

Managing urban diversity through differential inclusion in Singapore

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Abstract

This paper interrogates processes of everyday urban diversification by challenging dominant narratives of “diversity” and “integration”. I address the management aspects of urban diversification through the normative and productive categorisations of race, citizenship and civility in shared spaces to highlight the forms of differential inclusion of newcomers, drawing upon ethnographic data from Jurong West in Singapore, to explain subjective inclusion through state-led measures and everyday forms of coexistence. There are two key aspects of differential inclusion discussed here: a) the explicit rules that form the basis of differential state treatment of its population by race, ethnicity and citizenship status and b) the implicit principles in which migrants are included according to normative forms of appropriate behaviour in public spaces. Consequently, social norms and civility become tools of inclusion, and, relationally, exclusion, producing a politicised logic of managing diversity both in structural and everyday spaces. Recognising the profound ways in which differential inclusion shapes space through its subtle yet pervasive ways not only imparts analytical purchase to the study of everyday interactions but also grafts the meaning of belonging and difference onto the ever-changing contours of diversification in the city.

Keywords

Differential inclusion, encounters, migration, Singapore, urban diversity

This paper examines diversity in Singapore to articulate a distinctive politics of living with diversification that is shaped through fragmentary processes of inclusion and incorporation, rather than through more conventional discussions of exclusion. I use the concept of “differential inclusion” rather than exclusion to make visible the deliberate management of urban diversification through the categorisation of race, citizenship and incorporation of foreign labour. I disrupt the binary of exclusion/inclusion in the context of migrant-led diversification to demonstrate the politics of difference-making. It is my aim to draw attention to the processes of differentiation by challenging dominant narratives of “diversity” and “integration”. The paper demonstrates that inclusion within particular

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configurations of diversity is a filtered process to the extent that people are variously, subjectively included. I not only show that integration is dependent upon people – in this case, new migrants – being subjected to certain policies and norms of civility, but I also argue that fleeting interactions generate and reinforce the rules that constitute differential inclusion within a diversifying context. In this paper, civility lies at the core of the politics of diversity as a banal mode of surveillance through its everyday enactment.

More specifically, I refer to the normative codes of conduct to explain how the incorporation of diverse others is regulated in differentiated ways through state-led measures and principles of everyday coexistence. I argue that an empirical analysis of micro-encounters in Singapore necessarily contributes to the spatial conceptualisation of urban coexistence under conditions of migrant-led diversification. This paper also contributes to the growing field of urban encounters by demonstrating that fleeting modes of everyday “rubbing along” in public spaces must be contextualised within broader structural regulations shaped by state institutions and actors. Indeed, government policy measures, campaigns and discourses of diversity do not lie separate from everyday modes of governance and organisation of difference. But rather, they selectively link and organise places and people through the everyday re-enactment of narratives of diversity that do not simply form the backdrop, but indeed produce the very contours of how diversity ought to be. It is these dynamics of management that also shape processes of differential inclusion through everyday encounters. This speaks to the articulations of the formal and the informal, but also to the spatialisation and socialisation of governance. I show that the geography of coexistence is constituted through socio-spatial processes where the politics of living with diversity are mediated through, although not limited to fleeting encounters. Norms of civility clarify the messiness inherent in public spaces, to filter, curtail and simplify diversity. Rather than as a narrowly focused set of rules, these norms are perhaps more effectively grasped when conceived in terms of broad, overarching principles that guide everyday encounters in public through practices of inclusion and exclusion. The rituals of everyday contact with diverse others – so fundamental to the collaborative act of sharing space – can also become a ritualised form of selective incorporation where acceptance is dependent upon people subscribing to established norms and values. Consequently, everyday spaces become the arena where the gradual construction of a social and civil order takes place. In demonstrating how norms and civility act as tools of integration through co-optation, this paper goes beyond clarifying how diversity is managed and negotiated in the everyday vis-a-vis uneven interconnections amongst people of different backgrounds. Instead, I argue that it is not only exclusion but *inclusion* that is also highly politicised as difference-making. The aggregate processes alluded to above render people subject to particular state-led imaginaries of diversity.

In this light, the next part of the paper discusses two key aspects of differential inclusion. First, I discuss the *explicit rules* that form the basis of differential state treatment of its population by race, ethnicity and citizenship status. This is followed by how explicit rules shape the *implicit principles* in which migrants are included or choose to follow according to normative forms of appropriate behaviour in shared spaces. By imposing these ordered ways of proceeding, legitimised codes of conduct do not only exclude those who do not conform accordingly but also set up a relative and normative form of inclusion where newcomers are welcomed on condition that they behave in socially accepted ways. In this sense, I shift the focus from exclusion to inclusion by critiquing and sharpening the concept of civility which acts as a tool of inclusion, and, subsequently, exclusion. Civility thus shapes a particular and politicised logic of diversification. Finally, I conclude by evaluating how meritocracy and multiracialism have historically precluded discussions of difference along racial and ethnic

lines in Singapore, the micropolitics of everyday co-existence are organised through inclusion as characterised by the intertwined processes of migrant management and continuous re-enactment of appropriate conduct.

