











A temporary community on reclaimed land in front of the Central Business District





Lunch break on a construction site







# CONDUCTING HUMAN RESOURCES

Migrant Workers  
in Singapore

by  
Ahmed Belkhodja  
Saskja Odermatt





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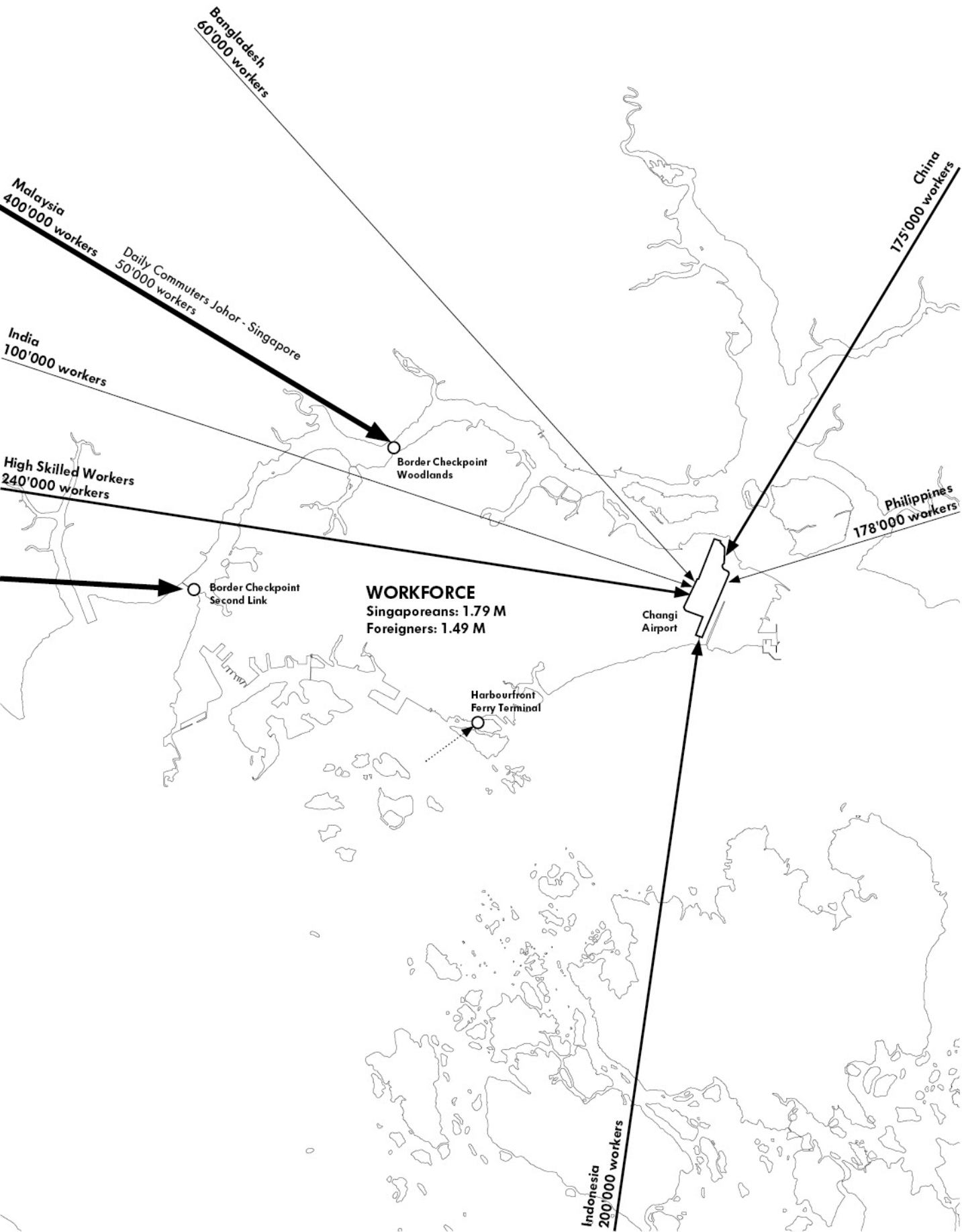
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## Two Fields Of Control

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Foreigners form about forty-five percent of Singapore's workforce and this ratio has been constantly rising in the last fifty years. The mutual dependency between this population of workers and the economy of the Island-State is well known, but its translations into "Singaporean realities" are often overshadowed by geopolitical and/or ethnical considerations.

This research is an examination of some of the processes related to the employment of those foreigners, both on the administrative and territorial levels. For instance, a focus is put on the organisation of the influx of workers and their placement in different regimes of employment, as well as on the way the urban seclusion of some of those foreigners is planned and executed.

This artful conduction of workforce constitutes a comprehensive prototype of manpower management on a national level.



# An Employment Framework

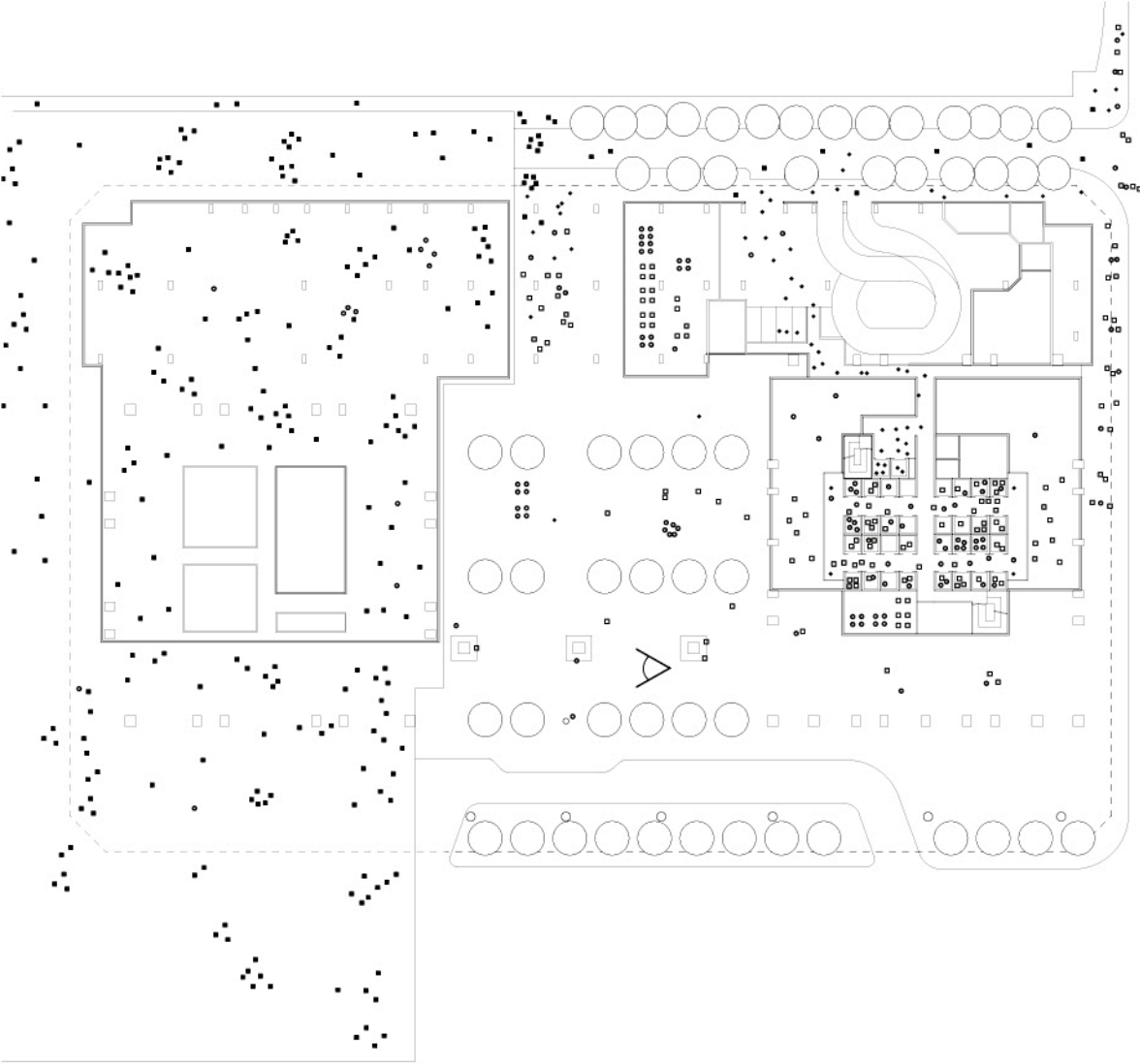
Our exploration of Singapore’s human resources began on a Monday morning in the most central district of the city. Flocks of businessmen were going in and out of a brand new complex of offices called Asia Square, which consists of two towers separated by a covered plaza. The plaza and the first tower had just been opened at the time of our visit, while the second tower was still under construction. Thus, a temporary partition was splitting the complex and hiding

the ongoing construction from the plaza. A trompe-l’oeil was printed on this whole partition wall, trying to give the illusion that the other office tower was already standing. We noticed that Asia square was largely occupied by foreigners from first world (‘expats’) and developing countries (construction workers and cleaning staff), with each group having its own entrances to the complex. This first chapter is a study on those layers of foreign work-

force residing in Singapore, on the nature of the dependencies towards them, and on the Island-State’s intent and means to rationalize and control those influxes of people.



Trompe-l’oeil of upcoming tower in Asia Square



Asia Square, October 2012

- Singaporeans
- "Expats"
- Cleaning Ladies
- Construction Workers







1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.

- 1. Main lobby
- 2. Front street
- 3. Smoking area
- 4. Back entrance
- 5. Separation wall
- 6. Break plaza
- 7. Lau Pa Sat Hawker, cleaning lady
- 8. Lau Pa Sat Hawker, financial workers
- 9. Lau Pa Sat Hawker, construction workers

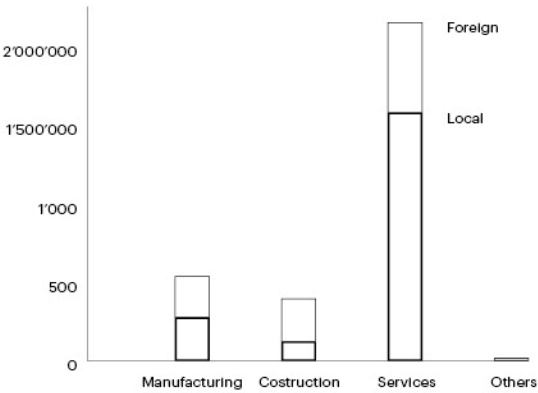


# Singapore's Workforce Structure

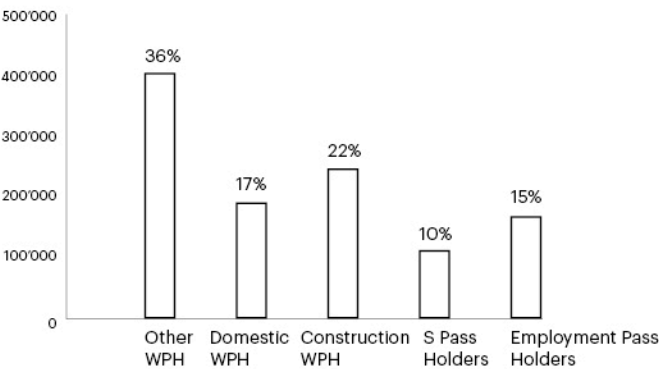
As a secular place of immigration, Singapore's population is mostly an assemblage of people that either came to the island to find work opportunities, or whose ancestors did so. Since the 1960s, the Ministry of Manpower keeps the foreign workforce organised into a clear hierarchy based on income levels.

This hierarchy mainly consists of three categories which all have different sets of rules to follow and different requirements for their employers to comply with. Each employer is allowed to hire a certain number of foreign workers, which varies depending on net revenues and on the amount of local workers they hire.

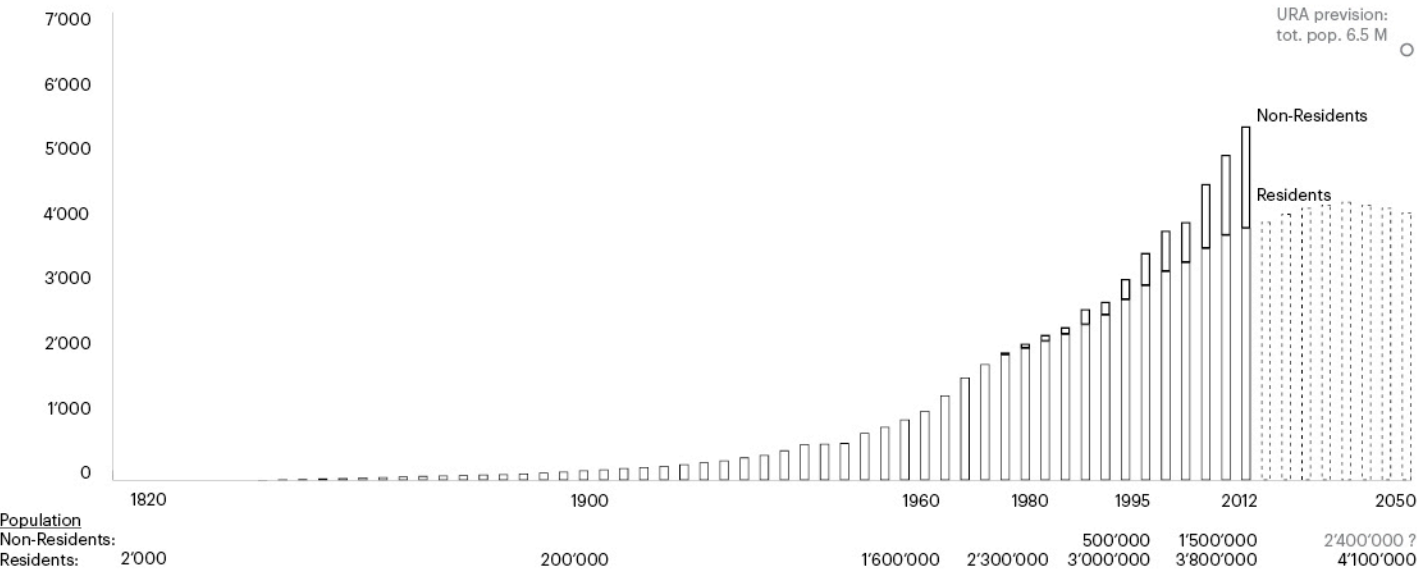
Workforce per Sector (2011)



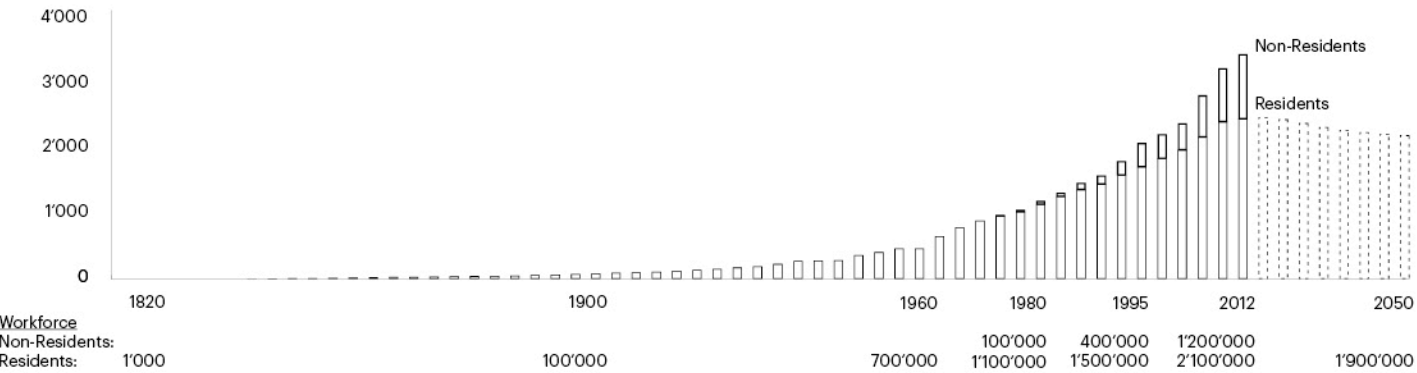
Non-Residential Workforce per Status (2011)



Population per Residency Status



Workforce per Residency Status



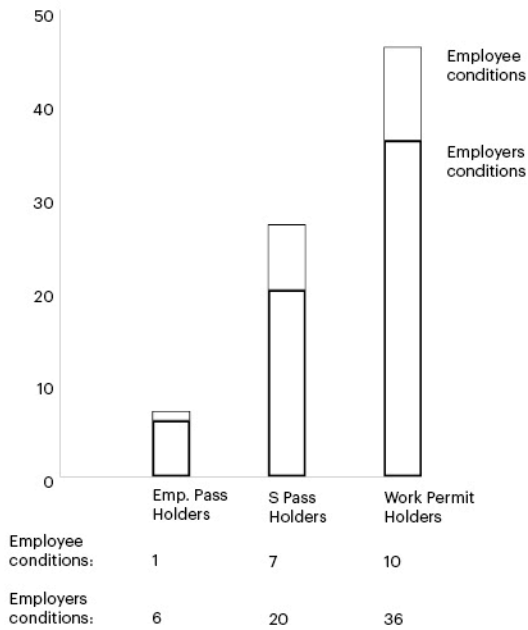
## Population and Workforce Evolution

Since the founding of the Republic of Singapore in 1965, statistics split the population into two groups; 'residents' and 'non-residents'. The resident population comprises Singaporean citizens and 'permanent residents', while the non-resident population consists mostly of foreigners on a temporary residency status. The major trend is for the percentage of non-resident population and workforce to increase rapidly. In addition to the economic advantages of hiring foreign workers, specialists link this trend to the fact

that Singapore's resident population is aging at an alarming rate. And this fact will probably get even more problematic in the coming years, since the generation that was born during the 'baby-boom' of the 1950s is now starting to enter retirement age. To sum up, Singapore now needs to find strategies to compensate this shrinking of the local workforce, either by opening permanent residency status to more foreigners or by an even more extensive usage of 'non-resident' labour.



