

How Do We Decide What is Good For Society?

Challenges in Deciding What is Good For Society

Differing Needs and Interests

There are generally two types of needs:

- They could be things that people depend on for their survival.
- They could be things that people depend on for their well-being.

Unequal Sharing of Costs

It is also challenging to decide what is good for society because decisions on how to meet various needs and interests may lead to an unequal sharing of costs.

The **unequal sharing of costs** refers to the varying impact that a decision has on different groups of people

Managing Trade-Offs

Cross-Island Line Project

In January 2013, the Singapore government announced plans to build the Cross Island Line (CRL) as Singapore's eighth Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) line. The CRL was proposed to pass through and run under the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. When completed, it will be the longest fully underground line and will link major hubs such as the Jurong Lake District and the Punggol Digital District.

- The CRL is projected to serve 600,000 commuters per day, increasing to over 1,000,000 in the longer term.
- The CRL will have the highest number of interchange stations, with almost half the stations on the line linked to existing rail stations.

In July 2013, the Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS) - a non-government and non-profit organisation dedicated to the appreciation, conservation, study and enjoyment of Singapore's natural heritage - officially raised its concerns about the construction of the CRL.

- It presented to the Singapore government its views on how the CRL would affect habitats within the Central Catchment Nature Reserve.
- The NSS then recommended adjusting the route to skirt around, rather than passing under, the nature reserve.

Before making the final decision on the CRL route in 2019, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) had to consider the two options carefully.

Principles Shaping Governance

- Having Good Leadership
- Anticipating Change and Staying Relevant
- Practising Meritocracy
- A stake for everyone, opportunities for all

Having Good Leadership

Mr Lim Kim San (HDB)

Mr Lim Kim San is the first chairman of the Housing & Development Board (HDB) and became Minister for National Development in 1963.

From 1960 to 1964, he led the construction of low-cost public housing to tackle the housing shortage at that time. In slightly over three years, HDB managed to complete 26,000 flats. This was considered an exceptional achievement considering the **Singapore Improvement Trust**, which came before HDB, took over 32 years to complete 23,019 units.

Mr Lim chaired HDB voluntarily for four years without any salary until he became minister in 1963. During his time at HDB, he helped improve the building and financial processes so that low-cost public housing could be built quickly and cheaply, and according to strict regulations.

Anticipating Change and Staying Relevant

In 2019, during the **National Day Rally**, PM Lee Hsien Loong spoke about the impact of climate change on Singapore. He informed Singaporeans about the government taking early and vital action to prepare the country for rising sea levels caused by climate change.

In 2020, a budget of \$5 billion was set aside for the **Coastal and Flood Protection Fund** to help the country meet the significant risks of rising sea levels.

A Stake for Everyone, Opportunities for All

Singapore Together Movement

One example of a government initiative that illustrates this principle is the engagement with citizens through the Singapore Together movement.

Launched in June 2019, Singaporeans are encouraged to partner the government and one another to shape and act on their shared future in areas they care about. This can be through partnership opportunities or government support for citizen-led initiatives.

The Emerging Stronger Conversations (ESC) series was part of the larger Singapore Together movement. The ESC sessions ran from June to September 2020, involving over 16,000 Singaporeans from different backgrounds, languages and experiences who expressed their hope for how Singapore can emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practising Meritocracy

Meritocracy refers to a system that distributes opportunities and rewards according to merit. People are rewarded according to the effort they put in rather than factors such as race, religion and family background.

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