Conceptualising urban diversity and coexistence

The celebration of city life as saturated with contact with subjects different from ourselves has a long history in urban studies; from Simmel (1950) who hailed everyday encounters with difference as crucial for development of novel personalities, through Jacob's (1961) "eyes upon the street" theory of collectively co-created safety of everyday urban streetscapes, to Sennett's (2012) idea of cooperation. Much of the recent work on urban diversity remains centred on Western European contexts such as the United Kingdom (Amin, 2012; Neal et al., 2015; Valentine, 2008; Valentine et al. 2012; Wilson, 2013) and "immigrant" countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Hiebert, 2002; Pearson, 2001). Yet, as Robinson, Roy and Ong remind us, there is not only potential but indeed *urgency* in "worlding" urban theory such that the non-West contributes conceptually rather than just empirically (Robinson, 2002, 2003; Roy, 2009; Roy and Ong, 2011). I am not seeking to identify a city or cities in Asia that might be deemed paradigmatic for an increasingly Asia-centred world (Goh et al., 2015; Harris, 2012). My wider concern is with ways in which diverse Asian cities, such as Singapore, go beyond existing conceptualisations of urban diversity. I highlight the structural dimension of diversity management by state agencies. This is not about cosmopolitan capacities, nor convivial sensibilities as persuasively argued by Wise (2016), but rather to point to how boundaries are created at the level of state policy and through everyday encounters to manage migrants through differential inclusion. I argue that these modes of management surpass explicit policies and programmes and are adopted and perpetuated by people in informal, implicit ways through sharing everyday spaces.

Terms such as "multiculturalism," "social cohesion," and indeed "diversity" have become prominent in both political and academic discourse in describing social relations and often prescribing *how they ought to be* in contexts peopled by individuals of different backgrounds. A growing stream of research highlights convivial coexistence. In re-imagined cities, Thrift (2005: 140) argues that strangers engage each other in "acts of kindness and compassion" in their everyday interactions. Their quotidian and civil engagements as neighbours or as vendors and customers express and constitute "being-togetherness" (Amin, 2006: 1012). But more than that, the intense gathering of ethnic and cultural difference is seen as spurring transformation of cities into "cosmopolitan melting pots where hybrid identities connect the most intimate relations with the most remote places" (Simonsen, 2008: 146). Koch and Latham's (2011) ethnographic observations of the Prince of Wales Junction in West London further shows the forms of sociality and togetherness through actions that "domesticate" public spaces.

In a different stream of argument, Valentine (2008) has argued strongly that everyday encounters are often only indicators of socially accepted forms of public civility, and 'urban etiquette does not equate with an ethics of care and mutual respect for difference' (329). This line of argument also highlights that transient encounters, even of a positive nature, do not necessarily "scale up", that is, develop any lasting challenge to embedded prejudices and stereotypes (see also Clayton, 2009). Regardless, Valentine's recent work has continued to show how mundane and routine forms of sharing space are embedded with acts and justifications of prejudice against people of different backgrounds (Valentine et al., 2015). Exploring the politics of belonging in a small town in Minnesota that is being transformed through immigration, Leitner (2012) reminds us that long-time residents often try to,

“defend their place and associated identities that they feel are under threat from global and mobile forces, conceiving of place as a site with a clearly circumscribed culture and identity, rather than as a site that is open and constantly emerging” (831).

Yet, while encounters may frequently reflect and reinforce the positionalities of those involved, they also hold possibilities of change because they are mediated socially, and, as I show through diverse public places in Singapore, spatially. Indeed, the uncertainty about what can be delivered by the focus on encounter has been examined by Askins and Pain (2011) in their work with a mixed group of youth in a community arts project in the north-east of England. Wilson (2013) has also explored the social relations of mixed populations using public transport in the English city of Birmingham. What the research of Askins and Pain (2011) and Wilson (2013) both particularly highlight is first, the unstable nature of an encounter and second, the importance of the materiality of place in shaping its tone. For instance, Askins and Pain (2011) argue that the tactility of the actual art materials invited interactions and mixing, ‘contact with and through objects . . . mediated points of connection and similarity, opening up potential for new social relations to be enacted’ (817). Wilson (2013: 646) also suggests that the intimacies that travelling by public transport demands of heterogeneous populations—bodies closely sharing confined spaces—demands sets of practices and obligations that can produce sometimes conflictual, but also sometimes consensual social relations and even a sense of being part of a ‘collective culture’ and ‘temporary community’. Neal et al. (2015) focus on the importance of public parks as a site for multicultural interaction where green spaces are valued and celebrated as convivial and inclusive even if they are also associated with conflict. This approach to diversity offers a distinct way of addressing contemporary public spaces and the dynamics of difference that shape them. While much of this work has been helpful in addressing the significance of everyday forms of rubbing along, it remains unclear what the mechanisms or principles are that enable people to negotiate the boundaries of diversity through everyday encounters. Overwhelmingly, existing research also rarely discuss the structural context in which these encounters occur. How do strategies of state actors and institutions sort, regulate, constitute and set the terms of diversity? Furthermore, how do these strategies contour the politics of everyday coexistence in shared spaces? In asking these questions, I aim to conceptualise diversity as composed of a wider yet highly nuanced set of management practices that re-engages state programmes with its seepage into everyday life.

Norms of civility are also a prevalent form of power through the mundane way in which urban diversity is encountered and governed in the everyday. The violation of civility, norms and values by people – which in rapidly diversifying cities like Singapore also include new arrivals – exposes dominant orderings in space. This normatively indicates who knows how to behave and who does not, designating who belongs and who does not. I “scale up” fleeting encounters in public zones of contact by situating them within a broader structural context led by state policies and initiatives.

In this paper, I continue to resist drawing upon European and North American models of “assimilation”, “integration” and “multiculturalism” by delineating configurations of diversity in Singapore, as historicised through a particular formula of “multiracialism” and as led most recently by transient labour migrants. As Parnell and Robinson (2012) urge, critical urban theory needs to speak more sensitively and directly to the cities of the Global South to reflect empirically driven knowledge. Indeed, diversification processes in Asia are different largely because of its distinct post-colonial geographies, histories of migration and economic development strategies (Yeoh, 2013). Much of the existing work highlighted above has been helpful in drawing our attention to the complex micro interactions that frequently happen in various public spaces. Mitchell’s (2014) recent

editorial reminds us, however, that it remains critically important to clarify and explain through the complexity in our analyses. Drawing upon ethnographic observations and secondary data, the objective of this paper is thus an attempt to explain the ways in which principles of coexistence in diversifying conditions are based upon differential inclusion on the basis of normative forms of public civility.