Employment Act Conditions

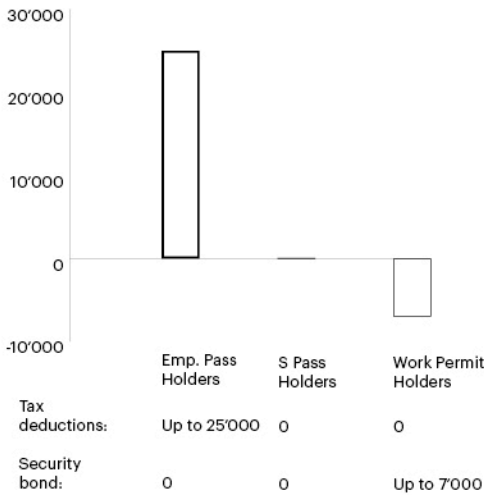


Hierarchy of Treatment

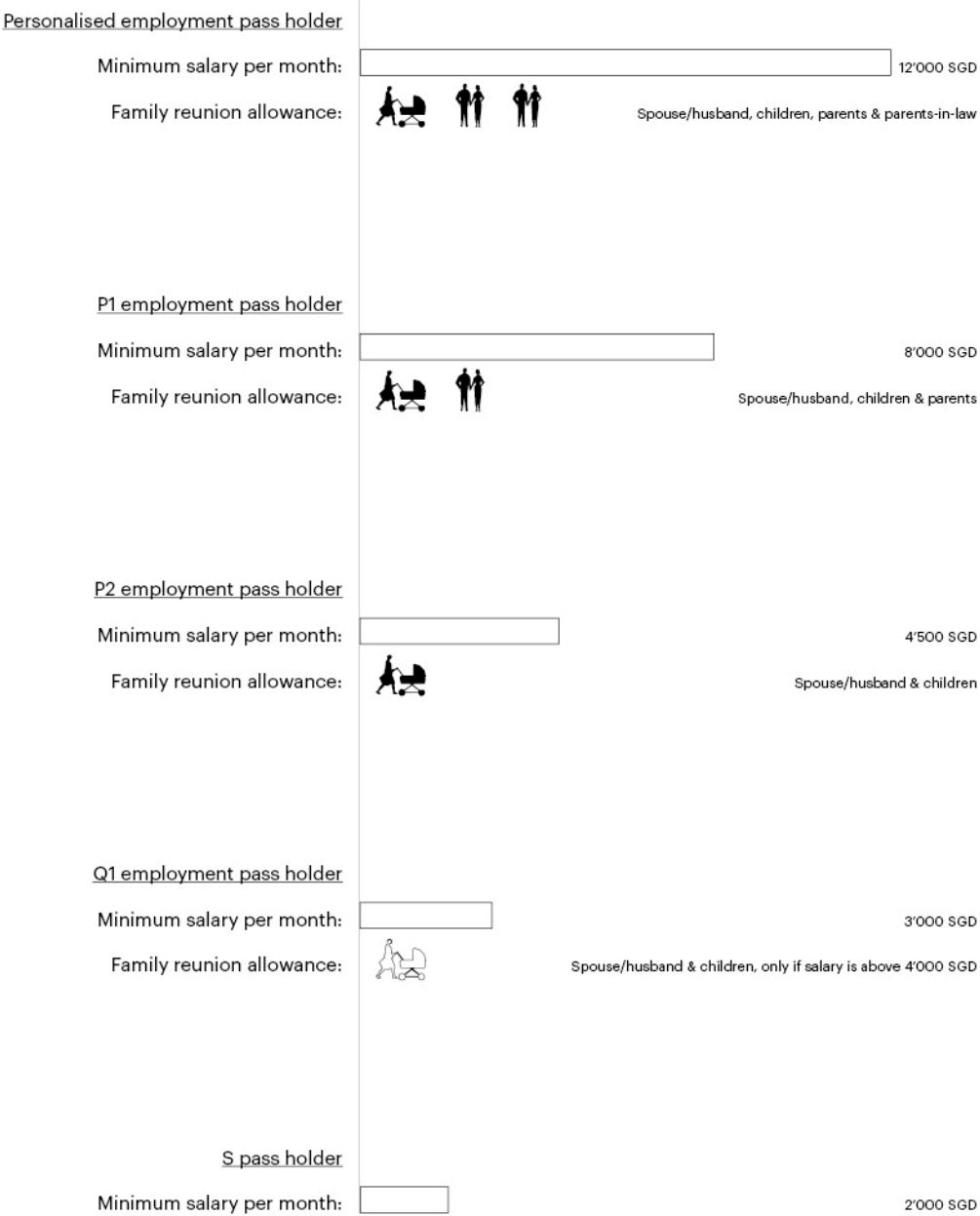
Each of the three categories of non-resident workers has a different level of constraint set up by the ‘Employment of Foreign Manpower Act’. It mostly concerns their administrative regime, their allowance to bring their family from their home country to Singapore, and their (lack of) permission to change job while in Singapore.

For this representation, we just counted those conditions that are imposed to both the workers and their employers, regardless of their content. The most peculiar of those them include for example the prohibition of pregnancy and the interdiction to ‘break up families in Singapore’, both of which only apply to work permit holders.

Potential Gain/Loss for Employer at Recruitment



Benefits per Type of Work Permit



Incentives & Guarantees

The Ministry of Manpower applies different types of financial interference in the recruitment process. An employer willing to hire a work permit holder has to deposit a ‘security bond’ of up to 7'000SGD, while hiring an employment pass holder can earn him a tax deduction of up to 25'000SGD to cover the relocation expenses.

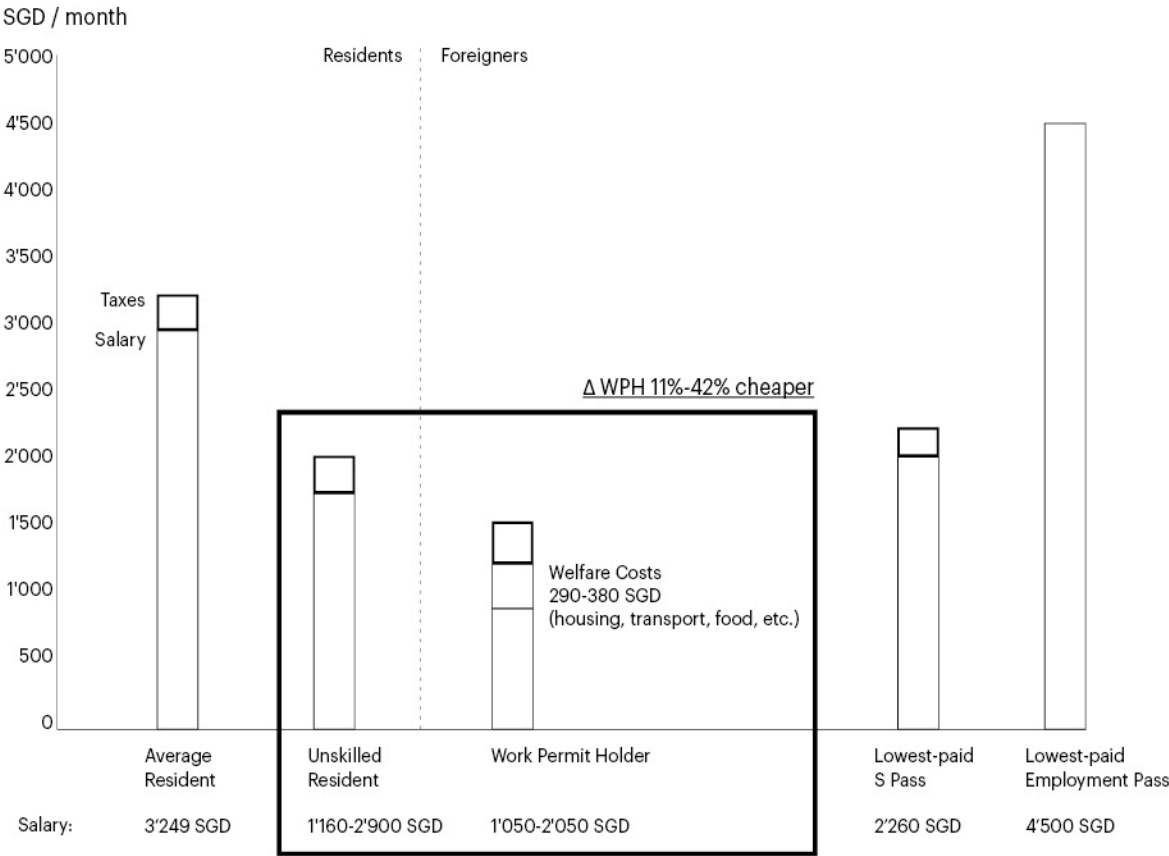


Financial Attraction  
of Foreign Workers

The main drive of the extensive recourse to foreign work-force is obviously financial. The average salary of an unskilled Singaporean remains significantly higher than what is usually offered to an equivalently-skilled worker coming from another country in Southeast Asia. Singapore's authorities have two means to control the ratio of foreigners in each sector.

First, each sector has a "dependency ceiling" which allows for a certain number of foreigners for each local worker. The second mean is the control on the "foreign worker levy" that employers have to pay on a monthly basis for each work permit holder they hire.

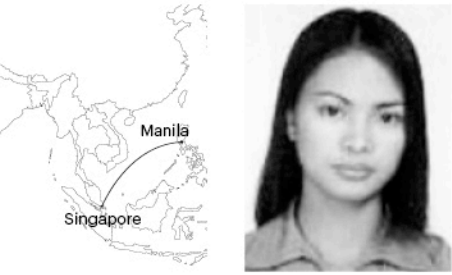
Monthly Expenses for the Employer,  
for each Type of Employee



Robert

Age : 42 years old  
Pass & Sector : Employment Pass, Pharmaceuticals  
Relocation Expenses : Fees paid by his company and gets 10% bonus to come in Singapore.  
Status : Single  
Children : -  
Previous Job Location : Lyon, FR  
Planning to Stay : 10 Months, but would like a long term job in Singapore

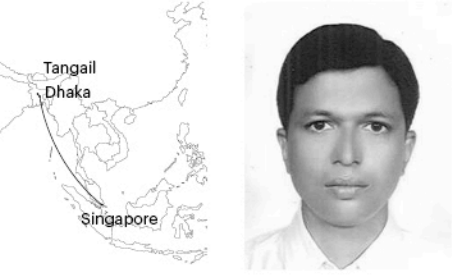
Salary in FR	12'000 SG\$	
Salary in SG	30'000 SG\$	
Breakdown :		
6'000 SG\$ other expenses	20%	
4'000 SG\$ serviced apartment	13%	
20'000 SG\$ savings	67%	



May

Age : 26 years old  
Pass & Sector : Training Work Permit, Cleaning service  
Relocation Expenses : 2'200 SGD  
Status : Single  
Children : -  
Family Location : Manila, PH  
Previous Job Loc. : Manila, PH  
Planning to Stay : 2 years

Salary in PH	120 SG\$	
Salary in SG	1'200 SG\$	
Breakdown :		
200 SG\$ daily costs	16%	
380 SG\$ 4-people room	32%	
620 SG\$ remittance	52%	



Mukul

Age : 42 years old  
Pass & Sector : Work Permit, Construction  
Relocation Expenses : 6'000 SGD  
Status : Married  
Partner Salary : None  
Children : 2  
Family Location : Tangail, BH  
Previous Job Loc. : Dubai  
Planing to Stay : Since he made enough money

Salary in BH 150 SG\$	150 SG\$	
Salary in SG 850 SG\$	850 SG\$	
Breakdown :		
500 SG\$ daily costs	62%	
250 SG\$ dormitory housing	30%	
150 SG\$ remittance	18%	



# Impacts on Two Scales

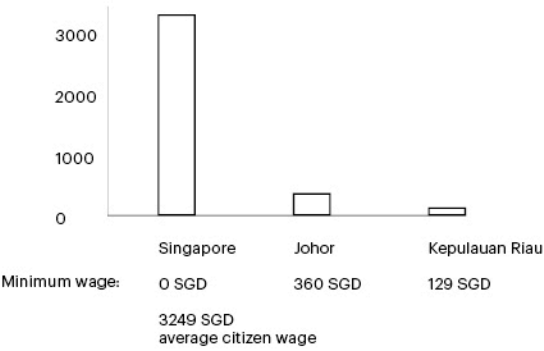
The regional ‘triangle of growth’, which has officially become a political intention in 1989, relies partly on the idea that each end of the tri-national agreement possesses a different kind of workforce in abundance. Specifically, Singapore would provide the highest-skilled workers, Malaysia the mid-skilled ones, and Indonesia the lower-skilled workers.

In actual terms, this mostly translates into Singaporean

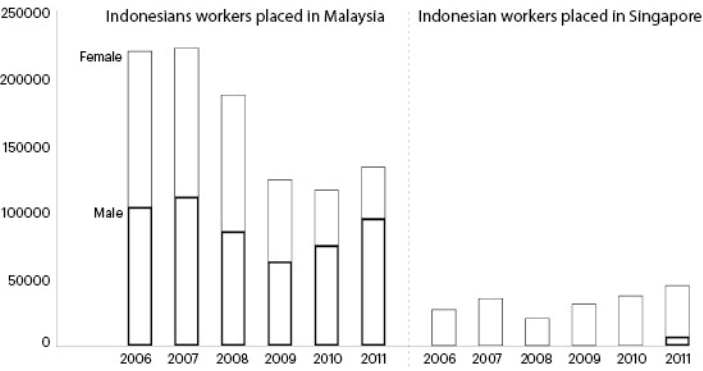
companies opening factories in both Batam and Johor, which in turn brings both domestic and international work-force migration to these regions.

On the other hand, thousands of Malaysian commuters cross the border each day to work and earn a Singaporean salary.

Regional Ratio of Foreign Workforce (2009)



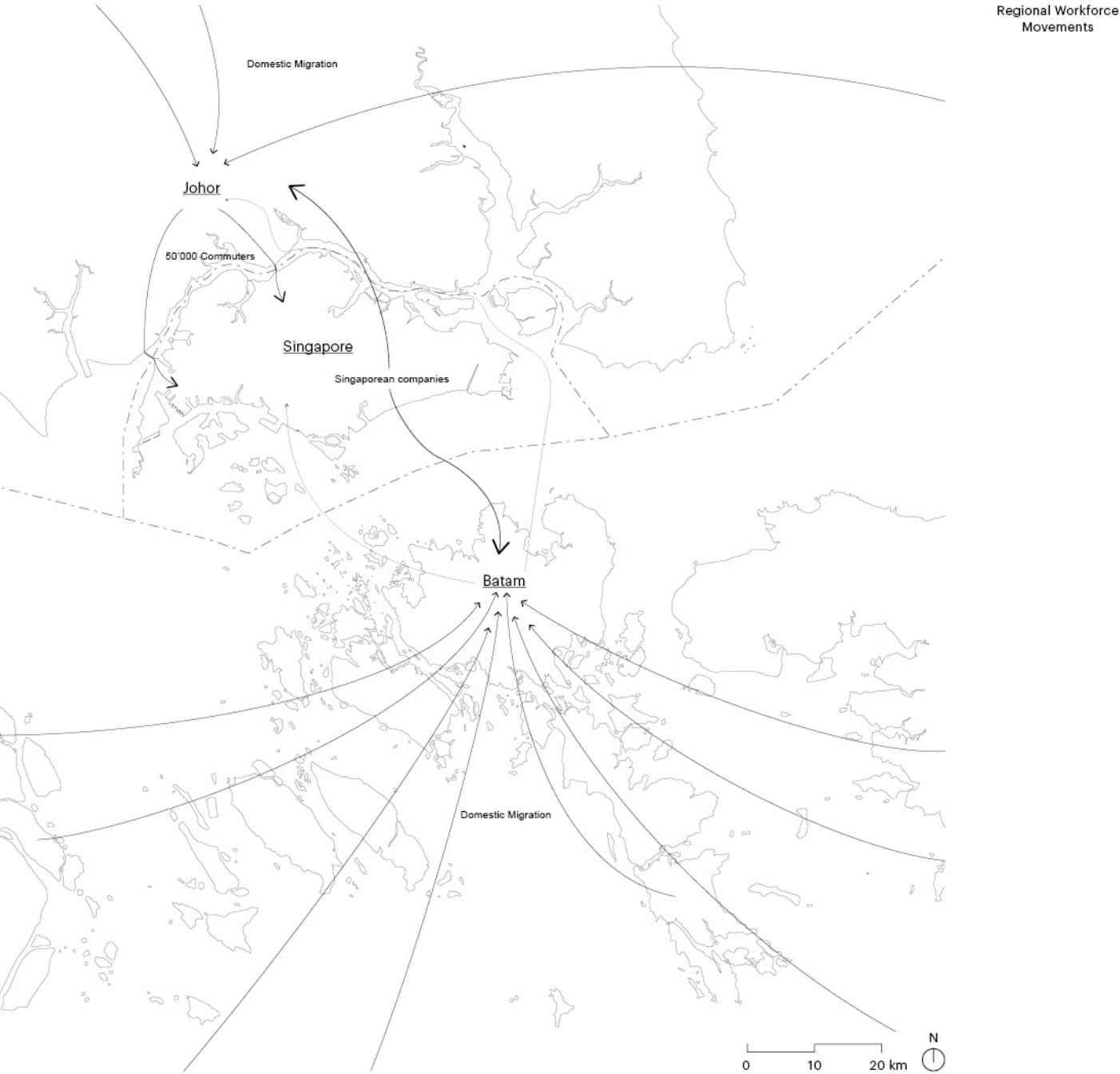
Minimum Wages in the Region (2012)



## Gender Differences

Indonesia's flows of work-related formal emigration show that Malaysia and Singapore are very important destinations for Indonesian "overseas workers" (respectively second and fourth most common).

One should also note how migration of male workers to Singapore seems to have just started in 2011.



