

# Placemaking in the Terrarium

## Resident Perceptions of Public Housing Garden Spaces in Post-Pandemic Singapore

### AUTHOR

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Fitness stations arranged linearly along the building orientation of Tampines Greenverge



Seating areas along walkway exposed to the units above at Tampines Greenverge

AS WE CONTINUE ELEVATING OUR CITY, WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC SPACE IN HDB LOOK LIKE?

IS PLACEMAKING DICTATED BY PLANNERS OR DRIVEN BY INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES?



TAMPINES GREENVERGE  
Staircase leading to the 2nd storey E-Deck

### INTRODUCTION

Responding to density, **elevated public spaces** are becoming prominent features in developing new public housing estates in **Singapore**. How this evolving design affects the social dynamics of HDB parks and public spaces deserves an examination, especially potential **contradictions between planners' conceptions and users' perceptions of these spaces**.

### TANGIBLES

#### Connection & Awareness

Elevation presented a notable disconnection from the daily corridor of activity that reduces users' awareness and willingness for deliberate usage.

#### Versatility & Fragmentation

Smaller scale and spatial layout limit the types of activity and appropriation by different users as facilities are perceived as singular in function and overly manicured.

#### Privacy & Observations

Intimate spaces must be coupled with visibility to observe the surroundings and not be isolated from the rest of other activities.



Children "invading" the fitness stations for their play in Tampines Central Park

### THE TERRARIUM

#### Plasticity

The inherent plasticity in shaping ideals imbues opportunities for experimentation of new typologies to create new experiences. It must consider beyond replicating desired architectural and spatial features with a deeper understanding of residents' reading.

#### New Form of Public Space

Physical presence and participation is not the only measure of public space success. Placemaking and community persist with individuals curating their level of involvement, empowered by new digital platforms. Space practitioners must acknowledge that placemaking exists on a spectrum influenced by individuals' agency.

#### Invisible Ownership

Ownership is practised through appropriation and co-existence. It is likewise exhibited through constant daily observations, familiarity with implicit norms and rules. These contribute to collective wisdom in an organised functioning public space unique to each HDB estate.

### OBJECTIVE & METHODOLOGY

Exploring the impact of elevation on perception and utilization, I study residents' experiences, focusing on environment decks and neighbourhood parks—representing elevated and at-grade park designs. Employing **structured observations, survey questionnaires, and in-depth interviews**, the data are analysed using **thematic analysis**.

### INTANGIBLES

#### Ideals & Imagination

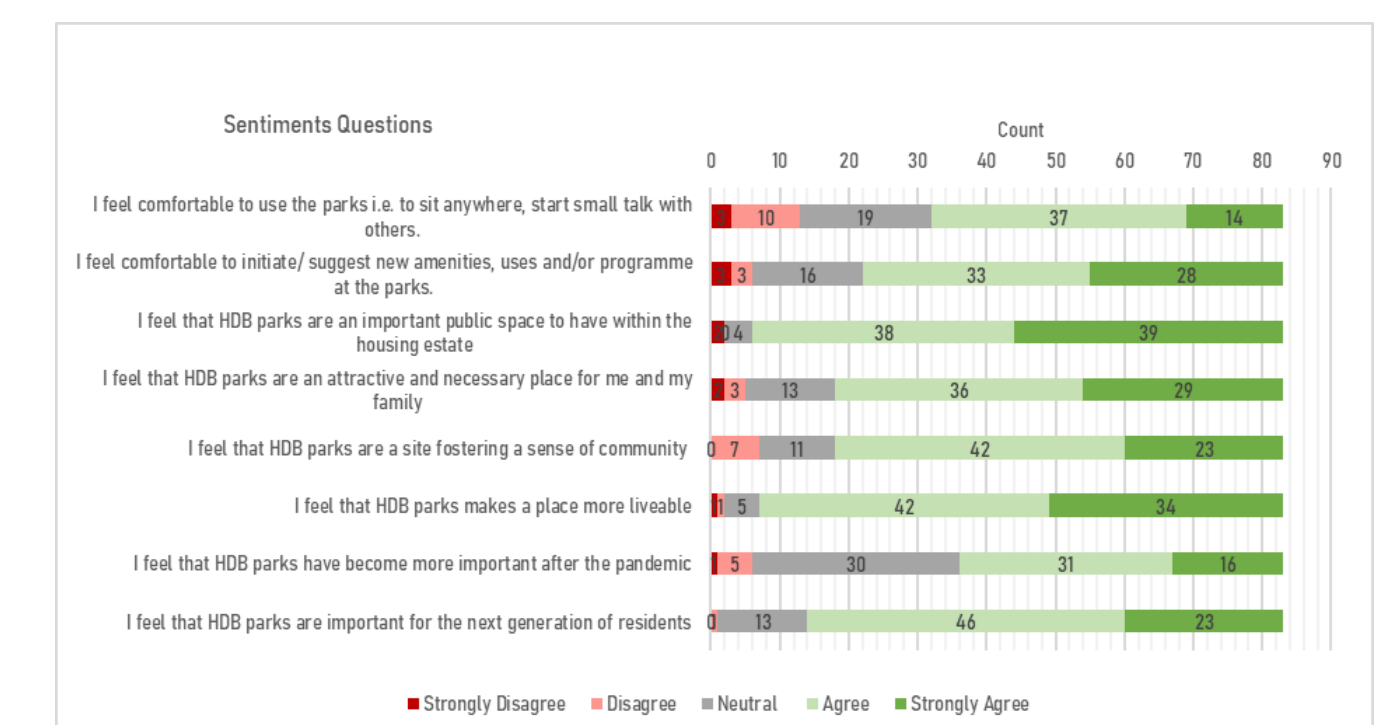
The preferences and ideals are influenced by nostalgia and experiences ingrained during formative years and mutate with each new encounter.

