



Our SG Conversation for the Green Community

Our SG Conversation for the Green Community is organised by:

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in collaboration with:

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Introduction

The Green Community in Singapore is not easily defined.

Made up of various interest groups from nature conservation both land and marine, to the 'brown' interests of waste, water and energy management, to pet lovers, to proponents of sustainable food, urban farming and vegetarianism, getting together to discuss issues of common passion, interests and concerns, is no mean feat.

However, with the support of the "Our Singapore" Programme Office, and thanks to the Singapore Polytechnic Environment Club for providing the venue, on 19 January 2013, a stormy Saturday morning, close to 80 people representing such diverse interests, did just that.

Why did we see the urgent need to do so?

From the experience of those of us who had participated in the Our SG Conversation discussions, we realised that little or no mention is made to 'green' concerns.



There is also a growing realisation among the diverse members of the green community that in general, there is little awareness on the range of environmental concerns that should be in the consciousness of not just the average Singaporean, but more importantly, in the consciousness of policy makers.

It is also our realisation that more than ever, there is an urgent need to make our voices heard.

Our paradigm is simple - well-being goes beyond GDP growth.

It goes beyond fulfilling careers, emotional security, equitable distribution of wealth, affordable housing, healthcare and education.

It is about understanding, appreciating and including the intangible values of all non-human sentient beings and nature spaces, and being conscious of the impact of our every action, on something bigger than ourselves.

Our SG Conversation for the Green Community therefore sets out to discuss and show that environmental concerns are important for the reasons below:

- Environment as 'Biodiversity Centre'
- Environment as 'Free Eco Services Provider'
- Environment as Values-based Educator
- Environment as Healer and for Wellness
- Environment as Identity, Esteem, and Sense of Place and Home
- Environment as National Pride

All these reasons are reflected and elaborated in the views of the close to 80 participants under the broad heading of 'Heart', 'Engagement' and 'Policies' in the next three chapters.

HEART

About values, nature, animals, and society



HEART

Discussions on Past and Present



“I lived in the kampong last time, and reared chicken and planted vegetables. The youth of today are not connected. When I ask my students to draw a chicken, they drew KFC chicken. The youth do not have much interaction with the environment and nature. They’re more interested in playing with PSP, Xbox, social networking, Facebook, and Twitter. They’re not interested in going under the sun and getting their hands dirty.”

“It’s important to keep the population of cats in Singapore. Personally, I think it’s a major part of society, which gives us a biophilic relationship with nature. We shouldn’t see them as pests, so long as we can keep the population down. I feel it’s a great way of going beyond the human-human relationship and going into animal-human relationship. I feel that regulations for pets are important, and when you don’t look after them, they end up in the streets. A sense of social responsibility and public spiritedness for pet owners is important.”

“There is a physical way we view and experience environment, and a social construct, where it’s about how people relate to land and environment. Another interesting part is also how we relate to land: the metaphysical part, which I feel it’s missing in Singapore. We only think about physical and sometimes social but don’t delve into the metaphysical.

Why do people worship trees? Sometimes you have a sense of connection with the land, we think it’s hocus-pocus but it’s an important area to study, how we relate to land spiritually. When we talk about having reverence for nature, the metaphysical part is often taken out. There are many towns with secret water, stones, trees and that’s something we should not look at as superstitious, it’s a form of respect people have for nature. We should be broad enough to accept it.”

“My biggest concern: when I did tours around the Southern Islands in Singapore, I was one of the last batches of people to see the coral reefs there. The thing that made me sad was that with reclamation, it’s going to go without Singaporeans even knowing it’s there. My inspiration: as a lecturer at a Junior College, I find that there are loads of students who are not the typical “work in finance” type, but are inspired to work in natural sciences and they talk to me about it.”

“Singapore is a young nation and unlike other countries with a long history and culture that strengthen the social value. We have our short-cut economic success and now we need to build the values back via holistic approach.”

“Sustainability should not just be a hobby but a lifestyle. Education turned into action.
Love our home. Be responsible for the environment.”

"Comfort is a big challenge to the green movement.
A strong government makes people less self-motivated.
We are too dependent on the government and domestic workers.
Young people may be spoilt."

"People are getting involved and concerned.
More people are standing up for environmental causes.
Activists fighting for Chek Jawa.
People getting influenced from their experience.
Interest from the public.
Earth Hour where all the youths gather to participate.
Clean and green infrastructure of the country.
Students willing to do internship at the Kranji Countryside."

"Concerned about the "Don't Know, Don't Care" attitude of Singaporeans, contributing to a low awareness of sustainability issues which drives overconsumption and wasteful behaviour such as the wanton usage of plastic bags and the practice of unnecessarily leaving one's car engine running. Values distortion by the advertising industry in seeking to promote consumption habits, contributing to a low level of ecological awareness. Such a state of affairs made one feel discouraged and pessimistic about the future of Singapore."



“What are the common values or culture for Singapore? Be gracious. Individuals should take responsibility with a broader perspective, caring for others and not only their own.”

“The Singapore education system is not aligned with sustainability efforts, and rather solely geared towards economic imperatives.”

“My experience with children brought up in Switzerland where the norm was to return eating cutlery and utensils, but in Singapore, such behaviour is overridden by a herd mentality of following the norm.”

“Habitualising certain behaviours and creating positive experiences around them were essential to shaping behaviour.”

“My personal interest is in nature conservation and gardening, and while in Australia, I was inspired by the strong conservation efforts by the government because the Australian voters hold their government accountable for sustainability efforts. I feel that such a culture was lacking in Singapore.”

“Environment and Destruction – the attitude is that the economy is more important than preserving the heritage. It’s about the practical dollars and cents, and the intrinsic value is not considered enough, e.g.

preserving coral reefs, people ask “why?” since Singapore is not dependant on coastal systems.”

“Good to see more vegetarianism, and pamphlets and leaflets to promote eating less meat. But still depressing to see stuff like animal abuse.”

“It’s positive that NUS is having an Environmental Science course. However, not everyone look at studying that and those who don’t know feel that ignorance is bliss. All students are interested in courses that are good academically, and they dismiss the environment courses entirely.”

“Community gardens are a chance to get involved in nature. However, the gardens are locked up, and with limited access so only a few people can get involved. “Community” word is missing. NParks try to get people involved, but people then claim “this is my plot” and approach the Town Council to put up fence resulting in not everyone in community being involved since it is not easily accessible. What has happened is connected to the values in society.”

“The attitude of citizens and government should be one that considers more than just economic and monetary achievement in our society.”



“Stray animals, especially cats and dogs, require a voice for their protection. The spectrum of attitudes towards stray animals in Singapore: many moderate, but some are extreme. Issues in animal welfare are often complex and not easy to address, given the diversity of attitudes toward pets and stray animals. It is important to work ‘on the ground’ to know what is happening before actions can be taken.”

“Balance of ‘soul’ and life in Singapore – people need to appreciate nature and see that it is integral to living a good and balanced life. There is a skewed attitude among Singaporeans with too much emphasis placed on material achievement (e.g. the 5 ‘Cs’). People need

to know about nature before they can start to appreciate it, and understand that a well protected (and clean) environment is also necessary to well-being. Attitudes should be towards distinguishing ‘wants’ and ‘needs’.”

“The disconnect between people and nature in Singapore leads to a perceived conflict between nature conservation and communities.”

“How to identify Singaporeans when overseas: 1) when they open their mouth 2) NTUC plastic bag 3) where’s the dustbin? The government has done a good education when we’re young that now we can’t survive without a dustbin. We must accept more social responsibility. Feel that there’s not enough knowledge and maturity from Singaporeans concerning global issues. We are in a good position to take up environmental and global issues.”

