



T1900202684

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS
HOUSING PREFERENCES OF
OWNER-OCCUPIERS IN SINGAPORE

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**A thesis :ubmitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of
the Ur iversity of New England**

**First Submission
February 1997**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

.....
Kok-Yang Tan
February 1997

To
Lee Boon,
Toh Liang and Ching Yin.

PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to, in the strongest conjuration.

Charles Dickens (1812–70),
Martin Chuzzlewit, ch. 35, p.1844.

The idea of embarking on this research on housing first originated from one of my early childhood encounters. Back in the early 1960's when as an inquisitive boy of around seven years old, I came upon a poor family being evicted from their rental flat in my hometown, by some officials from the then housing authority. What had occurred before my eyes was almost incomprehensible. Growing up later, it was my mother who explained to me that the family was evicted as it did not pay the rent for the flat.

The incident had nonetheless instilled in me, a very deep rooted message - that of the importance of having one's own house - a place one could regard as home. As there is currently a lack of local research on private housing at postgraduate level, and coupled with my keen interest in environmental issues, 'housing preferences' became a natural choice of topic for doctoral research. As part of the research programme, I visited Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Brunei as well as Myanmar, Hong Kong, and Australia. At each place visited, I keenly observed how the people lived in an effort to understand the housing situation in these countries.

While this study has provided me with new and useful insights, I was originally apprehensive of the mammoth tasks ahead of me. Fortunately, with the help of my supervisor, Associate Professor Tony Sorensen, the outcome is a study that serves as a useful testimony to all those who are interested in the study of housing. I am indeed indebted to Tony for taking a keen interest in my research and for his relentless effort in encouraging me to get on with my work. His prompt replies to my queries and his often constructive criticism acted as essential impetus in writing this thesis. His positive feedback and constant encouragement, on the other hand, acted as ongoing sources of inspiration throughout my candidature. I am very grateful to Tony for the assistance and advice he has given me. I hereby extend my utmost and sincere thanks to him.

Many other people have helped in the writing of this thesis.

Special thanks are due to Professor Jim Walmsley, who commented on the draft of the survey questionnaires and contributed many useful ideas towards improving the research design. In addition, he so willingly provided me with many invaluable references and information on human geography and housing. His cheerful encouragement and constructive comments had helped me tremendously during those periods of my residency in Armidale.

I am grateful to Herb Weinand, who despite his busy schedule, commented on the statistical methodology which I proposed. His professional assistance in this aspect made data analysis an easier task.

Special thanks are also extended to friends and colleagues in the Department of Geography and Planning, especially Chris Cunningham, Roger Epps, Martin Auster, Angus Witherby, Terry Cooke, and Wade Edmundson, for their time in giving feedback on the survey questionnaires and for their participation in discussions and seminars related to my work on housing.

Janice Johnson was extremely helpful whenever I required assistance in the Ellis Thorpe Library. Dr. Wade Edmundson provided me with useful pointers on pursuing doctoral research, and his cheerful personality and friendship made my residencies all the more memorable and enjoyable.

Fellow postgraduate students like Robert Haworth, Sattar Mousavi, Robin Pagram and Pei Yi Ding had all shared my joy and apprehension throughout my candidature and I am very grateful for their well wishes and intellectual company. Sattar and his family, in particular, were very supportive during my last residency when my family stayed at the Mary White College. We treasure their hospitality and friendship very much.

In Singapore and Malaysia, many individuals and organisations have also contributed to the completion of this research.

First and foremost, I extend my thanks to Prof. Lim Lan Yuan, Head of the Department of Building and Estate Management of the National University of Singapore for his assistance in providing me with references and seminar papers pertinent to the research. Thanks are also extended to Dr. Oon Yu Hock of the University of Malaya for providing useful insight into Ph.D. research when I visited the university in 1993. At the polytechnic, my former colleague, Sin Guek, the head of the reference section of the Library was very helpful in searching for the relevant books and literature for this work.

My best friend, William Kin Kyu from Myanmar, had assisted in data analysis. William devoted many hours of his precious time to discuss with me on the various aspects of data analysis and presentation. I appreciate his help greatly and would like to extend my thanks and best wishes to him and his family. William's sister in law, Mrs. Khin helped out with the data entry.