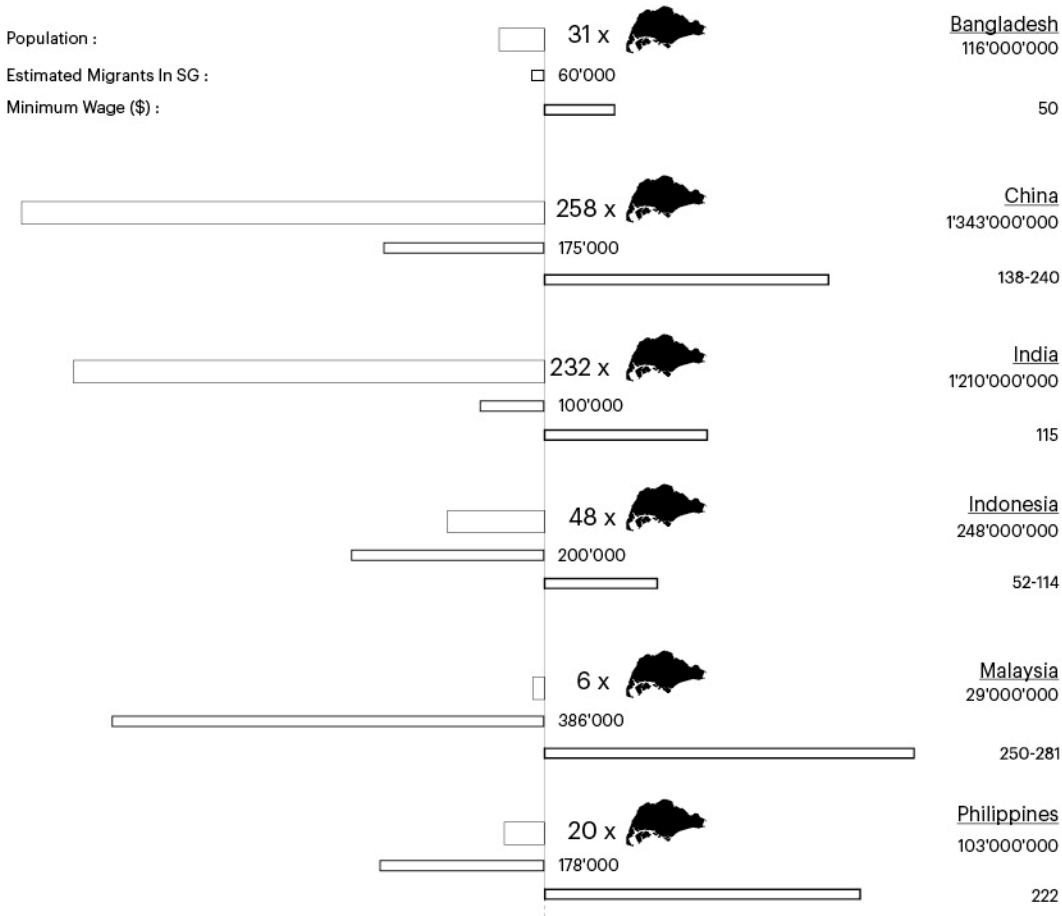




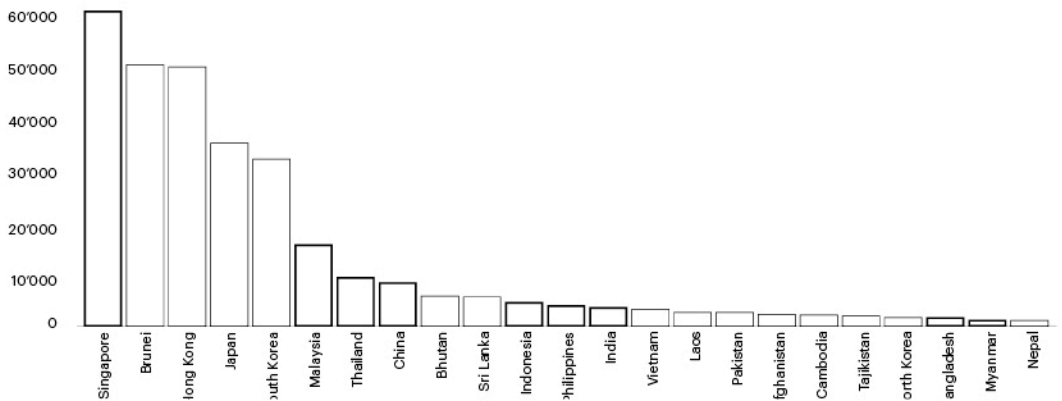
Differentiated Workforce Fluxes

Each country in the region provides very specific types of unskilled workers. Indonesia and Philippines are the main sources of domestic workers while India and Bangladesh are the main sources of construction and marine industry workers. China and Malaysia have more diversified flow of emigrants to Singapore.

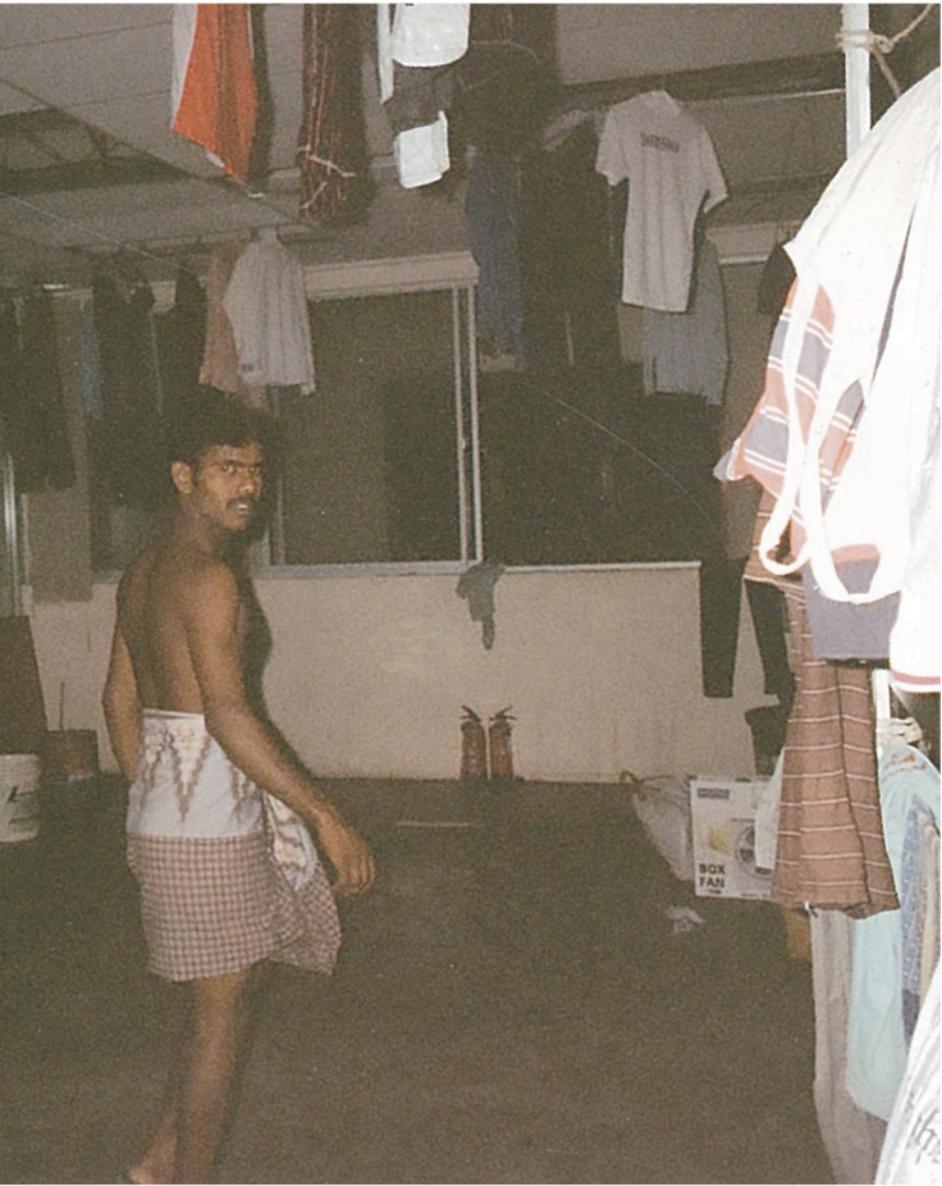
Comparing Different Origins and Wages



GDP per Capita in the Region







Foreign construction workers, in a dormitory in Bukit Batok. Photographs were taken with a disposable camera given to one of them.



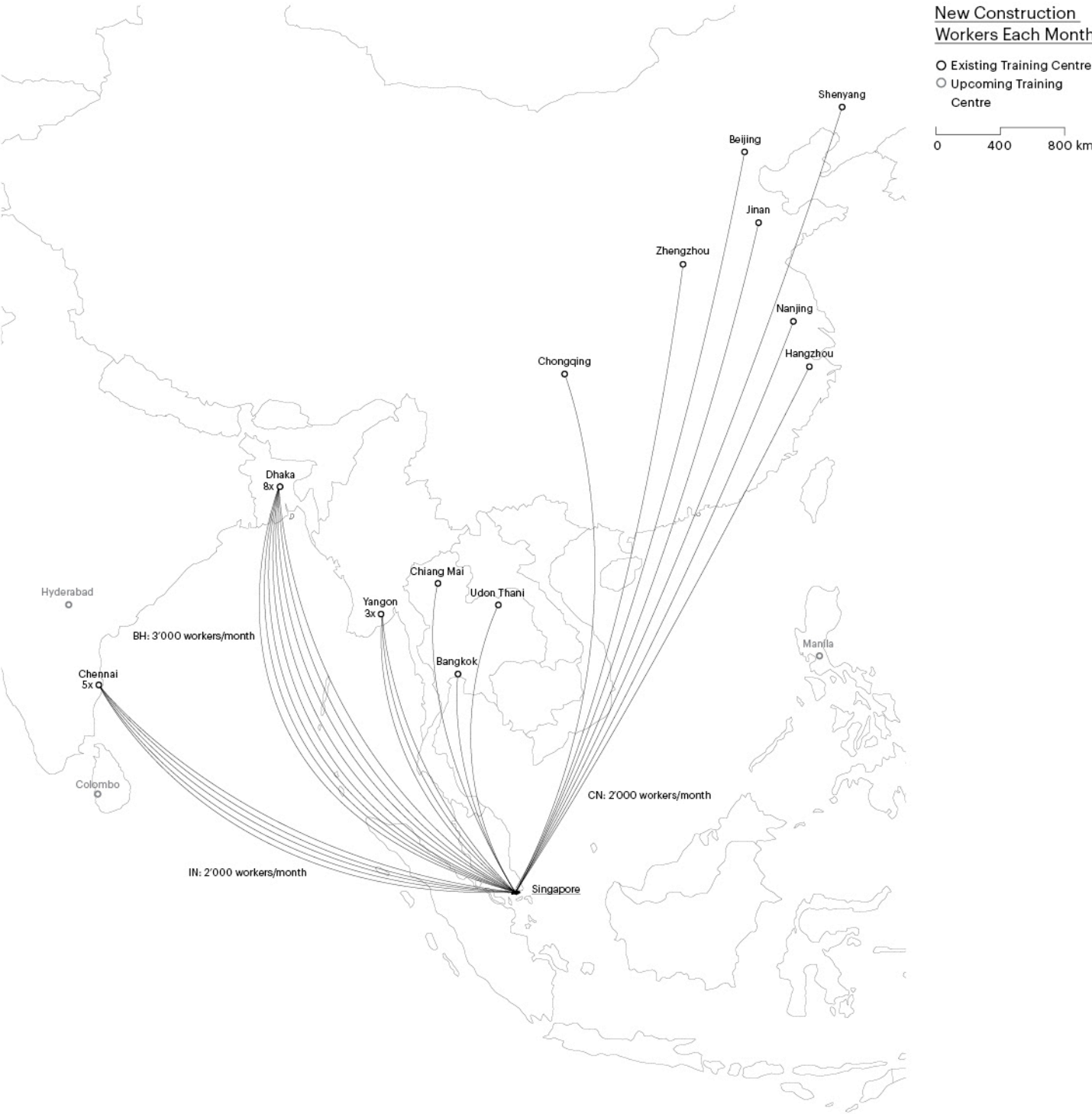
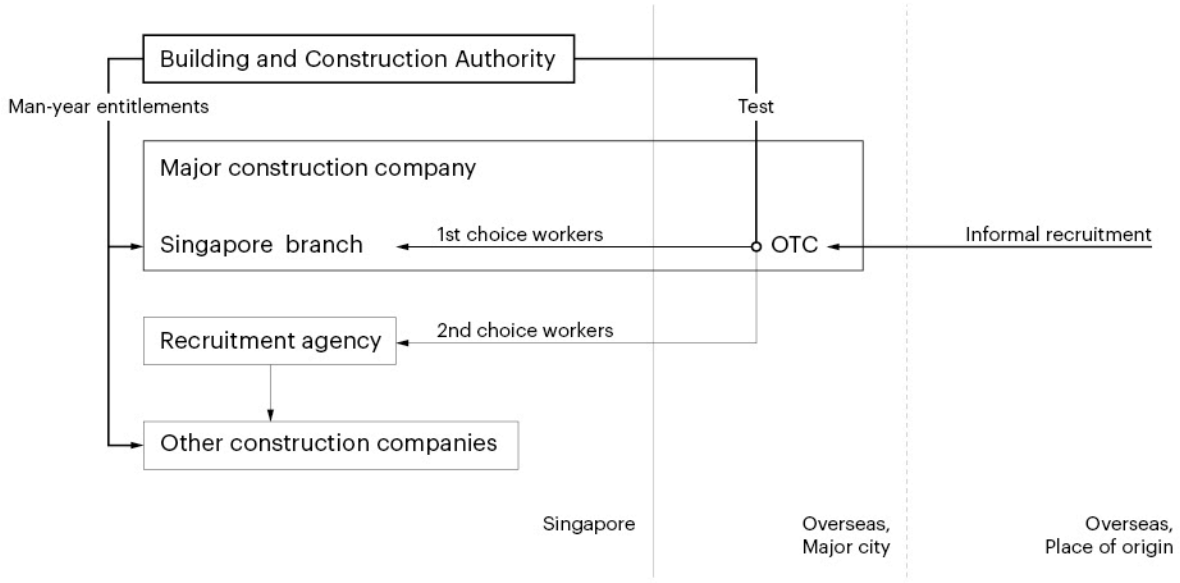


# An Exogenous Construction

Singapore's construction sector is the country's first employer of non-resident workforce. Its 'dependency ceiling' is currently set at 7 foreign workers for each full-time local worker. But as there is no segmentation in this ratio, Singaporean workers usually hold the highest positions in each company, while the foreign workforce is generally carrying out work on the ground.

Since February 2000, the Building Construction Authority (BCA) has required of each foreign worker to train and pass a test in his home country prior coming to Singapore. As a result, 'overseas training centres' (OTC) were opened in each home country of the construction workforce. Those OTCs are generally run by Singaporean construction companies on behalf of Singapore's BCA.

Ensuring Foreign Workforce

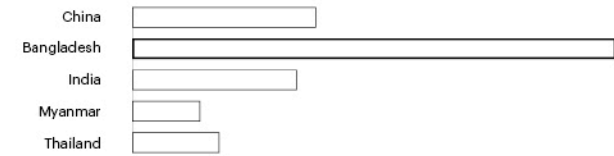




Structural



Architectural



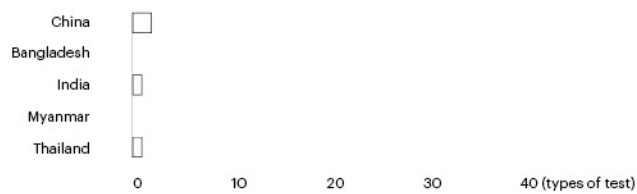
Civil Engineering



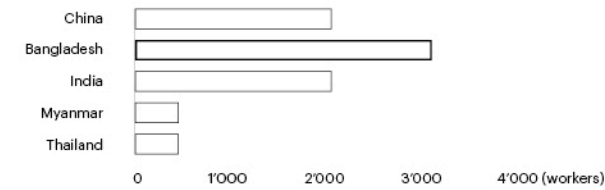
Mechanical & Electrical



Construction Plant Operation



Monthly Total per Country



Overseas Training Centres

Each overseas training centre provides training and testing paths according to the profile of workers that are desired in Singapore.

According to a range of employers that we interviewed, the higher-skilled, most technical workers come mostly from China and Thailand, while the more physically demanding jobs are mainly fulfilled by workers from Bangladesh, India and Myanmar.

Nevertheless, the concurrence from other employing places such as Hong Kong and Mainland China is reducing the number of Chinese construction workers coming to Singapore. This explains the will to expand the reach of the OTCs in new places such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka.



1.



2.



3.



4.

