Abstract

This study is an attempt to examine the changes in the pattern of population distribution of Singapore between 1957 and 1970.

Before the Second World War, the population of Singapore increased rapidly as a result of immigration. The majority of this increase was within the city limits, especially in the Central Area north and south of the Singapore River. As a result of population growth and urbanization, there was over-crowding in housing within the city area and urban squatters began to appear on the fringe of the Central Area. The remainder of the increase was scattered in other minor urban centres situated mainly near the city boundaries. After 1960, the H.D.B. began its large housing schemes by establishing numerous housing estates outside the city centre so as to relieve the congestion within the city. Therefore by 1970, there was a modification of the distribution pattern as compared with 1957. The population density of the central area decreased while the density of the suburban areas increased. The former central area high population density zone has now diffused. In 1970, Queenstown and Alexandra had higher densities than the central city. The other housing estates were less dense than any of these. By 1970, 150,000 housing units were completed and were occupied by 34 per cent of the total population of Singapore. The movement away from the Central Areas and the development of other urban centres on the island is likely to continue increasing in the immediate future with the full implementation of the Government's plan.
Changes have also taken place in the distribution of various racial groups within Singapore. In the past, people of the same race, or people with the same dialect did try to cluster together. However, as a result of the implementation of Public Housing Schemes throughout the country, fusion was bound eventually to take place between the various racial groups.

The future distribution of population depends greatly upon Government's decisions. Although the population density of the Central Areas decreased in 1970 as compared with 1957, it seems certain this area will become again the centre of population concentration in the period following the completion of the Urban Renewal Plan. Population density of the suburban areas will still remain high whereas in rural areas population density will be lower than the town areas generally, except for a few areas of high population concentration.