elite, something of national value. It could be a local hawker centre, it could be a local park. It could be a local place where people congregate, meet their friends, probably engage in daily taiji [traditional physical exercise]. It's a place that's involved in memory making.”*

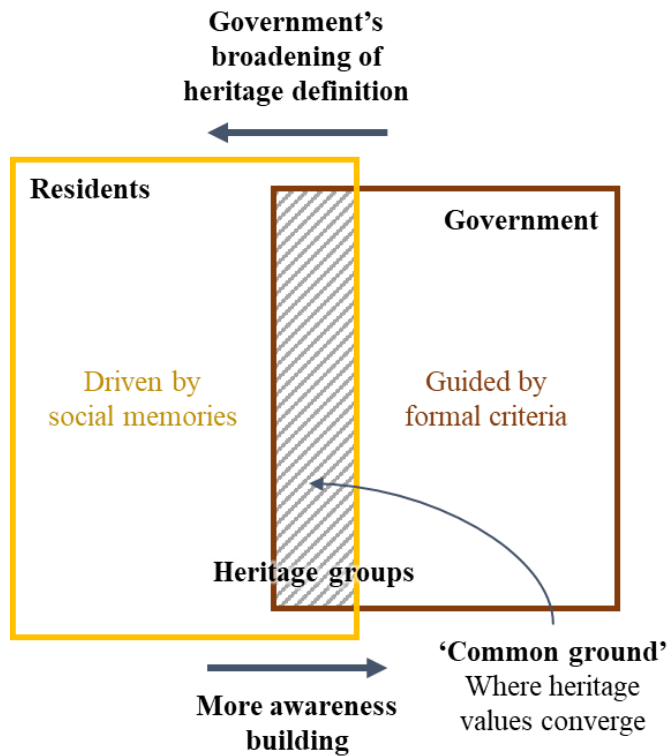
Seeing themselves more as a facilitator rather than one who decides the narrative of a town for its residents, My Community involves the residents in the decision-making process and allows them to curate the heritage elements and stories that they would like to represent through their guided tours, the artefacts and documents to showcase at the community museum or store in the community archives, and the buildings to campaign for conservation. He also shared how these initiatives have helped to revitalise Queenstown residents who were initially disoriented with the rapid redevelopment taking place in their town and to discover the local heritage gems around them.

### 4.2.4 Discussion on broader findings

Having looked at residents, government agencies and My Community's views on the four categories of local heritage, further examination of the data is done at the aggregated level to yield several broader findings.

#### *Perspectives on local heritage and 'common ground' between actors*

From the findings, we see that residents' perception of local heritage is mainly driven by social memories whereas the government's perception of local heritage is mainly guided by a formal set of criteria. These perceptions overlap when both groups concur on the heritage value of an element (i.e. 'common ground'), e.g. some of the places of worship and shophouses cited by the residents have been conserved by the government. Heritage groups could operate across the spectrum, depending on their technical expertise and heritage focus. In My Community's case, they largely operate within the social memories realm but do also engage the government agencies on conservation of built heritage using formal criteria such as historical significance (Zaccheus, 2019). The relationship is illustrated in Figure 10 below.



*Figure 10 Relationship between different actors and their perspectives on local heritage*

From the FGDs and interviews, there is potential for the ‘common ground’ to be expanded. In one direction, there is increasing consideration of social memories and experiences among the government agencies as part of the authorised heritage discourse. In the other direction, there are efforts by both the government agencies and the heritage groups in building awareness of local heritage and engaging residents on conservation matters. With greater mutual understanding and alignment of interests, there could be more opportunities ahead for collaboration.

#### *Heritage is processual*

Comparisons between the FGD and survey data also suggest that there could be some incongruence between residents’ rational beliefs as expressed through their survey responses on the qualities associated with local heritage and their narrated values as expressed through the FGDs. For example, ‘Historical significance’ ranked the highest in the survey (see Figure 11) but did not feature much during the FGDs. Also, more respondents chose ‘Collective memories’ over ‘Personal memories’, suggesting that residents may consider it more justified in some sense if the element hold memories for the wider community. However, the FGDs revealed that both were important factors to the residents and a local heritage element means more to them if they have positive personal memories of it.

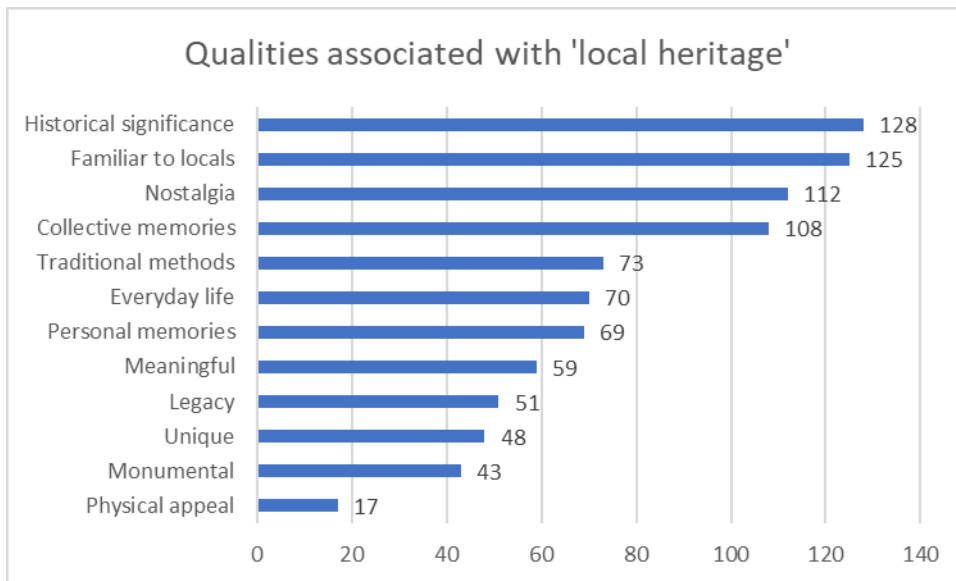


Figure 11 Vote count for qualities associated with 'local heritage'

Such incongruences indicate that heritage is processual and not static. Residents would naturally have pre-conceived notions of what heritage means or looks like based on their personal experiences/exposure and what has been presented to them through authorised heritage discourses and packaged heritage narratives (McDonald, 2011). Hence, even with the invitation to broader definitions of heritage, residents will need to internally negotiate within themselves what counts as local heritage to them and how that would in turn influence how they relate to their towns.

#### *Local heritage elements not conceived singularly*

It is observed that local heritage elements are usually not conceived singularly, especially between physical elements, events/activities and food. For instance, when discussing physical elements such as a bird-singing corner, they also refer to the regular congregation of people at the bird-singing corner to admire the birds/bird-singing (everyday activity). When discussing hawker centres, they also refer to the communal dining (everyday activity) and the hawker food (food) that they enjoy. This suggests that often, more than just the building, structure or space itself, it is also what people do with it that makes the element meaningful as a whole (Cheape, Garden, & McLean, 2009). Thus, if such elements are to be employed as anchors in the process of spatial change, it is important to see how to retain not just the form but also the essence of the building, structure or space.