Hytech Goodwill - Training and Testing Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh

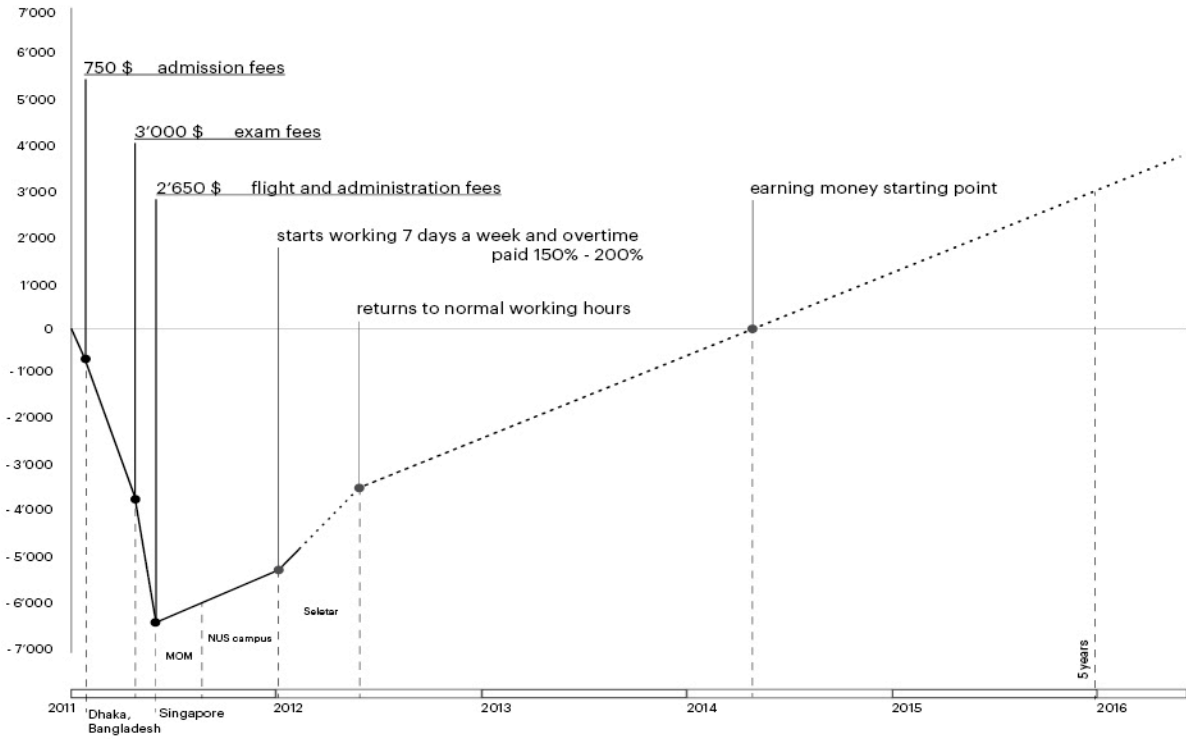
- 1. Pipe fitting
- 2. Plastering
- 3. Electrical wiring
- 4. Enhanced construction safety Orientation course (ECSOC)





Abdur Rout Ahamed Haji Abdur  
aka Mukul

Type of work : Electrician  
Age : 42 years old  
Status : Married  
Children : 2  
Previous Position : Similar, in Dubai



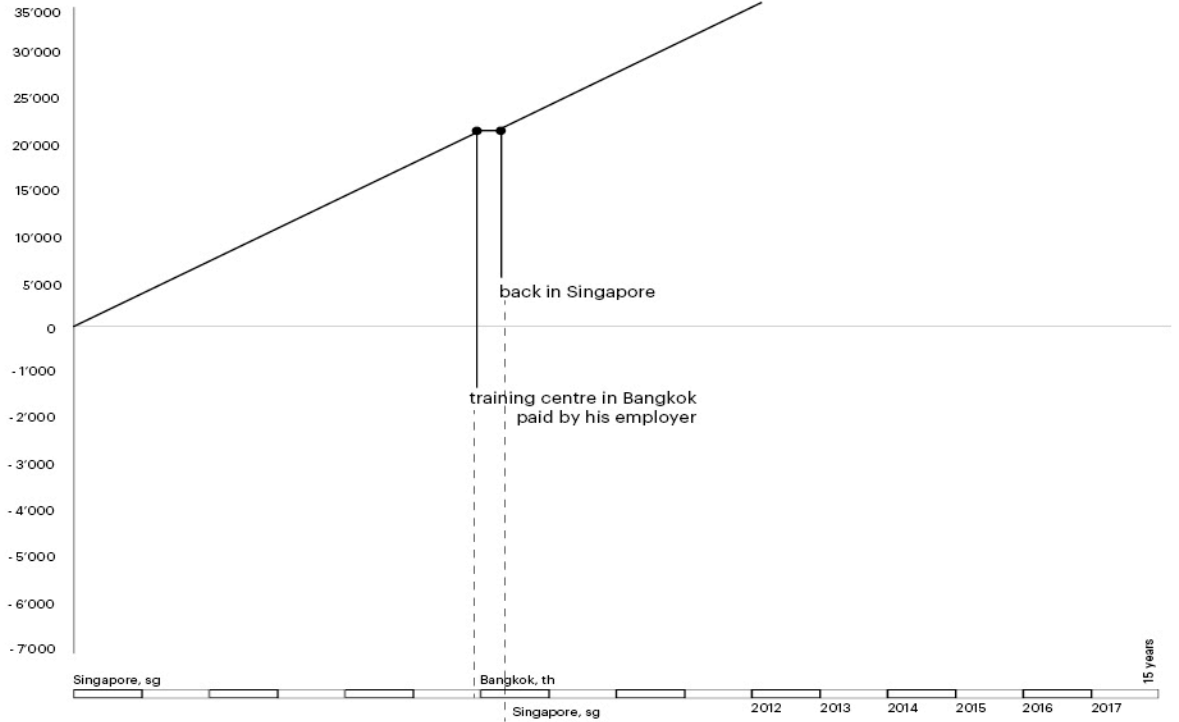
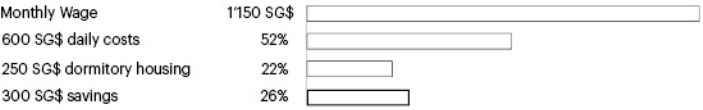
National Differences

The financial trajectory of each worker is unique. However, we noted that a lot Bangladeshi and Indian workers had earned large debts in the process of getting from their hometown to their OTC and then to Singapore. They thus need to spend a certain amount of time working in Singapore before actually gaining anything.



Pongpat Wachirabunjong  
aka Warat

Type of work : Painter  
Age : 34 years old  
Status : Single  
Children : -  
Previous position : None, in TH





# An Invisible City

Our exploration of Singapore’s human resources was continued on a Sunday afternoon, in a sleeping industrial area in the southwest of the island. A couple of Bangladeshis were offering haircuts on a grass slope, surrounded by the main road and an almost dry canal. Thus, as we assumed that one usually goes to a hairdresser either close to home or in a commercial neighborhood, the following question was raised:



◀ Near Pioneer MRT, on the edge of the residential zone

Who are the people going through the hassle of traveling to a remote industrial area for a haircut on a Sunday? We then discovered that at least twenty-five thousand foreign workers are living in dormitories confined in the middle of the nearby industrial settlements. And that a large part of those workers was working in other areas of the island, in diverse work sectors. Islands of communal housing and ‘recreation centers’ in

parts of the city which are designated for industries, activities that are kept away from view in the most dynamic neighborhoods. This chapter is a study on this second city, and on the way in which it cohabits with the Singapore that most of us know.



- Pioneer**
- 1. Kian Teck Hostel  
3'500 marine workers
  - 2. Blue Stars Dormitory  
4'500 marine & manufacturing workers
  - 3. SCAL Recreation Centre
  - 4. Soon Lee Lodge  
4'500 construction workers
  - 5. SCAL Greenfield Dormitory  
3'000 construction workers
  - 6. SCAL Soon Lee Dormitory  
3'000 construction workers
  - 7. Kian Teck Dormitory  
5'424 marine & manufacturing workers

0 100 200 m





A Neighborhood Named Pioneer  
Pioneer is split in two by a major road called Boon Lay Way. The northern half comprises the most western expansion of Singapore’s large-scale social housing program (HDB), while the southern half is part of Singapore’s largest industrial estate, Jurong.  
In the last years, this southern half has also become a sort of grouping area for foreign worker dormitories. Six complexes of dormitories and a ‘recreation centre for foreign migrants’ were built as enclaves amid the industries.



1.



2.



3.



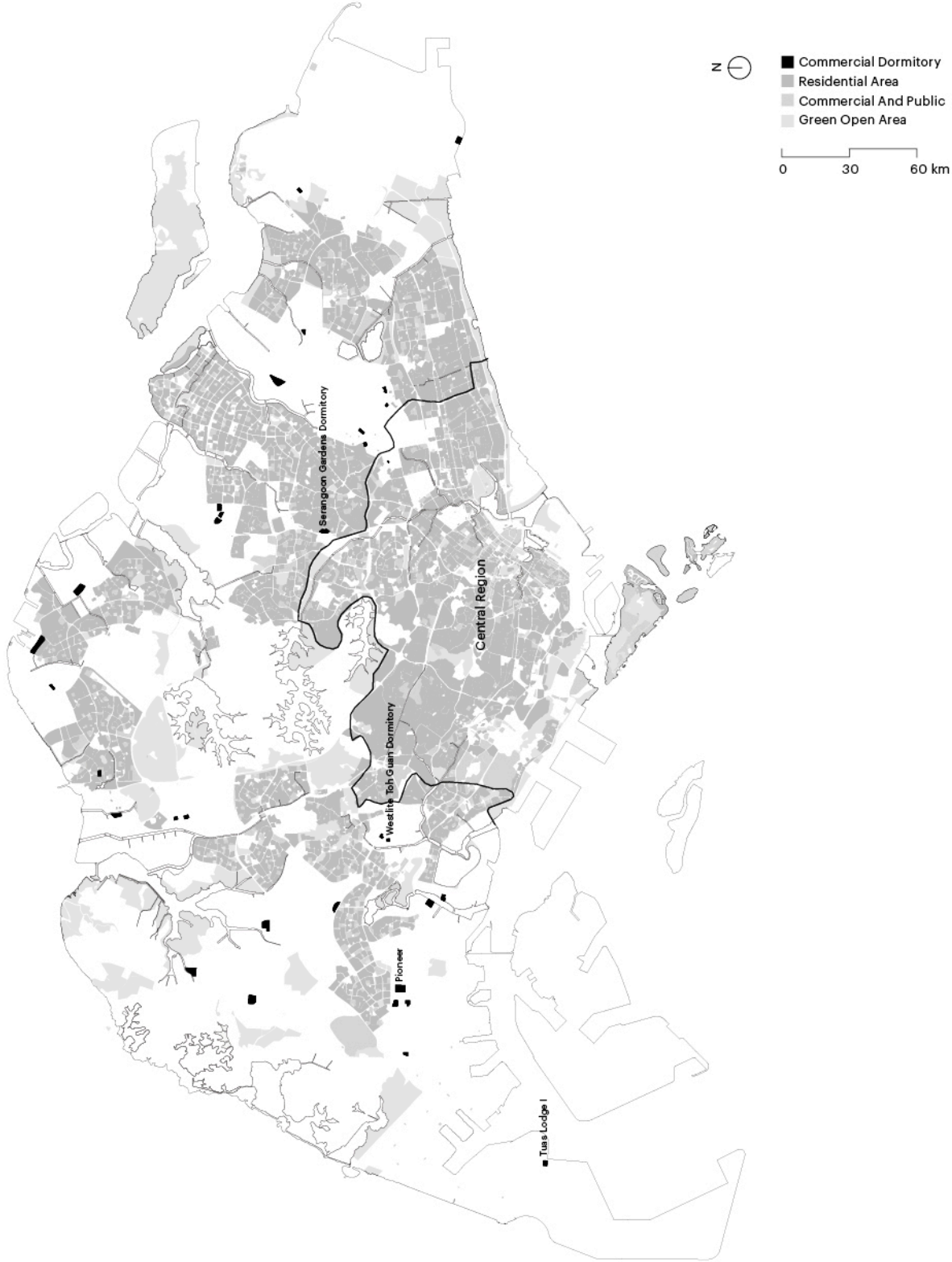
4.



5.

- 1. SCAL Soon Lee Dormitory
- 2. Kian Teck Dormitory
- 3. SCAL Recreation Center
- 4. Kian Teck Dormitory
- 5. Soon Lee Lodge  
Kian Teck Dormitory





Planning Repulsion

Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is the governmental agency in charge of planning the use of the national territory. At first glance, one can observe that sites selected for foreign workers' dormitories are spread on the outskirts of the island. Most of them are also outside of the residential and

commercial areas which constitute the core of the city's expansion:

Dorms inside of central region:	1
Dorms inside of res./com.:	1
Dorms on the edge of res./com.:	4
Dorms outside of res./com.:	34



Planning Enclaves

The repulsion from the main cores of the city implies that dormitories are usually set up within functional areas that are kept on the outskirts of the island. Those areas are usually of three categories; industrial zones, 'reserve sites' (plots kept vacant for further planning), and 'special uses' (military functions, reservoirs, cemeteries, etc.). Most

dormitories are either set up as enclaves in those functional areas or exisit between them:

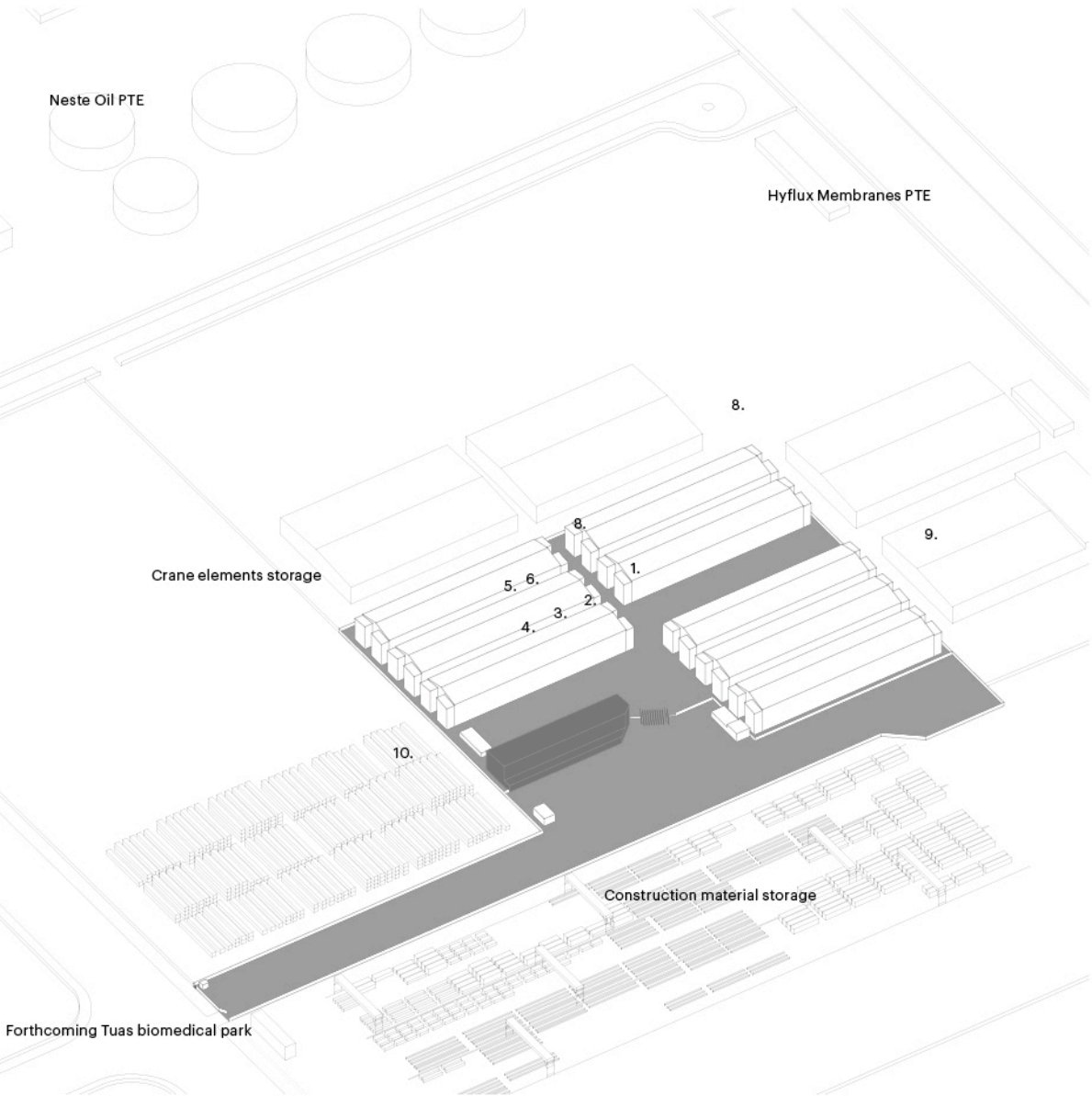
Dorms in or next to industrial zones:	29
Dorms in or next to "reserve sites":	6
Dorms in or next to "special uses":	3
Dorms not in those three categories:	1



Enclaving

Dormitories are the most common option to accommodate work permit holders in Singapore. However, their situation as islands of housing remote from the main residential areas implies that as opposed to other types of housing, they need to be able to function independently from the rest of the city. Or, in the words of a dormitory manager, they must be "self-sufficient enclaves".

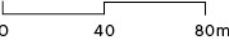
Therefore, each of the settlements needs to have in-house offers of food and basic supplies, an ATM along with other essential services. Some even have their own remittance office and hairdresser.



Tuas Lodge I

Centralised services:

- 1. Administration
- 2. Food court
- 3. Mini-Mall
- 4. ATM
- 5. Computer room
- 6. Hairdresser
- 7. Gym
- 8. Recreational area
- 9. Beer garden
- 10. Enclosed access road



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

- 1. Enclosed access to the dormitory in Tuas
- 2. Covered walkway to the dormitory in Tuas
- 3. ATM in Blue Stars Dormitory
- 4. Private Hawker in Soon Lee Lodge
- 5. Map of the area

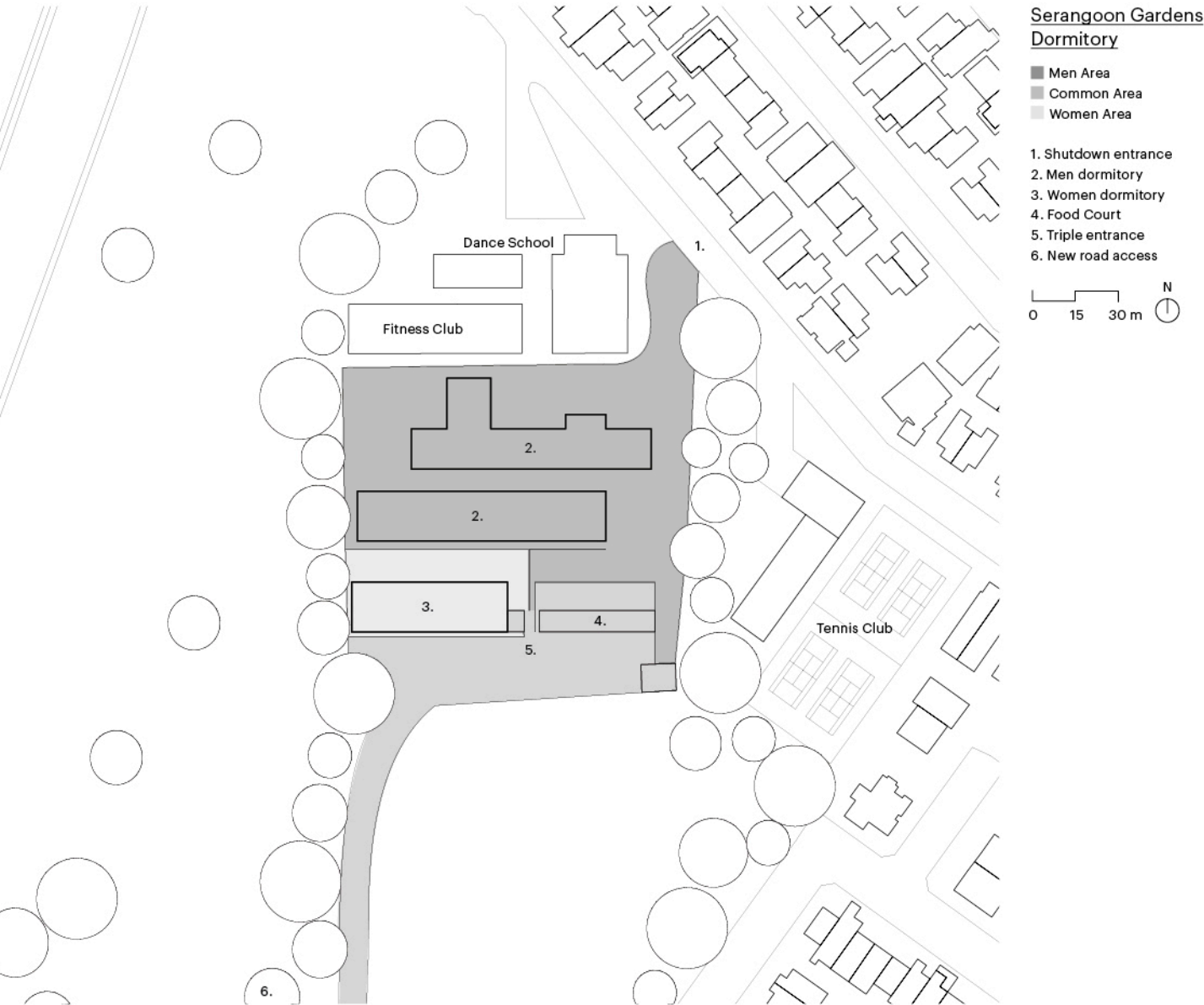


# Hiding & Splitting

Considering the fact that most dormitories are extremely dense enclaves of housing, one of the main concerns for their managers is to reduce the potential for conflictual relationships both with their surroundings and inside the settlements.

