
Overcoming Elderly Loneliness: A Case Study of the Ageless Theatre in Singapore

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abstract

Recently, many projects in public and community arts have flourished around the world, and arts management and cultural policy research have focused on the regeneration of community. Singapore is no exception. The government has placed an importance on community arts since 2012 when the Arts and Culture Strategic Review Report was issued. The report was a response to a crisis of community, namely, increasing immigration and the loneliness of the elderly.

The postmodern community theorists Bauman (*Liquid Modernity*) and Beck (*Risk Society*), though often cited in this context, simply describe the crisis of community without suggesting solutions. Hiroi (広井 2009) has also mentioned the need for theme-based communities that bond over similarities of interest. Yet, such communities do not support the members outside of the shared activities. Arts management considers these communities too weak to provide a safety net for the elderly.

This study transcends crisis of community theories to describe the elements of a new paradigm for communities of the elderly focused on artistic activity, particularly in developed Asia countries.

This study examines the Ageless Theatre (AT), a theater for the elderly built in Singapore in 2012. Participant observation was conducted and informal interview data was collected every Tuesday night between November 2016 and August 2017 during AT rehearsals. I also used *The Straits Times* and *Today*, two local English-language newspapers, for additional information related to the elderly arts circuit in Singapore. Through this study, I emphasize both the possibility of a “civic society,” which is defined by the government as a “social sphere between the state and family,” (*The Straits Times*, 21 June 1991) and how active resident associations are.

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