#### *Fuzzy boundaries*

As Allmendinger & Houghton (2009a) noted, administrative planning boundaries are often the pre-occupation of spatial planning practice, but residents on the ground do not experience their towns strictly based on these professional boundaries. This is seen from the survey data where some of the items listed were near but not inside their town boundaries. For example, a Sembawang resident mentioned ORTO park which is in the adjacent Yishun town, and Marine Parade residents mentioned Katong/Joo Chiat shophouses, East Coast Park and Katong laksa which are around but outside of Marine Parade's boundary. This is also a unique observation to heritage at the local level because unlike national/country boundaries, town boundaries are perhaps fuzzier in the minds of the residents. In this regard, planners seeking to engage residents will need to



be mindful of this and “acknowledge that they must work within multiple spaces” (Allmendinger & Houghton, 2009b, p. 619).

### *Impact of age category of towns and length of residence*

It was anticipated that the age category of towns and length of residence may have an impact on the ease by which residents would be able to list out local heritage elements in their towns, due to the longer town development history and the longer timeframe that residents have living in and experiencing various aspects of their towns. When considering the age maturity of the town, it is seen that across the four categories, an older town would have more responses per respondent on average (see Figure 12). However, when considering the length of residence in the town, there is no clear pattern (see Figure 13). This suggests that there are other factors at play, which may require further research to uncover. Some possible factors extracted from the FGDs include residents’ personal interest in the topic of heritage and whether they spend time exploring and experiencing their towns, regardless of length of residence.

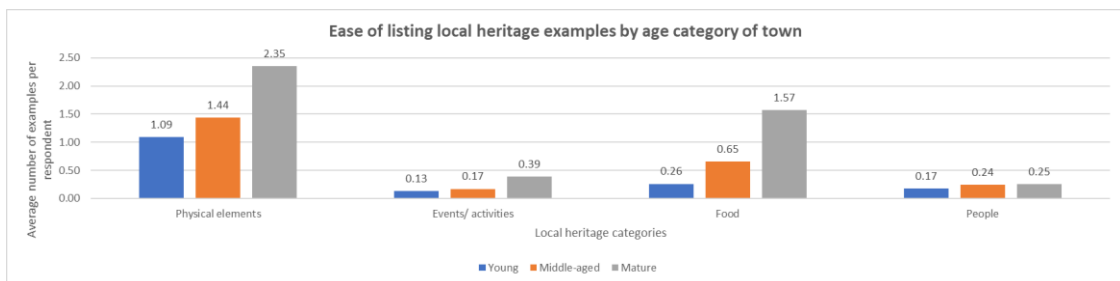


Figure 12 Average number of local heritage examples per respondent by age category of town

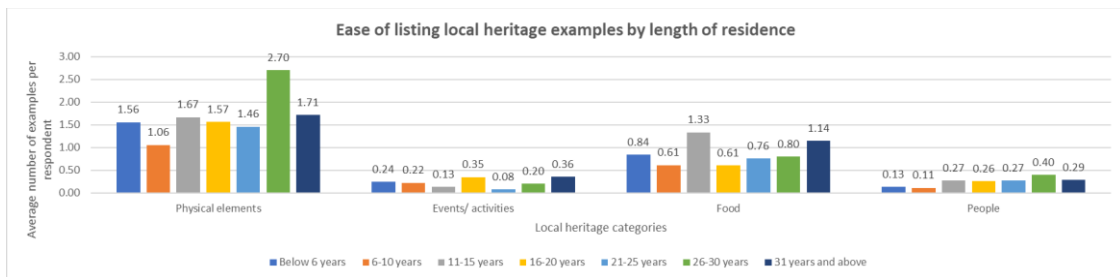


Figure 13 Average number of local heritage examples per respondent by length of residence

## 4.3 Impact of local heritage on place-making

This section systematically discusses key findings on the relationship between each category of local heritage and the three dimensions of place-making.

### 4.3.1 Physical elements

Of the four pre-defined categories of local heritage elements, ‘Physical elements’ displayed the strongest relationship with all three dimensions of place-making. Similar to the impact of built heritage at the national level, where cultural landmarks help to define a country’s identity amidst a globalising world and generate civic pride amongst its citizens (Yuen, 2006), these effects were also evident at the local level of HDB towns, albeit with lower differentiating factor across towns. For instance, residents noted that many of the cited physical elements are common amenities and features in



HDB towns. Yet, due to familiarity and because some of these features are propelled to greater awareness through social media, residents, including those from the younger towns, were able to see many of these physical elements as synonymous with or representative of their towns. These physical elements also function as place markers, contributing to their cognitive memories of the place and aiding in orientation and wayfinding.

*“To me, I think the food centre feels like the centre of all that, like the heart connecting with the other shophouses. So, when I think of, “Oh I want to go to a certain place”, I’ll think of it relative to the food centre ... And sometimes you see it on the news ... you can recognise that, ‘Oh, this is my food centre’.” – Female, 31-40 years old, resident of Clementi (mature town) for <6 years*

As many of the identified physical elements are functional places and facilities that serve residents’ current needs and lifestyles, e.g. parks, hawker centres and recreational facilities, residents felt that the continued presence of these physical elements do make them feel at home and help in providing a place for people to form memories and interact with one another. These physical elements also generate a sense of pride for the residents, especially when people living outside their towns know about or praise these elements.

*“I was actually a little proud when my colleagues who are expats ... talk about Sembawang hot spring. ... Even though it’s very far away, very ulu [secluded] and inaccessible, they actually drove all the way to just spend time there. So, it seems like it’s a unique local sightseeing place for them. ... I was actually quite impressed.” – Female, 31-40 years old, resident of Sembawang (young town) for <6 years*

It also appears that residents’ attachment to their towns tends to be stronger when their memories of these physical elements were formed during childhood and schooling years. This mirrors separate studies that spending one’s childhood in a place and having positive childhood experiences there do lead to long-term affective bond to the place, often surpassing place attachments developed later in life (Hay, 1998; Morgan, 2010). One supporting factor is because HDB towns are planned to be self-sufficient for people to live, work, play and learn within their towns (HDB, 2019), and children, having less independent mobility, tend to spend more of their childhood years in and around their towns (Bhuyan & Skelton, 2014). Residents also explained how as they grow older, they travel out more frequently to other parts of Singapore for higher education, work or social gatherings, and their priorities for their ‘adult home’ are based more on practical considerations.

