

Chapter 2

Developmental Urbanisation in Singapore and South Korea

2.1 The Rise of Developmental State in Singapore and South Korea

Singapore and South Korea are two of the so-called *Asian Tigers* along with Hong Kong and Taiwan. They earned this name for their successful economic development in the past and consequent rise among the world's most developed countries. Since the 1960s Singapore and South Korea have sustained one of the highest economic growth rates in the world for more than two decades, which is remarkable, considering that the two countries had to start developing from virtually nothing. In 1960, a year after gaining self-governance within the British Empire, the GDP per capita in Singapore was 428 USD. When Singapore was forced to leave a short-lived Malaysian Federation and became an independent state in 1965, there were very little resources to build upon. Fifty years later the GDP per capita of Singapore is one of the highest in the world and has reached 52,888 USD in 2015 (Department of Statistics Singapore 2015). South Korean economic development over the past decades has been equally remarkable. Korea was liberated from Japanese Empire and gained independence in 1945. Establishment of Republic of Korea (South Korea) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) in 1948 has effectively divided the nation, and South Korea has been heavily devastated during the tragic Korean War years later. In the late 1950s, social and economic situation in a war-torn South Korea was in this sense much grimmer than in Singapore. The GDP per capita of South Korea in 1960 was merely 156 USD, but has reached 27,970 USD in 2014 (Fig. 2.1) (Seoul Metropolitan Government 2015). These outstanding economic achievements has been largely attributed to the extensive industrialisation of Singapore and South Korea, which was in both cases directly led by a so-called *developmental state* (Castells 1992; Perry et al. 1997; Park 1998; Johnson 1999; Woo-Cumings 1999; Cumings 2005; Pirie 2008; Park et al. 2011).

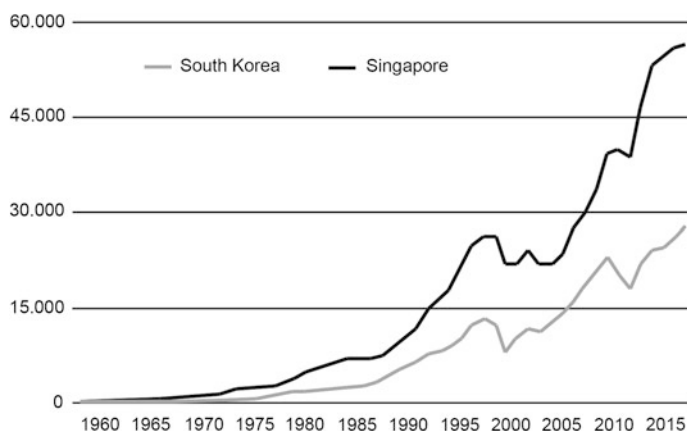


Fig. 2.1 Growth of GDP per capita in USD in Singapore and South Korea, 1960–2014. *Source* Department of Statistics Singapore (2015), Seoul Metropolitan Government (2015)

A developmental state is committed to and prioritises extensive industrialisation over other policies to improve its national development to the level of advanced capitalist countries. Its ultimate goal are high rates of economic growth, which is mainly achieved and sustained through interventionist industrial and financial policy, where financial, and other resources are directly allocated to selected private corporations in the country (Castells 1992; Johnson 1999; Woo-Cumings 1999; Chang 2009). These corporations are supported due to their strategic importance for the national development and enjoy in this way a privileged position in the domestic market, which allows them faster growth compared to other businesses. Pirie (2008) argues that establishment and expansion of these large export-oriented corporations, capable of massive capital accumulation by efficiently competing in international markets, should be seen as one of the main priorities of the developmental state. International competitiveness is largely possible due to rising productivity without parallel growth of labour costs, which is a result of tight control and suppression of organised labour by the national state. This has in consequence led to ‘steady high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship to the international economy’, which Castells (1992, p. 56) recognises as the principle of legitimacy in a developmental state. Despite this close alliance between a small number of private businesses and the national state, the latter is capable of effectively intervening in the domestic market to protect its interests when these clash with those of large corporations (Douglass 1998).

This form of capitalist state has first emerged in the late 19th century Japan, which has later served as a role model for the economic development of other countries in East Asia, including Singapore and South Korea (Park et al. 2011). During the period of the so-called Meiji Restoration, Japan advanced within just a few decades from an agrarian pre-modern society with a decentralised political

power to a modern, rapidly industrialising and highly centralised national state. This immense economic, social and political transformation—which was largely based on a interventionist industrial and financial policies, technological advances, social reforms, and military expansion led by a strong nationalist government—has been recognised as of utmost importance for countering growing Western influence in East Asia and protect what has been considered as strategic national interests of Japan (Johnson 1999). The latter, however, were little more than particular economic and political interests of a small number of powerful large corporations and political elite. The legitimacy of the developmental state in Japan has been, therefore, closely linked to not only successful economic development but also to its ability to impose particular economic and political interests as seemingly broader societal goals. Developmental states in Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea or Taiwan seem to differ little from the pre-war Japan in this regard.

The successful capitalist developmental states have been quasi-revolutionary regimes, in which whatever legitimacy their rulers possessed did not come from external sanctification or some formal rules whereby they gained office but from the overreaching social projects their societies endorsed and they carried out. (Johnson 1999, p. 52)

Interests of diverse social groups, as well as the individual interests, were supposed to follow and serve these broader societal goals, articulated and imposed by the authoritarian regime. In the eyes of developmental state, the civil society appeared as illegitimate or as a possible threat to national security and to what has been promoted as an inevitable national drive for modernisation. Attempts of developmental state to substitute itself for civil society have been largely achieved with a help of a highly repressive state apparatus, suppression of civil society, suspension of civil rights, and cultural and social homogenization (Castells 1992; Shin 2006; Douglass 2008). Moreover, developmental state has also used urban development as an instrument of social and political control and not only as a way to accommodate massive rural to urban migrations and provide labour for rapidly expanding industries. Considerable differences, nevertheless, exist among the countries in East Asia in this regard. While developmental state in Singapore and Hong Kong has firmly controlled urban development and housing, South Korea or Taiwan have on the contrary rather relied on informal sector or have established a close alliance with private corporations to address housing shortages (Perry et al. 1997; Park 1998; Kim and Yoon 2003; Park et al. 2011; Chen and Li 2012).

If urbanisation is primarily an instrument of rapid economic growth as well as of social and political control on one hand, and if civil society, on the other hand, hardly exists as an autonomous and legitimate sphere of social and political action in relation to the national or local state and as free from the intrusion of market, it is difficult to talk about civic participation in urban development (Douglass 2008; Križnik 2009; Choi 2011). Citizens have been in this sense largely excluded from taking part in urban development, although the developmental state has at the same time tolerated, as noted, growth of informal urban settlements. Such mostly illegal grassroots participation in urban development has historically played an important social and economic role in Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan in providing

housing, informal jobs and social support for low-income households during the early industrialisation and urbanisation. Most of these informal shantytowns, nevertheless, were sooner or later demolished and their residents displaced to make a place for new residential complexes (Ha 2002, 2007; Kim and Yoon 2003; Chen and Li 2012). In South Korea and Taiwan this relationship between the state and civil society has started to change radically during the 1980s mainly under the influence of labour, students and pro-democracy social movements, which has opened ways for a more active civic participation in urban development (Shin and Kim 2015). While these changes in Hong Kong and Singapore took a slower pace and more modest scale, compared to South Korea or Taiwan, they have eventually also led to important institutional changes related to civic involvement in urban development (Perry et al. 1997; Soh and Yuen 2005).