Differentiated inclusion as organising strategy

The concept of differential inclusion has travelled widely to theorise various strategic organisation and permutations of citizenship. Although it has assumed many names, this concept has long provided a means for describing and analysing how inclusion in a sphere or realm can be subject to varying degrees of subordination, rule, discrimination and segmentation (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2012). Its strength lies in demonstrating how its deployment through both state and everyday practices situates and flexibilises the experience of belonging through the *calculated processes of inclusion*. I extend the concept of differential inclusion into the realm of urban diversity in everyday life, and I highlight the fragility, contingency and relationality of diversity practices and discourses. Ong's (2000) notion of graduated sovereignty is helpful in developing a more nuanced understanding of citizenship and belonging in her conceptualisation of neoliberalism and neoliberalism as exception. According to Ong (2006: 88), graduated sovereignty refers to 'the differential treatment of population in relation to ethnoracial differences, and the dictates of development programs'. Ong is applying graduated sovereignty to the differences of privilege and power between *bumiputera* Malays and the non-Malays and indigenous populations within Malaysia. While her definition is still confined to variegated citizenship, it can be expanded to talk about the selective incorporation of diversity where diversity is subjected to situated and predominant notions of difference. As Espiritu (2003) discusses in *Homebound*, the differential inclusion of Filipino Americans serves political, economic, and cultural purposes "because they were absolutely critical to American economic development, to the reconstruction of white American manhood, and to the larger project of nation building" (56). Differential inclusion allows us to see the non-linear, uneven ways in which structural constructions of citizenship shapes norms and values that are crucial to belonging. People who occupy legally vulnerable and criminalised statuses are excluded from law's protection but continue to exist within its folds of regulation and discipline (Espiritu, 2003). Most importantly, this work shows how exclusion always operates in tandem with an inclusion that is never complete, fracturing and dividing identities in ways that are not always compatible (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013).

Governing diversity through "multiracialism"

The organisation and governance of diversity in Singapore must be understood in its historicised notions and practices of citizenship and race. Following independence in 1965, one of the challenges the governing body faced was that of imagining a common objective as a nucleus of nationhood for the city-state (Chew and Lee, 1991; Turnbull, 2009). Socially and politically, building a nation-state out of an ethnically diverse population with a complex background of economic, political, social and cultural differences has resulted in the ruling party, the PAP's attempt to create an overarching national identity and a particular order of "multiracialism" (Lai, 1995: 17). This measure officially gives separate but equal status to the Chinese, Malays,

Indians and “Others”¹ (or CMIO, for short) and informs official policies on various issues related to the economy, language, culture, religion and community life (Lai, 1995; Perry et al., 1997). This framework of race became part of the national imagination such that Singaporeans of various backgrounds could imagine themselves as a multi-racial nation that includes people who fit into the CMIO categorisation. English was adopted as a pragmatic language of trade and is the first language of the country, tying the different ethnic groups together (Turnbull, 2009).

The insecurity of Singapore’s regional geopolitics was, and often continues to be, an active dimension affecting ethnic relations and management in the city-state. Situated in the Malay Archipelago that has a large “indigenous” Malay population and an “immigrant” Chinese minority, Singapore’s ethnic composition created an arguably uneasy fit to its surrounding region. It was because of its ethnic differentiation and dominance of its Chinese people that many viewed Singapore as a Chinese place, or even state (Lai, 1995). To some extent, the ethnic identities of the Chinese and Malays in Singapore are shaped by the comparison of their economic and political positions with those of the Chinese and Malays in Malaysia. The position of Chinese in Singapore is further structured by the historical experiences of the Chinese immigrant minorities in South-East Asia (Tan, 2004; Turnbull, 2009); conversely, however, some viewed the Malays’ social position in Singapore as a disadvantaged indigenous minority (Lai, 1995). Finally, the ethnically differentiated development during the colonial period has resulted in limited interaction, the maintenance of rigid ethnic boundaries, strong stereotyping and an underlying sense of insecurity and fear of dominance by Chinese and Malays of each other (Turnbull, 2009).

The construction of the local multiracial community must be understood against this background. Until the 1960s, Singapore’s population mostly lived in separate ethnic settlements established by the colonial administration. Large-scale resettlement into self-contained public housing estates, implemented through the Housing and Development Board (HDB) was one of the ways in which the ideology of multiracialism materialised spatially. Through the construction of publicly administered, largely ownership-based housing projects, the HDB has been able to provide Singaporeans with affordable shelter and spaces to facilitate interaction among different ethnicities (Goh, 2005). These include neighbourhood schools, markets, community centres, playgrounds, void decks² and walkways that link one block of flats to another (Chua, 1995; Lai, 1995; Perry et al., 1997). Racial quotas are enforced through flat ownership to ensure each housing block reflects Singapore’s racial composition. The state’s socio-spatial engineering of diversity in HDB estates precludes ethnic segregation. People are not just thrown into contact, but contact is facilitated through state practice. From a strategic level, then, public housing in Singapore is a powerful tool in managing ethnic diversity and relations. The state also manages race and ethnic relations via the school curriculum, where the ethnicity of the student determines his or her “mother tongue” – for example, a Malay student must study Malay, an Indian student must study Tamil. In this sense, the management of citizenship through multiculturalism in the Singapore context relies on the simplification and essentialism of race. Race and ethnic identity also continue to be clearly denoted on every Singaporean’s identity card. The annual Racial Harmony Day is celebrated to remind the citizenry of the racial riots that happened in July 1964. As the education minister Heng Swee Keat said at the Racial Harmony Forum in 2015, “(r)espect for people of different religious beliefs is something we hold dear to our hearts as Singaporeans”.³ This particular vernacular of multiracialism, hence, is conveyed, experienced and spatialised as commonplace in the everyday lives of Singaporeans.