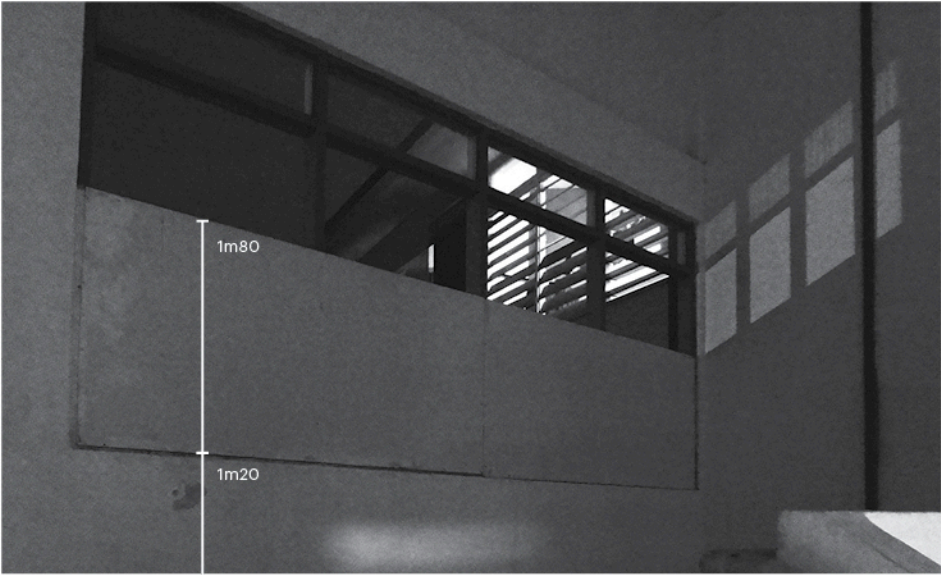
Therefore, various means of separation are put in place: Men and women occupy separate buildings, out-

door areas and entrances. Men of different origins are separated when possible. Biometrics checkpoints are mandatory at each entrance. Curtains and panels are blocking the rare vis-à-vis with the exterior world.



1.

2.



3.



4.

**Serangoon Gardens Dormitory**

In 2008, the Singapore Land Authority announced the intention to convert an abandoned school, which sat next to a housing area, into a foreign worker dormitory. Contestations rose from the neighboring residents, which led to the following compromises:

a. The school's entrance was shut down and a new entrance was built from the highway, on the other side of the plot.

b. The number of expected beds was lowered, but it seems like the initial number is currently applied.



5.

Photographs taken during a clandestine visit.

1. Only entrance to the dormitory (no entry-sign)

2. Guard's office (left), separated entrances for men and women (middle), third entrance to the food court (right).

3. Additional panels to reduce vis-à-vis

4. Additional curtains to reduce vis-à-vis

5. Map of the area

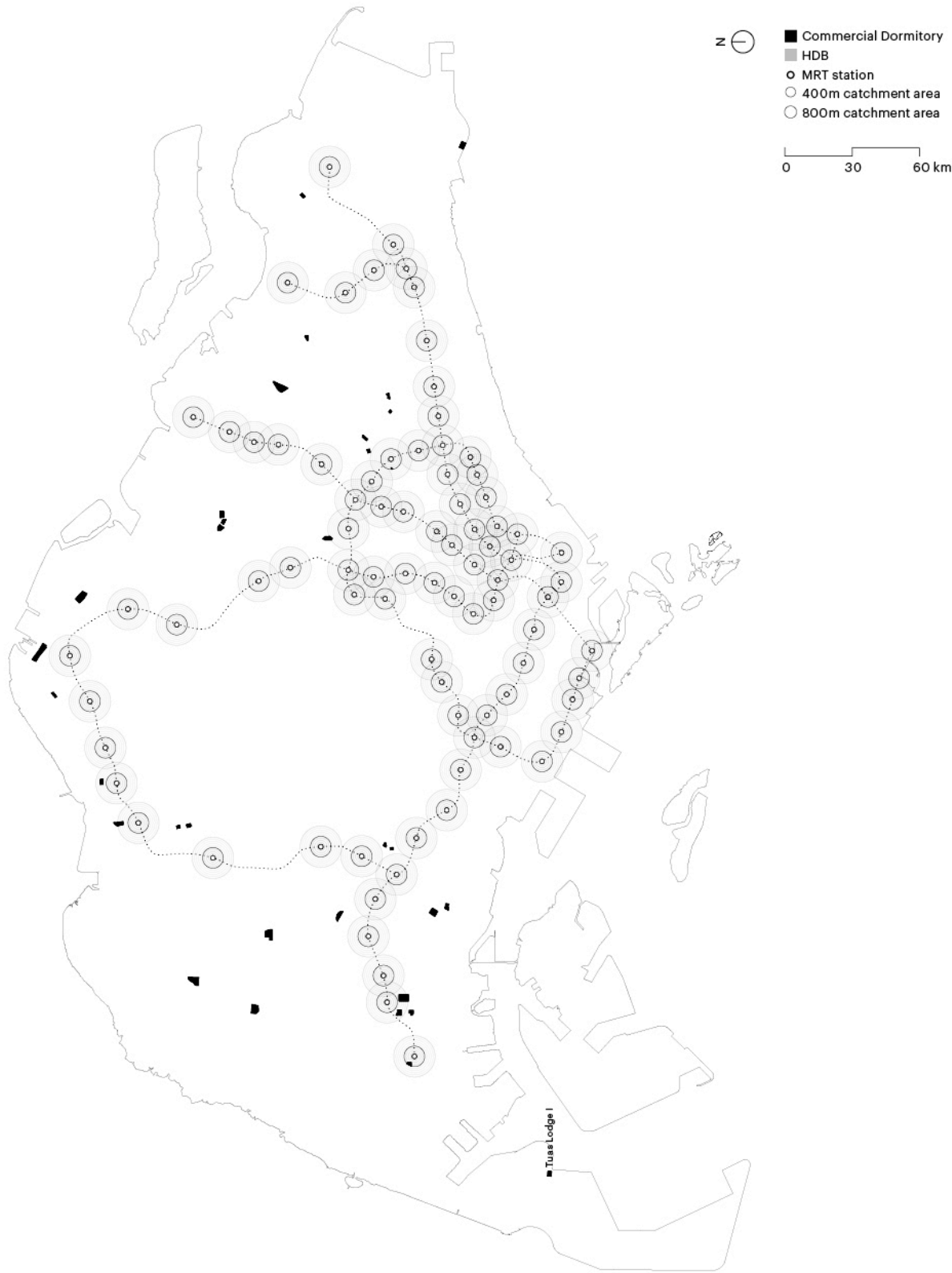




**Public Transport Supply**  
In Singapore, living far from the residential areas often means living far from public transport stations. The new lines of Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) are planned together with the new Housing Development Board (HDB) neighborhoods.  
As a result, most of the foreign workers

dormitories are out of reach from the MRT lines, which creates dependencies on buses and private types of transport.

HDBs in 400m MRT catchment area:	18%
HDBs in 800m MRT catchment area:	70%
Dorms in 400m MRT catchment area:	7%
Dorms in 800m MRT catchment area:	23%





# Foreign Workers Transport: a Secluded Network

Work permit holders are generally provided with transportation between their residence and workplace by their employers. In most cases, workers of each company are grouped in the same dormitory in order to ease their transport.

Lorries are the most common option for the journey of construction workers as they can accommodate relatively

large groups of individuals and allow to carry some equipment along with the staff. This mode of transportation is always treated as an exception in road safety regulations. On the other hand, some dormitories arrange low-priced bus rides to their temporary residents on their days off.



Transportation  
Networks

■ Commercial Dormitory  
○ MRT  
~ Buses from Tuas Lodge I

0 40 80 km



1.



2.

1.  
Storyboard of a lorry ride  
for construction workers,  
from Marina Bay to Changi

2.  
Stickers showing capacity  
and security regulation on  
the back of a lorry

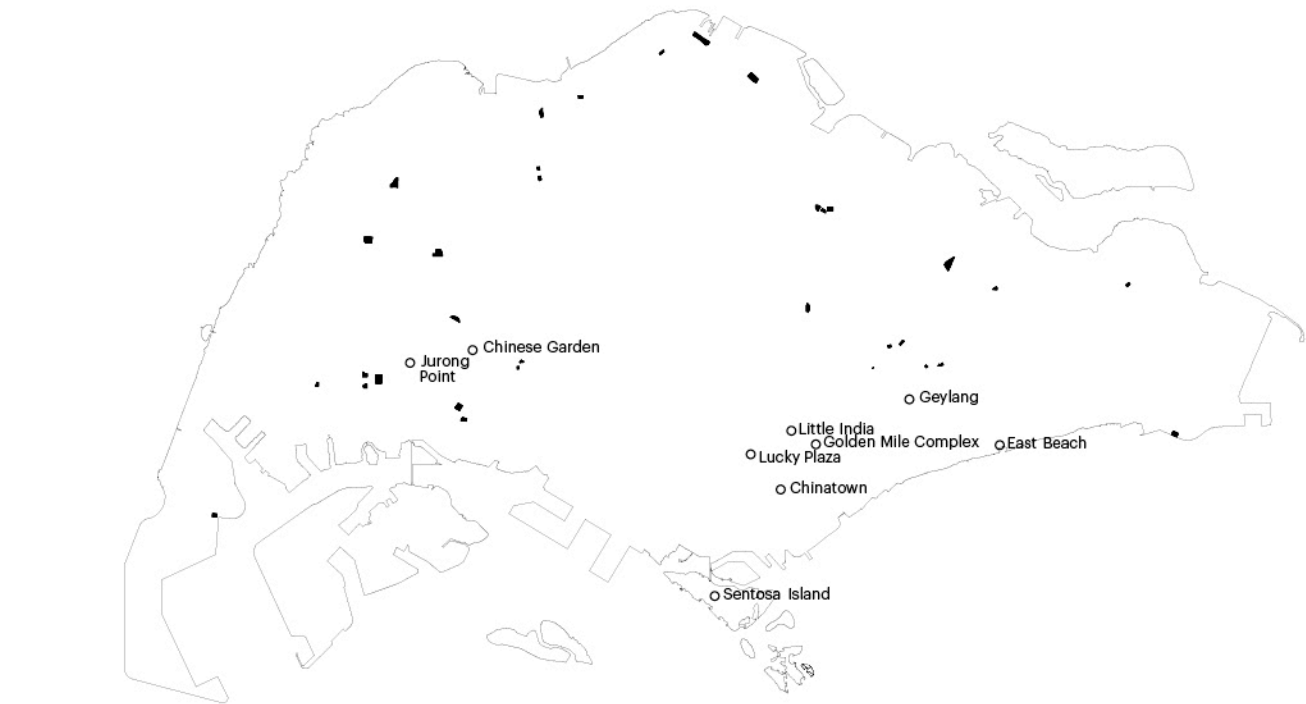


# Gathering Points: Merging with the City

While most of them live on the outskirts of the island, work permit holders tend to gather in a few places on their free time, usually on Sundays.

Each community of migrants in Singapore tends to have its own preferred gathering places, such as Little India for the Indians and Bangladeshis, or the Golden Mile Complex for the Thais. But we noted that foreign workers

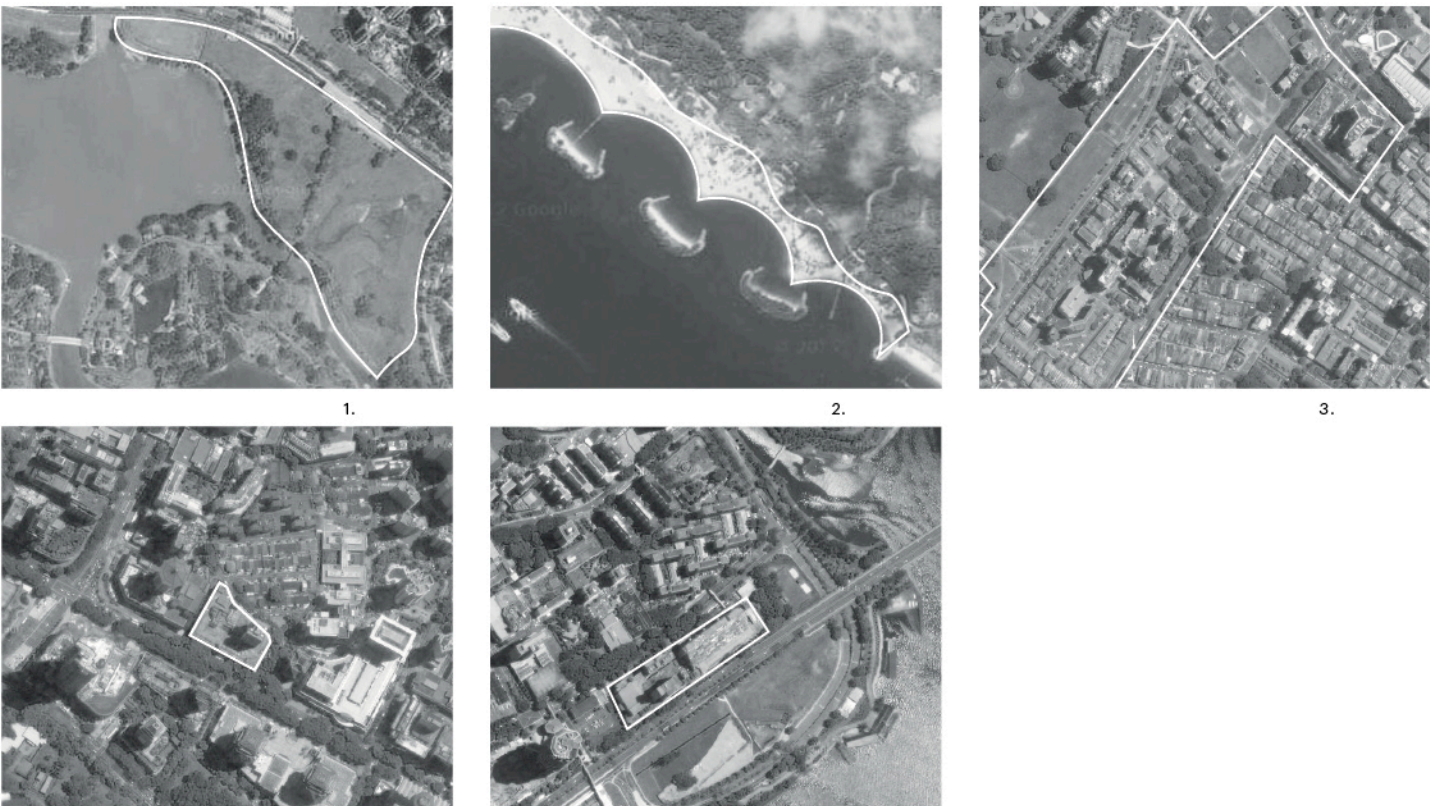
also gather in other, less ethnically-oriented places, such as Jurong Point Mall or Chinese Garden, which can probably be explained based on their strategic location in relation to dormitories. Those places, together with bathing opportunities such as East Beach and Sentosa Island, are the ones where migrant workers can mingle the most with the rest of the population of Singapore.



## Gathering Points

- Commercial Dormitory
- Important Gathering Points

0 40 80 km



1. Chinese Garden
2. Sentosa Beach
3. Little India, Tamil community
4. Lucky Plaza, Filipino community
5. Golden Mile Complex, Thai community





Little India, Sunday

Being the main gathering area of the Indian and Bangladeshi communities in Singapore, this neighbourhood sees dozens of busses and lorries bringing in flocks of migrant workers each Sunday. They mainly come here to be with friends, buy things and remit money.

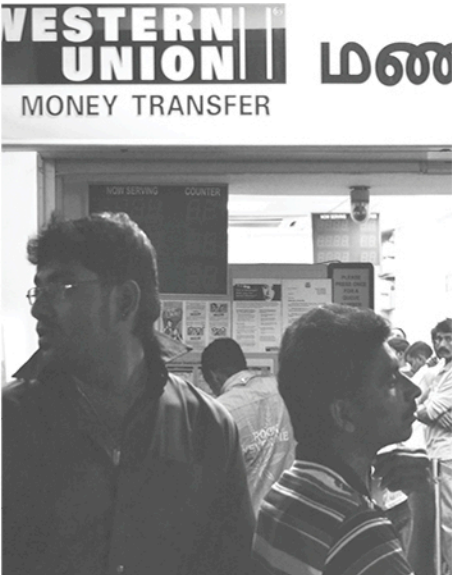
Remittance is done either through formal offices or through 'friends', who travel with money on a regular basis and charge a lower rate.



1.



2.



3.



4.