“Nature serves its function (there are reasons and purposes of everything).”

“The joy of growing your own food.”

“Economy is not only based on consuming and making money.”

“The public demand teachers to teach values, while teachers complained about parents. The culture and values has to be built in the family. Parents have to be role models, shaping the narratives and values that guide their children.”

“Youth are not interested in environmental issues. There is a lack of responsibility in caring for the environment.”

“The general population is disconnected to themselves, other people and nature at large. Hope to see people become less concerned on the material value of things.”

“Volunteered as a nature guide for young children where I was overwhelmed by the children's enthusiasm with nature, inspiring me to learn more about plants and animals.”

“I’m inspired from geography class in school and like to volunteer in activities. I love tracking and hiking and really appreciate nature. My appreciation of nature triggered my inspiration for green issues.”

“Doing trips to Semakau every month to share about nature, and to convert outdoor seekers to nature lovers.”

HEART

Discussions on Future



“Consumerist lifestyle of Singaporeans needs to be addressed. It is no longer an issue of having to recycle, but conscious effort should be made in looking out for needs, rather than wants.”

“Main goal and vision for Singapore: Gross National Happiness: We want to be a country that respects the earth.”

“Enhance quality of living and social mobility. Make sure entertainment is made affordable to the public and bring arts to the public. Move away from material life to better recreational facilities. We don't have to spend money and why do we have 26 golf courses which take up so much land and cater only to 26,000 people? Does that make sense?”

““Gracious society” and living graciously.

Beyond economics. When we are not working for money, it could be more fun. Fun is not only about economics.

Sufficiency is better than sustainability.

Singapore must come together with common mission though diverse aspirations.”

“More parents to change their values, e.g. accepting that doing sports or farming are good professions.”

“Nature conservation and ecological education.”

“Strawberry generation: when they grow up, they will face new challenges and demand for change. It may take generations to achieve our gracious society vision.”

“Conventional economic structure may be problematic - collapse then restructure the economy /society?”

“Survey results from a school project showed that 80% of youths were not concerned about environmental issues. This reflected the quality of upbringing that youths receive and their personal values. The values of individuals are fundamental to the sustainability efforts of the government.”

“The authoritarian nature of the government coupled with the transition to an urban environment, have resulted in a decline in ecological values.”

“Government to prioritize environmental values.

Control in people's hands is not as big; government has much more power.

Make sure that people share common values to make ends meet.

Small steps should be taken with support from the government.

However, public should not rely too much on the government only.”

“Nature and earth to be seen as sacred instead of as ‘things’. Need a change of mindset.”

“Teaching of resource planning, awareness of rare animals, nature reserves in the national curriculum (more awareness becomes habits). Have experiential learning.”

“Self-awareness and identity. Understand our limitations. Love our land to be motivated to protect it. Be aware of how little we have and how precious it is.”

“More compassion from the people.”

“5Gs - Gracious, Green, Giving, Grounded (taking personal responsibility), Grateful.”

“It all starts with you, as an individual.”

“Moving towards a less disposable society. Buying things that last so that we can use them over a longer period of time rather than buying lower quality products that don’t last.”

“Aim to be one of the greenest cities globally. More natural/green areas: forests, mangroves, and shores.”

“A focus on happiness, the surrounding and people around us. A society that is not materialistic. Pride in serving.”

“Development in harmony with nature.

Understanding the environment.

A community which is more compassionate and more contented.

Conscious effort by everyone.

Responsible behaviour without being told what to do.

Society which does not over-consume.

Nurturing and educating the young. Imparting the right values.”



“Connecting with nature, implementing recycling habits and having a more sustainable lifestyle. Break away from our fast-paced lives and think more about the planet that we are living in.”

“Loving our land and recognising its value. Survival of this land is dependent on our lifestyle. “Green” should not just be a campaign.”

“Genuine change in attitudes and apathy of Singaporeans at large towards the environment.”

“Increased awareness and appreciation of nature among local communities.”

“More should be done to encourage the appreciation of local nature areas such as the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserves. This would help in shifting the national culture away from a consumption-oriented one.”

“Create green schools. School to hire someone on biodiversity and make Ecology/Biology compulsory. What kind of values do we put in our science education?”

“Nature guides are highly valuable people and should recognise them.”

“Refuse. Reduce consumption. Happiness beyond consumerism.”

“Have more green spaces, and environment as part of our heritage.”

“Buy what we need, not what we want.
One community, stand as one, unite together.
Animals have rights, treated humanely.
Greenery isn’t manicured.
Mindset shift in consumerism.”

“Vision for Singapore: nation that respects the earth.”

“Vision for Singapore in the long run: beyond living, towards life. We are in a phase of transition. What kind of population and how much growth do we want? An economy with 3-5% growth?”

“More gracious society is the core. Do we want ethics for the end? Environmental sustainability?”

“Need values, culture, and character.”

“Preserving natural areas since we have a connection with them and know how calming they are. We should try to integrate them into developments.”

“Create a culture that's less disposable. Moving beyond consumption and economics and GDP, to a sense of happiness. Not just our own happiness but happiness about our neighbours here and overseas. How can we help one another, how can I help you, how can we help people overseas. Being compassionate, and having more contentment with what we have.”

“We lack national pride: we need to love the land more, that's missing in our connections to green issues.”

“Desired traits of Singapore in 2022: compassionate and social graciousness. Look at the role of individuals and governments.”



“Unifying message: aim to be the greenest city in the world. We aim to be number one in so many things but leave this one behind. Strive to be a 5G society: Gracious: caring for one another, being nice to one another – if we can't do this how can we talk about more? Green: Integrate into personal lifestyle, taking personal responsibility about being green. Giving: Everyone always has so many excuses, like “I don't have time to help”. Grounded: coming together, connecting with everyone else, being ready to get hands dirty and do real work. Grateful: we are very lucky here, we've made sacrifices to be where we are. We should be grateful for our lives.”

“We just want to be happy. Happiness can lead to paradigm shift. Not just receiving from consuming but from enjoying family and friends, experiences from nature etc.”

“Identity: having a stake in Singapore. People don't feel connected to country. People should have areas that make them happy and love the land and start to take care of it.”

“Need values, culture, and character.
Integrating natural areas into development.
Moving beyond consumption and GDP towards happiness.”

“Treat environment not as a separate entity but as a crucial part of our continued survival. We only have 700 sq km, which makes the sustainability agenda more acute. We are holding this separate session from the social and healthcare agendas, which means this is not a priority, and can be discussed later. Good to have and make you happy. Must be dealt with concurrently with socioeconomic conditions. Have a sustainability charter: everything we do must be in line with it. Stable environment underpins economy. If you screw it up enough, economy will suffer. Not present in discussions.”

““Believe and act” is more powerful than we think. One thing I realized is that there are a lot of people who care about what’s going on. We’re not emotionless, the challenge is time and space. In our rat race, we go for faster and cheaper but definitely not better. We have no time for the environment and children. Parents may not even see children every day. Think about the 5Cs: connection, conversation, collaboration, forming community, and contribution.”

“I know a lot of people may think: to reduce carbon footprint, why not cull animals? Killing off everything is not the right way. If you love the land, love cats and find better means to deal with it. Animal welfare is a tough fight, we face limited resources, no land and no

money. How do we bring the stray population down while giving them proper care?”

“Getting economics right: we have to rethink the economy and participate in it responsibly. Why must the economy be about borrowing, spending, and consuming? It should be about making, growing and sharing.”

“Be Happy! Happiness comes with a paradigm shift through enjoying time with family and nature, moving towards a green lifestyle, and more sincerity. Have fun and excitement.”

“Buy what we need. Mind-set change in growth and consumerism.”