2.1.1 *Early Nation-Building in Singapore*

Since becoming an independent state in 1965, Singapore has overcome severe conditions and major challenges surrounding its rapid transformation, which remained as a continual threat to its survival. Even after it had attained economic success, a sense of crisis and urgency has remained amongst the population. Perry et al. (1997) argued that this has been cultivated by the political style of Singapore's leadership as 'maintaining a permanent state of insecurity has helped keep the state free from the challenge of alternative agendas, minimizing the impediments to economic development' (Perry et al. 1997, p. 6). The rhetoric of struggle for survival has served to overlook the negative economic consequences as 'to survive, Singapore needs an armed force of citizen-conscripts, racial harmony must prevail, and political differences and dissensions must be kept to the minimum and under control' (Chua 2011, p. 30). Under the authoritarian regime, economic growth has been 'promoted at all costs' and 'survival has provided the discursive and governance space for an interventionist or activist state that closely regulates Singaporean everyday life as part of the necessary condition for its highly entrepreneurial pursuit of national economic development, in step with the changing shape of global capitalism' (Ibid. p. 31). Through the pursuit of survival, the developmental state in Singapore was able to practise tight control of society and prioritize rapid economic growth that gained sustained popular acceptance of its legitimacy (Chua and Kuo 1991; Perry et al. 1997). The ruling *People's Action Party* (PAP) and its enduring power in politics have driven the national planning since 1960s, placing economic development at the forefront (Yeung and Olds 1998) which continued to make massive gains in its socioeconomic development throughout the early stage of nation building.

The sense of vulnerability and hence of the importance of national cohesion, instilled in Singapore's leaders by Lee Kuan Yew and his fellows, is at the root of many aspects of the Singapore exception. It has also influenced economic policy, including the ideological objections to welfare and its debilitating impact on the national psyche. (The Economist 2015, p. 10)

Beyond the narrative of national survival, Singapore's long term vision and goal has always been a 'global city', a dominant self-image since the 1970s when Singapore's first foreign affairs minister Sinnathamby Rajaratnam declared his vision of Singapore as a 'global city' (Rajaratnam 1972). Considering the lack of resources, the need to integrate into the global economy was, in fact, a matter of survival as there was little possibility for Singapore to become self-sufficient in meeting its basic needs; in this way, 'Singapore's global city-making process began long before globalization and global/world city discussions became popular among academics and planners' (Han 2005, p. 169). Being a city-state, Singapore is an atypical case among the global cities though, since it is free from the conflicts of interest between the state and the major cities, which have divergent interests and goals, common in other global cities, integrated in far larger national territories. In Singapore, it was possible for the state to directly get involved in the economic development of the city, efficiently creating favourable conditions to attract foreign investment and setting the direction of new spatial and social order of the state (Fau 2010) without being required to balance between the different agendas of the state and its major cities. Its small size has also been acknowledged as an advantage in a sense that it allowed the state to react faster to international developments than could other larger countries. The city-state could continuously adapt itself to the evolving external geopolitical or geo-economic situations, but at the same time, it was able to formulate long-term visions and plans based on the hegemonic single-party polity without change in government over the span of 50 years, 'which could otherwise derail such plans and programmes' (Da Cunha 2002, pp. 269–270).

Singapore is well-known for its intensively planned environment and highly centralised nature of urban development, predominantly led by the state. The immediate socio-economic problems after its independence, including racial tensions, unemployment, and housing shortages were tackled with extensive policies and plans, especially in the area of land use planning. The centralized and top-down approach to planning is based on the dominant influence of the government, statutory authorities and public agencies. Kong (1994) and Mekani and Stengal (1995) have argued that in many public arenas in Singapore, the government 'plays an inordinately large role in defining the agenda and identifying and facilitating the implementation of the solutions, often, though not invariably, to good effect' (cited in Perry et al. 1997, p. 221).

To enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the city centre in the early years including clearance of slums and squatters, the Land Acquisition Act was introduced in 1966 to give the state the power to acquire and appropriate land that was privately owned on a compulsory basis for any public purpose. Through this legislation, the state became the largest landowner by the 1970s (Ooi 2012). In 1992, the amount of land that was owned by the state had increased to 80 % of the total land in Singapore (Von Alten 1995). Most importantly, the compulsory land acquisition enabled affordable home ownership by limiting speculation and keeping the development costs low (Perry et al. 1997). The concentration of land in state

ownership facilitated rapid urbanisation; 'built-up area in the city practically doubled between 1950 and 1970, from 18.5 % of the total land area to 32.4 %' (Ooi 2012, p. 331). Through the land acquisition process, massive slum clearance and resettlement destroyed existing settlements, affecting their inhabitants and businesses. Chua (2011, pp. 44–46) has observed that the displacement and resettlement process in Singapore has been different compared to 'common scenarios of displaced people being left homeless by developers or government agencies.'

A survey of the settlement to be resettled is made to establish the number of affected households, including their business and agricultural activities, if any. No new households will be registered for resettlement after the survey. Resettlement will not begin until the replacement public housing flats for the affected households are ready. The compensation will factor in the size of the dismantled house and every productive aspect of the dwelling; new factory premises will be rented to those with cottage industries, and shop houses to retailers, and there will be cash compensation for animals and fruit trees owned by semirural village households. Large extended families that cannot fit into a single flat will be allocated as many flats as there are nuclear families within them. No one will be made homeless by the resettlement. (Chua 2011, pp. 44–46)

Choe (1975 cited in Perry et al. 1997, p. 202) has also reported that the affected families were given generous resettlement benefits such as cash compensation, 'priority in the allocation of space in one of the new planned estates and incentives that made owner occupation an attractive option' while shopkeepers who were affected by resettlement schemes were provided with 'priority in renting alternative HDB premise at subsidized rates'. Although the Singapore government has taken generous care in the resettlement process as illustrated above, many studies about the early years of the resettlement involving the majority of the population who were relocated to high-density and high-rise public housing have reported that the relocation had critical impacts on social organisation and neighbouring patterns and dislocation of the social networks that were established in the earlier settlements (Tai 1988). People had difficulties in rebuilding the community bonds they had once they resettled in the new neighbourhoods, prompting concerns about the absence of strong networks and relations among residents living together in high-rise and high-density neighbourhoods (Ooi and Hee 2002).

In this early stage of nation building, urban development and public housing programmes were implemented with high efficiency and order. Mass housing was produced in the fastest and cheapest way, establishing 'the industrialisation of everyday life', 'the housing norm for the industrial workforce that Singapore was counting on to attract international investors' (Ooi 2012, p. 332). Each public housing estate was provided with 'a replica of the range of estate facilities and services developed in the others', enabling 'a relatively high degree of self-sufficiency, with schools, shops, medical clinics and banking facilities among others' (Ibid). Singapore's public housing scheme provided the affordable settlement that contributed to 'the kind of social stability and elimination of labour unrest

that Singapore has enjoyed since the 1960s' (Ibid). In this way the developmental state in Singapore has directly instrumentalised urban development and public housing to build a stronger and more cohesive nation.