*“Given a choice, I think I will not want to stay in this Woodlands. Because firstly, it is not the town that I grew up in. I actually grew up in Ang Mo Kio until 14 years old. So, when I shifted to Woodlands, there’re really no childhood memories here. ... there’s always a special feeling for Ang Mo Kio. I can still remember buying the candies at the round “mama shop” [traditional provision shop] at the neighbourhood centre ... even my secondary school and JC [Junior College] are not in Woodlands. So, it’s like so out of touch with Woodlands even though I stay here.” – Male, 31-40 years old, resident of Woodlands (middle-aged town) for 21-25 years*

It was observed that while residents do feel some degree of sadness if and when a physical element that they value is removed, pragmatism still stands out strongly. For instance, a few residents who have experienced redevelopment in their towns shared that they did not feel any lasting sense of grief or loss as the buildings that were demolished were often replaced by a new one that serves a similar purpose, and they get to enjoy these amenities in an upgraded environment. This suggests that it is possible for heritage objects to be “recreated without losing value if they retain their core meaning” (McDonald, 2011, p. 788). Moreover, if the new facility serves residents better, it meant that redevelopment has helped to enhance the importance and heritage value of the element (McDonald, 2011).

Residents also noted that physical elements are often tied to the functional use and the users of the place. Thus, when a physical element fades into obsolescence and is removed, residents may engage in ‘reflective nostalgia’ (Boym, 2001) but are generally accepting of this coming and going as part and parcel of life (see Figure 14).



*Figure 14 Traditional “mama shop” in Bedok, a fading scene in HDB heartlands due to market competition (Courtesy of Raphael Hugh Chang Jia Yi)*

### **4.3.2 Events/activities**

Residents across mature, middle-aged and young towns found it challenging to link ‘Events/activities’ to the identity of a place for several reasons. Many community and festive events/activities are organised by Community Clubs (CCs) and Residents’ Committees (RCs) which are based on electoral boundaries that do not match with HDB’s town boundaries. For example, Bedok town boundary overlaps with three different constituencies – Aljunied Group Representation Constituency (GRC), East Coast GRC and Marine Parade GRC, which leads to some confusion on ground as to which HDB town people belong to.

*“I don’t see people organising events for the town. They may organise based on political boundary, but they seldom organise based on the town. But the political boundary and the town are not exactly the same ... [so] it’s very hard to*

*associate with the town. ... [Political boundaries] also keep changing every election. Sometimes you're in, sometimes you're out. So, you probably cannot have that kind of, say, 'Oh, I belong to this town', unless you're always in."* –  
**Male, 51-60 years old, resident of Bedok (mature town) for 11-15 years**

They also felt that many of the events/activities cited can be commonly found in all the towns, i.e. different towns would have their own versions of it. Hence, unless the event/activity is indeed peculiar to a town, e.g. WP events, the gathering of army boys at Pasir Ris bus interchange to embark on their mandatory off-shore Basic Military Training, the annual large-scale 'Three Steps, One Bow' Buddhist ritual at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery in Bishan (see Figure 15), or historical events that took place in the town, they struggle to say that the events/activities contribute to a town's identity.



**Figure 15** 'Three Steps, One Bow' ritual participated by thousands of devotees at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery  
(Source: *The Straits Times* © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission)

On the impact of 'Events/activities' on residents' attachment to place and community spirit, it appears to be weak unless there is active participation in it. Firstly, residents' observation was that these events/activities were more present in older towns rather than younger towns, an observation made also by the Director from NHB. Secondly, for those who do see those mentioned events/activities in their towns, they do not take part in them as those events/activities were not relevant or of interest to them. This contrasts with examples in Europe and Australia where local fairs, community-based festivals and local celebration of national commemoration days are regarded by residents as local cultural heritage that reflects their values, interests and aspirations and binds them to the place and the community living there (Derrett, 2003; Hansen, 2002). In those examples, the community is involved in various ways, e.g. as organisers, performers, stallholders, or participants. Such collective involvement however is less

present among residents in HDB towns, as majority of the events/activities cited involved residents mainly as viewers or attendees but not to higher degrees of involvement.

### 4.3.3 Food

Apart from well-known hawker food such as Bedok 85 *bak chor mee* which several FGD participants living in different towns immediately associated with Bedok, residents felt ambivalent about the connection between food and place identity as the same type of food can usually be found elsewhere in Singapore. Some also noted that certain dishes may initially have a strong connection to place as they started out in a specific town, bear the name of the town, or were exclusive to the town. However, when these dishes/food stalls become popular, they may expand their businesses to other parts of Singapore, e.g. the famous ‘Sembawang White Beehoon’ has set up branches and is now available in five other locations outside of Sembawang (White Restaurant, n.d.).

Notwithstanding, ‘Food’ appears to have some influence on place attachment and community spirit, especially for older towns where there are more established hawkers. To the residents, having good food in their town forms part of the reason why they enjoy living in their town and provides opportunities for bonding with family and friends. On the flipside, when one perceives his/her town to be lacking in good food that they can enjoy or take pride in, they seem to exhibit lower attachment to their towns:

*“I would want to move out of Choa Chu Kang because ... the food is also not great ... good stalls don’t stay here in Choa Chu Kang for a very long time ... a lot of food places just keep going, ... there’s just no longevity. So yeah, food is definitely a push factor.” – Male, 21-30 years old, resident of Choa Chu Kang (middle-aged town) for 6-10 years.*

Of note, Singaporeans have “a very high propensity for dining [out]” because of busy lifestyles, social norms and variety of options available (Henderson, 2014, p. 907). Singaporeans are also very willing to travel for food (Chua, 2016), made convenient by Singapore’s small size and transport accessibility. As such, when asked how they would feel if the food that they value in their towns are gone (e.g. when hawkers retire), residents shared that they would miss the food but will usually cope by finding similar substitutes elsewhere, such as another food stall that sells an equally good version of the same dish. Nonetheless, as observed in the recent SERS relocation exercise at Tanglin Halt in Queenstown (Chia & Smalley, 2021), it cannot be ruled out that the elderly who are less mobile and depend more on the presence of familiar food (and hawkers) in their immediate surroundings may experience a bigger impact on sense of belonging if these are gone.

### 4.3.4 People

Beyond mere acknowledgement that certain MPs, historical figures or local personalities are in some way representative of or related to their towns, residents do not feel that these people contribute hugely to the identity of their towns or help them feel more attached to their towns. Some reasons given include how MPs may rotate to

serve different constituencies in the course of their political careers and because these people lack a direct or deep relationship to the residents' lives such that it would create an emotional connection to the place.

*"But if these people are historical or MPs who don't know our names, then it's probably not something we experience." – Female, 31-40 years old, resident of Clementi (mature town) for <6 years*

Residents finding it difficult to visualise the association of historical figures with the town is somewhat contrary to the intentions of the government agencies. Such as in the case of Yishun named after Mr Lim Nee Soon who developed rubber and pineapple plantations in the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (NLB, 2010), the Director from NHB felt that having "a whole story and a figure around it" would help create a stronger identity and appreciation of a town's history. Perhaps, greater awareness and relevance need to be drawn, given how Singapore has urbanised and evolved so much that these historical figures and their former industries have no present significance or meaning for the people living in the town (Yeoh, 1996).

It is also noted that local community figures tend to be limited in their radius of influence. While they may be significant to some in the community, they may not be known by everyone living in the town, which limits the degree of their impact on place identity and attachment.

Apart from prominent MPs potentially triggering conversations among residents, it seems that the impact of 'People' on community spirit is negligible. Perhaps the impact would be better felt by those who interact more closely with these political or community figures (e.g. grassroots leaders).