- 1. Gholia's Village
- 2. Farrer Park
- 3. Wester Union
- 4. Northumberland Road



# A Lucrative Subsistence Dwelling

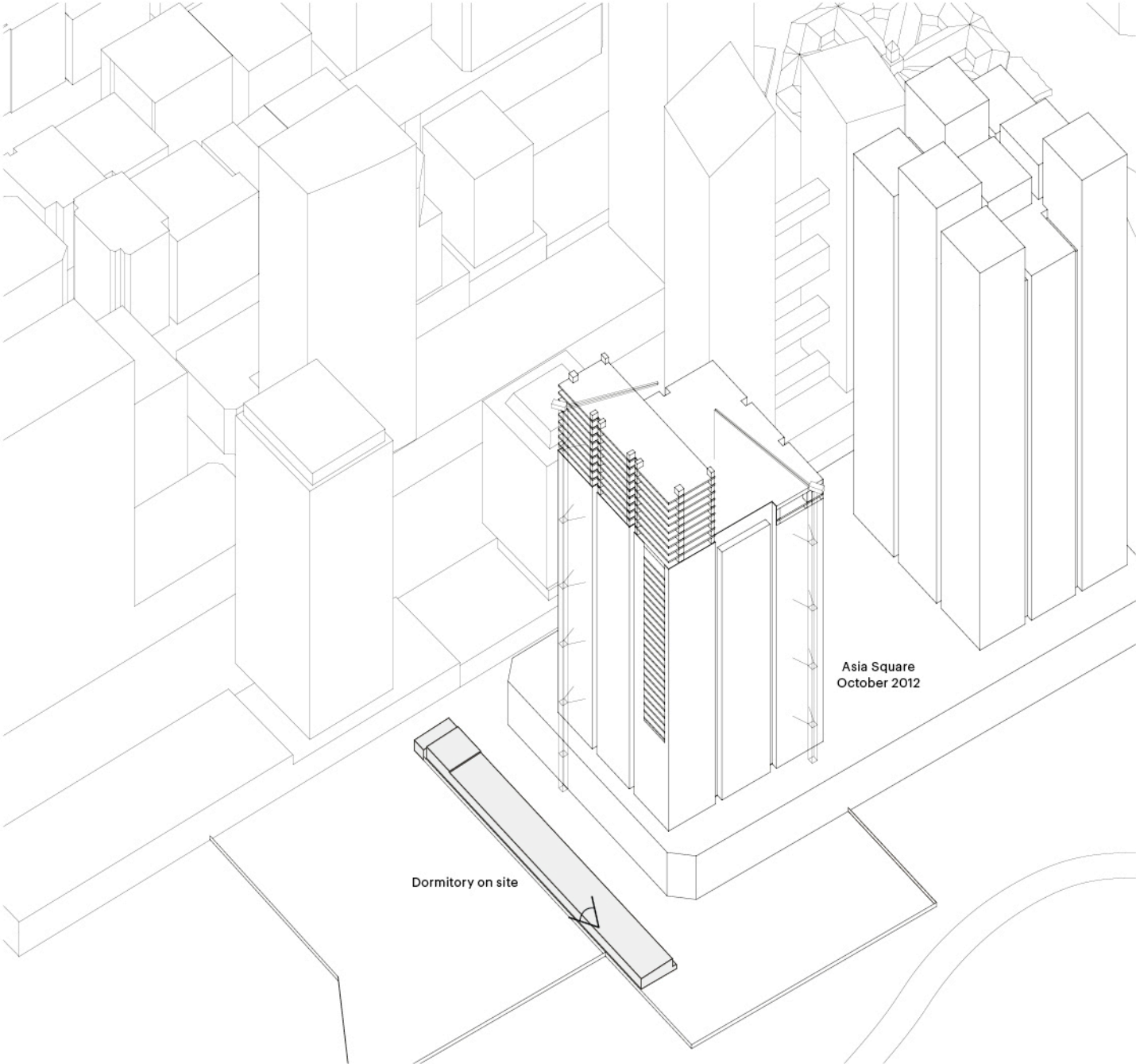
Going back for further explorations of Asia Square in the city center, we focused on the trompe-l'oeil partition wall and what the construction site it aimed to conceal. There, we realized that a hundred-and-twenty-meter-long monolith of metal and fabric was sitting next to the forthcoming tower. On closer look, we understood that it was a building made of containers and scaffolding elements, and that it was meant to house about four or five hundred con-



Container dormitory on Asia Square construction site

struction workers of the different companies which were occupying the site. Each container is designated to a company and can house about ten to twelve workers. Singapore is now in a difficult transitory period concerning foreign workers accommodation. On the one hand, there seems to be a political intention to convert to more gratifying solutions in terms of image, such as commercial dormitories. On the other hand, the offer for such dormitories is

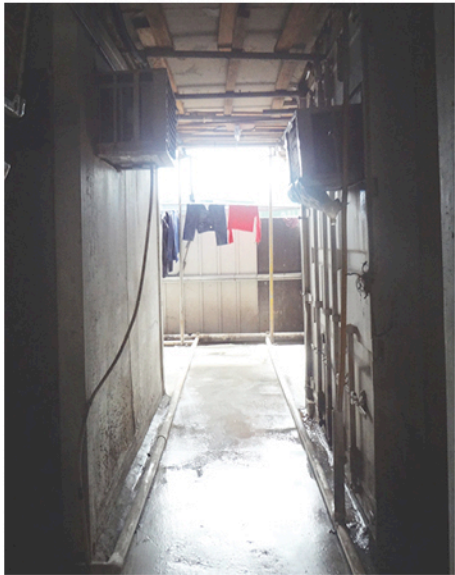
struggling to expand because of the very little amount of land that is released for this use. This chapter is a study on this evolution of the housing offer through case studies. Going from informal but regulated options, to more systematic, commercial ones.







Dormitory on a construction site in Asia Square. Photographs taken during a clandestine visit.



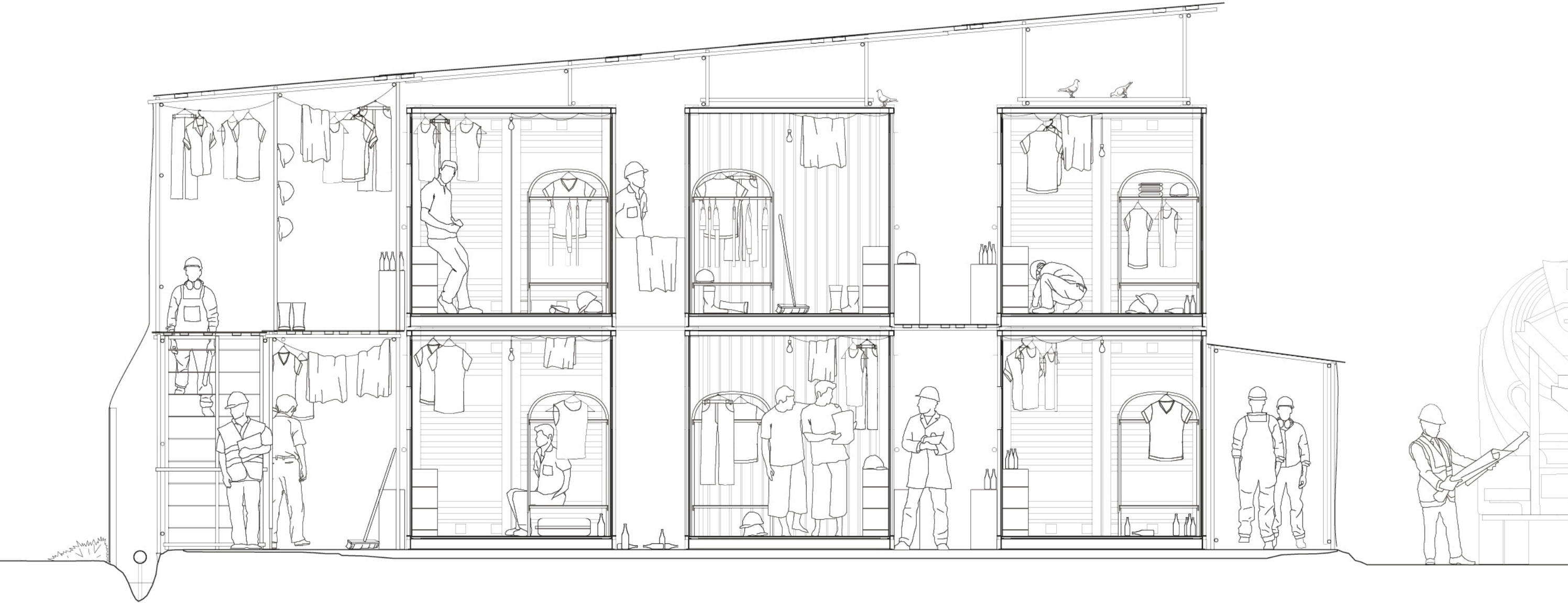
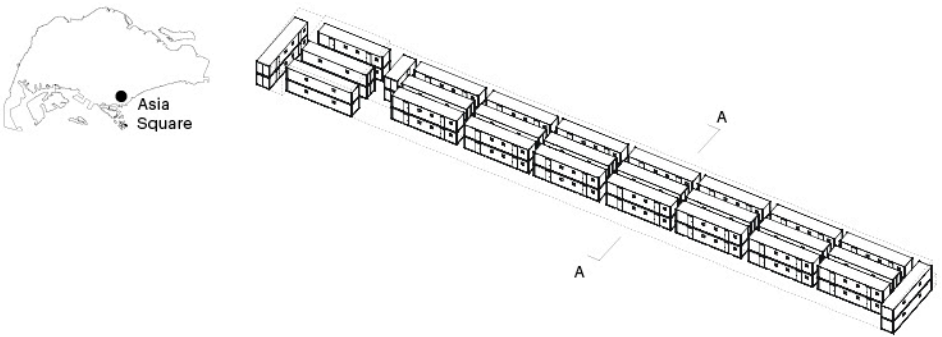


# Asia Square: Dormitory as Mobile Inset

The construction site is enclosed and a security guard controls its entrances. The dormitory inserted in this compound is a purely functional devise meant to serve for a set amount of time before being moved to the next construction site.

It is therefore precarious, yet, very efficient. It allows savings on the cost and time of commuting.

A Prefabricated Housing Model  
Two layers of containers are placed on the site. A scaffolding-like structure is then constructed around the containers in order to give access to the second level and to create an enclosed habitat, complete with sheet metal as roof and fabric as façade.  
A few containers on each end are reserved for communal bathrooms and storage.





# Foreign Workers Housing: Restrained Options

According to Singapore's Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, all employers of work permit holders "shall ensure that the foreign employee has acceptable accommodation. Such accommodation must be consistent with any written law, regulation, directive, guideline, circular or other similar instrument issued by the Government". Domestic workers usually live in their employer's house, but other work permit holders require different solutions.

This situation is put in perspective by the fact that, thanks to its HDB program, Singapore has one of the highest rates of residents living in public housing in the world (83%), as well as one of the highest home-ownership rates for its resident population (89%).



Permanent Commercial Dormitories  
These are commercial dormitories sitting on a 30-year-lease plot of land.  
The current rental price of a bed is about 200 to 250 SGD per month, and there are about 85'000 beds available.



Temporary Commercial Dormitories  
These are commercial dormitories sitting on a 9-year-lease plot of land.  
The current rental price of a bed is about 200 to 250 SGD, and there are about 90'000 beds available.



Short-Term Quarters  
According to governmental guidelines, temporary dormitories can be built on construction sites or "temporary occupation licence" land, in order to house the needed workforce of a certain activity, such as construction work.

## Accomodation Types



Industrial Quarters  
40% of each industrial estate can be converted into dormitories, following governmental guidelines.  
Depending on their zoning situation, the beds of those dormitories are either open to be rented by any employer, or exclusively dedicated to workers of the said industrial estate.



Private Residences  
This comprises shophouses, semi or fully detached houses, condominiums and other private estates, which are owned or rent by the employer or the worker.  
Primarily concerns employment pass holders who live in condominiums and domestic workers, who are generally housed in their workplace.



HDB Flats  
About 5% of the inhabitants of HDB flats are foreigners who subrent rooms or flats to Singaporean tenants.  
Most of them are either S pass or employment pass holders, but some are work permit holders. Nevertheless, "foreign construction workers (non-Malaysian) are not allowed to be sub-tenants of HDB flats".





Tuas Lodge 1

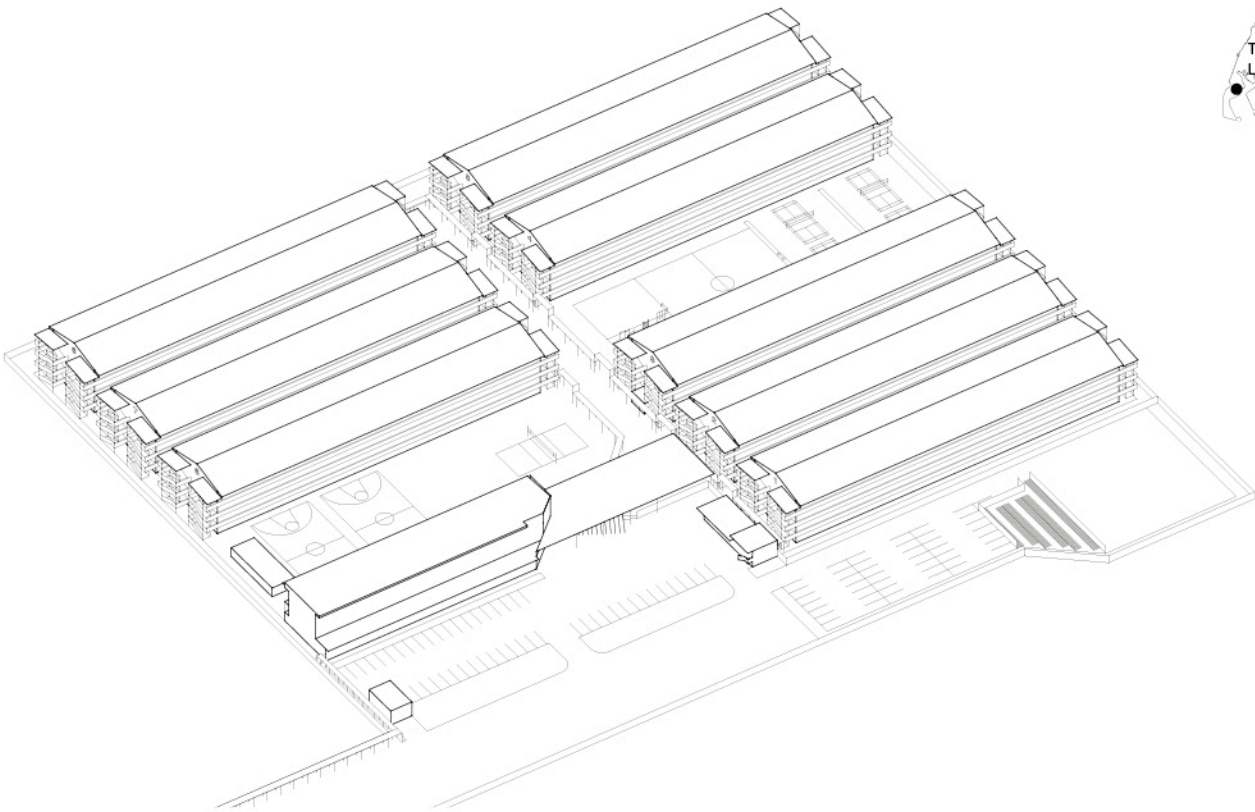




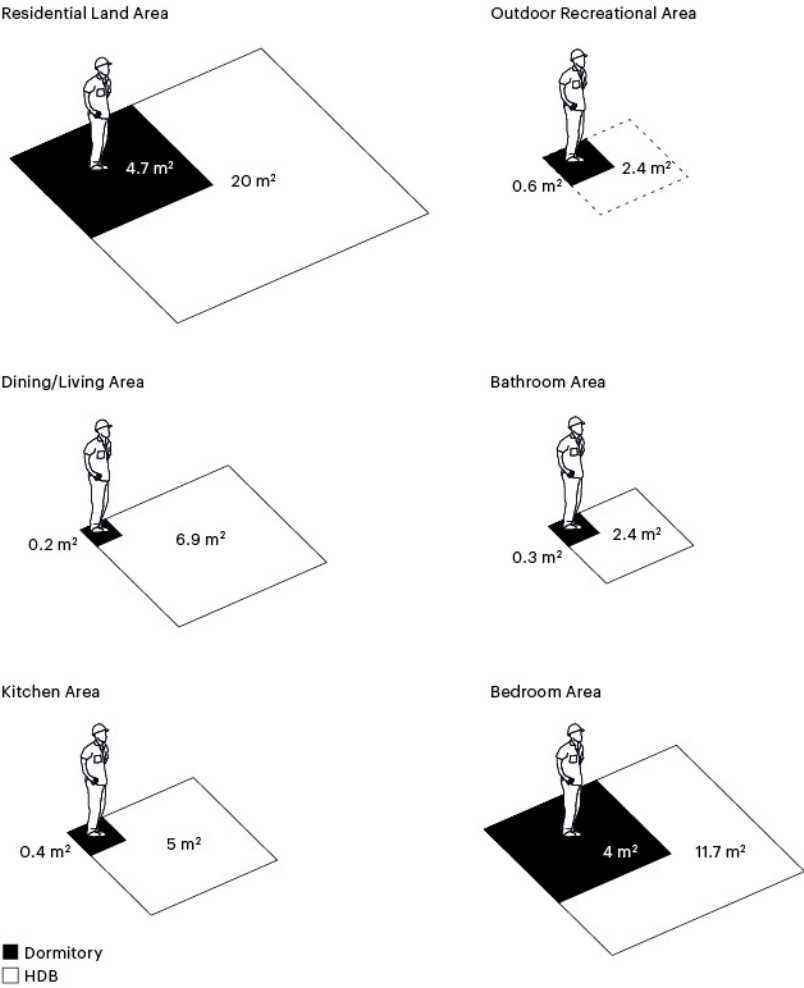
# Tuas Lodge 1: Dormitory as Satellite

Tuas Lodge 1 is a commercial dormitory, which means that several dozens of employers rent rooms there in order to house their foreign workers. In total, about eight thousand six hundred construction workers are living on this thirty-

thousand-square-meter piece of land.  
The plot is situated in Tuas, arguably the most remote piece of reclaimed land in Singapore's territory.