“Enabling society to develop a broader and more holistic awareness of environmental issues.”

“Hope for a more gracious society in terms of values, ethics, morals and sustainability to better shape change-makers.”

“Green vision: Minimalist culture. Erosion of disposable culture.”

“Shifting away from GDP as the measure of progress towards more integrated and inclusive indicators.”

“Shift from consumption-oriented values towards a community-oriented society.

Behavioural shift to a green-conscious lifestyle.

Leverage Singapore DNA of kiasu and kiasi.”

“Balancing care for animals with the imperatives of supporting human ecology.

Getting the economics right; rethink the economy, participate responsibly away from consuming to giving, growing and making things.

Sharing economy – barter systems as a way to creating community.”

“Change sustainability to sufficiency.

More organising, incentives, flexibility, change of mindset.

Life is more beautiful, should not think only money, car and houses.

Being compassionate.

Sense of national pride, love the land more.”

“Create a common vision with the abundance aspect. Include measures and take into account environmental issues and awareness.”

“I can see that there are already many Singaporeans who have an interest to go back to the kampong spirit, to bond more with each other, and to share our resources.”

“Singapore leads, buy what we need rather than want, unite as one community, animals have rights, better network of resources, stabilize population, lead to Singapore green centered companies, compromise realistic & idealism, increase awareness and appreciation.”

“Drive behavioural change among Singaporeans. Can we do this by changing people’s mindsets around materialism and consumerism?”

“Progress in bridging the knowledge-behaviour disconnect and at the same time increasing appreciation of nature.”

ENGAGEMENT

About engagement, communications and collaboration for government, NGOs, businesses and the public



ENGAGEMENT

Discussions on Past and Present



“The government is not transparent enough. They don't put into laws and system. Even nature reserves: that's not written in law and could be disbanded in 5 years' time. The government must have better dialogue and relationship, and we can respect the government if they make issues we can debate about.”

“Government pushes the responsibility among each other: For example (in the past), NEA tried to catch mosquitoes but the officers are limited by their own inspection area and did not care about mosquitoes from nearby areas. The hierarchy structure is a problem within the government, e.g. officers are willing to help a social entrepreneur on their proposal but in the end stopped by their boss.”

“Do it other than speak out. One person's individual movement can drive a lot more than the government, since the government has to look into many all other areas and slow down the process. Individual movement can have impact but they must have common mission (though with diverse aspirations). Example on lack of common mission: There are more healthy people in Singapore now but the irony is that the overall health index is worsening. Example on having a common mission: farmers have common problem and vision, so they come together and form the Kranji Countryside.”

“There are many NGOs but most work on their own clusters. Suggest having more collaboration.”

“Suggest that the government build a common platform (e.g. via Facebook group) for all NGOs to collaborate.”

“During green conferences with public servants, when someone discusses issues which they have the power to change, they would say we can't do that. It's a disturbing atmosphere with a sense of “nothing can be changed”.”

“Inspired to be part of the green community where good ideas and thoughts about making a change can be shared with everyone. It is important to be aware and encouraged by the efforts and success of the wider community.”

“The government takes a paternalistic approach to decision-making, having made their decisions before consultation sessions with citizens. This propagated the view that the government makes a pretence of holding and taking note of discussions on issues such as recycling and other environmental issues when the reality was that economic imperatives took priority.”

“Singaporeans are willing to learn, but are simply not aware enough and hence, the need for more education and awareness.”

“More work remains to be done on creating awareness of green spaces in Singapore.”

“Feel that there is very limited messaging by government agencies about sustainability issues, and even then, the narratives portrayed were incomplete and lacking.”

“The green community doesn’t collaborate enough.”

“Green groups should collaborate and work together in order to bring pressure on the government to heed environmental concerns. One time that the government actually listens is on Chek Jawa.”

“Did an environmental campaign designed to raise awareness on the culture of waste in Singapore. But was demoralised by negative feedback from fellow students because the campaign inconvenienced students by the removal of rubbish bins.”

“Having a good project is not enough, it must have the human element. People might be interested in a project but how do we communicate this to them? Should have a system that creates a culture. Provide more knowledge and they will find you. An example for outreach would be two excellent documentaries on Okto that were shown on water grasses.”



“In schools and tertiary groups, students should be more involved in green events. Have exhibitions and festivals where like-minded people and green clubs will appear together.”

“Use children as ambassadors. Influence people by leading by example.”

“Focus on health, food security, aesthetics and heritage. An example would be that if you like to eat seafood, then you must think of the ecosystem as you destroy that and there will be no crabs.”

“The environmental sector has no appeal and the consequence is not immediate, so how do we let the public see the relevance and importance? It is not straightforward. For example, CNG was introduced but it was troublesome. These are good initiatives to have but if it’s not convenient and if there’s no infrastructure, then no point.”

“A friend introduced me to blogging and now I have a blog to voice concerns. I want to raise awareness and keep educating people constantly. The biggest challenge is the development of relationship with the government because NGOs seems to have little opinion that matters.”

“It is hard to have the ability to convince and educate people. People will ask questions about the impact and whether it is too late and not convinced by the evidence now, as it is hard to project the consequences later on and thus, people seems reluctant to do so. Tried to organize carbon-free event previously, but was still difficult to get the cooperation although the company knows the importance of such issues. People also rarely talk about issues like this, and it is rarer to take action on it. Media communication is important.”

“When you ask people in the company to do something green. They think that it is extra workload and don’t

want to put in more effort or extra time. They still refuse although the little effort can bring long term benefit for the company.”

“Limitations in engagement between the environmental movement, government and citizens.”

“Difficulties faced by the environmental community in engaging people at multiple levels on environmental issues effectively. Translating conservation messages to the public or interest groups is often difficult. Priorities of citizens and environmental concerns sometimes in conflict.”

“Genuine apathy towards environmental issues at large. Need to continually explore best practices in promoting environmental education to the wider community. Dissemination of knowledge on environment and conservation a constant work in progress, and exploration of what works best, and implementing them.”

“Highlight to authorities that environmental consciousness is also integral to economic development and not always in opposition to the economy. Authorities appear to value environmental issues with lesser weight compared to ‘economic priorities’.”

“Government unable to engage people at a transparent level on environmental issues. Environmental information that everyone has a stake on should be made available, but appears that relevant agencies have discretely limited the circulation of such information (e.g. information on rainfall acidity, climate change development). Details on key environmental matters should be shared with people so that the population at large is entitled to make their own informed judgments and actions. Many key environmental issues (e.g. sea level rise, climate change, acid rain) are not conveyed clearly to the public, and if communication was done, this is usually in a non-transparent manner. Need to address barriers faced by academics and NGOs in dissemination of scientific information, such as some pressure on academics and NGOs not to disseminate information perceived as sensitive.”

“Importance of building awareness and knowledge base so that decision-makers have the right information for key decisions. Government need to closely work together with other agencies. Knowledge base should be openly accessed by citizens and researchers.”

“Integrate environmental clubs into the wider community. Students may have a lot of knowledge about environmental matters but they may not want to take up the option to act. Students can play a larger role in conservation. Long term goal is to bring relevance of the environment and conservation from the schools to the wider community.”

ENGAGEMENT

Discussions on Future



“Need for people in the various sectors of the environmental scene (public, NGOs, institutions and government) to collaborate, and not to compete or duplicate efforts.”

“All efforts and avenues should be aggressively pursued to spread as much awareness of the environment and conservation to Singaporeans, from national dialogues, the mass media to the education system.”

“Education is critical in maintaining knowledge base and awareness in the population.”

“Lack of public awareness and action? Crisis brings attention.”

“Need more positive and engaging stories.

Examples of living sustainably - a good life doesn't necessarily require the 5Cs.