#### **4.4 Key factors influencing the relationship**

The above analysis shows that different categories of local heritage do impact place identity, place attachment and community spirit in different ways, to different degrees and moderated by certain factors. Of which, 'Physical elements' have the strongest association, followed by 'Food' having a moderate association, and 'Events/activities' and 'People' having the weakest association. The following paragraphs highlight the key factors identified that either challenge or strengthen the relationship between local heritage and place-making.

Overall, we see that the issue of *perceived ubiquity* across HDB towns is a key challenge for place identity, especially for 'Food' and 'Events/activities'. Given the multi-racial and multi-religious context of Singapore, it is important that HDB towns are inclusive and cater to the needs of the diverse population living within it (Cheong, 2018). For example, the *kopitiams* and itinerant hawkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century had "a strong ethnic dimension in their spatial distribution and cuisine as they 'followed' immigrant workers in their settlement into various ethnic enclaves" (Lai, 2010, p. 6). However, when they were resettled into HDB towns, the new *kopitiams* and hawker centres began to offer a mix of ethnic foods and hybridised options to serve the ethnically heterogenous crowd (Lai, 2010). Also, unlike designated historic districts which are more decorated and vibrant during festive seasons (see Figure 16), religious festivities are more muted in HDB



heartlands. To address the perceived ubiquity, more will need to be done to accentuate the finer-grain details to bring out the extraordinary in the ordinary.

*“Festive wise, we do have a mosque here, but I think they tend to keep their celebrations to themselves. ... Unlike, say Chinatown or Little India, whenever the festive season comes around, the whole place will light up. Clementi doesn’t have that.” – Male, 31-40 years old, resident of Clementi (mature town) for <6 years*



*Figure 16 Chinese New Year light-up at Chinatown in 2017  
(Courtesy of BP Chua)*

Another challenge is that of *pragmatism* which influences residents’ attachment to their towns. Singapore is known for its theory and practice of pragmatism since its nation building years, which prioritises what is practical and what works (Tan, 2011). This philosophy permeates public thinking (Tan, 2011), as seen above in how FGD participants generally weigh pragmatic considerations over sentimentality when it comes to issues of redevelopment and retention of local heritage. The Director from NHB further adds that “heritage is very soft” and practical reasons such as upgrading to “a bigger house, more convenient locations, amenities around the area, ... will definitely score higher”. This is matched by discussions during the FGDs where residents voiced their preferences to stay on or move out of their current towns largely based on practical considerations and not on the presence of local heritage.

*Awareness* can be “defined as having knowledge or cognisance of one’s surrounding environment” (Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010, p. 226). From the FGDs, we see that residents who seldom explore their towns or do not know much about its history found it difficult to discuss local heritage and its impact on place-making. For others, depending on where they frequent, they may not know every part of their town well, and thus can only identify e.g. with their immediate neighbourhood. While the general sensing by government agencies

is that the local heritage scene in HDB heartlands is picking up, residents' sharing suggests that more awareness and interest building is needed to facilitate the process of discovery.

The next step from awareness is *participation*. Manzo & Perkins (2006) highlight the importance of person-environment transactions in fostering affective bonds and the development of community. The FGDs also show that place attachment and community spirit rely on residents participating and interacting with these different local heritage elements. While residents generally do engage with the cited 'Physical elements' and 'Food', more needs to be done to make 'Events/activities' and 'People' more relevant and relatable to the residents, thereby encouraging the transition from a passive observer to an active participant.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

At the start of the paper, we have introduced the age-old tension between redevelopment and heritage conservation and how the challenge of balancing both of these remain even as cities endeavour to harness heritage for place-making to create a sense of place and continuity amidst spatial change. We have also discussed how both in literature and in practice, there is growing focus on heritage at the local level and how this would give voice to residents and community stakeholders to interpret and express what they value in their lived environments. Additionally, it would allow for a greater variety of ordinary, everyday elements to be considered in this broadened definition of heritage.

These challenges and trends are also observed in Singapore's society today and could become heightened in the coming decades when HDB rolls out its large-scale redevelopment scheme, VERS. In light of the above, this research was interested to find out what do residents value in HDB heartlands, how these perceived local heritage elements contribute (or not) to place identity, place attachment and community spirit, and key factors that are influencing this relationship.

*Sub-question 1: What do people consider as local heritage in residential heartlands?*

From the literature review, we understand that local heritage is socially constructed, and that different people attribute different meanings to things based on their personal experiences. This also means that the range of local heritage can be very wide since there is no fixed criteria and "virtually anything" (Johnson & Thomas, 1995, p. 170) can be considered. The research shows that indeed, there is a variety of things in HDB heartlands which residents assign meaning to. Variations and repetitions were also observed in the elements cited for each town. Across the four pre-defined categories of local heritage, 'Physical elements' and 'Food' appeared to be more relatable to residents as compared to 'Events/activities' and 'People', as seen from the higher number of responses that came in and the relative ease with which FGD participants discuss 'Physical elements' and 'Food'.

There are some variations in the factors residents consider when it comes to the different local heritage categories, but by and large, their perceptions of local heritage are driven mainly by social memories. Government agencies on the other hand are mainly guided by a set of established formal criteria to identify and assess heritage elements. This does not necessarily result in two distinct sets of elements, as there are instances where they do concur on the heritage value of an element, for instance, when a conserved building is also well-loved by residents. It also appears that this 'common ground' will expand over time, as the government agencies are gradually acknowledging and considering social memories as part of the authorised heritage discourse. At the same time, heritage groups such as My Community, are also working the ground to raise awareness and engage residents in local heritage matters.

Various authors have written about the processual nature of heritage (e.g. Harvey, 2001; Smith, 2006). We see this playing out in terms of the incongruence between residents' rational beliefs (e.g. qualities which they believe are associated with the term, 'local heritage') and their narrated values (e.g. factors shared on why they value something as their local heritage). Hence, even with the invitation to broader definitions of heritage,



residents will need to internally negotiate between their pre-conceived notions of heritage and the possibilities of viewing a wider range of everyday sites and elements as their local heritage.

In the conceptual framework, the categories of local heritage were illustrated as four distinct categories. However, the research revealed that heritage elements are usually not conceived singularly. Physical elements often co-occur with events/activities and/or food in the FGDs and interviews, implying that both the form and the essence need to be considered when seeking to capture local heritage in a meaningful way.

The notion of fuzzy boundaries also surfaced, as it is observed that residents sometimes cite local heritage elements that do not technically fall within their town boundaries. This reflects what Lefebvre (1974) described in his spatial triad, where official town boundaries and formal heritage criteria can be seen as the conceived space by planners and architects, and the perceived and lived space are based on the public and the residents' memories and experiences on ground.

Lastly, there seems to be a positive correlation between the age category of a town and residents' ease of listing local heritage elements. The pattern however was not as clear for length of residence. This likely means that there are other factors at play, such as residents' personal interest in the topic of heritage and whether they spend time exploring and experiencing their towns, regardless of length of residence.