2.1.2 *Modernisation of the Fatherland in South Korea*

Developmental state in South Korea has been largely associated with the rise of the authoritarian regime of General Park Chung-hee, who seized the power through the military coup d'état in 1961, became elected president two years later, and subsequently ruled the country until his assassination in 1979. Faced with growing social tensions, economic instability, political divisions and the permanent military threat from North Korea, Park's regime quickly embarked on radical economic and political reforms after ousting the democratically elected government (Cumings 2005). Economic policy stood at the core of these reforms and was based on rapid and export-oriented industrialisation, which was to a large extent possible due to massive foreign grants, loans and investments, coming mostly from the USA and later from Japan.¹ The developmental state in South Korea has selectively allocated and channelled this financial assistance to a small number of large corporations, known as *chaebols* in Korean, which were considered to be of strategic importance for the successful economic development of what was a severely underdeveloped country at that time (Chang 2009). In exchange for this highly privileged position, which allowed them a fast growth, technological advancement and accumulation of profits way above the market average, these corporations accepted the role of what Woo (1991, p. 175) calls 'private agents of the state's purpose' by following and implementing the policy and directions of the national government.

The relationship between the South Korean state and large capitalists is one of give-and-take. The military regime provides various financial and institutional supports to the large capitalists, such as the preferential distribution of foreign loans and investment licenses and low-interest domestic and foreign loans. In return, the capitalists follow the government's direction and play a leading role in manufacturing and exporting. (Park 1998, p. 277)

Pirie (2008) argues that supporting and developing these large and mainly family-owned domestic corporations, which were the engine of rapid and export-oriented industrialisation and were capable of effectively competing on the international markets, was actually at the very heart of economic policy and one of the main strategic aims of the developmental state in South Korea. For this purpose, Park's regime successfully appropriated the existing state apparatus, which had its

¹US economic and military assistance to South Korea alone has reached more than 12 billion USD from 1947 till 1976, which was twice as much as the entire US aid for the African continent during the same period (Pirie 2008).

origin in the legacy of the Japanese colonial state. During their occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, Japanese established a powerful colonial bureaucracy, which used to manage and control the market, provide financial assistance to selected businesses, brutally exploit labour force, and exercise a total control over the social, economic and political life in the country (Pirie 2008). In this sense, there seems to be considerable similarities between the Japanese colonial state and Park's regime. The close alliance between the large corporations and interventionist state seems to have been shaped to a large extent by the institutional legacy of Japanese colonialism (Woo 1991; Chang 2009).²

The alliance with the *chaebols* was at the same time instrumental not only as a strategy to improve national development to the level of advanced capitalist countries but also to strengthen economic self-sufficiency and national security. In the 1960s and early 1970s, South Korea was under permanent threat of North Korean military provocations. North Korea used to be at that time economically more advanced and was in control of a superior military force. For President Park Chung-hee (cited in Shin 2006, p. 104) supporting large domestic corporations was in this sense of utmost importance in order 'to accelerate our economic growth, to modernise our fatherland, and to achieve peaceful unification of our country on the basis of self-reliance, independence and prosperity.' Such economic nationalism was also common in other developmental states. Yet, a strong commitment to rapid industrialisation and explicit nationalism as the key principles of legitimacy, were initially important for Park's regime more than for any other, due to its illegal seizure of power (Choi 2011). Shin (2006, p. 14) argues that the authoritarian regime in South Korea has successfully created 'a developmental ethic among Koreans by skilfully fusing the Confucian respect for hierarchy, harmony, and loyalty to authority with the nationalist slogan *Modernisation of the Fatherland*.' Through such massive mobilisation of its population for advancing of the so-called national interests, the developmental state in South Korea was able to transform from once predominately agrarian society into a rapidly industrialising country within just one decade (Cumings 2005).

For this mobilisation to succeed the authoritarian regime had no tolerance for any civil or political alternatives, which could challenge its legitimacy. Individuals and social groups had to give up their particular interests, individual identities and civil rights for their collective role and broader societal goals. For the authoritarian regime, the national state and society were one. There was no place for civil society as an autonomous and legitimate sphere of social and political action, and the national state has exercised total control over the social, economic and political life in South Korea (Shin 2006). However, this brutal suppression of civil society has led to a decades-long social mobilisation, including labour, pro-democracy,

²President Park Chung-hee himself also took an active role in this highly repressive state apparatus of the Japanese colonial state as a young and ambitious lieutenant, serving the Manchukuo Imperial Army.

students or housing rights movements, which have increasingly challenged what they have seen as the illegitimate and undemocratic regime. Although this has triggered even a more violent response from the authoritarian regime on short term, these social movements have historically succeeded in bringing the military rule to an end in 1987, which opened doors for subsequent democratisation of the national and the local state later (Park 2006; Kim 2007; Katsiaficas 2012). Democratisation process has radically changed the relationship between the state and civil society, which has been rapidly expanding in South Korea during the 1990s. At the same time, the relationship between the state and market has also started to change, although less as a result of growing civil demands for economic democratisation, but rather due to a growing impact of economic and cultural globalisation as well as neoliberal economic restructuring (Cumings 2005; Douglass 2008). These changes have eventually led to the structural transformation of developmental state and the emergence of so-called neo-developmental state in the late 1990s, which is the focus of the next chapter.

The Modernisation of the Fatherland has also radically reshaped South Korean cities, which have become sites of expanding industrial production, as well as a home for new labour force (Choi 2011). Urban development during the 1960s and early 1970s was characterised by massive and unprecedented rural to urban migrations, triggered by poor living conditions in the predominately agrarian countryside and employment opportunities in rapidly growing cities. Only 18.4 % of the South Korean population lived in urban areas in 1950. The share of the urban population increased to 27.7 % in 1960 and reached 40.7 % in 1970. By 1977, every second South Korean already lived in urban areas (Kang 1998). A major part of these rural to urban migrants was living in a very poor housing, located in shantytowns, and was largely excluded from urban life. While these informal residential areas were initially tolerated, the developmental state has started large-scale demolitions and evictions of shantytowns after the 1970s. This transformation of substandard residential areas was not only aimed to improve the living environment in South Korean cities but has also been a result of growing investments and soaring profits on the housing and real-estate markets. This speculative urbanisation has resulted from emerging alliance between large corporations and developmental state in South Korea, which the authoritarian regime has used to improve housing provision and quality of life in cities by facilitating interests of these private businesses, while the latter were able to accumulate massive profits in return (Park 1998; Kim and Yoon 2003; Choi 2011). At the same time, the local state was little more than a proxy of the national state, with little or no autonomy in implementing the policy of the national government. As such local state was unwilling and unable to address growing social and environmental problems in South Korean cities. This particular market-driven and speculative urban development, based on a close alliance between developmental state and large private corporations with no civic participation, can be referred to as *developmental urbanisation* in South Korea.

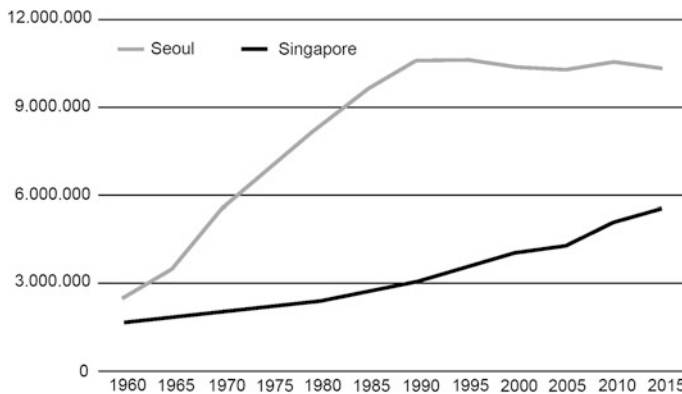


Fig. 2.2 Population growth in Singapore and Seoul, 1960–2015. *Source* Department of Statistics Singapore (2015), Seoul Metropolitan Government (2015)

2.2 City and Developmental State

2.2.1 *The Housing and Development Board in Singapore*

Singapore's national public housing programme is widely regarded as 'one of the few success stories in the universal provision of housing around the world' (Chua 2014, p. 532). From the outset, the developmental state in Singapore has focused on improving the living environment as a prior condition for economic success, which was in the opposite direction to what many other Asian countries were focusing at that time (Park 1998). Sin (2002) has argued that the commitment of Singapore's newly elected government to tackle the housing problem has given the state credit. Singapore's public housing caters to a wide range of population without the stigma attached to the public or social housing in Anglo-American cities. Chua (2011) noted that, 'ironically, in this aspect, the less than democratic single-party state appears not only more efficient but also more responsible to the basic needs of the entire population than a liberal democratic state'; in every aspect, public housing in Singapore is 'a political good, beyond simply physical shelter' (Ibid, p. 47).