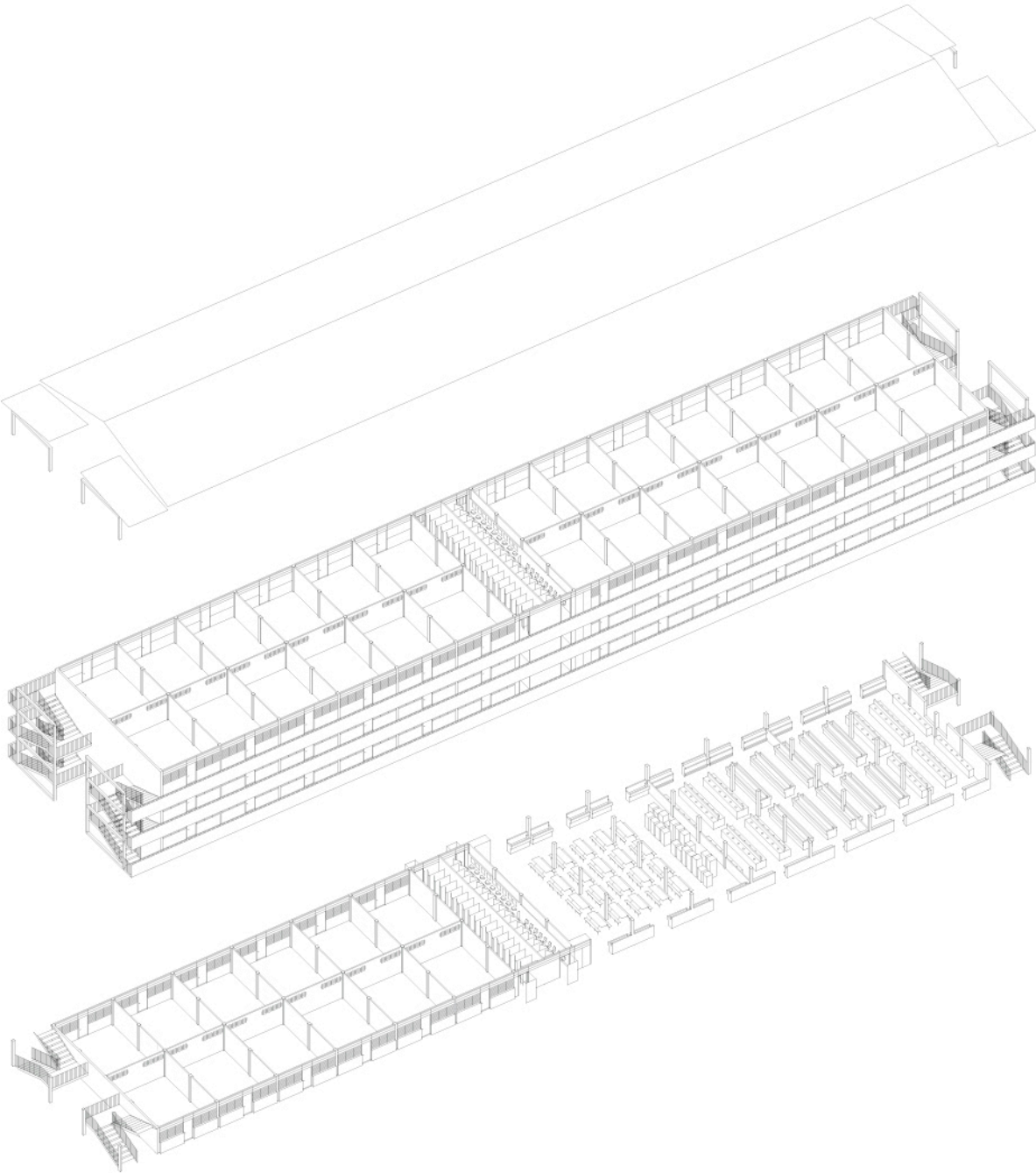
Another Prefabricated Housing Model  
On top of a concrete slab, an assemblage of steel structural elements and sandwich panels is mounted. The whole construction process takes about a week and the total price of the building material is about sixty Singapore dollars per square meter, which comes to about three million dollars for the whole complex.



## A New Housing Standard

Several governmental agencies dictate guidelines for foreign workers dormitories in terms of square meters per inhabitant. Altogether, those regulations led to a new standard of housing in the last few years with its distinctive typologies.  
We compared this standard with HDB flats, which house 83% of the resident population.





Block Breakdown  
Each block consists of 4 floors of bedrooms.  
The only exceptions are the bathrooms on  
each floor and the cooking-and-dining areas,  
which takes up half of the ground floor.

18 Washbasins



18 Urinals



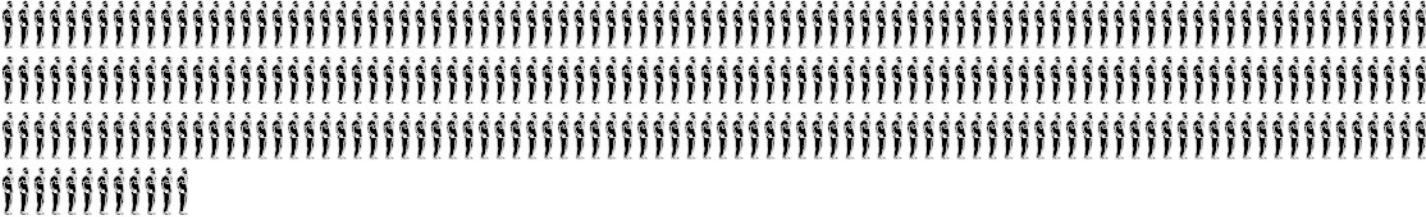
18 Toilets



18 Showers



312 Men



Floor Breakdown

Each typical floor is divided in 26 identical  
rooms. Each room houses 12 workers. In the  
middle of the floor, an aisle leads to a com-  
mon bathroom. There is approximately one  
set of washbasins, toilet, urinal and shower  
for 17 inhabitants.



One Bedroom

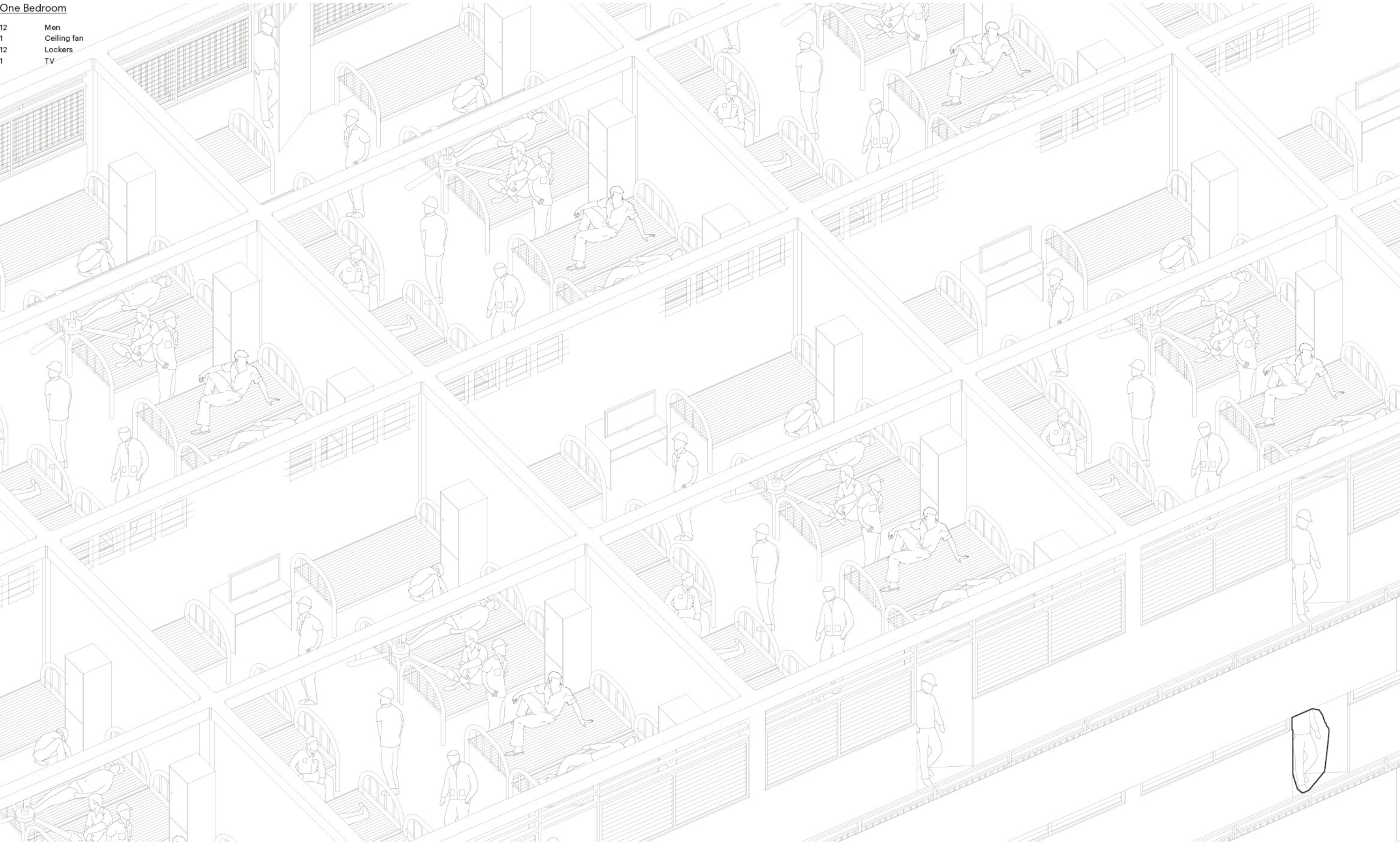
- 1 Ceiling fan
- 12 Lockers
- 1 TV





One Bedroom

- 12 Men
- 1 Ceiling fan
- 12 Lockers
- 1 TV



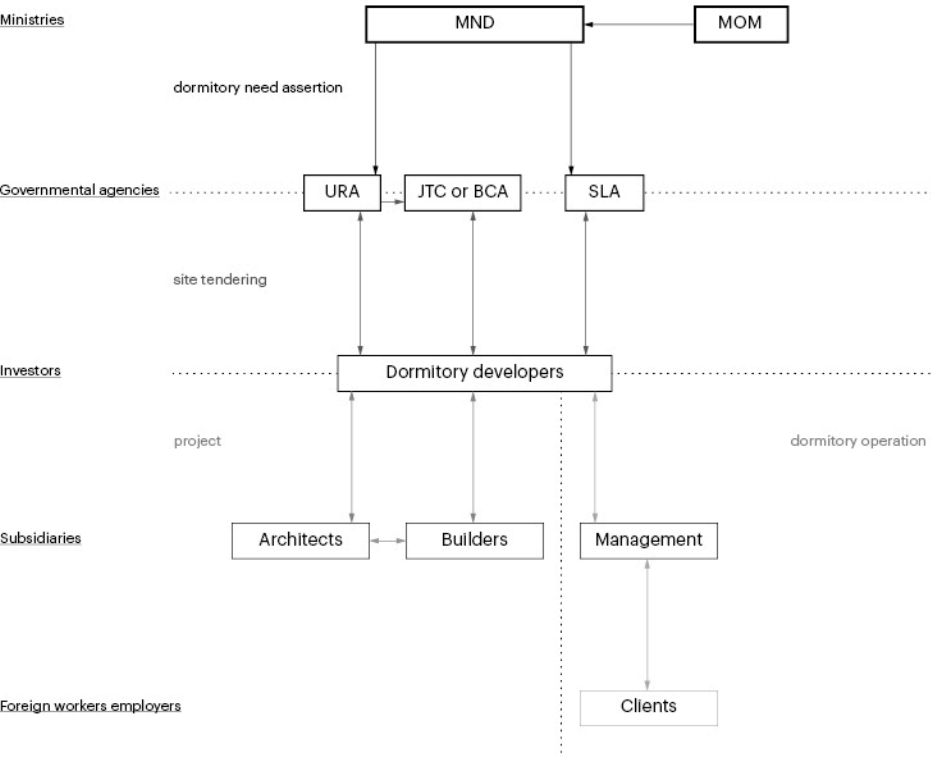


# Commercial Dormitories: An Emerging Business

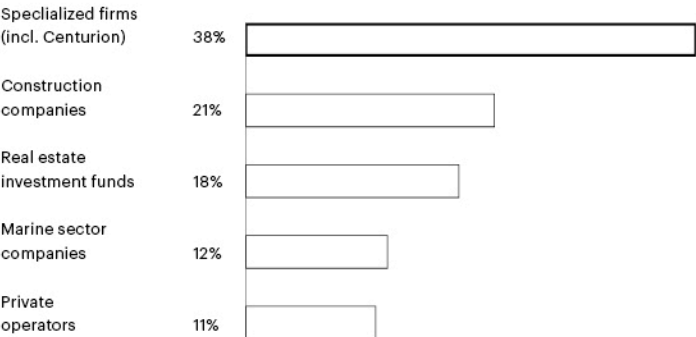
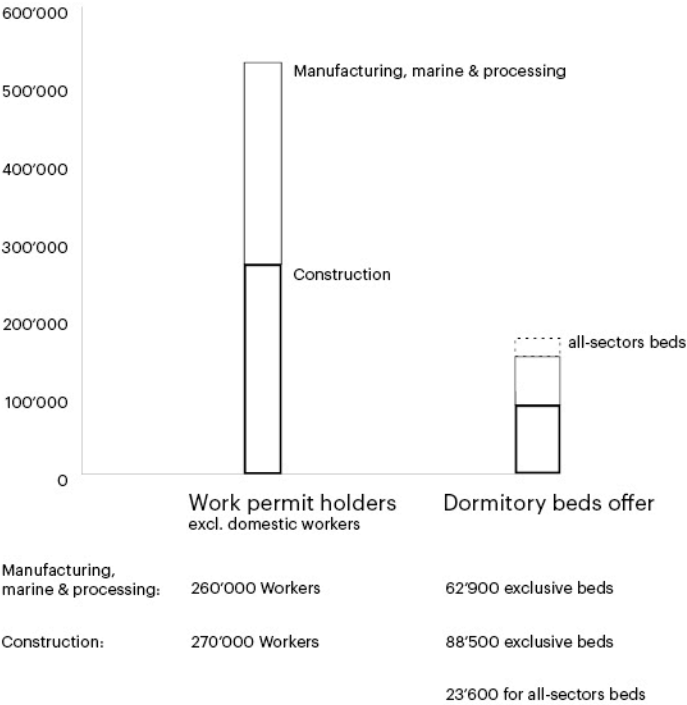
The ownership and management of dormitories is proving to be a very lucrative business in Singapore for two main reasons.

First, the extreme density of those dormitories allows for an inflated leasing market, where rooms can rent out for as high as three thousand dollars per month, for situations where these are occupied by as many as twelve people.

Secondly, the gap between offer and demand drives the rental prices higher every year. This shortage of beds is once again a consequence of the very small number of plots given up by the governmental agencies for this use (recently about one or two sites per year).



- BCA Building and Construction Authority
- JTC Jurong Town Corporation Authority
- MND Ministry of National Development
- MOM Ministry of Manpower
- SLA Singapore Land Authority
- URA Urban Redevelopment Authority



## Supply & Demand

Singapore now has more than a half million foreign workers that would ideally be placed in dormitories. However, due to the land planning constraint, less than two hundred thousand beds are currently available.

Other constraints exist: When a plot of land is leased for dormitories by the Building Construction Authority, it is generally reserved for workers of the construction sector, while the JTC applies the same kind of exclusivity to the industrial sector. Aside from commercial constraint, this adds to the segmentation of the population of foreign workers in Singapore.

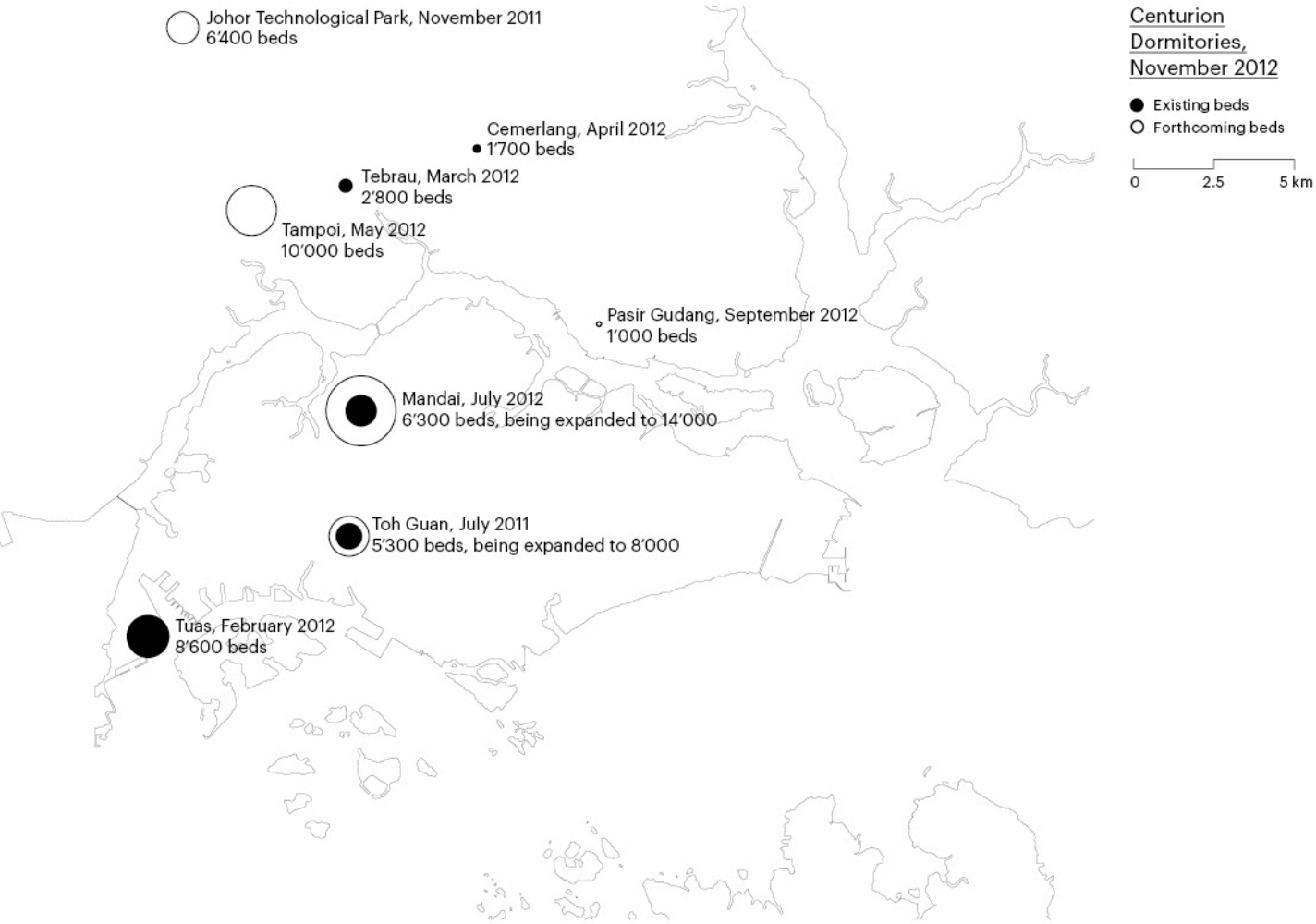
## Commercial Dormitory Ownership

In recent years, several actors have entered the dormitory business, either through calculated financial strategies or 'by chance'.