Stories should be told in more captivating ways.

Simple and personalized messages.

Sense of ownership and caring attitude.

Dedication of self to the community.

Attitude to be passed on across generations.

Family-to-family sharing experience and stories.”

“Need for greater knowledge dissemination on what is happening across the environmental front.

Singaporeans need to know nature, not fear it, and understand the need for conservation from local and global contexts.”

“Corporations have a larger role to play in conservation and the environment.

Corporate social responsibility can be pushed beyond current boundaries.

Corporations to consider what they can contribute to the wider community in Singapore.

Corporate-level rethink of their CSR strategies - profits not at the expense of environment, but actually benefiting the environment.

Community need to continue targeting large corporations and engage them.”

“Need to act on knowledge. Many more people know about the environment, but many are reluctant to act on knowledge, even on basic things like ‘reuse and reducing wastage’.”

“Increase in transparency. People need to know what is going on (too much is kept in the dark at present).”

“Shift in attitude and mindsets of Singaporeans towards environmental issues.”

“Issue and perception of ‘why the government is not fixing the problem’ should be addressed. Communities and individuals need to realise that they too are stakeholders and need to act on environmental problems. Not always necessary for intervention at a governmental level. Individuals should realise and appreciate the need for their stake in Singapore’s environment.”

“Empowerment of non-governmental organisations to track environmental issues, and to work closely together to advise on environmental policies and actions from the government.”

“Collaborate with the government and not work against it, at least at a personal level to address common goals. After all, the people in the government (i.e. civil servants) are the people we live and work alongside.”

“Identifying the middle ground in conservation instead of confrontation, and adopting win-win approaches.”

“Empower people so that some of the objectives set for the environment can be met, without the need for active intervention on the part of the government.”

“Government need to move away from enforcement and regulation, to help people who help themselves.

Government shall engage and communicate with social entrepreneurs more.”

“The need for civil society and individuals to have more space for action in order for ecological awareness to develop. It is “real politics” and “real civil society” that would be able to contribute views and perspectives from a range of sources.”

“There should not be any government influence over the media.”



“Singaporeans should take action about problems instead of merely complaining about them. Singaporeans need a greater sense of national pride. When Singaporeans feel that they do not have a stake in the country, and hence, nothing to lose, such sentiment leads to indifference. Giving Singaporeans a stake in the country would bolster local environmental preservation efforts.”

“There is a need for individuals to be engaged and align themselves with genuine grassroots efforts instead of government-initiated and sponsored organisations. People at the grassroots level were not seen as participants in the policy-making process.”

“Need to have a continuous Singapore conversation instead of only collecting feedback at specific dialogue sessions.”

“Student groups taking green initiatives.

Civil society and private enterprise – all of us are collaborative.

Government to engage us sincerely and not, “we listen to you but we’ll want to do what we want to do anyway.”

Communication – to stop coming across as hippies.

Role models need to show up.

Encourage youth leadership.”

“Government or liaison to look out for anyone who wants to do something, and grow and nurture.”

“Town councils and people in the government to listen.”

“Get celebrities involved.”

“Bigger industries and companies to be represented in green communities.”

“Communication: simplify and personalize the message, and put what is communicated into action.”

“Government and NGOs play a consultative role between people and government, and need collaboration.”

“What we’d like to see is a paradigm shift in how we act and the choices we make. People should lead a green-conscious lifestyle. More sincerity in engagement: more dynamic: things should just spark off for there to be avenues for this sort of conversation. There should be collaborations between civil groups and government agencies to come with solutions we need and want, not what a higher power thinks is needed or wanted.”

“Really inspired by the ideas and worked out possible collaborations. Learnt a lot and we feel like we’re now responsible now for spreading the word among our generation. We want to raise awareness about green spaces beyond statistics and share passion to preserve what we have.”

“Individual to understand the government’s concern. Take action yourself rather than just complaining about the wrong.”

“Look for more dynamic conversation and more collaboration.”

“Government transparency on green issues.”

“Work on solutions with the government, act on various solutions that we can discuss with government policies. Increase bureaucracy awareness level.”

“The government always tell us that the ground is not ready. Sometimes it takes a community to lead and we are perhaps the community that should lead and find ways to improve education and bring issues to the ground and engage the government to look into issues in further detail.”

“Individuals should understand the government’s concerns. Before being critical, try to understand why

do the government do things the way they do? That’s important, once you understand their approach, take action yourself. Don’t complain, do the opposite of what you think isn’t right. Singaporeans tend to focus on what we lack. Countries which are green tend to be proud of what they have. Singaporeans should focus on what we have and feel that we have a stake in the country, we’ll be more likely to preserve that.”

“NGOs and grassroots should be partners in policy making. There’s a difference between considering our recommendations and letting us be involved in policy planning.”

“Have more fun and exciting ideas.”

“Vision: more positive environmental stories from media and ourselves. Now the media always promotes things like sports car and bungalow. Need more positive news coverage: good life might not require sports car. Simple may be ultimate good for the society.”

“We can share what ignites our passion in green. We all have our own motivations.”

“No point in everyone wanting to do something if no one does anything. This has to become habits and a way of life.”

“When communicating green ideas: have a simple message instead of facts and figures and big words. Personalize this message such that everyone can relate to it. Not just talk about things that happen in Rio and Indonesia, but what happens in Singapore so that it feels less foreign: it’s not just a green people thing but something all Singaporeans can feel interested in.”

“Partnerships between government, social enterprises and NGOs: everyone has to work together, give consultative role so everyone can work together.”

“Want more platforms to engage better with other groups.”



“Government always seen as separate entity: they are not the other, or evil. They are people like you and I, if we connect with them, it’s synergy. We need to start believing and acting on it.”

“People feel disempowered: they think that it’s the government’s or business’s responsibility or other people’s responsibility. Act on what we believe in: do it and make the change you want to see.”

“We have set up an ecosystem to support good initiatives to capture people’s attention and to reach out to others interested in the environment. We also provide a crowdfunding platform.”

“My favourite superhero is Superman. I have another favourite, Spiderman, and Spiderman’s uncle told him something: with great power comes great responsibility. We are the future of Singapore. Every one of us carries the responsibility to be green and be Singaporean and propel the nation forward. We must understand how the rest of Singaporeans think, continue to negotiate with their varying interests to bring our agenda forward, with a common vision.”

“Bring green issues to the ground. Green is much more than recycling and waste. Sustainability must be included into everything and not just a secondary issue.”

“What’s a conversation? It’s about the relationship, not about the issue. One day it’s this issue, the next day it’s something else. How do we communicate, and when it doesn’t go right and people don’t want to listen to us – is it them not us? Do we not communicate well?”

“What does it mean to engage? Does nature mean the same to you as it does to me? How to engage other people? When asked why she wasn’t participating in an anti-war march, Mother Teresa said: When you have a pro-peace march, I will come. We need to market ourselves better. We need to concentrate on abundance, not lack of, perspective.”

“Better network.

Government transparency in green causes and government policies.

Connections between NGOs and government.

Act on what we know.

Increase awareness and appreciation.”

“Engagement has to be more sincere. Collaboration with government agencies and civil societies to come up with solutions.”

“A united green community with organised resources.”

“Green groups to propose fun and exciting solutions so as to change the public’s perception of green groups as idealistic, disruptive or radical.”

“Empowering NGOs through collaboration and better relations with the government.”

“Sustainability is integral to all other social and economic issues. Having a “green conversation” sending wrong message because it assumes separation.”

“Getting people up to speed on green issues is seen as a key issue and requires green groups engaging with the general public to speak and understand common language and issues. Green groups need to drill into specific issues to create depth to discussion and creating breadth by engaging with other communities.”

“Start small and win with one step at a time.”