My primary occupation was to give every citizen a stake in the country and its future [...] if every family owned its home, the country would be more stable [...]. I believe this sense of ownership was vital for our new society. (Lee 2000)

The PAP government of Singapore led by Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew from 1959 to 1990 has been continuously committed to a national housing programme with universal provision of 99-year leasehold homeownership for all its citizens since 1959. Since its establishment in 1960, the *Housing and Development Board* (HDB), the public housing authority of Singapore, has built more than one million high-rise housing units, accommodating 90 % of the citizens and permanent residents, of which more than 85 % of the resident households are

homeowners' (Chua 2014, p. 520). This highlights the high efficiency of HDB, especially in sharp contrast to the previous era when its predecessor, the *Singapore Improvement Trust* (SIT) was in charge, up to the 1950s and early 1960s. At that time, Singapore was still plagued by old, badly degenerated, overcrowded slums, with poor sanitation and lack of hygiene (Eng and Kong 1997). Eng and Kong (1997) have pointed to earlier reports that described a typical street in Chinatown in 1954 as 'among the most primitive in the urban areas of the world' (Kaye 1960, p. 5), 73 % of surveyed households living in badly overcrowded conditions in 1953–54 (Goh 1956) and one quarter of a million people living in badly degenerated slums in the city centre while another one-third of a million living in squatter areas on the city fringe, in 1960 (Teh 1975).

To tackle the acute housing shortage, the HDB took as its top priority to build as many housing units as possible within a short period of time. Several significant measures were taken to sustain the public housing programme established under the newly formed HDB (Joo and Wong 2008). There are three major policies that are widely credited to have laid the foundations for a home-owning society in Singapore, namely: (i) the 1964 *Home Ownership Programme* that enabled every citizen to become a homeowner in the country, giving citizens an asset, a means of financial security (Wong and Yeh 1985); (ii) the draconian 1967 *Land Acquisition Act*, through which the HDB was given absolute control over the use of private property and the restriction of private property rights (Joo and Wong 2008); and (iii) the 1968 amendments to the legislative and self-financing ownership mechanism known as the *Central Provident Fund* (CPF) Act, enabling the use of CPF savings for home purchases, which led to a sharp jump in numbers of applicants for HDB flats to 8,455 in 1968 (Fernandez 2011). Buyers could choose to repay the mortgage loans over a long period of time, even up to a span of 30 years, with interest rates charged much lower than the prevailing market rates (Joo and Wong 2008). By the end of its first five-year plan in 1965, the HDB had exceeded its construction target of 50,000 units by 5,000 and was able to house 23 % of the total population in public flats (Eng and Kong 1997, p. 451). The success of the programme resulted in the proportion of the population occupying public housing growing from 9.1 to 34.6 % during 1960–1970, and then to over 80 % in the 1990s (Fernandez 2011).

Besides political stability, the developmental state in Singapore also utilized the public housing policies in restructuring the society and social reproduction. In the early post-independence years, the public housing programme was used as a means to ensure ethnic mixing in public housing estates. Eventually the Ethnic Integration Policy was established in 1989, through which the quotas for different ethnic groups of Singapore 'approximately proportional to their presence in the national population, are maintained at every block of flats to avoid racial territorial concentrations and the formation of enclaves, purportedly to reduce the potential of racial violence' (Chua 2011, pp. 45–46). Restrictions regarding the nationality, marital status and household income level of applicants govern the purchasing of HDB flats, to ensure both that the government subsidies go to benefit the largest number of citizens and are not exploited by individuals for quick profit, and to promote the familial structure favoured by the government (Goh 2001, p. 1592).

There are many social policies embedded in the HDB programme that promote the social sustainability of public housing, especially its affordability and quality of living environment. Joo and Wong (2008, p. 136) argue that ‘affordability for lower income groups is symbolic of equitable redistribution of national resources integral of social sustainable development’. In terms of planning, there are considerate measures not to stigmatize the lower-income households by blending the rentals flats where the lowest 10 % income households are placed with the sold flats, through which ‘the visibility of income inequalities and poverty is thus radically reduced’ (Chua 2011, p. 44). He further argues that ‘a combination of planning and social policy has produced physical if not social integration’, creating an image of ‘inclusiveness’ and of ‘multiracial integration and harmony’ in the HDB new towns (Ibid, p. 46). Public housing has been made operational and as a social infrastructure to act as a social stabilizing agency (Joo and Wong 2008).

Since the 1960s when the state launched its public housing programme in Singapore, its success has in large part been premised not only on continuity but also on progress and change in the planning and urban development of public housing estates. Public housing has been a central feature of Singaporean daily life since independence. It has also been greatly intertwined with the trend of Singapore’s urban development in general. As practically the monopoly supplier of housing to the nation, the HDB has been able to develop comprehensively planned housing estates over the span of 50 years, which went through various stages of growth according to five-yearly building programmes.



Fig. 2.3 First HDB flats completed in 1960 (at Stirling Road in Queenstown, Singapore). *Source* Jorven Tan (2016)

The *first stage* of early estate development provided housing for resettled residents close to their original settlement location. These estates were predominantly in the city and catered to low-income families with the most urgent basic housing needs. Many of the ideas about housing being implemented in Europe in general and Britain in particular found suitable testing ground in Queenstown (Fig. 2.3), where the high-rise model was first adopted, initiated by the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) in 1952 and completed by the HDB in the 1970s (Hee 2009). This first stage of HDB's development was during the formative years in testing out the public's acceptance of high-rise and high-density living as a viable way of life (Joo and Wong 2008). The earlier attempts to provide public housing were at best piecemeal developments on an ad hoc basis.

By its second five-year plan (1966–70), HDB had succeeded to meet its quantitative targets, enabling it to pay more attention to quality (Eng and Kong 1997). The *second stage* of development was marked by the construction of Toa Payoh (Fig. 2.4). Initiated in 1965, it was the first new town planned outside of the city with a target population of 180,000 and was in fact HDB's flagship project for public housing (Hee 2009).