Governing new migrants

The implementation of economic restructuring measures since the early 1970s illustrate new relations among state, capital, labour and commodity production within a changing international division of labour of which Singapore has always been keen to be a part. While these measures are by no means limited to practices of the state and are instead conditioned by the dynamics of global restructuring, the Singaporean state has particularly strong control over its strategies of development through its purposeful-shaped processes of diversification (Olds and Yeung, 2004). While many of the measures adopted are coherent with neoliberal models found elsewhere, the distinctiveness of the Singaporean case lies in the explicit and strong role of the state in shaping economic, political and social life in the city-state. The integrated development processes of state-led export-orientation and foreign investment-driven developmental strategies perceived to attract desirable “global capital” require the import of human capital, both high and low waged labour (Ye, 2016b). While other transnational sojourners, such as marriage and student migrants, are also contributing to growing social diversity, the sharp increase in immigration to Singapore in the past two decades has been propelled by the urgent economic need to fortify Singapore’s labour force. The turn of century saw an increasing share of non-citizen population resulting from the city-state’s restructuring policies to attract and rely on foreign labour. The deliberate and strategic reliance on “foreign manpower” is part and parcel of the dominant neoliberal discourse of globalisation as an “inevitable and virtuous growth dynamic” (Coe and Kelly, 2002: 348).

Today, foreigners make up 33% of the total workforce in Singapore.⁴ It remains steadily growing, numbering 1,368,200 in total in June 2015.⁵ As elsewhere, the transmigrant population grows in tandem with restructuring processes to render labour more “flexible” in relation to capital (Yeoh, 2006). The workforce was rigorously calculated to incorporate a significantly large foreign labour pool which can be broadly divided into two strands: foreign talent and foreign workers. Both strands of workers are brought into Singaporean space strategically and they are administered very differently (Yeoh, 2006). Foreigners’ access to rights and privileges is mainly differentiated by skills status and by the perceived desirability of these skills to the achievement of national goals. As differentiated access is institutionalised by the issuance of a range of work passes and permits that fall broadly into the employment pass and the work permit categories, the uneven integration of foreigners therefore reproduces different citizen-subjects in Singapore. Building a nation through an outward-looking and flexibilised development model also requires selectively inclusionary projects to entice “foreign talent” – highly skilled professional workers, entrepreneurs and investors who are part of the face of cosmopolitanism in Singapore (Ye, 2016b). This group of migrants holds a form of the employment pass⁶ that enables them to apply for dependents’ passes and access to greater job mobility. Far greater in number, however, are the work permit holders, most of whom are concentrated in the manufacturing, construction, shipbuilding and domestic industries. This group has no access to citizenship, nor are they eligible for dependents’ visas. This latter pool is also broken down further by nationalities, with rules and regulations set by MOM, permitting only certain nationalities to access work in particular industries (Ye, 2014).

The bulk of the increase in foreigners comes from the increase of male and female low-waged temporary migrant labour in the city-state who hold work permits (Ye, 2014). Of this group that hold work permits, the largest percentage of increase comes from foreign construction workers. In June 2015, there were about 322,400 construction workers, many of whom are men from Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (Ministry of Manpower⁷). A large number of workers from the Philippines also take on low-paying service sector work

outside of domestic work. One of the starkest material ways in which these groups of workers are differentiated from other more privileged migrants lies in their financial terms of access. Bangladeshi male migrants, for example, have to pay their labour agents between SGD\$8000 and \$10,000 to access work in Singapore (Ye, 2014). These structural forms of socio-economic differentiations manifest tangibly in the segregated landscapes inhabited by temporary migrant workers compared to other populations in Singapore. Shipyard and construction jobs entailing shift-work means that the majority of male migrants may work either in the day or at night, and they generally work on sites away from interactions with the public. There is also a high degree of spatial management in the daily lives of the Bangladeshi workers as the everyday lives of migrant workers are highly reliant upon their employers. Institutionalised within the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) guidelines for employers who hire foreign workers is the policy that mandates low-waged male migrant workers in Singapore be housed in state-approved, employer-provided accommodation. These come in the form of purpose-built dormitories that are commercially run, industrial and/or warehouse premises that have been partly converted to house workers, temporary quarters on work-sites, harbourcrafts (such as ships and marine vessels) and to a smaller extent, HDB flats (MOM website⁸). The majority of such accommodations are segregated from residential areas where locals live. Their experience of difference is characterised by these differentiated, circumscribed social and spatial positions, as demonstrated in my ethnographic observations later on. These circumscribed positions in Singapore are further reinforced by their highly limited access to state-organised social support. For many of these low-waged migrants on the work permit, turning to state institutions such as the Ministry of Manpower for help in securing unpaid wages and workplace injury compensations means their work permits will be exchanged for a special pass which prevents them from formal employment during case investigations (Ye, 2014). Workers will be repatriated once their cases have been resolved. These measures again, structure the different modes of inclusion where labour migrants belong as transient subjects.

Familiarising Jurong West

Given that my argument in this paper seeks to demonstrate how state-led forms of differential inclusion shapes coexistence in everyday encounters, I would like to situate my discussion around the date that unpacks the multi-layered and changing socio-spatiality of the neighbourhood of Jurong West. Aside from secondary data, the primary data presented in this paper is drawn from a fieldwork period of 14 months, collected and analysed through mixed methods. Aside from participant-observation and taking fieldnotes in public spaces, I also conducted repeated semi-structured interviews, photo and film elicitation based on images and filmed footage by and with respondents who live and/or work in the town of Jurong West. These respondents were chosen to reflect the demography of the town and so were made up of both locals and migrants, of various ethnicities and ages. One of the more interesting dimensions of civility lies in my recording of field data. Having spent so many months conducting participant-observations and having conversations with different people in the town, it is most often the deviance from and breach of norms of civility that are recorded or talked about. As Lofland (1998) pointed out, it appears that people, myself included, typically assume normality. Methodologically, it was through the interrogation of normality of the status quo and what is considered "business as usual" in public that my analyses of differential inclusion through civility came about.