My colleague, Meow Ngoh, a professional property valuer, assisted by commenting on the relevant parts of the thesis, especially those pertaining to the local property market. I am very grateful to her for her assistance and supportive words. Her involvement and contributions in this research have been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement for me especially during those difficult periods of drafting and redrafting of this thesis.

I am just as grateful to my former colleague, Miss Tan Kim Yang, who, despite her busy work schedule in the private sector, painstakingly proof read the first draft of the thesis. Certainly, her cheerful manner and her humorous remarks on my writing had made working with her so much more interesting. I would also like to thank Mick Stevens, Head of Studies at the Australian International School in Singapore for proof reading the final draft of the thesis. Mick is a former Co-Ordinator for English for

Academic Purposes at the University of New South Wales. His assistance is greatly appreciated.

As for the field work, my final year students at the Polytechnic (1993/94), in particular Mary Ong, Irene Ng and Helen Choo Siew Luan were a great source of help, not forgetting the many respondents during the actual survey and fellow colleagues at the Singapore Polytechnic and friends during the pilot survey.

Several staff members of the Urban Redevelopment Authority, Land Office, Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers and the National University of Singapore must be thanked for their help in providing the much needed information on housing.

Certainly, my two young children, Toh Liang and Ching Yin have been constant sources of enjoyment, hope and love for me. They had to bear with my constant absence while pursuing this doctoral research and especially when I was alone in Armidale for my residencies. Of course, I must also thank my mother-in-law for helping me and my wife to look after our children when I was away in Australia and when my wife was at work. Her quiet disposition and untiring love for all of us had undoubtedly enable us to concentrate on our work. Finally, writing this thesis is only possible with the positive and unceasing support, devotion, understanding, and love of Lee Boon, my wife and confidant. Our common interest in housing has made writing this thesis all the more meaningful and enjoyable. For her and the children this thesis is dedicated.

ABSTRACT

In tandem with increasing affluence, more and more Singaporeans are aspiring to own private housing. There exists a vast literature in the field of real estate, particularly on public housing and especially on topics concerning price movement, supply and demand, and investment. However, none at doctoral level investigate housing preferences in Singapore. Furthermore, there is also a growing need to further understand the many aspects of private housing. This study, therefore documents and explains the housing preferences of owner occupiers in an attempt to fill this gap.

The study begins by emphasizing how rising affluence among the people leads to aspirations by the people to own private housing. It goes on to document the evolution of private housing in Singapore from as early as the 1920s to the present day. A household survey was carried out to gather primary data for statistical analysis. The latter chapters outline the conceptual housing preferences models and present findings on housing preferences and satisfaction of owner occupiers. One of these findings is that environmental attributes are of utmost importance to owner occupiers. This study also reveals that owner occupiers are more satisfied with their housing units than with their neighbourhood and that 99-year leasehold housing remains unpopular with owner occupiers.

The various approaches in managing rising aspirations of the people to own private housing are also discussed. Indeed, this study shows that current approaches are very much influenced by government policy. Aspects of housing such as environmental and locational considerations examined in this thesis are of interest to private sector developers and designers. Of course, these aspects take into consideration the specific housing preferences of the owner occupiers highlighted in this study. These include among many other factors, the preferences of the owner occupiers for privacy, security and environmental factors such as peace and ventilation, all of which are unveiled in this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CIDB	Construction Industry Development Board
CPF	Central Provident Fund
DCD	Development Control Division
DGP	Development Guide Plan
EC	Executive Condominiums
EDB	Economic Development Board
ENV	Ministry of the Environment
HDB	Housing and Development Board
HUDC	Housing and Urban Development Corporation
JLW	Jones Lang Wootton Consultants Pte Ltd
LTA	Land Transport Authority
MCD	Ministry of Community Development
MND	Ministry of National Development
MOL	Ministry of Labour
NIC	Newly Industrialized countries
NIEs	Newly Industrialized economies
NTU	Nanyang Technological University
NTUC	National Trade Union Congress
NUS	National University of Singapore
PAP	People's Action Party
PCD	Pollution Control Department
PMV	Predicted Mean Vote
PPD	Predicted Percentage of Dissatisfied
SISV	Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers
SIT	Singapore Improvement Trust
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TDB	Trade Development Board
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority
VAL	Values And Lifestyles