Once basic shelter needs were satisfied, the HDB's planning objectives changed, resulting in a greater emphasis on providing amenities for the community (HDB 2014) for a higher standard and quality of living. Resident satisfaction was more valued in the HDB's planning, and survey responses have been considered since the late-1970s. The HDB realised that greater incorporation of citizens' views helps to improve public housing and a sense of belonging to the estate can be achieved through more active participation, especially through activities organised by various grassroots initiatives that familiarise residents with their community. The Government of Singapore has, over the years, introduced a number of so-called grassroots organizations, in order to decentralize some of its administrative service and invoke citizen participation in the formulation and discharge of public policies. Forms of civic engagement and participation in public housing in Singapore, led by the government has been in forms of local grassroots organizations such as Residents' Committees (RCs) and Town Councils (TCs). The earliest of such organizations is the Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs), which were formed in 1965, as the umbrella grassroots organisation in a constituency in Singapore. CCCs plan and lead grassroots activities in a constituency and oversee community and welfare programmes. They also act as a feedback channel between the government and the people. In order to supplement the function of the CCCs, and to help citizens better accommodate each other, given differences in culture, ethnicity, and religion, Residents' Committees (RCs) were first established in 1977 with the aim of promoting neighbourly interaction, good communal relations and overall cohesion. The grassroots organization is highly localized, but estate residents tend to perceive them as having national political agendas (Ooi and Hee 2002). The verdict on the RCs has been that these committees have aligned themselves more to the local Member of Parliament and ruling party and have been less answerable to

(a)



(b)



Fig. 2.4 (a), (b) HDB flats built in the 1960s in Toa Payoh (Singapore's second oldest satellite town) [Built in 1964, Toa Payoh is also the first new town to be built by the HDB after the development of Queenstown by the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) in the late 1950s]. *Source* Jorven Tan (2016)

the residents or constituents they serve (Ooi 2004). Perry et al. (1997, p. 247) argue that ‘the effort to encourage community spirit and identity through RCs and CCs also serves a political function: that of controlling the means and manner of citizen participation in civil life. These organizations act as channels through which government policy can be explained to the masses and means through which people can be mobilized for community projects’.

Box 2.1. Void Decks

In 1970, a unique design element was introduced to public housing estates to enhance community-building opportunities: the ground floor void decks. Void decks were simply devised to create an informal space for residents to meet and talk and to serve as social space and shelter. They are considered as valuable external social space in the context of Singapore public housing estates, which allows for opportunities for incidental encounters among neighbours. There are several user-specific amenities built in the void decks, such as Senior Citizens’ Corners for the elderly, kindergartens or pre-schools for young families, and Residents’ Committee centres (Fig. 2.5). They are also important sites for social and religious occasions such as a Malay wedding or a Chinese funeral (CLC and HDB 2013).

In the 1970s, the issues surrounding community spirit and neighbourliness became an important agenda in the new housing estates. It was recognized that social ties among HDB neighbours were rather ritualized, superficial and transitory (Hassan 1977). In the *third stage* of new town development during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the precinct concept was implemented to incorporate the abstract notions of ‘building communities’ and optimization of land into an inward focused and compact spatial form that can foster better opportunities for the community to forge a sense of identity and belonging (Hee 2009, p. 76). Throughout the 1970s, as the public housing programs were consolidated and housing provisions brought up to an adequate level, the political will turned to the planning of new towns with neighbourhood of convenience as a functional model of distribution of infrastructure and facilities, as well as some means of social integration for a society dislocated from its vernacular and ethnic origins—addressing the perceived need for some form of re-integration and notion of neighbourliness (Ibid).

In parallel to the development of the precinct, as the housing shortage problems were resolved in 1978, HDB started to put intensive efforts in providing a comprehensive living environment with better quality and differentiated facilities in the new towns as well as in leading community development (Joo and Wong 2008). Furthermore, there was an attempt to break away from HDB’s monotonous physical outlook and image by introducing the notion of identity and character in the new towns.

(a)



(b)



Fig. 2.5 (a) Typical void deck in Singapore's public housing estates. (b) Senior Citizens' Corner in a void deck. (c) Residents' Committee centre in a void deck. *Source* National University of Singapore

(c)



Fig. 2.5 (continued)

The *fourth stage* of new town development was characterized by the use of the structural model as a template for the design of each new town. One of the first new towns to be based on such a model was Tampines.³ Throughout the 1980s, to improve the quality of life in public housing estates, the HDB sought to promote new town character and community identity through the use of new building designs. Upgrading of older estates in order to bridge the social gap between the older estates and the new with their greatly improved amenities also became a priority in the 1980s (Perry et al. 1997).⁴ In addition, the precinct concept, initiated in 1978, was further encouraged in the 1980s. Each precinct, consisting of 600–1000 dwelling units, and linked to other precincts by pedestrian paths, was meant to encourage meaningful social interaction among residents. The idea was to try to create a community activity focal point in the form of a landscape square with recreational facilities, kindergarten, eating places and local shops among a cluster of blocks. Precincts were also made more compact with closer spacing between buildings so as to enhance a sense of community spirit and neighbourliness.

³Tampines is the site where HDB test-bedded the most recent community participatory planning initiative *Hello Neighbour*. This will be elaborated in Chap. 4.

⁴HDB's various upgrading programmes will be discussed in detail in Chap. 3.

As can be seen in the different stages of HDB estate development illustrated above, the meaning and value of the community—in order to achieve a community spirit and neighbourliness—have evolved through time, along with the transformation of the living spaces. Public spaces in the HDB public housing are reasonably well designed and have good connectivity and accessibility to facilities. In other words, the planners have generally fulfilled their design purposes of surveillance and connectivity, as well as fulfilling the technical planning standard of provisions (Hee and Ooi 2003).

Undoubtedly, the provision of public housing has been a key pillar in Singapore's nation building. However, the limits of developmental state in Singapore and its dominating role in the public housing system have been challenged in recent years, with an emergence of an increasingly diverse group of middle-class HDB home-owners with more differentiated aspirations. Many scholars have also been questioning whether the public housing development in Singapore has fostered the expected level of community bonding (Chua 1997, 2000; Hee and Ooi 2003; Hee 2005; Yuen 2009; Appold 2011).

The rise of the development state, as well as one-party dominance in politics, have also meant a tightening of regulations over civil society organisations and their role in the political process. The strategy that has been developed in managing civic life in Singapore has been, in large part, a spatial strategy. Indeed, there is basis to argue that the increased abstraction and homogenisation of space, albeit ideological space, has displaced the contested nature of such space from its larger context which is the city and political life. (Ooi and Shaw 2004, p. 80)

The ongoing economic restructuring that occupied Singapore during its early stage of nation building has made decision-making in the city-state highly centralised, leaving almost no room for civic participation (Ibid). In many ways, the success that has been achieved in Singapore by the state in planning and implementing urban development programmes left citizens being accustomed to a sense of dependency on the state. 'When policies are generally efficient and pre-emptive in nature, citizens feel the need to do little beyond observing the rules and complying with them' (Ganesan 2002, p. 60). There is a strong belief that collaborative civic participation helps localities build the social capacities that are required to resolve shared problems (Evans 1997; Ooi and Shaw 2004). Evans (1997) propose that where the state facilitates the growth of social capital by creating an environment in which civic participation can thrive, it also fosters state-civil society synergy that increases the capabilities of both the state and civil society. It has been argued that the developmental state in Singapore, seeking to boost its legitimacy, while doing what it would have needed to do, has removed this source of building a broad and cohesive civil society. While the effort is difficult with the highly centralised approach used in the planning process, the main challenge has been the neglect of civic participation often regarded as crucial by many in the planning circles (Ooi 2004).