Located at the western end of the island, Jurong West may not immediately come to mind as a known site of living with diversity in Singapore. Yet, it was chosen precisely because it is

not unlike many towns in Singapore but is distinct in its migrant geographies. Typical of the rest of the country, its composition of old diversity is representative of the CMIO model, yet with a far larger number of newcomers than in most other areas of the city-state. The initial post-independence development in the 1960s in Jurong West was heavily industrial. It was designated for such use given its relative distance to the city centre, proximity to the western offshore islands where oil-refining and chemical processing take place as well as the port of Singapore which remains a significant trade hub in the region and globe. The development of the town as a place of residence began when workers were relocated to Jurong West to live in HDB flats. The town remains a major employment centre and is steadily growing.⁹ The population living and working in Jurong more recently have come to include new migrants, reflecting the increase in Singapore's foreign workforce. These are predominantly low-waged migrant workers who are housed here in purpose-built dormitories, some of which are more remotely located than others as mentioned above. While there are some new migrants living in HDB flats, there remain large clusters of new arrivals who live separately from long-term residents. This separation of housing for a large percentage of the low-waged migrant population from longer-term residents further demonstrates the spatial demarcations between the local born as well.

With the extension of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) East-West line in 1990, and additions of MRT stations further west, Jurong West and its surrounding areas began to be seen as more desirable places to live. There are currently four MRT stations serving the town. These new rail connections mean that it is also now easier and quicker to get into the city centre. The extension and renovation of Jurong Point shopping centre and the building of a large condominium development immediately above the mall also established the area as a key transport and residential hub. Condominiums such as Parc Vista and The Centris were built to cater to this recent demand for middle-class housing in the area. The limited access to HDB housing, many Permanent Residents (PRs) and foreigners on Employment Passes (EPs) live in these private developments. Such transformations also facilitated movement from the town as many residents commute to the city for work. There is mobility within the town as well, with well-connected footpaths and shuttle buses.

One implication of this is that public transit and its hubs such as MRT stations and bus interchanges, especially at certain times of the day and week, become extremely tight and crowded spaces of bodily negotiation and movement. The sheer density of bodies in such public spaces is also an important aspect of understanding how everyday diversity is negotiated. It is these visceral and sensorial elements of encounter that generate affective reactions that often shape the ways in which different Others are perceived. This is evidenced by social media and popular discussions around multicultural living that often emerge from concerns over the everyday visual and embodied – indeed, *lived* – aspects of difference. Occasionally these daily negotiations of living with difference bubble over into much more high profile expressions of anger, such as the Anton Casey example mentioned above. Much more common in quotidian public spaces, however, people are guided by the principles of managing difference. Much of these principles are also visualised through the numerous signs that are posted at transit hubs, such as the “No Littering” and “No Durian” signs. This does not mean that race is unnoticed in Jurong West but rather, not adhering to the normative set of rules in public places highlights difference, whether this be race, ethnicity, nationality or gender. Civility is hence also subtly exclusionary in that people, *especially* new arrivals, are expected to behave in particular ways. Recognising the presence of social organising principles in any public space thus reveals not only the salience of exclusion but the calculated ways in which diversity is accepted along differentiated lines.

Terms of integration

In 2009, the National Integration Council was set up to facilitate social interaction amongst Singaporeans and new arrivals. Its “approach to integration does not demand that new immigrants abandon their own beliefs and culture. Rather, we expect them to share commonalities, values and experiences with fellow Singaporeans so that we can all work together to achieve our aspirations”.¹⁰ The language of norming and including is ever present during celebratory occasions such as when Prime Minister Lee said at one of the 2015 Racial Harmony Day Celebration events, “new arrivals (should) embrace the Singapore values and norms and try and fit in as Singaporeans; and the Singaporeans to encourage the new ones, and help the new ones to fit in”.¹¹ While the riot in the Little India in December 2013 sparked off various reactions from Singaporeans – and indeed, international media outlets¹² – state bureaucrats have maintained during this extraordinary event that “the foreign workers must be inducted into the Singaporean way of life. *They must know about our norms and expectations, to come and accept them as ‘normal’.* Likewise, Singaporeans must learn to accept them in our midst. Prejudice is built on fears and ignorance” (*The Straits Times*, 2014,¹³ author’s italics). Similar to discourses of European leaders such as Angela Merkel and Nicholas Sarkozy, integration discourses are meant to ensure the adherence of migrant and minority groups to supposedly shared national values and lifeways. The difference here, however, is that whereas Muslim populations are targeted in the European context, it is the new migrants who are addressed in the Singaporean context. To be included into diversity then is a much more sophisticated calibration of whether one is behaving according to particular norms. The politics of diversity that I illustrate here is, therefore, the management of belonging and of boundaries. These discursive state practices of integration constitute differential inclusion in Singapore as part of the apparatus of governance and governmentality of diversity and the diverse subject.

The current narrative of diversity in Singapore also stresses “social integration” but this is constructed through distinctly Singapore-style of integration that stresses on notions of harmony and shared commonalities and norms. Unlike Matejskova and Leitner’s (2011) work on Marzahn which found that local integration projects often run counter to their original intention and tend to fail to provide opportunities for more sustained contact between migrant and non-migrant residents, the issue in Singapore is not the counter of intention but precisely the intended terms of integration that I wish to problematise.