#### Pandemic & Influence

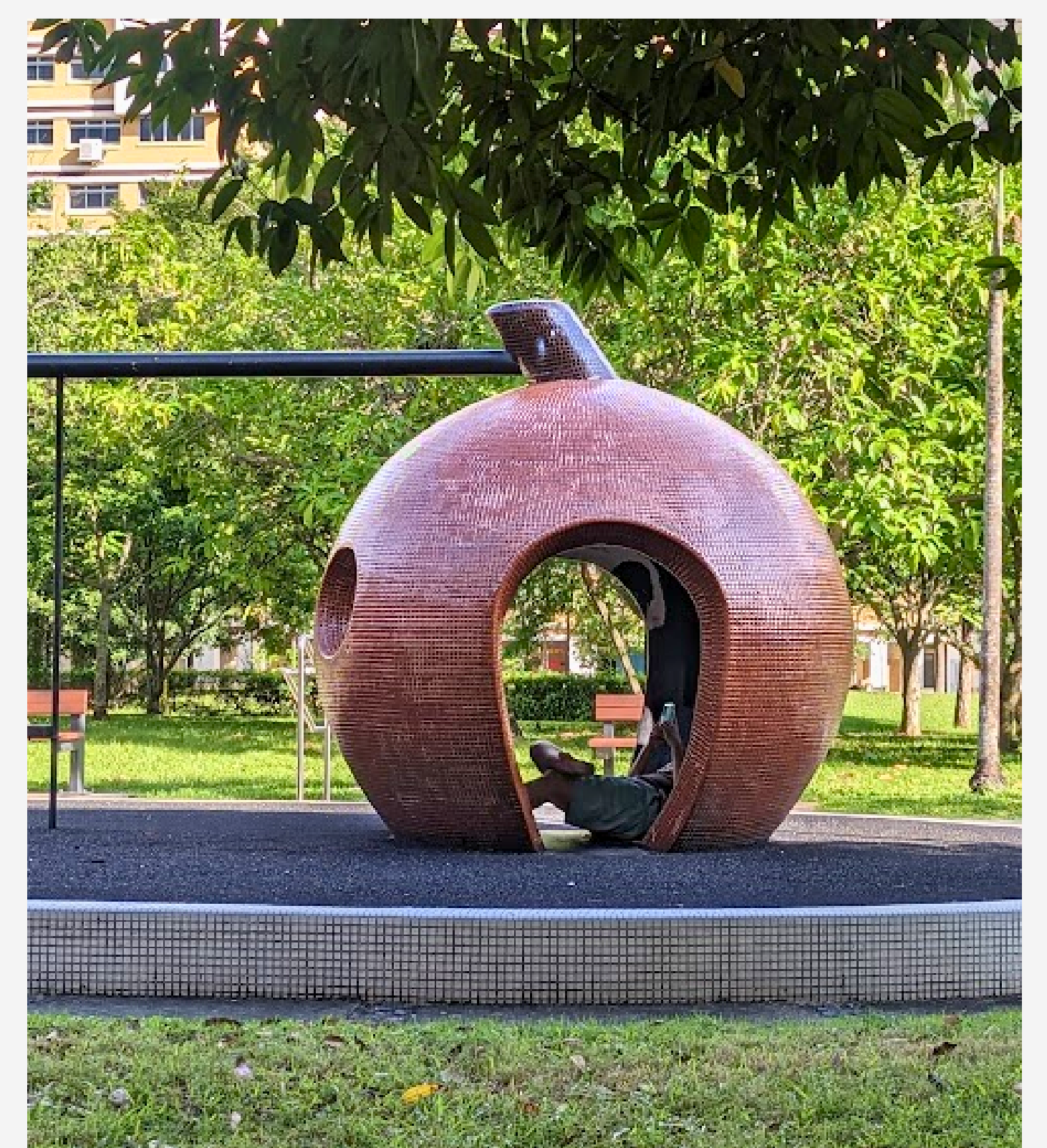
The pandemic imparted a new lens of viewing public space during this extraordinary time but did not fundamentally alter residents' perception.

#### Optimism & Indifference

Indifference is contradicted by optimism towards the importance and relevance of HDB parks and familiarity with the neighbourhood and happenings.



Collation of Sentiments Questions in the Survey Questionnaire



TAMPINES CENTRAL PARK  
Man resting inside the mangosteen playground