2.2.2 *Joint Redevelopment Project in Seoul*

As traditional capital of Korea, Seoul has served the interests of the King and the country for centuries.⁵ Modern Seoul has been no exception in this sense. The developmental state has considered the urban development of Seoul to be of utmost importance for the future economic growth, security and prosperity of South Korea, and has directly instrumentalised urban development of the city to support its economic policy (Kang 1998; Park 1998; Choi 2011). During the 1960s and early 1970s, urban development of Seoul was shaped by rapid industrialisation, which has resulted in the transformation of existing and construction of new industrial areas and infrastructure in the city. This rapid industrialisation created new employment opportunities, which on a daily basis attracted hundreds of mostly unskilled migrants from the rural countryside in a search for new jobs in Seoul. As a result, the population of the city almost doubled from two and a half million residents in 1960 to more than five million residents in 1970 with an average yearly growth rate of 8.4 % during this period (Fig. 2.2). Such rapid population growth created an enormous shortage of housing, and many migrants had no place to live. Although there were more than one million households living in Seoul in 1970, only about 600,000 housing units were available at that time (Kim and Yoon 2003). Many of these were located in substandard residential areas with a rather low quality of life. It was not uncommon to have several families sharing a single housing unit. Moreover, many poor migrants were living in shantytowns and squatter areas, which were illegally built on vacant public land along rivers, roads or hill slopes, with miserable living conditions and no access to running water, electricity or other infrastructure. These places were popularly called *daldongnae*, which literally means ‘moon village’ in Korean. Many of them were namely built on difficult to access slopes and hilltops around downtown Seoul, which has rendered them as being close to the moon in the eyes of Koreans. Shantytowns, which had mushroomed around downtown Seoul for more than a decade, have provided a home for about one-third of all households in the city (Kim and Yoon 2003).

The authoritarian regime considered enormous housing shortage, low quality of life as well as illegal shantytowns, to be among the major obstacles to the future economic growth of the city and tried to address these problems since the mid-1960s (Kim 2010). Although many shantytowns were demolished and residents displaced during this period, new housing, which was to replace them, was of poor quality and could not accommodate the rapidly growing population of the city. The success of these early attempts was therefore very limited. Moreover, evictions and relocation of low-income residents did not solve but rather delayed and moved these sober social and economic problems to peripheral urban areas, where new social conflicts emerged, leading to early urban struggles of the dissatisfied population like in the case of *Gwangju Complex Uprising* (Cho 2011) (Box 2.2). For

⁵The name Seoul originates from ancient Korean words *Seorabeol* or *Seobeol*, which means the ‘capital city’ (Clark and Clark 1969).

these reasons, improvement of substandard residential areas along with the provision of new housing has become a major focus of developmental state about the urban development of Seoul during the early-1970s.

Box 2.2. Gwangju Complex Uprising

The Seoul Metropolitan Government decided to build a large residential *Gwangju Complex* in the present-day Seongnam city in the Gyeonggi Province to relocate evictees from Seoul. The relocation process was poorly planned and managed, and evictees had to face, upon their arrival to the area, unbearable living conditions, virtually non-existent social amenities and infrastructure, and soaring property prices, fuelled by land speculations. What followed in August 1971 was one of the first urban struggles in the modern history of South Korea. While waiting in vain for the Seoul mayor to talk about their problems, the residents began with what appeared as spontaneous protests, which soon turned violent and caught national and local government largely unprepared. After three days of fierce protests most of the demands, raised by the residents, were accepted although many protesters were later prosecuted and jailed. Gwangju Complex Uprising has in this way become an important turning point for urban struggles in South Korea (Kim 2010; Cho 2011).

This period, at the same time, brought growing political instability in South Korea, and consequently led President Park Chung-hee to implement a highly centralised and repressive *Yushin reforms*, by which he tried to strengthen his political power (Cumings 2005). Improvement of housing became an important way to gain political legitimacy of the increasingly unpopular authoritarian regime as well as to get public support from growing and dissatisfied urban population (Park 1998). President Park also launched the New Village Movement in 1970, known as *Saemaeul Undong* in Korean, which mobilised rural and urban population to improve the quality of life by strengthening cooperation, self-help and communal identity among them. Following the popularity of the New Village Movement in rural areas, the state also tried to expand it to cities, where the residents jointly carried out small improvements in their neighbourhoods, such as maintenance of streets, cleaning of drains or planting of trees (Douglass 2013). These communal activities were at the same time expected to create a shared identity among the residents. Although they can be seen as an early attempt of civic participation in urban development, the seemingly voluntary involvement of the residents in different communal activities was in reality compulsory, and directly organised and supervised by the developmental state. Unlike to the countryside, the New Village Movement had a limited impact on living conditions in South Korean cities, particularly on substandard residential areas (Ha 2002; Shin 2006; Douglass 2013).

Faced with a limited success of their previous attempts the national and local state tried new approaches to address the transformation of substandard residential areas and housing shortage, and improve the quality of life in the city during the 1970s. The new national *Act on Temporary Measures for the Promotion of Housing Improvement* was passed in 1973 and allowed to legalise and transfer squatted public land to the residents at below market prices to encourage urban redevelopment of illegally occupied urban areas and promote construction of new housing. Squatters were given the basic housing rights and were encouraged to improve their living environment on their own. Due to limited financial support and resources of the squatters, this approach produced little tangible results too. In an attempt to secure new land for rapid urban development of the city and address demands for better housing, national and local state consequently started to change their focus from shantytowns to other substandard residential areas during the early-1980s (Kim 2010). For this reason, the local state tried to bring together property owners and construction corporations to prepare and implement urban redevelopment projects, but again with little success. This approach, nevertheless, led to the introduction of *Joint Redevelopment Project* (JRP) in 1983, which soon became the dominant approach in Seoul, addressing transformation of substandard residential areas, and profoundly affected urban development of the city in the coming decades (Park 1998; Kim and Yoon 2003; Ha 2007; Shin 2009; Kim 2010).

The new approach was based on a partnership between property owners, who provided land for urban redevelopment, and construction corporations, which were to develop and construct new housing and infrastructure. In a future redevelopment district, the property owners had to establish a so-called redevelopment association, which was to prepare the master and implementation plan, contract construction corporations, and manage urban redevelopment process. When the redevelopment association gained consent from the majority of property owners and the local government approved the master plan, the locality was designated as a redevelopment district. After the implementation plan was passed, the locality was ready for a wholesale clearance and displacement of the residents which made the way for construction of new residential complexes, popularly known as *apartment danji* in Korean.

As a result of JRP about 100,000 old houses were demolished and replaced with 217,000 new housing units by 1998, which improved housing provision and the quality of life in 228 redevelopment districts in Seoul (Kim and Yoon 2003). Ha (2007) reported that housing units were available only for about half of all households in Seoul in 1980, while in 2000 the housing supply ratio already reached 77.4 % in a large part as a result of the massive transformation of substandard residential areas by the JRP. At the same time, not only the housing supply but also the housing quality has been improved. The average size of housing units, for instance, has increased from 68.3 m² in 1980 to 81.5 m² in 2000 (Ha 2007).