In a broad Foucauldian sense, new arrivals become subjects of integration. Aside from labour policies that differentiate them according to skill, salary and status, they are governed and disciplined in myriad, even banal ways in all sorts of everyday interactions. Diversity governance has historically, and continues to be, explicitly enacted through performances of authority and everyday civility through government discourse and campaigns. The principles underlying these state-led campaigns are carried on in the daily lives of newcomers as well. Rules and norms are overtly explained and visualised in sites such as migrant worker dormitories (see Figure 1) and public transit points (see Figure 2). Later in the paper, I also show how these become implicit norms that long-time residents reinforce to newcomers in everyday shared spaces. These spaces crystallise the governmentalisation of social life through specific projects and practices as state or non-governmental actors continuously shape the contours of diversity and the terms of inclusion. During an interview, the manager of large male migrant dormitory in Jurong West explained:

(there are) introduction courses that are provided to all new workers so that they can be taught how to do things *our* way. Inside the dorm, there are rules like no drinking, no fighting, any problem just talk nicely to settle. We try to teach them, explain to them so that they don’t think



Figure 1. Campaign poster in Bengali by the National Environment Agency at a bus stop near a migrant dormitory.

they are still back in their own country. We also explain to them the rules and regulations outside when they go out, like reminding them not to litter otherwise will get fined, don't eat on the MRT train

(See *Figures 1 and 2.*) As these signs that are displayed in places often (and in the case of migrant dormitories, solely) used by migrant workers, they become a physical form of the “ordinance-ing” of norms made up of co-opting and, at times, chastising messages directed towards behaviours that are to be discouraged and controlled (Lofland, 1973). Even where there is spatial segregation in places like the migrant worker dormitory, the vocabulary of civil integration and attempts to integrate transient newcomers continue to be ever present.

The dynamism of these subjective modes of integration, in part, comes from the fact that newcomers are not passive recipients of such messages. Migrants themselves simultaneously pick up this information, act upon them and pass on that knowledge to others. As a Bangladeshi respondent, Kashem’s told me:

My favourite t-shirt is this one that says ‘Singapore is a Fine City!’. I like this t-shirt because it tells people what to do in Singapore, what cannot do. Like I know cannot spit at the roadside,



Figure 2. Sign in a migrant dormitory.

cannot anyhow throw rubbish, cannot eat on MRT... Singapore rules must follow! Bangladesh also have rules like this but people no follow. In Singapore, if don't follow, my friends, my company say can send you back to Bangladesh.

Such acquisition of the meanings behind explicit rules and regulations demonstrate both the simple yet profound process of urban learning which is tied to not only place, but *public place*. These explicit rules speak not only to the ordering of urban public space through codes of conduct but are also a way of managing and integrating a diverse population through the inculcation of particular social norms. These newly arrived inhabitants have to develop knowledge of the grammar and rules for dealing with their engagements within the city (Butcher, 2011; McFarlane, 2011).

Variegated everyday inclusions

Moving on from discussing explicit policies organising and campaigns of diversification, I now turn to the implicit ways in which diversity is unevenly incorporated. This is seen in the following quote from an interview I conducted with a Chinese-Singaporean woman in her early twenties who runs a sundries shop in Jurong West.

There are really a lot of Indians who live around us now. Our customer base is also made up of workers who live at the dorms in Pioneer. They are nice people lah, like the Bangladeshis. So we carry a lot of different kinds of rice to sell to them. We used to have a lot more Thais but now very few – they are nice also. Especially nicer than the PRCs who are so rude! Really no (manners). You know, they just throw the money down on the counter like that! PRC Chinese really very different from us....

The shopkeeper's observations speak to the structural changes in the composition of the foreign labour force in Jurong West. The quote further suggests that both integration and intolerance towards newcomers are neither applied evenly across all newcomers nor can it sufficiently be anchored in ethnicity. In contrast to much of existing work on urban diversity, the Singapore case study demonstrates that there is not only a structure to diversity

governance explicitly but these spill over onto how people manage difference amongst themselves in everyday spaces (Ye, 2016a). Similar to Wilson's (2013) discussion of a primary school in Birmingham, the sundries shop is a space of diversity and tolerance but one that is also fractured by selective tension and principles of behaviour. The politics of civility therefore emerges through the instability of the encounter as the guiding principle of sorting through diversity, including some while excluding others in public. Difference is hence constituted through codes of conduct and social norms – or the violation of – and expressed through nationality and ethnicity.

The following quote further points to the fragmented ways in which people encounter difference, where some newcomers are more tolerated because of their adherence to social order, whether they consciously know it or not.

When residents complained a few years ago about China workers walking around in their underwear, the workers “were gracious and changed their habits” when EM Services told them it was not something done here, he said. (*The Straits Times*)¹⁴

The social organisation tool of civility becomes a localised form of friction that, in this case, is imposed by locals in the know onto migrants in their midst to organise, regulate and place judgement upon diverse others. Inclusion in this sense was extended after new arrivals changed their behaviour to fit within local norms. “Graciousness” in this context is therefore part of the demonstrated willingness to assimilate into legitimised norms of the majority.

Sorting through strangeness: civility at the market

Clearly, exercising civility towards diverse others in public is not necessarily to like them. The following is based on a conversation I had with a key informant, Auntie Wong, at a weekly flea market that takes place in Jurong West every Sunday.

The flea market was moved further south on the pathway because of construction on the north side. At this end of the pathway, customers are much fewer. To deal with the reduced flow of people, the stalls stay open longer and have also started selling electronic items that their neighbour gave them. Ever since moving here, her customers have mostly been residents of the surrounding blocks and the construction workers working on the path's renovations. She says that “most of the time it's ok”. She continues to greet different customers in their first language. While talking with a migrant customer, she regularly slips in a word or two of their first language. She mentions a few times that “migrants are ok actually...especially the Filipinos”. She highlights, however, that it is the “very new people who give (her) a lot of problems”. They start by saying they want a shirt for \$2 or something for \$1. Bargaining for too low a price is a transgression of civility at the flea market. Similarly, it is considered uncivil when vendors sell clothes for less than \$1. The vendors I speak with feel that such a move pressures others to sell their items at an even lower price. The phrase “no choice” comes up a lot in my conversations with Auntie Wong about how she feels towards having migrant vendors and customers. She also says, “I am fine with them – I can even joke with them! – *as long as they know that this is Singapore and they shouldn't behave as they are still in their own country.*”