“Meaning of conversation - more about the relationship than about the issues. Communication is a two-way process, being able to effectively engage with people.”

“If we can step up and engage the rest of Singapore to understand green issues, the key word being understand, and not just being aware, that would make the difference to changing their mindset on how they live their daily lives. We also need to walk the talk and not just talk forever about the same thing. There are many entrepreneurs out there who can help change things. Just don’t kill their ideas with lots of road blocks.”

“Review areas that require legislative change and work together to push these through. This can be done via a joint platform where green groups and government agencies can deliberate and dialogue through a formal process.”

“Green groups in Singapore to band together behind one specific conservation theme (e.g. haze, deforestation) and campaign jointly around it.”

POLICIES

About government policies, improvements and opportunities, and environmental challenges



POLICIES

Discussions on Past and Present



“The government has to address environmental impact assessments (EIAs). They are perennially brought up by green groups and perennially deflected by the government. Should the government come up in a transparent way, say why they don't want to adopt EIA in any kind of construction and building? It doesn't matter that whatever they say doesn't go down well, just come out and say what is their rationale on doing this. By keeping silent, it's not good in a transparent society.”

“Friends said that EIAs used to be just anyhow do and rubber stamp, but now there's more details taken into consideration. Is that true?”

“Food waste is so easily compostable, it's not something I feel has to make economic sense. Sometimes services have to be provided even if they don't make economic sense. It's so easy to make peels into compost. I compost all food waste in gardens. So much waste is bagged and thrown down the chute. I use chemical drums from Jurong and drill holes into them. We should have composting units in HDBs or condos, it's possible technologically.”

“I think we can make the change on plastic bags. Our society is against it for some reason. We are behind times. Taiwan does a great job, and even China doesn't allow plastic bags anymore. Bring Your Own

Bag is everywhere in China and they're so advanced. Our government can do it, but for some reason they just don't want to. The thing is our government can snap its fingers and everyone will do it. Don't need to look too far, Johor bans plastic bags every Saturday. It's a very big issue, but it's not beyond possibility. If others can do it, I don't see why we can't. We've been overtaken, we used to be leaders but we're backward now. It takes political will and education to push things through.”

“Even though I do composting and we have chutes and incinerator systems, we still need plastic bags to bag stuff. First R is Reduce, and it's not in many people's brains. We are a consumerist society and should reduce our consumption. We get 3 trash bags every day but our house is not that big. Sometimes we wish the government would be harsher but only a small minority will be happy if they implement no plastic bags. The last “no plastic bag” day didn't really work out. We should be aware that we're still a minority, the green people.”

“Too much focus on ‘brown’ issues, with limited consideration for ‘green’ issues.”

“An issue is the government's practice of overlooking and marginalising viewpoints that criticised Singapore's short-comings. One example is the lifecycle impact of the resources imported to sustain the level of growth and lifestyle in Singapore. Singapore needs to account for the impact of extracting resources from the source country and bear responsibility for its external carbon footprint. Only then will we be accounting for our resource usage in a holistic manner, and understanding their impacts.”

“Feel that the recycling industry is not being encouraged enough in Singapore by government incentives. The government is not doing enough to create the recycling structures to implement economic incentives that promote recycling. Waste should be converted into something useful.”

“The government issued a directive to hawker centers to use polystyrene containers in the interest of hygiene and perhaps the government can leverage on the same political muscle to remove such plastic containers.”

“Simple issues like mandating rules on air-conditioning temperature, and climate change initiatives could be associated with economic savings and mandated by law.”

“The government is not putting enough emphasis on environmental sustainability compared to the funding that other industries receive such as the financial or petrochemical industries.”

“While the government is aware of the environmental imperative, it is hesitant to be the first to take action because of the political and economic costs associated with it.”

“Singapore's unwillingness to use the term “civil society” in ASEAN gatherings over fears that it could galvanise action by civil society organisations.”

“Improper implementation of environmental policy, with the mismatch of existing policy and physical infrastructure. Many government targets set for environmental matters are paper objectives that may be met, but in some cases more than that is needed. Re-prioritisation is needed to align environmental policies more realistically, and to adjust current infrastructure and resources to match it.”

“The population debate – do we have the infrastructure to support future projected populations without reducing the quality of life and putting additional strain on Singapore's environment. For example, leading to the destruction of more natural areas significant for biodiversity or other heritage value.”



“Increase integration of environmental education into current syllabi to address the disconnect between students and their awareness and concern for the environment. Students of today are faced with too many priorities, and greater emphasis of environmental matters, especially those relevant to our local context should be made available to students.”

“Conservation planning is not in sync with current ecological research. There is a need to expand beyond current network of nature reserves, and consider the implementation of environmental impact assessments (EIA). Many developmental projects are pushed ahead without a proper EIA, even when there are potentially

severe implications. EIA should be transparently pursued and made available to relevant agencies and institutions. EIAs are needed as a safety net for future environmental problems. Is the government afraid that EIAs may eventually become bureaucratic obstruction for current and future large-scale projects that can make a lot of money?”

“A serious rethink is needed on the part of the government. The constant prioritising of economic development over conservation and environmental matters, which is viewed as a lower priority in many major decisions, may need to change given the current and future imminent environmental problems (e.g. sea level rise).”

“We are well trained that we don't litter and want to dispose responsibly. Another flipside is how we treat our trash. It doesn't matter where we put it, we produce too much trash. In New Zealand, the garbage man comes just once a week, you have more awareness about the waste you generate. Here, once you dump down the chute, we can stop thinking about the amount of waste generated. How to make Singaporeans think about the amount of trash you generate even if you're a clean people?”

“In Switzerland, people are charged by the weight of trash. When they go to supermarkets and for shopping, they don't want any wrappers or cardboard box for packing. All the packaging is such a waste of money.”

“There's a national interest in recycling, a very poor issue in Singapore.”

“Tokyo with 26m people is very clean not because the government cleaned it (unlike Singapore where we are cleaned, not clean). We are not civic minded, we dump it all over the place, and the army of cleaners clean it. Japan is clean because their people are clean. When people say it can't be done, I say it can be done because look at them, they're civic minded and proud of it. I have a foreign student who lives in Jurong. She told me, “look at my Jurong housing estate every morning, the roads are so dirty because everyone throws rubbish out of the window. How can you tell me about clean and green Singapore, just come to my housing estate in the morning.” People have no sense of civic mindedness.”

“Pampered Singaporeans have too much water, when we run out they don't know what to do. My nieces and nephews waste water when they open the tap and go do something else. I've seen that in my friends too, they use 10 litres of water to clean, I don't understand.”

“Singapore was once threatened by Malaysia to cut water supply, that's why Singapore find ways to create Newater. Now I'm concerned with energy supply: though we have not been threatened or run out, we may find it difficult to generate in the future if we don't do something about it.”

“Been in Beijing for 6 years and only back in Singapore for 6 months. Returned due to pollution in Beijing, with current PSI at 340 (and hitting 700 a few months ago). Quite happy to be back.”

“Start of mid-80s: government realized many people are very interested in nature. Why build construction over a whole set of trees? Should have built somewhere else. There are problems of land scarcity but there are also people concerned about nature.”

“Waste management – one of the biggest national environmental concerns which calls for immediate action.”

“Enthusiasm for environmental activism attributed to my personal experience of severe air pollution living in China. Such an experience made me realise that maintaining a clean environment is fundamental to a healthy society.”

“Too many people develop models of technology but do little to do research about the impact of technology on the society. It is more like forced fit, where they make something and pushed it into society.”

“Went to big events in Singapore and at the end of the event, trash were left all over the place, e.g. National Day. There’s little respect for the place that you live.”

“People have habits of using environmentally unfriendly products like styrofoam.”