Once the construction of new residential complexes was completed, the property owners moved into new residential complexes, while the construction corporations sold the remaining new housing units on the market. These were sold with increasingly high profits, as a result of various urban development interventions by

the national and local state, which were in favour of large construction corporations. Many of them belonged to *chaebols*, which used to have very close relations with the developmental state since the 1970s (Cumings 2005; Pirie 2008). The national government had introduced selective support and incentives for these large corporations through preferential designation as eligible construction corporations, selective distribution of bank loans and investments in housing and real-estate market, and relaxed building regulations promoting market-driven urban redevelopment. The local state had designated redevelopment districts, approved redevelopment associations and supervised master and implementation plans, as well as authorised wholesale clearance and displacement of residents (Park 1998; Shin 2009; Lees et al. 2016). Implementation of JRP in this way largely reveals the growth alliance, which the developmental state in South Korea has established with the large corporations and can be seen as a characteristic approach of developmental urbanisation in Seoul.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the authoritarian regime succeeded in improving housing provision and quality of life for the emerging middle- and high-income households by relying on market-driven urban redevelopment. In this way the large businesses were able to accumulate massive profits from JRP. This was possible not only due to favourable state interventions but also soaring markets as well as the availability of surplus capital in South Korea during that period. On one hand, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation created a large demand for available land and consequently also opportunities to acquire profits from investments in real-estate markets. Jung (cited in Shin 2009) has reported that land prices in Seoul increased for 32.9 times from 1974 and 1996, which, on the other hand, attracted large amounts of surplus capital from industrial production, faced with the steady decline of net profits since the 1970s. The large businesses have become intensively involved in speculative investments in housing and real-estate markets, which has facilitated what Shin (2009, p. 909) calls speculative 'property-based urban redevelopment.' This has promoted short-term economic interests of large construction corporations rather than addressing complex social, economic or environmental challenges in South Korean cities on the long run. This close alliance of the developmental state and large corporations has not only reduced involvement of the former in housing provision but has also limited the ability of national and local government to control and manage urbanisation in general.

By constructing and selling as many housing units as possible, the property owners and construction corporations have aimed for extremely dense high-rise residential buildings that were out-of-scale and poorly integrated with existing neighbourhoods. Such urban development has in consequence fragmented social and urban fabric in Seoul. In many cases, these new residential areas lacked basic social amenities and infrastructure, which construction corporations have considered as unnecessary additional costs. Moreover, as a market-driven urban redevelopment, the JRP was focused on housing provision for mid- and high-income residents, which along with property owners and construction corporations have become the main beneficiaries of this approach. The low-income residents in Bongcheon-dong, Haengdang-dong, Mok-dong, Nangok, Oksu-dong or

Sanggye-dong, to name only few among many similar redevelopment districts in Seoul, were on the contrary largely excluded from JRP, and were faced with wholesale clearance of their living environment, evictions and displacement, loss of small businesses and neighbourhood markets, and heightened social conflicts (Cho 1998; Ha 2007; Križnik 2009; Shin 2009; Shin and Kim 2015; Lees et al. 2016). Particularly poor tenants, who used to represent the majority of the population in many redevelopment districts, have in this way effectively lost access to affordable housing (Park 1998; Kim 2010).

Once the new residential complex was constructed, only a few of original residents were able to return to their neighbourhoods due to soaring property prices and living costs, which the majority of them were not able to afford. For this reason, even many former property owners were forced to sell the property rights to mostly speculative absentee property owners and move out of their neighbourhoods in a search for more affordable housing. Ha (2015) estimates that about 80 % of the original residents were in average not able to return to their former neighbourhoods once the urban redevelopment was completed. These low resettlement rates have in result become one of the main reasons for the widespread decline of communal life and culture in redevelopment districts and nearby areas which used to be otherwise characterised by the close relationship of the residents, thick interpersonal trust and comparatively strong social cohesion in the past. Moreover, there were little if any opportunities to sustain communal life in highly uniform residential complexes, built for middle- and high-income households.

Negative consequences of JRP on communal life in localities, along with the exclusion of low-income households from the market-driven urban redevelopment projects, have triggered various responses from affected residents, who have in different ways contested what they perceived as the unjust transformation of their living environment and struggled to protect their housing rights. Although occasional protests of squatters, demanding provision of social amenities and infrastructure, had already occurred during the 1970s, it was not before the 1980s when urban struggles widely became an integral part of urban development in Seoul. While the national and local state have initially tried to provide housing and improve living environment for different social groups in the city, the transformation of substandard residential areas in Seoul has become increasingly market-driven and focused exclusively on middle- and high-income households after the introduction of JRP. Low-income social groups have benefited little if anything from this new approach. Often the national state has actively supported and even organised evictions and displacement of those residents, who tried to resist rapid urban redevelopment (Kim and Yoon 2003; Shin 2009).

Tenants, who had initially no rights to take part in JRP, were in many cases the main victims of extremely violent and brutal evictions. Once a locality was designated as a redevelopment district, the redevelopment associations, dominated by absentee property owners, have hired criminal gangs to intimidate and evict resisting tenants from their homes in neighbourhoods such as Sanggye-dong, Mok-dong, or Sadang-dong, for instance, to speed up urban redevelopment and maximise their profits. In particular, when Seoul was readying for the Olympic

Games in the mid-1980s, the pressure on residents to leave their homes quickly and make way for new urban development was exceptionally strong. Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (1989) reported that more than 700,000 residents were forcefully displaced in Seoul during that period. Under such harsh conditions, the urban struggles have gradually become stronger, with more residents involved and better organised. Struggling residents were also supported by a growing number of civil society organisations, which have brought the issue of forceful evictions and housing rights to the national spotlight in the wake of democratisation process after 1987. Heightened social tensions and growing civil pressure to address the housing problem of low-income residents has forced the national state to introduce compulsory compensation fees and public rental housing for eligible tenants in 1990 (Park 1998; Križnik 2009; Shin 2009; Kim 2010).

Due to a rather limited impact of these measures to solve the housing problem on one hand as well as due to intensifying evictions and displacements, and growing awareness of their civil rights among low-income households on the other, urban struggles continued in the 1990s with growing intensity. Their focus has nevertheless gradually shifted from anti-eviction towards housing rights social movements, fighting for fair compensation fees and provision of public rental housing as well as for on-site temporary housing. During this period successful attempts of civic participation in urban development also emerged among poor tenants in Seoul, who came forward to struggle not only against evictions and for their housing rights but also to protect their communal life and shared identities, threatened by market-driven urban redevelopment. Establishment of Songhak Town in Hawangsimni-dong, which Cho (1998, p. 99) recognised as one of the most successful and carefully managed ‘self-governing cooperative community for low-income urban families’ of the time in South Korea, can be seen as an early grassroots response to the undesired consequences of JRP on communal life and culture (Box 2.3). At the same time it was not only poor tenants, who were struggling to protect communal life and shared identities. The residents of middle-income neighbourhoods, who were affected by declining quality of life, also tried to improve their living environment through civic participation. Seongmisan Town, which has over the next decades evolved into one the most successful cases of community building in Seoul, for instance, started in 1994 as a collaborative childcare centre (Box 4.6). In both of these early, but rather different cases of civic participation, the residents started to recognise community-based urban development as a way to sustain their communal life and shared identities and to improve the quality of life in the locality.

Box 2.3. Progressive Community Movement in Haengdang-Dong

Cho (1998, p. 98) provides an in-depth account on aims, formation and achievements of what he calls ‘progressive community movement’ in Haengdang-dong, Geumho-dong, and Hawangsimni-dong, which used to be one of the largest substandard residential areas near downtown Seoul in the late 1980s. Its transformation, based on the JRP approach, was expected to

change the area in a new residential apartment complex, which was to provide more than 11,000 new housing units. When the urban redevelopment was approved in 1993, the poor tenants became faced with forceful evictions. About 350 households, nevertheless, decided to stay in the neighbourhood because they had no place to go despite continuous threats from hired gangs. After two years of resisting evictions and struggling for their rights, they managed to force redevelopment association and construction corporations to provide them with 243 temporary on-site housing units. This allowed them to stay in the locality during the construction of new residential complex with public rental housing. At the centre of this community movement was the construction of the so-called *Songhak Town* with 102 housing units, community centre, cooperative childcare, garment workshop and credit cooperative. This small town has allowed its residents to strengthen their community, which was formed through years of urban struggles to protect their civil and housing rights.