Parts of civility emerge more from being blasé about difference in a place such as the flea market than intrinsically appreciating it. Place, as Massey (2005) observes, is an arena where negotiation is forced upon us. While for Auntie Wong, as it probably is for the majority of Singaporeans who have grown used to being in diverse settings, it is the breach civility which is worth highlighting rather than its adherence. Too much deviation from the norm raises flags. It is this breach that separates the newcomers from older waves of diversity who have internalised what is appropriate bargaining behaviour at the flea market. As indicated in the

final part of the quote, Auntie Wong's reaction is not straightforwardly xenophobia, but rather demonstrates the highly subjective forms of inclusion embedded within these interactions. To restore sameness within and limit "surplus difference" from without, foreigners already in the country are required to "adopt" the host country's "core values" and norms as their own in public (Grillo, 2007). While the flea market appears to be an informal space of bantering and bargaining across difference, norms of civility transform and organise the experience of living with diversity by reinforcing a filter that not only subtly marginalises different behaviours but implicitly reinforces the terms of integration.

Differential inclusion through teaching and monitoring civility in public spaces

Strangers may also use their understanding of the public space's normative system to generate sociability and inclusivity (Lofland, 1998). In the following, a respondent explains how she uses this sociability as a channel to inform or educate a newcomer about local cultural practices.

During one of our conversations, Auntie Wong told me that she notices how "PRCs are not aware of local customs and norms". She cited an example of when she saw that the PRC vendor near her stall was selling shoes with paper flowers attached that are meant for the dead. She was not sure how to tell the vendor at first, but she eventually did. She said "Auntie, don't mind my saying this please..." She told me that the PRC vendor was open to hearing what she had to say so she went, "but if you want to sell those shoes, you should remove the paper flowers because in Singapore, those are meant for dead people, not the living!". Auntie Wong said that, "Auntie from PRC didn't know because in China, their ancestral worship practices are very different". She went on to explain to me, "most Singaporeans won't tell this Auntie but I think if no one tells her, then how will she learn?" That Auntie Wong was worried about coming across as rude even when her intentions were good again suggests the mode of civility in the form of below-the-radar learning that runs through such interactions (McFarlane, 2011). The PRC woman then very carefully removed the paper flowers from her shoes.

Aside from the explicit teaching by state campaigns of proper codes of conduct in public, the teaching of norms can also be done privately. Through the migrant woman's responsiveness towards Auntie Wong's instructions, it appears that this sociability is also met with cooperation. Yet, this form of inclusivity emerged from the monitoring and subsequent correction of the newcomer's actions. Auntie Wong reached out to the newcomer who, in turn, made the effort to cooperate by removing the paper flowers. In this interaction within the public realm of the flea market, strangers with different cultural backgrounds are working their way through a rather intimidating environment composed of and propelled by inanimate objects. Through both parties' adherence to the norms of civility, the cultural faux pas committed by the newcomer was mitigated in a fairly uneventful way that enables the principle to continue functioning. The boundaries of acceptable behaviour were maintained through enacting these principles of civility within these zones of encounter. Public space then becomes the forum not only for urban learning but also where dominant principles of organisation are maintained.

This leads me to a final related point. The learning of local ways is also adopted by migrants and enacted as a filter to organise the diversity that they encounter in public spaces. The following excerpt is from my fieldnotes:

7 pm at the outdoor foodcourt at Jurong Point Shopping Centre. I sit, finishing tea with Kashem and Sujon at a table. It is dinnertime and the foodcourt is busy with people queuing for food,

carefully winding through the crowd with their steaming trays of food and drink. There are commuters and shoppers who are cutting through the foodcourt to get to the MRT station behind it. Kashem was staring at a table diagonally across of us. There were two Mainland Chinese migrant men who appeared to be in their 30s sitting at a four-seater, having a chat over mugs of beer. At the foot of their table and spilling over onto the crowded pathway where diners were navigating, were bags of their grocery-shopping. Looking over as well, Sujon said quietly, “maybe in China they just sit like this”. One of the Chinese men reached into a bag of his groceries and pulled out a bunch of raw leeks. He started taking big bites of a leek, chewing while continuing the conversation with his friend. Kashem stared for a while more before realizing I noticed him doing so. He said, “I know shouldn’t stare in Singapore. But they eat like this very strange. I also won’t put my bags like this. Singaporeans don’t like PRC people I know! Maybe because they always sit and anyhow put their things like this.”

The offences described in this episode are several, from both groups of migrants. The Chinese men were unfazed by the fact that their groceries were getting in the way of the crowd and their taking up two extra seats during a busy time at the foodcourt. The Bangladeshis were also staring (and noticed for doing so). What is looming larger at stake is what these actions and reactions towards them say about being a part of this particular configuration of diversity. Although fleeting, encounters in public like this appear to open up space for further reflection by new arrivals on what it means to be integrated. The signs and signifiers of belonging that rearticulate the meaning of diversity are not only pervasive but are, further, so nuanced that new arrivals themselves subject one another to these narratives of integration and difference. In this way, new arrivals also become meaningful, if also judgemental, participants of an everyday diversifying community. In so doing, they problematise the more commonly circulated ideas of conviviality through contact and integration through inclusion in this situation. The urban learning demonstrated here draws attention to how marginalised groups learn to coordinate different forms of everyday life. The Bangladeshi migrants were tactically drawing upon their “acquired feel” for civility in Singapore to advance their incorporation into the city (Chattopadhyay, 2009; McFarlane, 2011). Their actions and attitudes create what Yiftachel (2009: 250) terms the “gray space” of urban incorporation. In this present context, the process of gray space-ing reproduces social relations and mobilises particular subjects of diversity through the negotiation (“I shouldn’t stare in Singapore”) and boundary-reinforcing, divisive work (“I wouldn’t put my bags like this”) of being included in shared spaces.