“Can we have a better life if our population goes to 7 million? What about land scarcity and food security?”

“Our economy is built based on big MNCs, and renewable energy is limited by refineries. It is difficult to get big organizations to do the right things, if they only look at profits. There is a lack of government collaboration with and support for social enterprising SMEs. The government does not believe in SMEs.”

“Loss of green patches and forests. Battle of land use: to conserve vs development. Development must be well-planned. Pace of growth is too fast.”

“Less space for waste so need more waste minimization. Waste is a misplaced resource.”

“Singapore’s energy consumption will be doubled in the future, and new power plants will be built. What’s the point of saving energy, then?”

“Realization of climate change.”

“Authorities are not addressing the concerns of residents. For example, the government’s decision on the Bukit Brown issue, where heritage is being destroyed and a scenic part of Bukit Brown is taken away to build roads. We have to cut down the number of cars.”

“Oil refineries produce a lot of carbon emissions but these companies say that their products are meant for other countries, so the government’s point of view is that they are not responsible. The government should acknowledge that the carbon emissions belong to us.”

“Companies should have Corporate Social Responsibility.”

“Recycling should start at source and reduce is more important.”

“Decentralise biomass collection and making of compost, and use the compost for community gardens.”

“People need to know and realise how environmental programs implemented by the government can benefit them directly. People often don’t know or aren’t aware of benefits. Example of recycling, which is not ingrained in Singaporean culture and many people tend to be apathetic towards recycling.”

POLICIES

Discussions on Future



“Environmental education to be included across all areas of education (e.g. from nursery to high-level education; to be immersed into daily life). More emphasis, but no need to modularize it.”

“Social SMEs to come up with a proposal for MEWR (and even involve other Ministries as a long-term vision). The proposal shall include proposed measureable target/KPI and requested budget.”

“Rather than simply not believing in social SMEs, the government can come up with measureable KPIs and targets for them while enabling social SMEs, such as by providing incentives for their good work (e.g. 2-3 year budget in a 10 year master plan; the budget can be reviewed based on social SME’s achievement).”

“Government shall look into more options and diversity (can’t always play safe without exploring more options).”

“Taking current environmental goals seriously and working on them actively.”

“Need to include public education on climate change. It’s an issue that’s going to become more serious in the next 20 years. Need to bring down to the level of the public and not stay at the government level, like NCCS. We need to be aware.”

“The entrepreneurial spirit should be further encouraged in schools. Include changes within the education system that would encourage independent and critical thinking in students.”

“The government should adopt a holistic approach when it comes to policy implementation. Such a holistic approach should be integrated into the government's decision-making framework and made on the basis of its impact on a broad range of stakeholders. The current decision-making framework of the government usually places social and environmental concerns as downstream considerations instead of being accorded importance at the start of planning.”

“Civic groups should be allowed the use of community facilities to promote participation from the grassroots.”

“The government and academia are conducting a disproportional amount of studies and not enough political action to adequately cope with the challenges of climate change.”

“Reduce and reuse, rather than recycle (which should be a last resort). Better waste management.”

“Bureaucratic processes pertaining to the environment (e.g. EIAs, climate change policy, nature areas) need a review. Current ones are outdated in addressing modern environmental problems. A review or audit of bureaucratic systems and existing policies in place – are these sufficient or do we need more to patch up current loopholes.”

“Set up a Marine Nature Reserve, besides focusing on the rainforest only.”

“Realise our limits as an island.”

“Provide green concessions.”

“Government to stop wasting money on useless campaigns, e.g. return tray and get \$2 from Exxon Mobil.”

“Private sector to make products more durable. Government to re-think ways to keep it sustainable. More services related then product related.”

“Government to play supporting role to create interest, and not to put barriers. Government should be more open to experimental projects by ordinary citizens and to facilitate processes.”



“Have marine protected areas and establish a Ministry of Park and Nature Reserves.”

“Need more commitment and action, and enforce penalties.”

“Address challenges on waste management, food, energy, transport, and climate change.”

“Government as an enabler for green movement to happen. Government is the enabler to enable Singaporeans to believe that we can do something.”

“Enable SMEs, stop relying on foreign talent, and have more sustainability for business.”

“Paying more attention on climate change challenges. Government, community and civil society working together to address the challenges of waste, energy and food.”

“Government to produce policy in holistic approach, such as when HDB build flats, they have to research about the political, social and economic impact.”

“We need to look into how we can incorporate awareness about nature and global issues and stakeholders into the school curriculum.”

“Every organization should have a green director and functioning green committee which includes management. For example in a school, it would consist of students, management and faculty.”

“We should not forget the role of the economy and the corporate sector. Bring industry on board to incentivize big, dirty business (4 untouchables: oil, gas, ports and airports) to contribute. If they can be legislated into becoming greener, this would have a huge impact compared to what households can do. For green tech, incentivize and monetize green tech and green business.”

“Climate change is a priority. We need to get everyone up to speed with core issues because everyone’s understanding of core issues differs. Everyone should speak the same language and understand basic issues.”

“Government should involve grassroots and NGOs in policy planning. Should have more collaboration between government agencies.”

“Have green plot ratio to help in quantifying amount of green spaces.”

“Singapore to lead in environmental technologies and expertise given its constraints around water and land. Incorporate old knowledge with new technology (kampung farming) to promote self-sufficiency in food.”

“Legislate greener regulations to achieve large impact and leverage on political muscle. Incentivise green initiatives and technology.”

“Highlight more on brown issues, not only green issues.”

“Strengthen environmental education within the formal curriculum, such as taking a multidisciplinary approach to studying environmental concerns.”

CONCLUSION

For many reasons, Our SG Conversation for the Green Community is an important event.

In fact, this first gathering of like-minded individuals is a historic event for not just the environmental civil society, but of civil society in general.

This is because we envisage a Singapore where civil society is set to play a bigger role, particularly in the wake of growing awareness among ordinary Singaporeans who are determined to make their voices heard.

Civil society will continue to have a strong, empowering and affirming role to play in policy-making in the Singapore of the future.

To that end, we call for greater open, honest, transparent and inclusive engagement, discussions and collaboration with policy makers in the spirit of our shared love for Singapore and the future of our children and our children's children, so as to build trust between policy makers and the government on one hand, and civil society and the general public on the other.

Our SG Conversation for the Green Community is probably the first ever and biggest gathering of environmental activists from animal welfare to nature lovers to the 'brown' issues proponents, from well-known academics to tertiary students, from veteran activists of 30 years' standing to enthusiastic 16-year olds experiencing their first flush of activism in setting up their fledgling student-led environmental clubs.

Beyond our own individual passion and organisation or interest that we represent, each and every one of the close to 80 people who gathered, call for a society based on compassion, graciousness, the 'kampung spirit' and for a life that goes beyond the material success that we are so used to hearing.

We went further.

We call for such values to be evident not just between human beings but also in our relationship with all sentient beings and with the natural world.

We call for a move away from the anthropocentric and linear paradigm that has been, for far too long, the basis of our systems, from our education to our economic systems.

We call for a recognition and acknowledgment that as human beings, we need to realise that there is a limit to what we can achieve when we put human beings front and centre of all things, all the time.