*Sub-question 2: Do different local heritage elements influence place-making differently?*  
*Sub-question 3: Are there certain factors that influence the relationship between local heritage and place-making?*

The research shows that the relationship between local heritage and place-making is not as straightforward as depicted in the conceptual framework. Different heritage elements have differing degrees of association with place identity, place attachment and community spirit, and there are various factors that reinforce or challenge the relationships.

Overall, 'Physical elements' is found to have the strongest association with the different dimensions of place-making. 'Food' had a moderate association, and 'Events/activities' and 'People' showed up to be the weakest. Four key factors were identified that shed some light into these relationships, namely, *perceived ubiquity*, *pragmatism*, *awareness* and *participation*. The first two factors add challenges to the relationship whereas the latter two tend to strengthen the relationship if achieved.

Underlying *perceived ubiquity* are broader forces at work, such as the need to provide a mix of amenities, events/activities and food across HDB towns to serve the multi-cultural and multi-religious population. The unintended consequence is that residents find many of these elements rather common across HDB towns, thus diminishing their ability to stand out as strongly to define a town's identity.

We also see how residents are generally *pragmatic* in their considerations, affecting how place attachment is manifested. Be it in terms of accepting redevelopment as it comes, demolition or fading of certain local heritage elements and decisions to stay on or move out of their towns, practical considerations take precedence over heritage and sentimentality.

There are multiple studies looking into how to increase awareness and participation in local heritage (e.g. Han, Shih, Rosson, & Carroll, 2014; Hoeven, 2019), highlighting the importance of these aspects in enabling local heritage to have an impact on place-making. *Awareness* can be seen as the baseline requirement, as residents need to first be acquainted with their built environment and their town's history before they can potentially develop an interest in it. This relationship can then be deepened with *participation*, where greater involvement would generate stronger feelings towards place and the community (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). In the research, we see that residents were generally aware of the 'Physical elements' in their towns and do engage with them, e.g. visit the parks and hawker centres. However, where the awareness and involvement are lower, e.g. for 'Events/activities' and 'People', the impact of such elements on place identity, residents' attachment to their towns and community spirit is weaker.

## 5.2 Recommendations for planners

To sum up, we see that in the current context of HDB heartlands in Singapore, 'Physical elements' have a significant role to play in shaping place identity and fostering place attachment and community spirit, but more needs to be done to enhance the impact of 'Food', 'Events/activities' and 'People'. Given the importance of awareness and participation, planners can leverage on technology and social media in this digital age to reach out to the general public, making local heritage resources easily accessible, facilitating heritage discovery and encouraging the community to layer on their personal and collective narratives.

Similar to efforts in the historic districts, there could be more town-based programmes and initiatives to enliven the local heritage scene in HDB heartlands, focusing on opportunities for collective involvement (e.g. getting local hawkers and residents to showcase the food heritage in their towns), relevance to different generations and exchange of knowledge and stories amongst long-time and new residents.

## 5.3 Recommendations for future research

Given how perceived ubiquity and pragmatism challenge the relationship between local heritage and place-making, it sparks further questions on how such a thinking has developed over time. Further research could be done to study the underlying currents or broader forces at play leading to such a perception/mindset. This may be examined from the social, political, economic and psychological lens, and by different segments of the population (e.g. age cohort).

The notion of fuzzy boundaries and the observation that some residents identify stronger with their immediate neighbourhoods, thinking that that is their "town", prompt possibilities for further research into the concept of 'place insideness' described by Relph (1976). In particular, what makes people consider themselves as 'inside' or 'outside' of a place, why such perceptions differ from official town boundaries and whether scale matters in how people identify and connect with a place.

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# Annex 1: Research Instruments

## Annex 1-A: Survey questionnaire

### A. Introduction + consent page

This online survey is part of a thesis research to fulfil the requirements for the MSc Urban Management and Development at the Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. The survey seeks to find out what the general public in Singapore consider as local heritage within HDB heartlands and how it relates to place-making. The research adopts a broad definition of ‘local heritage’ as elements that are valued by local communities and positively contribute to the character and distinctiveness of an area.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time by not submitting the form. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes and your responses will be kept confidential. While the findings will be analysed and used to guide focus group discussions in the next step of the research, the information collected will be anonymised and aggregated, and therefore not be traceable to you. Any information collected through this survey will only be used for the purpose of this thesis and will be deleted after the thesis project ends.

If you have any questions regarding the thesis research or the survey, you may contact me via my email, 589312sw@student.eur.nl. Thank you.

#### Electronic consent:

Selecting the option ‘Agree’ below indicates that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate in this survey

If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please select the option ‘Disagree’.

#### 1. **Please indicate your consent before proceeding:**

- Agree
- Disagree

### B. Background information

#### 2. **Gender\***

- Male
- Female

3. **Age\***

- Below 16 years old
- 16-20 years old
- 21-30 years old
- 31-40 years old
- 41-50 years old
- 51-60 years old
- Above 60 years old

4. **Which town do you currently live in?\***

- |                                     |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Ang Mo Kio    | <input type="radio"/> Geylang          | <input type="radio"/> Sengkang               |
| <input type="radio"/> Bedok         | <input type="radio"/> Hougang          | <input type="radio"/> Serangoon              |
| <input type="radio"/> Bishan        | <input type="radio"/> Jurong East      | <input type="radio"/> Tampines               |
| <input type="radio"/> Bukit Batok   | <input type="radio"/> Jurong West      | <input type="radio"/> Toa Payoh              |
| <input type="radio"/> Bukit Merah   | <input type="radio"/> Kallang/ Whampoa | <input type="radio"/> Woodlands              |
| <input type="radio"/> Bukit Panjang | <input type="radio"/> Marine Parade    | <input type="radio"/> Yishun                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Bukit Timah   | <input type="radio"/> Pasir Ris        | <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify: |
| <input type="radio"/> Central Area  | <input type="radio"/> Punggol          |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Choa Chu Kang | <input type="radio"/> Queenstown       |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Clementi      | <input type="radio"/> Sembawang        |  |

5. **How long have you been living in your current town?\***

- Below 6 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 year
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31 years and above

6. **Type of dwelling\***

- 1- & 2-room HDB flat
- 3-room HDB flat
- 4-room HDB flat
- 5-room & 3-Gen HDB flat
- Executive HDB flat & maisonette
- Private condominium/ apartment
- Landed property
- Other, please specify:

C. Opinions

7. **In your opinion, which words below would you associate with the term ‘local heritage’?\***

*[You may choose more than one option.]*

- Personal memories
- Collective memories
- Nostalgia
- Meaningful
- Historical significance
- Physical appeal
- Legacy
- Traditional methods
- Monumental
- Everyday life
- Unique
- Familiar to locals

8. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?\***

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Local heritage makes a town more identifiable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage makes a town more charming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage helps people know more about their towns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage makes people feel proud of their towns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage enhances people's sense of belonging towards their towns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage makes people reluctant to move out of a particular town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage promotes social interaction within a town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage helps to expand people's social network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage encourages participation in community activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local heritage increases people's desire to be involved in local affairs within their towns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