Concluding notes: reproducing diverse subjects in public through norms

This paper examined how diversity is managed through racialised, spatialised and state-sanctioned policy measures and campaigns that facilitate norms through explicit and implicit rules of engagement. Inclusion is dependant upon more than policy but also to behave within the normativities of civility. These normativities establish the conditions of belonging that are enacted in particular sites of encounter. While there appears to be tolerance of difference, there is also a heightened sensitivity to when someone is not adhering to locally accepted forms of civility. While expectations of proper behaviour have long been imposed on urban inhabitants, these expectations are increasingly extended to new arrivals. Such is the tight-rope of negotiating diversity and this is also why some groups of people, including migrants, are more tolerated than others. I assert that civility perpetuates the divide between newcomers and locals where certain groups of

migrants are often seen as not having mastered civility in Singapore because they have not learnt or do not practice situated forms of acceptable behaviour in public. This story of coexistence in Jurong West demonstrates how public spaces and diversity are constituted through processes of ongoing conflict and negotiation. It is also clear that exclusion continues to play a key part here. When public behaviour is performed differently during particular times, such as the Chinese migrants speaking loudly, they expose the dominant orderings in space. As Cresswell (1996) notes, these are “right ways of being and doing that define who is in place, who is out of place; who belongs and who does not” (cited in Valentine et al., 2012: 2060). Practices such as restraint in public are both productive of such social relations and produced by these normativities. This is also to say that there are boundaries reproduced through the re-enactment of civility that shape the politics of coexistence and inclusion.

Diversity is neither unique to Singapore nor is it limited to the discussion of new migrants. The recent prominence given to coexistence within urban diversity approaches through social practices, quotidian encounters and convivial mixing in diverse urban environments have brought into focus the ways in which people of different backgrounds routinely navigate cultural difference. Yet, *how* and how diversity is lived and negotiated through specific policies that shape integration through social codes of interactions and exchanges have thus far remained obscure. The ways in which inclusion and difference itself are structured are also empirically and conceptually heterogenous. In comparison to other states in Asia, Singapore is an especially appropriate case study. Aside from the explicit rules and policies that differently include various groups of migrants, state management also bears explicit tutelage to the public on intercultural encounters. These explicit measures ultimately contour as well, the implicit norms of civility in diverse public spaces. Recognising the profound ways in which norms of civility shape space through its subtle yet pervasive ways not only imparts analytical purchase to the study of everyday interactions, it also grafts the meaning of belonging onto the everchanging contours of diversification in the city. It is important to situate these organising principles embedded in the everyday through broader structural contours as this allows us to interpret the diversifying nature of public space more broadly. I have demonstrated that civility is not only filtered explicitly through the level of the state, but further are often tacitly regulates in urban public spaces.

It is through the analysis of migrant-led diversification processes in historically multicultural Singapore, we see how difference is managed, created and sorted at the level of state management and in everyday life. I have illustrated how prosaic forms of coexistence are shaped by localised norms of behaviour in public that are, in turn, shaped by the state’s management of diversity. While not limited to fleeting encounters which are themselves brought into being by policies and campaigns, these short-lived encounters cannot be dismissed as they form cogent moments of people putting into practice the principles of coexistence. It is within this mixing that the negotiation of civility acts as a fine-tuned source of segregation through the disciplining of conducts. Norms such as codes of civility thus illustrates existing forms of diversity management in shared spaces as they are internalised and practiced in prosaic ways. Based on what is emerging in my case study, cities will remain dynamic sites of inclusion and belonging but in ways that blur boundaries with exclusion. Indeed, if it is modes of inclusion and integration that produces new socio-spatial patterns of differentiation and “outside-ness”, then we need to rethink how we understand the implications of inclusion and circumstances under which people are included. I hope that this prompts a more critical thinking of the mundane, everyday negotiations we have to make in shared spaces of the city, of the challenges and possibilities of living with difference and of the politics of belonging in the diversifying present.

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Notes

1. This is a group comprised of other ethnic minorities in Singapore – Eurasians, Jewish, Armenians, British, etc.
2. This is the ground level of public housing buildings which are meant to be common, shared spaces.
3. <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2015/07/08/opening-address-by-mr-heng-swee-keat-at-the-racial-harmony-forum.php> (accessed 31 January 2016).
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5. Ministry of Manpower foreign workforce numbers, <http://www.mom.gov.sg/documents-and-publications/foreign-workforce-numbers> (accessed 25 February 2016).
6. Ministry of Manpower foreign workforce numbers, <http://www.mom.gov.sg/documents-and-publications/foreign-workforce-numbers> (accessed 25 February 2016).
7. MOM website, <http://www.mom.gov.sg/foreign-manpower/passes-visas/work-permit-fw/before-you-apply/Pages/overview.aspx> (accessed 1 November 2013).
8. Jurong West Masterplan 2013, https://www.ura.gov.sg/uol/master-plan/View-Master-Plan/master-plan-2014/master-plan/~/_media/dmp2013/Planning%20Area%20Brochures/Brochure_Jurong%20West.ashx (accessed 8 February 2016).
9. <https://www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg/> (accessed 1 February 2016).
10. <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/speech-prime-minister-lee-hsien-loong-teck-ghee-ircc-racial-harmony-day-celebration> (accessed 1 February 2016).
11. Goh, D. P.S., *Society and Space commentary*, <http://societyandspace.com/material/commentaries/daniel-p-s-goh-the-little-india-riot-and-the-spatiality-of-migrant-labor-in-singapore/> (accessed 25 February 2016).
12. <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/little-india-riot-one-year-later-the-night-that-changed-singapore> (accessed 17 February 2016).
13. <http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne+News/Singapore/Story/A1Story20081008-92531.html> (accessed 20 January 2016).

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