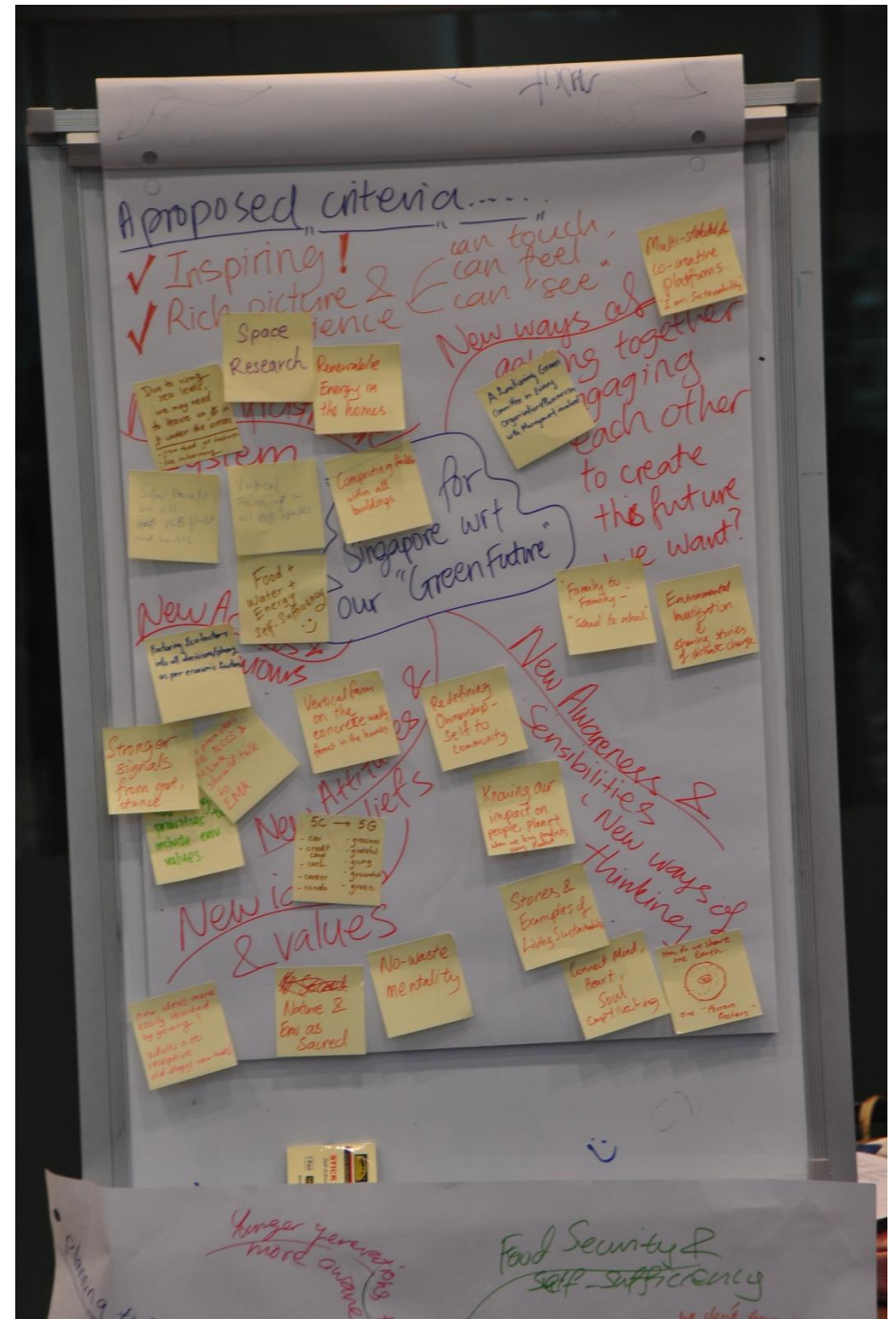
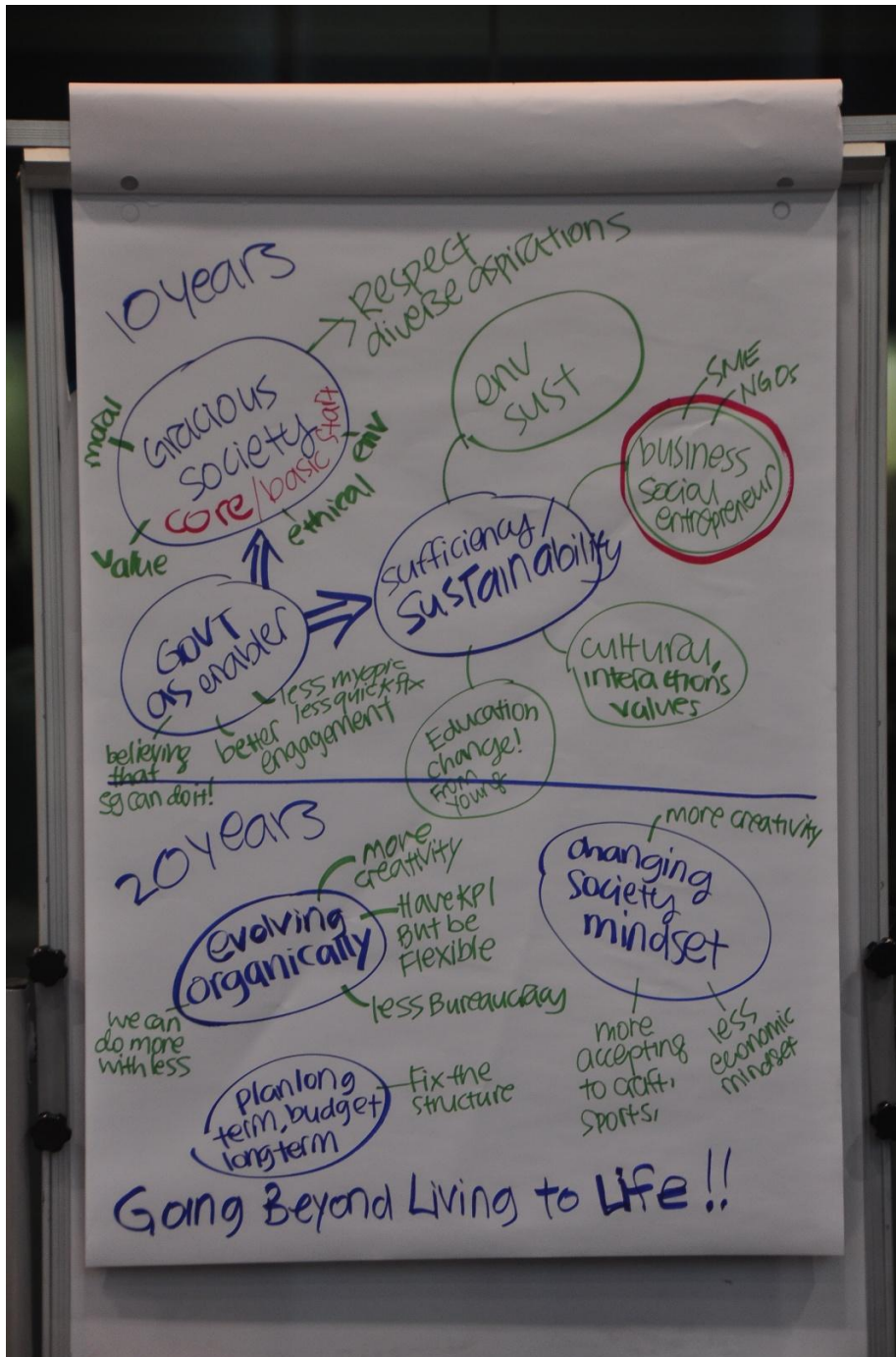
Lastly, we call for a recognition, acknowledgement and consciousness that the environment is not an interest group. Rather, it is the foundation of every aspect of our lives.