Indeed, some construction and marine sector companies in need of beds for their own workers have been at the front-row of this nascent market. For example, TTJ, "one the largest structural steel fabricators in Singapore", now earns about 14 percent of its revenue from the operation of two dormitories.

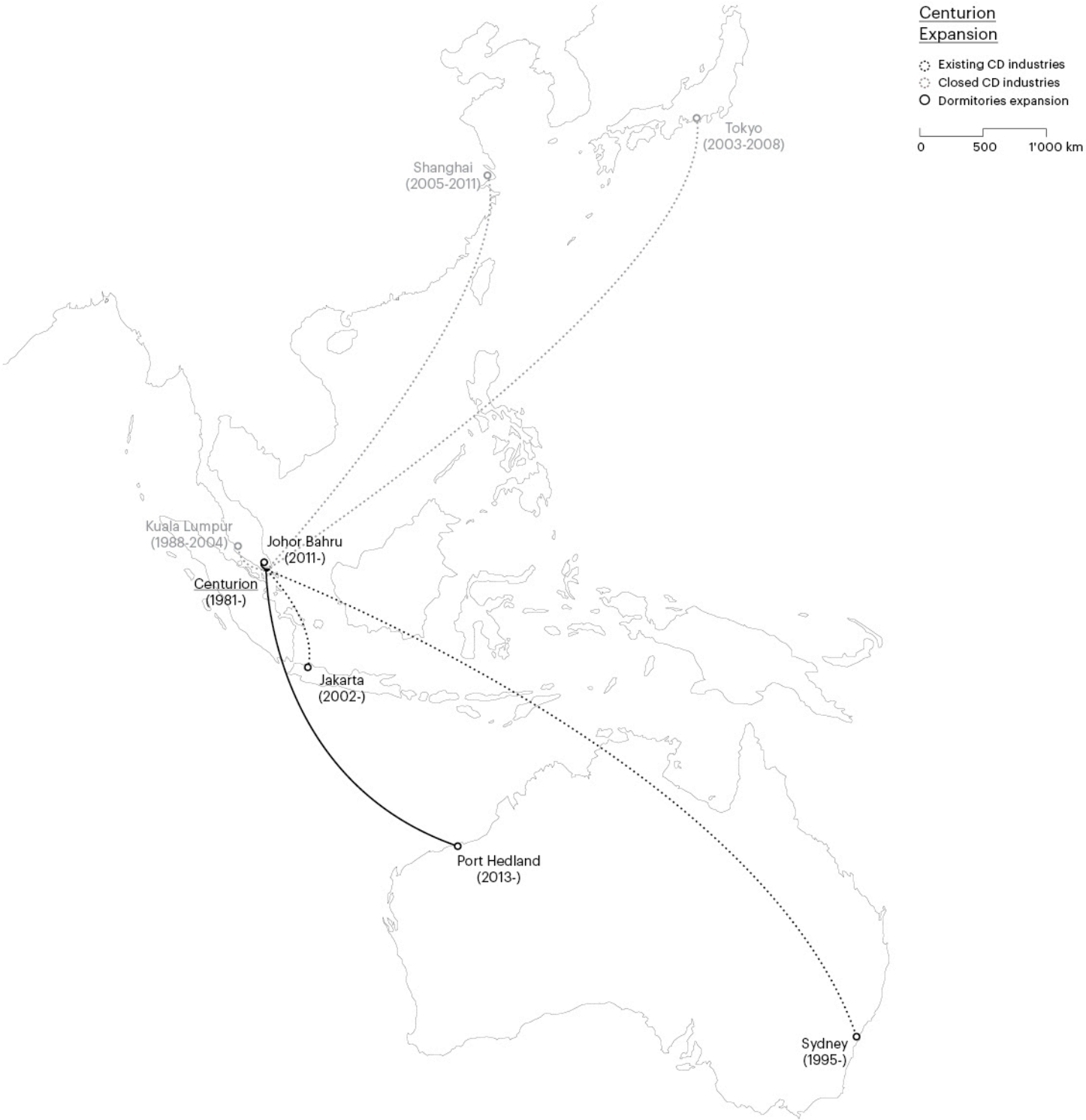
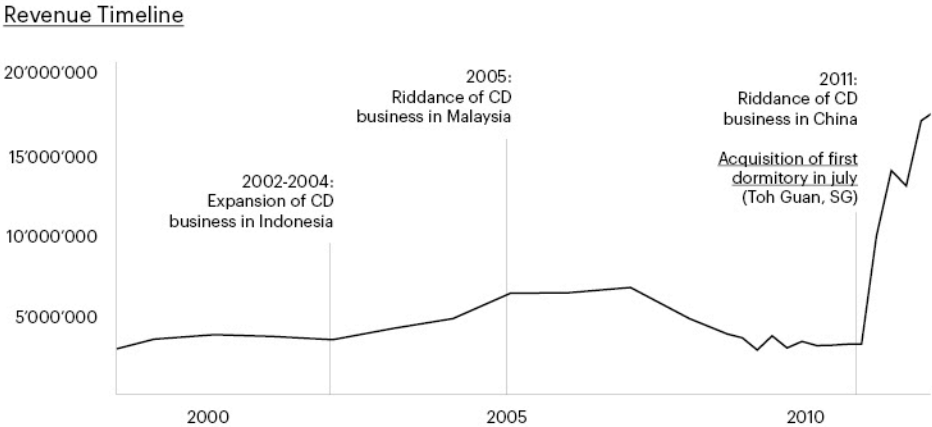
On the other hand, real estate investment funds are buying and selling permanent dormitories at enormous profit.





**Centurion**  
Centurion is one of those companies that entered the dormitory business 'by chance'. As one of the main CD fabricators in South-east Asia, it had to find ways to diversify when the concurrence from online markets became too important.

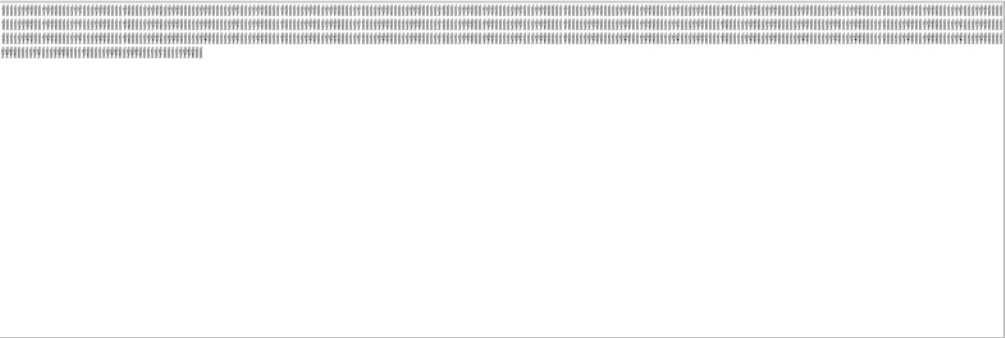
After the acquisition of a dormitory in 2011, they have seized every opportunity to acquire other ones. They are now heading towards the total conversion of their business priorities to refocus on dormitories. The shortage of land for new dormitories in Singapore is now making them expand overseas.





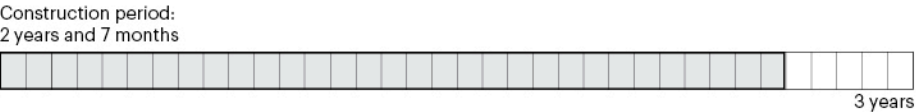
The Condominium:  
The Nexus

Capacity:  
242 units for about 800 inhabitants

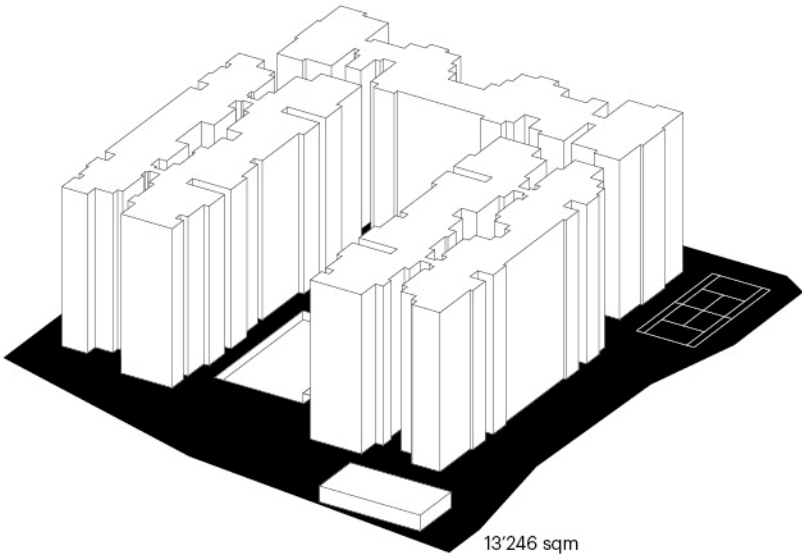


Construction cost:  
45'000'000 SGD

Estimated total revenue  
from unit sales:  
194'000'000 SGD



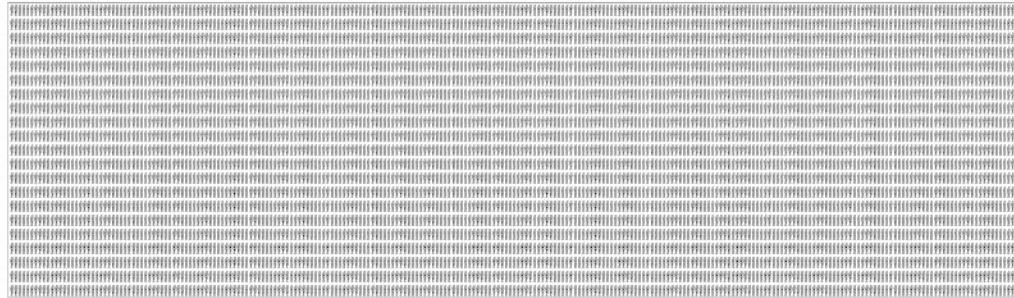
Average unit pricing at completion: 800'000 SGD



13'246 sqm

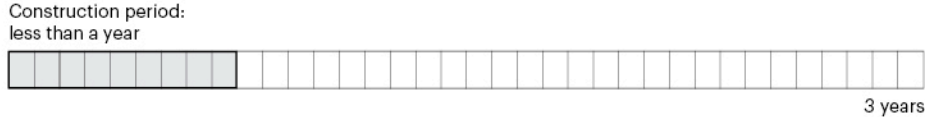
The Workers' Dormitory:  
Toh Guan Westlite

Capacity:  
448 units for about 5'300 inhabitants

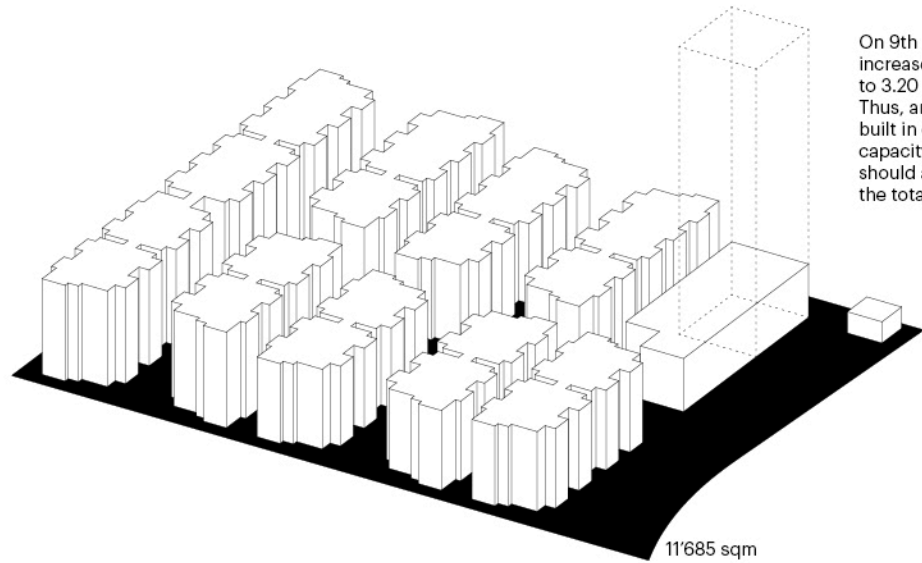


Construction cost:  
15'000'000 SGD

Estimated total revenue  
from 30 years of service:  
477'000'000 SGD



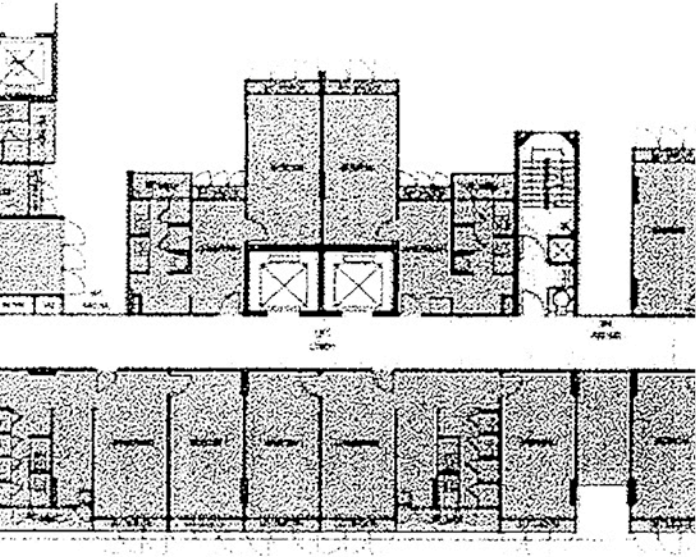
Monthly price per bed: 250 SGD



11'685 sqm

On 9th March 2011, permission to increase the plot ratio from 2.00 to 3.20 was granted by the URA. Thus, an 18-storey tower is being built in order to expand the capacity to 8'000 beds, which should add about 150M SGD to the total revenue.





Toh Guan Westlite



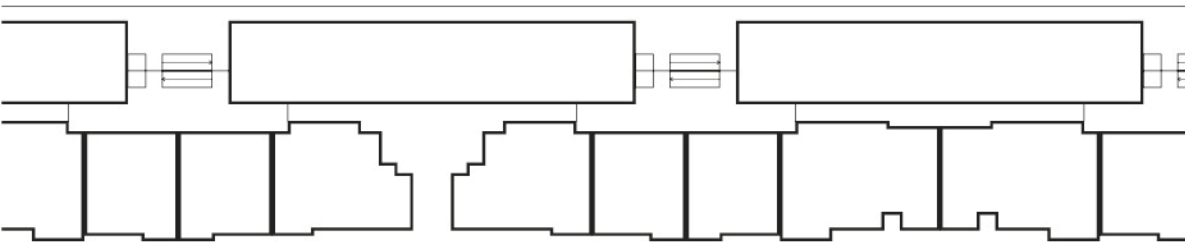
The Nexus condominium

Condominium  
con·do·min·i·um *noun* \kăn-dœ-'mi-nē-œm\  
*plural* con·do·min·iums *also* con·do·min·ia

1  
a: joint dominion; *especially* : joint sov-  
erignty by two or more nations  
b: a government operating under joint rule

2  
a politically dependent territory under con-  
dominium

3  
a: individual ownership of a unit in a multi-  
nit structure (as an apartment building) or  
on land owned in common (as a town house  
complex); *also* : a unit so owned  
b: a building containing condominiums



Speculative typology

Addendum: A Speculative Typology

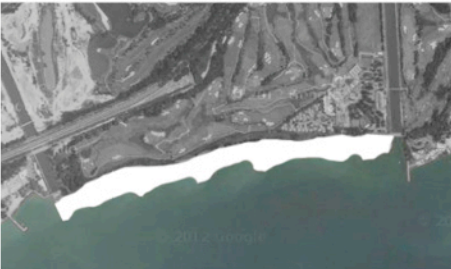
One could imagine various strategies to increase Singa-  
pore's supply of dormitories without compromising the rest  
of its residential share.

Our speculative scenario consists in reducing the river  
that separates the two ends of the housing spectrum in  
Singapore: foreign worker housings and condominiums.  
One can observe that those two types employ very similar  
means to create a secured environment, as well as to in-  
crease the housing density (and the subsequent real-estate  
profit). For efficiency in construction, the common choice  
for both typologies is to use the same plan on each storey  
of the building.

Thus, the two types of housing could be disposed back  
to back, each facing a different part of the city. The result-  
ing two-faced typology then offers the opportunity of be-  
ing used as an urban device: In each situation, the areas on  
each side of the system would be provided with a horizon  
of housing, which could perhaps alter the relationship be-  
tween them.



Left:  
"Traditional" situation  
reinvented:  
condos facing residential  
area, dormitories facing  
industrial area.



Right:  
Housing as frontier:  
condos facing inland,  
dormitories facing the  
open sea.



# Two Fields of Control

## The Art Of Delegation

For both fields of action, the private sector serves as a convenient mediator between the Singaporean state and its foreign workforce. Regulations are applied to employers and service-providers, which in turn have the responsibility of dealing with the migrant workers. The consequence of this situation is twofold:

On the one hand, as opposed to traditional welfare systems, it sustains the illusion that the living and employment conditions of foreign workers are resulting from the economical imperatives and good will of a few private companies.

On the other hand, it creates a strong mutual dependency between the employers and their foreign employees: The employers need their workers to comply to the regulations in order to avoid fines. And the workers can only count on their employer to fulfil some of their most basic needs.

## Administrative Control

A system of classification and rationing of the foreign workforce creates a strong hierarchy in the human resources of the country.

## Urban Control

Precise management of land planning and housing regulations is used in ways which tend to seclude the foreign workforce in the Singaporean territory.

