

Domain Area: Singapore: Everyday Diversity

Topic: Protecting Our Biodiversity

Guiding Question: How might we balance economic development with protecting our flora and fauna?

General Information

In 2015, Singapore was recognized by the Siemens-Economist Intelligence Unit as Asia's greenest city, symbolizing its success in developing from a 'third world' country into a modern 'Garden City'.¹ Singapore's government has adopted numerous climate policies and at present, Singapore only contributes to 0.11% of global greenhouse gas emissions.² Additionally, the government has increased the construction of green spaces such as parks and gardens. From 1975 to 2014, the number of parks has increased from 13 to 330 and the total area of green spaces has increased from 879 to 9707 hectares.³

However, critics argue that these are merely beautification projects that ignore the conservation of natural habitats and the biodiversity within them.⁴ Moreover, Singapore's developmental state model and its emphasis on economic development have led to climate policies prioritizing economic growth over the protection of our flora and fauna.⁵ As a result, natural habitats such as mangrove swamps and forests only make up an estimated 1.5% of Singapore's total land area, with mangrove swamps areas decreasing from 63 square kilometres in 1953 to just 6.59 square kilometres in 2007.⁶ The emphasis on economic development encourages society to develop an anthropocentric view towards nature – one which places little value on the preservation of natural habitats and the biodiversity within them.⁷

Thus, more can be done when it comes to protecting ecosystems and biodiversity. The main challenge is whether policymakers will be able to balance this aim with Singapore's economic

¹ Heejin Han, "Singapore, a Garden City: Authoritarian Environmentalism in a Developmental State," *The Journal of Environment & Development* 26, no. 1 (2017): 18.

² Belicia Teo and Sulfikar Amir, "Contesting Relations of Definition: Climate Risk and Subpolitics in Singapore," *Environmental Sociology* 7, no. 3 (2021): 206.

³ Han, p. 17.

⁴ Han, p. 18.

⁵ Han, p. 19.

⁶ D.A. Friess, "Singapore as a long-term case study for tropical urban ecosystem services," *Urban Ecosystem* 20 (2017): 279.

⁷ Teo and Amir, p. 206.



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development. This will be challenging as the contest between economic development and conservation is traditionally viewed as a zero-sum game.

Scope of Policy Proposal

You should consider the following points and address these in your policy proposal. If you are intending to take on a specific perspective (e.g., a certain Ministry, organisation), do state it clearly in your proposal.

- 1) **Economic feasibility:** Your policy should strive to protect ecological systems and biodiversity living in natural habitats while not risking the prospect of creating negative economic growth. Essentially, aim for a green growth policy which allows continued economic expansion while reducing damage done to ecology and biodiversity.
- 2) **Inclusivity in policymaking and policy evaluation process:** Your policy should aim to allow for more participation from citizens and civil society or environmental groups. Additionally, your policy should create a better network of communication between these groups and the government to include them in the policy formulation and policy evaluation of both urban development and climate policies.
- 3) **Reshaping policy priorities and conversations:** Your policy should strive to create a state and society which places moral consideration and value towards the protection of our flora and fauna.

Points of Interest

- Identifying which aspects of local biodiversity require more urgent attention.
- Managing the interactions between nature and society where they physically overlap.
- Delineating between the priorities of beautification and sustainability in green projects.





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