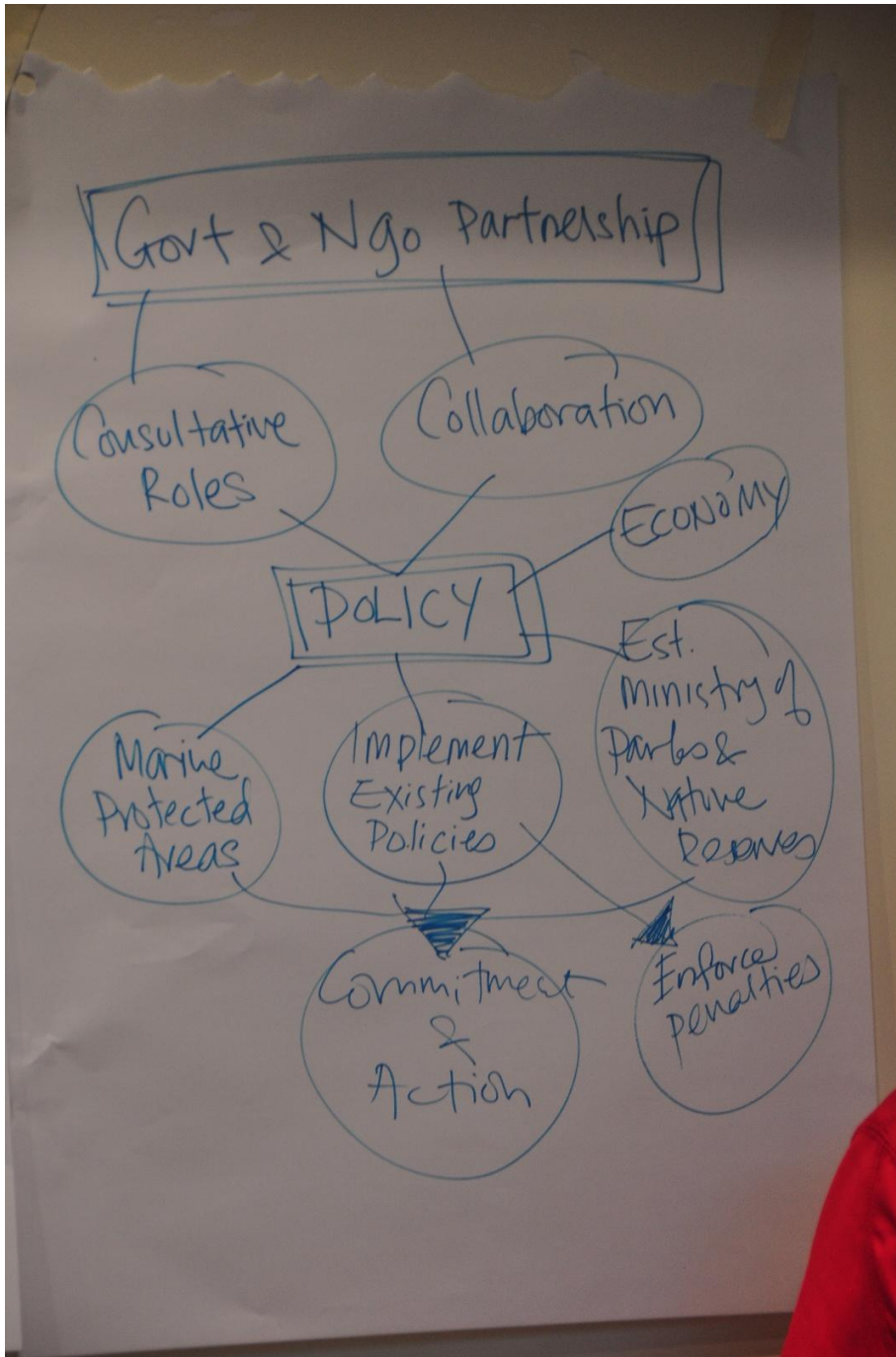
Putting it very simply, if there is no environment, there is no economy.











VISION 2030

What we'd like (IDEAL)

SINGAPORE LEADS IN CLIMATE RESPONSE

One country

where greenery isn't maintained. More places where man doesn't control nature.

What is probably going to happen ("Realistic/Practical")

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION ②

overpopulation everyone will be office robots

Still many other cities in various stages, many more needed.

We would buy what we need

DRUNKEN SINGAPORE

Gov looking for another option for landfill

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION ①

Gov TRANSPARENT ON GREEN ISSUES

Singapore leads in creating green environment, towards green economy.

Slaves may change slightly & still feared & worships & commercialism

Delays, excuses and more delays

1. ACT ON WHAT YOU KNOW
2. INCREASE AWARENESS / APPRECIATION
3. ALIGN RESEARCH & POLICIES & TRANSPARENCY
4. MINDSET SHIFT ABOUT GROWTH & CONSUMERISM
5. REVIEW BUREAUCRACY → INCLUDE & EMPOWER(?) NGOS

STICK NOTE PAD

JOLYN

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- Photographer: Hari
- Videographer: Alicia
- Our young volunteers from SOTA
- “Our Singapore” Programme Office: Daniel, Stephanie and Nicholas

Participant List

	Participant Name	Organisation
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2	Abdul Rahim Bin Abdul Hamid	Centre for Sustainable Asian Cities
3	Abigayle Ng	Blue Water Volunteers
4	Allan Lim	The Living! Project
5	Aloysius Foo	NUSSU SAVE
6	Anson Tan Zhong Yi	Avelife
7	Ben Lee	Nature Trekker
8	Bjorn Low	Edible "Garden City" Project
9	Cheng Zhiwei	Energy Carta (NUS)
10	Cherry Goh	Environmental Rangers Club (Ngee Ann Polytechnic)
11	Chris Jensen	Ground-Up Initiative
12	Corinne Fong	SPCA
13	Debby Ng	The Hantu Bloggers
14	Dianne Goh	Public
15	Ding Kian Seng	Waterways Watch Society

16	Dorothy Ng	Public
17	Elaine Sam Hui Xian	Singapore Polytechnic Environment Club
18	Eulalia Han	Energy Studies Institute
19	Foong Wei Xiong	Public
20	Frieda Loh	Hemispheres Foundation
21	Georgina Chin	Public
22	Heng Pei Yan	Public
23	Isabelle Lee	Conservation Interest Group (Republic Polytechnic)
24	Johann Annuar	Kampung Temasek
25	Joseph Lai	EART-H
26	Kenny Eng	Kranji Countryside Association
27	Ling Fu	Earth Hour Global
28	Low Zhan Hong	Public
29	Marcus Chua	Raffles Museum Toddycats!
30	Marcus Tay	International Coastal Cleanup Singapore

31	Margie Hall	Nature Society
32	Muhd. Ibnur Rashad Bin Zainal Abidin	Sustainable Living Lab
33	Ng Bee Choo	Wildlife Conservation Society
34	Nicholas Fang	Singapore Institute of International Affairs
35	Olivia Choong	Green Drinks
36	Pam Wan	Public
37	Pauline Menenzes	Vegetarian Society (Singapore)
38	Quek Baifeng	Keep Singapore Beautiful Movement
39	Ria Tan	Wildsingapore
40	Ricky Yeo	Action for Singapore Dogs
41	Siti Maryam Yaakub	TeamSeagrass
42	Soh Ju Hu	Public
43	Stephen Phoon	Public
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45	Tai Lee Siang	Singapore Green Building Council

46	Tan Wei Hong	NIE Green Club
47	Teoh Hock How	EARTHlink NTU
48	Vaidehi Shah	Singapore Environment Council
49	Veron Lau	Cat Welfare Society
50	Victor Lee Hong Zhi	SMU verts
51	Victor R Savage	Department of Geography, NUS
52	Wang Jing-Yuan	Residues & Resource Reclamation Centre
53	Xue Weijian	Bachelor of Environmental Studies Student Committee (NUS)
54	Yuhan	GEO Council (Nanyang Polytechnic)
55	Zhao Yan	Public