D. Physical elements

9. **Are there any buildings/ structures/ spaces that you feel represent your town (e.g. specific residential blocks, places of worship, playgrounds, parks)?\***

- Yes
- No

10. **Please name these buildings/ structures/ spaces.\***

*[Separate each item with a comma.]*

*Type here...*

11. **How would you rate the following statements regarding the buildings/ structures/ spaces you have listed?\***

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
These buildings/ structures/ spaces hold memories for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These buildings/ structures/ spaces look attractive to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These buildings/ structures/ spaces are important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

E. Events/ activities

12. **Are there any events/ activities in your town which you feel contribute to the town's history or character (e.g. specific historical incidents, periodic community activities, etc.)?\***

- Yes
- No

13. **Please name these events/ activities.\***

*[Separate each item with a comma.]*

*Type here...*



**14. How would you rate the following statements regarding the events/ activities you have listed?\***

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
These events/ activities hold memories for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These events/ activities are important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

F. Food

**15. Is your town known for any particular food (e.g. traditional pastries, popular eateries, etc.)?\***

- Yes
- No

**16. Please name these food items.\***

*[Separate each item with a comma.]*

*Type here...*

**17. How would you rate the following statements regarding the food items you have listed?\***

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
These food items hold memories for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These food items are important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

G. People

**18. Are there any significant people (past or present) who are related to your town (e.g. played a significant role in your town, contributed significantly to society)?\***

- Yes
- No

**19. Please name these people.\***

*[Separate each item with a comma.]*

*Type here...*

20. How would you rate the following statement regarding the people you have listed?\*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I know a lot about these people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

H. Other

21. Are there any other unique elements within your town that you would like to highlight (e.g. local trades, road names)?\*

Type here...

I. Invitation to focus group discussion

22. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up online focus group discussion around early Jul 2021?

If yes, please leave your name, email address and mobile number below so that we can contact you on the details.

*[Note: Your personal details will be kept confidential and your responses collected through the survey will also be dealt with anonymously.]*

Name:

Type here...

Email address:

Type here...

Mobile number:

Type here...

J. Thank you

**We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.  
Your response has been recorded.**

## Annex 1-B: Focus group discussion

### Preparatory work:

- Reach out to participants on the focus group discussion (FGD) details, e.g. date, day, time, duration.
- Prepare information sheet and informed consent form, including that the FGD session will be video-recorded on Zoom to facilitate subsequent analysis.
- Seek confirmation to participate.
- Prepare slides with discussion points to facilitate the FGDs.

### Opening words:

- Thank participants for joining
- Introduce myself
- Brief introduction on what the research is about and the objective and format of the FGD

### Guiding questions:

Table 7 Guiding questions for FGDs

S/n	Heading	Discussion points
1	Ice breaker	Share with one another: a) Your name b) Which town do you live in c) One thing you like about your town d) On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much), how interested are you in local heritage?
2	What is local heritage?	[Show graph of survey feedback regarding qualities associated with 'local heritage']  Discussion questions: a) Do you agree with these findings? Why yes or no? b) Do any of these scores come as a surprise to you? Why? c) What do you personally consider as local heritage in HDB heartlands?
3	Physical elements and place-making	Think of 1 or 2 examples of physical elements in your town that are familiar to you or that you find 'iconic'. a) How does the physical element serve as a place marker? b) In what way does the physical element serve the residents/ community? c) How would you feel if it is removed/ demolished?

4	Events/ activities and place-making	<p>Think of the different events/ activities in your town that you have seen or read about.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there events/ activities such as these that tell a story about your town or the residents living in it?</li> <li>How do these events/ activities make you feel about your town?</li> <li>In what way do these events/ activities help to bring the community together?</li> </ol>
5	Food and place-making	<p>Think of the popular food/ eateries in your town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why are these food/ eateries well-known in your town?</li> <li>In what way do these food/ eateries help to bond people together?</li> <li>How do these food/ eateries make your town stand out from others?</li> <li>What are some personal memories that you have of these food/ eateries?</li> <li>How would you feel if these dishes/ eateries are gone?</li> </ol>
6	People and place-making	<p>Think of the people in, or related in some way to, your town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what way do these people or their contributions help to differentiate your town from another?</li> <li>Do these people give you a sense of pride or a sense of belonging/ familiarity as a resident?</li> <li>Does the knowledge or presence of these people provide talking points for residents?</li> </ol>
7	Reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you have a choice, would you want to stay on in your current town or move to another town? Why?</li> <li>What is one key takeaway for you from today's session?</li> </ul>

**Closing remarks:**

- Thank the group members for their participation
- End the session

## Annex 1-C: Semi-structured interview

Government agencies

### Introduction:

- a) Introduce myself
- b) Purpose of the study
- c) Estimated duration
- d) Consent for participation and audio-/ video-recording

### Open-ended questions:

Table 8 Guiding questions for interviews with government agencies

S/n	Question
1	How would you describe the current local heritage scene in HDB heartlands?
2	How does <government agency> identify and evaluate local heritage elements in HDB heartlands?
3	Is there any difference in how <government agency> perceives local heritage elements vis-à-vis national heritage elements (e.g. World Heritage site, national monuments, conserved buildings)?
4	Besides physical elements such as buildings/ structures/ spaces, do you think that events/ activities, food and significant people who contribute to the town's history or character could count as 'local heritage'?
5	Could you share some examples of how <government agency> has tapped on these different categories of local heritage to foster place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit in HDB heartlands?
6	Looking at these four different categories of local heritage, do you think certain categories or elements have more impact on place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit than others?
7	In your view, what are some factors that may influence the extent to which local heritage impacts place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit?
8	Have there been situations where local heritage affected place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit negatively?
9	Considering how local heritage is also based on what residents value in their lived environments, how does <government agency> factor in the views of residents in the planning process?
10	In your experience, what do you think are the main challenges regarding local heritage conservation (both tangible and intangible) and urban (re)development?
11	Looking ahead, there are large-scale plans to progressively redevelop HDB towns/ estates under the Voluntary Early Redevelopment Scheme (VERS) in the coming decades. How does <government agency> plan to harness local heritage for place-making amidst the spatial transformation?