2.3 Conclusion: Between Strong State Control and Speculative State-Business Alliance

In the early 1960s, Singapore and South Korea were socially and economically rather underdeveloped countries, characterised by social tensions, economic uncertainty and political divisions. The authoritarian regimes, which came to power at that time, were faced with an uncertain geopolitical position of Singapore and South Korea, permanent threats to national security, as well as with lacking political legitimacy. Both countries responded to this challenging situation with radical social, economic and political reforms, which largely depended on rapid industrialisation, where the national state directly controlled and intervened in the market, mostly by allocating financial and other resources to selected domestic corporations. These large export-oriented corporations were the main engines behind one of the highest economic growth rates in the world, which both countries were able to sustain for about several decades. In this way, the authoritarian regimes in Singapore and South Korea transformed both societies and economies, and managed to catch up with other advanced countries. Successful economic development eventually improved their international position and strengthened the political legitimacy of their authoritarian regimes. This interventionist and growth-oriented economic development, which was at that time common not only in Singapore or South Korea, but also in other developing countries in East Asia, is considered to be at the core of the so-called developmental state (Castells 1992; Perry et al. 1997; Park 1998; Johnson 1999; Woo-Cumings 1999; Pirie 2008; Park et al. 2011).

Developmental state in Singapore and South Korea was not only in full control of domestic markets but also, to a large extent, of their societies, and there was little

tolerance for any civil or political alternatives, which could challenge the legitimacy of the authoritarian regimes. Citizens were expected to follow and contribute to broader societal goals, which were articulated and imposed by the authoritarian regime using a repressive state apparatus, suppression of civil society, suspension of civil rights, and cultural and social homogenization. In this sense, civil society in Singapore and South Korea hardly existed at that time as an autonomous and legitimate sphere of social and political action in relation to the state and free from the intrusion of the market. In such authoritarian political context, Singapore developed a comprehensive system, where the state takes care for virtually each and every citizen. Well-regulated provision of social infrastructure such as public housing had at the same time played an important role in controlling the society. In terms of social control, the authoritarian regime in South Korea had relied on repressive state apparatus rather than social welfare, while family or market were the main sources of social support (Park et al. 2011).

Rapid industrialisation has also directly affected urbanisation and resulted in an unprecedented growth of Singapore and major South Korean cities, particularly Seoul, which were transformed from pre-modern colonial cities into national capitals within just a few decades. Developmental state in Singapore and South Korea in this way instrumentalised urban development for faster economic growth (Perry et al. 1997; Park 1998; Choi 2011). Yet, there are important differences between both cities in this regard. In Singapore, the national government was able to plan and firmly control the urban development of the city, mostly due to its smaller size, compared to Seoul, but also due to the state ownership of most of the land. Urban development in Seoul was less controlled compared to Singapore and more directly affected by the increasingly speculative property markets. Singapore at the same time experienced much slower population growth than Seoul, which, on the contrary, had to cope with hundreds of rural migrants moving daily to the city during the 1960s and 1970s. Although such massive migrations did not exist in Singapore, both cities were, nevertheless, faced with a permanent shortage of housing at that time.

The response of the development state in Singapore and South Korea to the housing crisis has been, nevertheless, radically different. In Singapore, the national government has taken the provision of housing as one of its key priorities and pillars of its legitimacy. HDB has played a crucial role in supplying housing in Singapore, following the rampant housing shortages and substandard living conditions. This has resulted in a top-down urban planning of residential areas to provide required housing efficiently, reflecting highly centralised decision-making and execution of public policies (Goh 2001). In this way, HDB has successfully provided housing for the major part of the country's population. By now the majority of Singaporeans live in HDB public housing, which has been possible not only due to state ownership of the land and strong control of urban development, but also housing subsidies, integration of social and ethnic groups, as well as the provision of social amenities in housing estates (Park 1998). The national government has tried to avoid social tensions by carefully planning and managing relocations of the population, and no citizen was left homeless due to urban

development. In this sense housing provision has also turned out to be an effective way of social control.

Seoul followed a very different if not an opposite approach compared to Singapore. Faced with a rapid population growth, the national state was unable to provide sufficient housing. As a result, there was a permanent housing shortage, which after the 1960s led to enormous growth of informal settlements. These shantytowns with very miserable living conditions were tolerated until the mid-1970s, when policies for massive improvement of residential areas were launched, although initially with limited success (Kim and Yoon 2003). In 1983, Joint Redevelopment Project was introduced in Seoul, which was based on collaboration between property owners and construction corporations with an aim to improve quality of life in substandard residential areas. This urban redevelopment approach eventually succeeded in increasing housing supply, although most of these new apartments were built for middle- and high-income households, while the low-income social groups had little benefits from it. In contrast to omnipresent pervading HDB public housing in Singapore, there was no public housing in Seoul until the early 1990s.

Housing policy, hence, represents a major difference between Singapore and Seoul in terms of urban development. The developmental state in Singapore has owned and controlled most of the land, while in Seoul the property and housing market have become a major source for speculative investments since the early 1980s. JRP has effectively created new investment opportunities, particularly for large corporations, which shows how developmental state in South Korea has facilitated market-driven urban development rather than controlled it. In contrast to Singapore, there was no public or subsidised housing in Seoul, with few social amenities and little concern for different social groups. Moreover, JRP has destroyed many informal residential areas, which used to be main sources of low-income housing. Promotion of profitable housing units for middle- and high-income households went hand in hand with massive displacement of low-income social groups to maximise financial gains of large businesses (Ha 2015; Shin and Kim 2015). This has resulted in growing conflicts between the property owners, tenants, construction corporations and the state, which gave rise to numerous civil struggles and housing rights movements. These struggles have played an important role in the development of civil society in South Korea and have contributed to recent rise of community-based urban development.

Civil society was, hence, largely excluded from urban development in Singapore and Seoul. In this sense, it is difficult to talk about community-based urban development at that time. In Singapore, civil involvement has been officially implemented through local civic organisations such as Residents' Committees and Town Councils in a formal, institutionalised manner leaving little room for ground-up initiatives; community participation in Singapore's public housing development process has been minimal (Douglass 1998). In Seoul, a long history of urban struggles has eventually brought conflicts between tenants, redevelopment associations and construction corporations into public, changed housing policy of national and local state and also improved quality of life in some localities. This has

challenged the relationship between the state and civil society, and contributed to more inclusive approaches, addressing transformation of substandard residential areas in the late-2000s.

The early housing projects of the HDB in Singapore and JRP in Seoul reveal important differences not only between developmental urbanisation in Singapore and Seoul but also between transformations of residential areas in both cities. Developmental state in Singapore has firmly controlled urban development and provided housing for the vast majority of the population. In this way, urban development became an important instrument of social integration and has strengthened political legitimacy of the authoritarian regime. While urban development was also important for the rapid economic growth of South Korea, it was far less controlled, largely driven by the market and with little concerns about social integration of the residents. Developmental urbanisation in Seoul, which was based on alliance between the developmental state and large corporations, has on the contrary become a source of social tensions and economic polarisation in the city. Despite these differences, the developmental states in Singapore and South Korea have largely excluded citizens and civil society from taking part in urban development. This seems to be a major characteristic and similarity between developmental urbanisation in Singapore and South Korea.

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