## Heritage groups

### Introduction:

- a) Introduce myself
- b) Purpose of the study
- c) Estimated duration
- d) Consent for participation and audio-/ video-recording

### Open-ended questions:

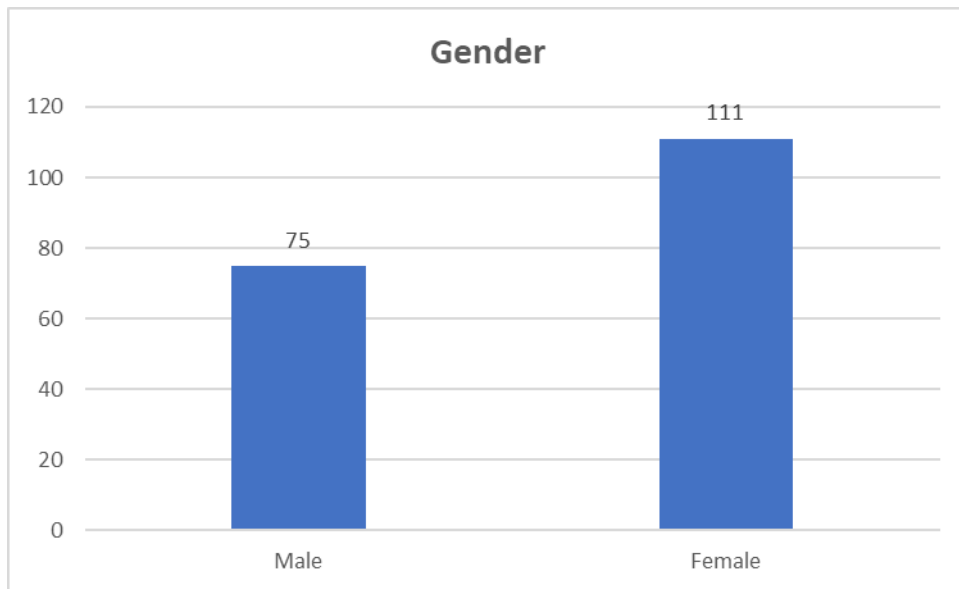
*Table 9 Guiding questions for interview with heritage group*

S/n	Question
1	How would you describe the current local heritage scene in HDB heartlands?
2	How does <heritage group> identify and evaluate local heritage elements in HDB heartlands?
3	How does <heritage group> perceive local heritage elements vis-à-vis national heritage elements (e.g. World Heritage site, national monuments, conserved buildings)?
4	Besides physical elements such as buildings/ structures/ spaces, do you think that events/ activities, food and significant people who contribute to the town's history or character could count as 'local heritage'?
5	Could you share some examples of how <heritage group> has tapped on local heritage to foster place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit in HDB heartlands?
6	Do you think certain local heritage elements have more impact on place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit than others?
7	In your view, what are some factors that may influence the extent to which local heritage impacts place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit?
8	Have there been situations where local heritage affected place identity, residents' attachment to place and community spirit negatively?
9	In your experience, are there any challenges in engaging the community on heritage matters?
10	In your opinion, what do you think are the main challenges regarding local heritage conservation (both tangible and intangible) and urban (re)development?
11	Going forward, are there plans to move beyond the mature towns/ estates to cultivate local heritage appreciation in middle-aged and young towns as a form of place-making strategy?

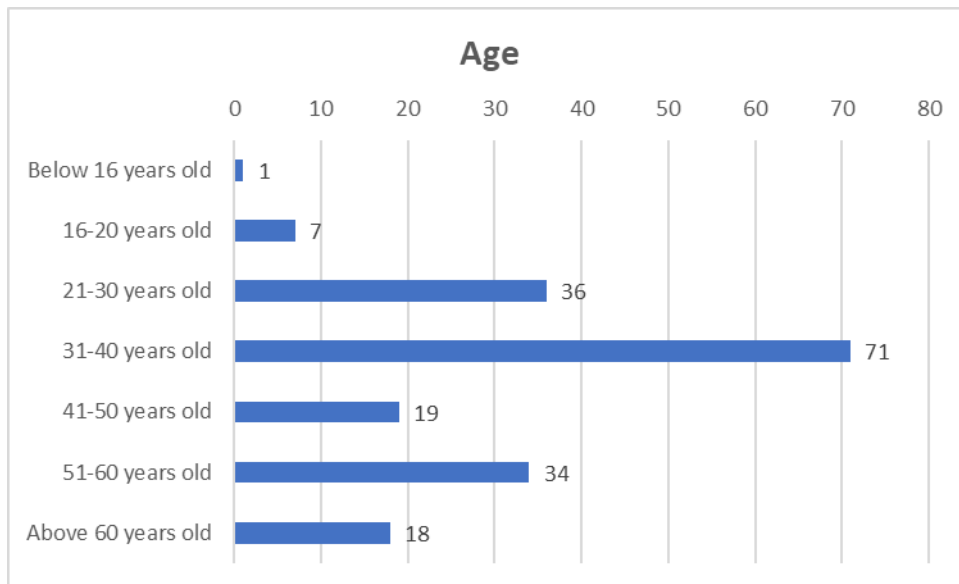
## Annex 2: Data Summary

Annex 2 contains summaries of the survey demographic data, profile of FGD participants and profile of interviewees for reference.

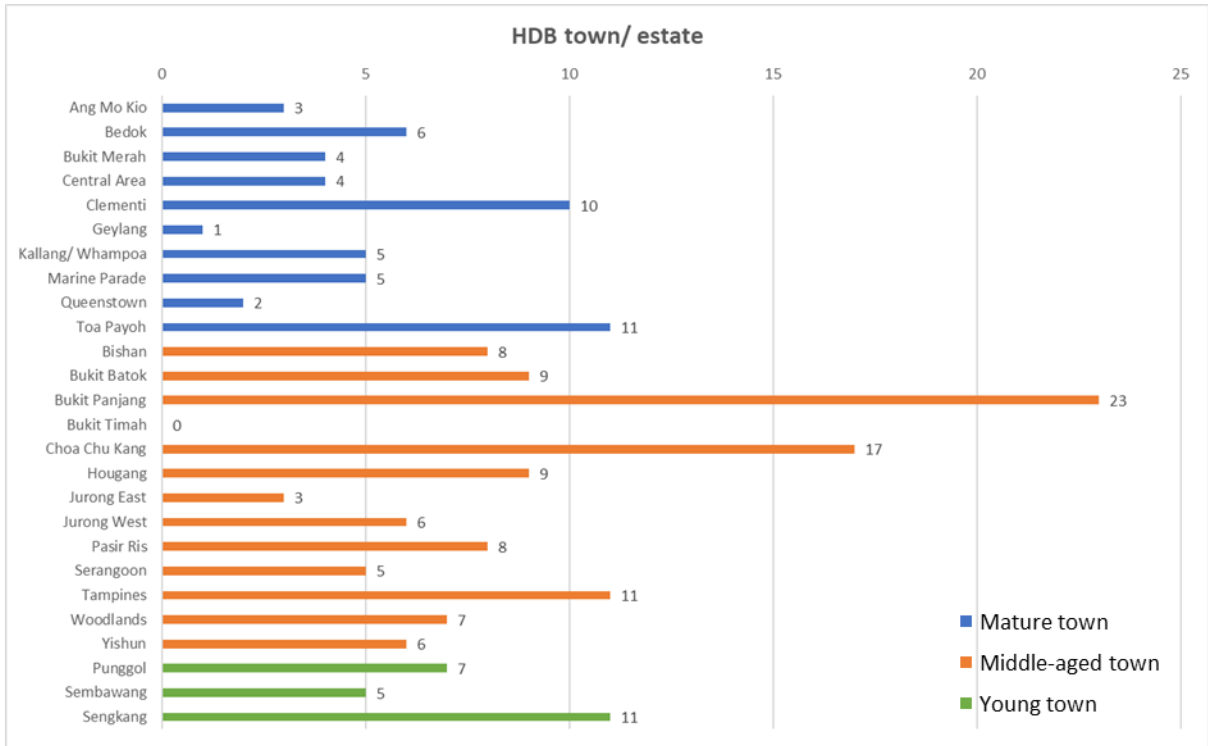
### Annex 2-A: Survey – Demographic statistics



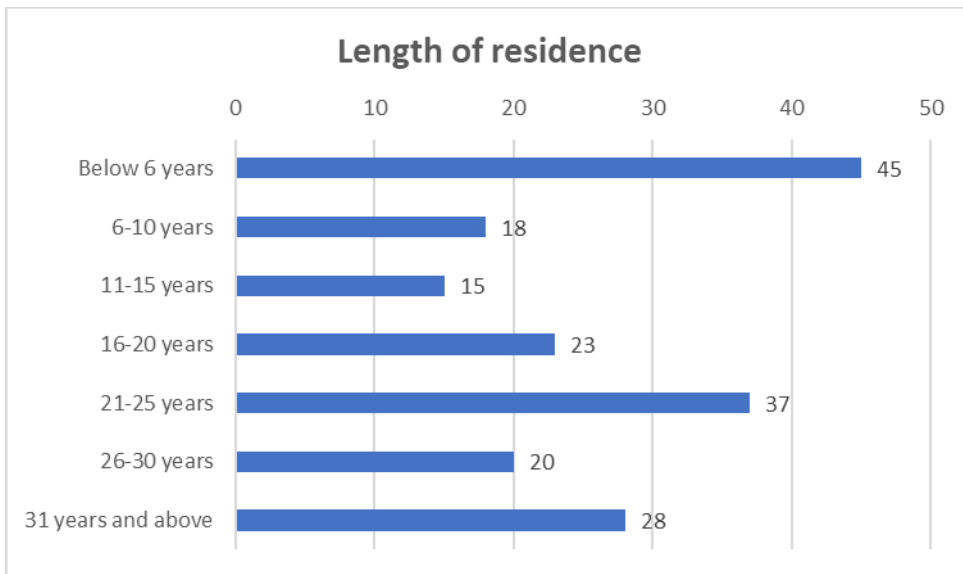
*Figure 17 Distribution of survey respondents by gender*



*Figure 18 Distribution of survey respondents by age group*

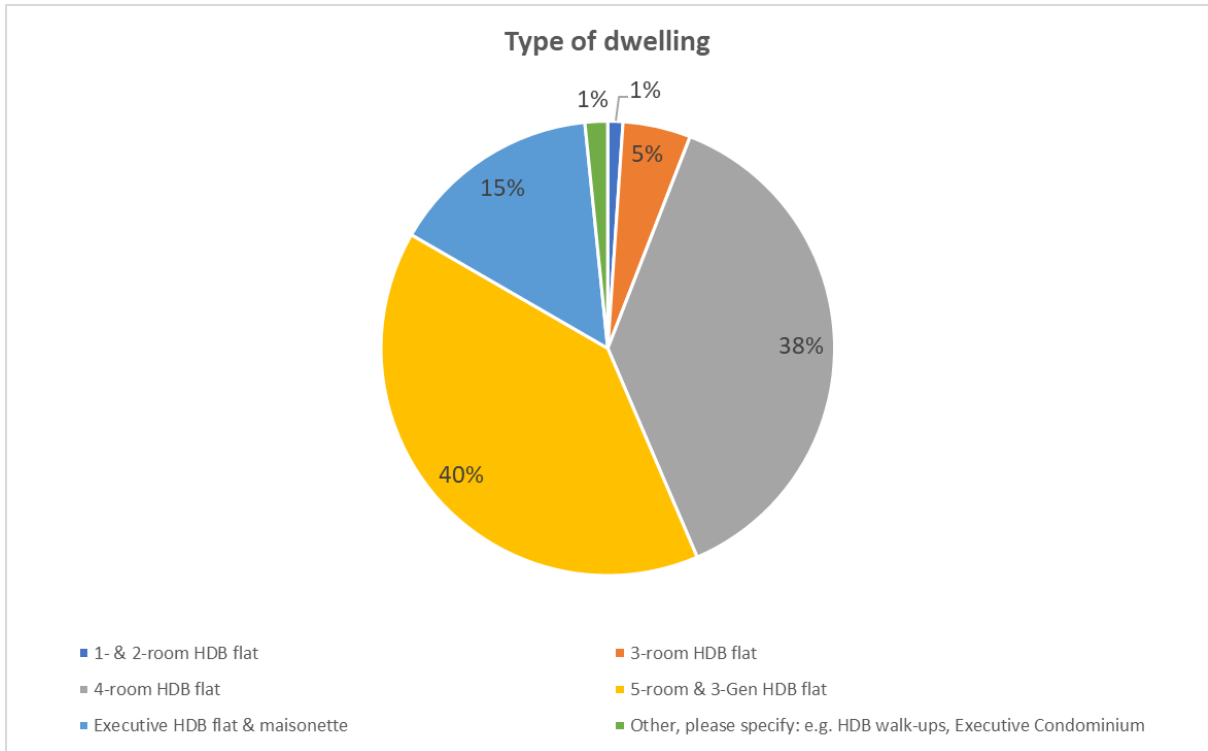


**Figure 19** Distribution of survey respondents by HDB town/ estate



**Figure 20** Distribution of survey respondents by length of residence





**Figure 21** *Distribution of survey respondents by type of dwelling*

## Annex 2-B: FGD – Participant profile

*Table 10 Profile of FGD participants*

Gender	Age	Town	Length of residence
<b>FGD for mature town residents (4 Jul 2021, Sun)</b>			
Female	31-40 years old	Ang Mo Kio	21-25 years
Male	51-60 years old	Bedok	11-15 years
Female	31-40 years old	Clementi	<6 years
Male	31-40 years old	Clementi	<6 years
<b>FGD for middle-aged town residents (3 Jul 2021, Sat)</b>			
Male	31-40 years old	Bishan	<6 years
Female	31-40 years old	Bukit Batok	16-20 years
Male	21-30 years old	Choa Chu Kang	6-10 years
Female	31-40 years old	Hougang	21-25 years
Male	Above 60 years old	Pasir Ris	26-30 years
Male	21-30 years old	Tampines	21-25 years
Male	31-40 years old	Woodlands	21-25 years
<b>FGD for young town residents (10 Jul 2021, Sat)</b>			
Male	31-40 years old	Punggol	<6 years
Female	31-40 years old	Sembawang	<6 years

## Annex 2-C: Semi-structured interview – Interviewee profile

*Table 11 Profile of interviewees*

Designation	Department	Organisation	Interview date & day
Group Director	Research and Planning Group	HDB	21 Jun 2021 (Mon)
Director	Heritage Research and Assessment	NHB	23 Jun 2021 (Wed)
Director	Director of Conservation Planning Department	URA	30 Jun 2021 (Wed)
Co-founder and Executive Director	N.A.	My Community	23 Jun 2021 (Wed)

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