

SPEECH BY MRS ROSA DANIEL
FOR NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
AT 2020 ARTS & CULTURE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
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ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCING

NEW NORMALS AND NEW WAYS FORWARD

1. Hello everyone, I should say good afternoon, but I'm going to say good day because I know that we have friends who are in a different time zone. Thank you to those of you who are joining us, I believe very early in the morning, for instance, friends from the UK. Warm welcome to this symposium which for the first time we are doing online. As Sharon mentioned, this is the third time we doing it, and it has certainly grown from the first gathering in 2017 when we had 80 people. It then grew to a 150 and today I think we have more than 200 now who have signed up for this. I think this speaks to the interest in how arts research has really grown in Singapore and overseas.

International Partnerships

2. I think we all agree that this is a highly unusual time. We are in the midst of a pandemic and it has shown us during this period that there are new challenges but at the same time we all believe, opportunities as well that require fresh thinking and responses. Today's topic for us in the arts communities is most timely, as we know that health and wellbeing are now at the forefront of people's consciousness.

3. In the 5-year planning blueprint from 2018 to 2022 that the National Arts Council had outlined under the document which we call *Our Singapore Arts Plan*, we had stressed our commitment to research undergirding what we do, as we enhance policies and programs to champion the arts in Singapore. To do this, we are undertaking in NAC, serious efforts to increase our own capabilities, but at the same time understanding that we should complement this with tapping expertise that resides outside in the local research community, and also in the arts sector. We are also

working with international partners, several of you who are here today, because we really believe that this will enhance the pool of available local expertise and the knowledge that is in Singapore. We have made good progress so far. In Singapore, we have embarked on several core research projects now with local academia and arts groups. On the international front, we are working, for instance, with the Australia Council for the Arts in a research partnership with the Cultural Research Centre of NUS to develop Singapore- and Australia- based case studies on the role of the arts in social cohesion. We believe that international collaborations are important because they allow us to access comparative studies, do benchmarking and also tap new research capabilities.

Knowledge Sharing

4. To enhance knowledge sharing, we have also made efforts to ensure that insights and data from research work are shared in digestible formats through the multiple outreach and research platforms that NAC has. Working with the Culture Academy of the Ministry, NAC is currently also reviewing our monthly research newsletter to better connect with our readers and we do invite our research community, many of you here today, to similarly share your knowledge, documentation and research through our platforms, so that together we can share our knowledge and expertise. We believe that doing so will help us over time to build a robust body of data and research that better contributes to evidence-based policy-making and also program design.

Evidence-Based Policy Making

5. Like many of our other international counterparts, NAC has been closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on the arts sector. In early March, NAC ran online surveys to gather feedback from the sector, as well as data that we collected from multiple sources on income and jobs impact. We gathered responses from over 2,000 self-employed persons in addition to our major companies and charities.

6. This data gathering at an early stage and analysis helped NAC to build a robust case for the relief measures that were rolled up in the subsequent budgets such as a job support scheme for companies, and the Self-employed Persons Income Relief scheme, or SIRS for freelancers. The Arts and Culture Resilience Package of \$55

million that was provided beyond our annual budget shows that we have been able, through our evidence and data, to convince the public funders of the importance of sustaining the sector through this crisis. NAC will push ahead on deeper studies in the months ahead to understand the evolving COVID situation, which will continue to require us to get audience sentiments, understand through various research studies the longer-term impact on the arts sector, as well as take a view from other business models that can inform us, because it will not be business as usual.

Responding to COVID-19: Policy Shifts

7. We intend to enhance our research efforts in three ways that respond better. Firstly, **harnessing technology**. With arts content moving online, we know that this has now opened up opportunities for us to have new ways of tracking and understanding digital consumption modes. This will greatly contribute to collation and analysis of detailed and timely data. The longitudinal approaches of multi-year and sustained data collection will provide robust inputs on digital consumption not just locally, but now as well as in different international markets.

8. Secondly, **continuing to grow international networks and expertise**. We will expand our existing research collaborations and data comparisons. Overseas expertise will be tapped on to conduct research in emerging areas and to conduct the comparative studies that can yield new insights that we want to share with the larger arts community.

9. Thirdly, **engaging the arts community itself in research and documentation work**. NAC will initiate projects and support the efforts of cultural institutions and the arts community. We have two objectives in mind. One is to capture that knowledge which resides with the leading arts practitioners and institutions in our scene. This will, we believe, enhance our own perspectives and also strengthen the linkages between the research and the arts community in Singapore. Second, we believe that doing so will generate work and sustain livelihoods during this period, beyond arts creation and presentation. It will also benefit the arts community in preserving and transmitting our cultural heritage for future generations. NAC intends to invite extensive participation from the arts community to be part of the documentation efforts for

Singapore artists and works that will form the national repository for Singapore arts. This task will be undertaken by NAC working closely with the National Library Board and the National Heritage Board in the months ahead.

Encouraging Cross-Sector Research Collaborations

10. For the rest of the afternoon, we will be hearing from a diverse group of experts on the area of arts and health which is really very timely. I think many of us would agree that this is a very good topic for this period. I would like to extend NAC's deep appreciation to our speakers. We will hear from Dr Wong Tien Hua, NAC Council member, a very eminent medical practitioner, who will be delivering the keynote address. Professor Katherine Boydell, Dr Clive Parkinson, Dr Joanne Yoong, and Dr Donald Yeo, will also share their perspectives. Dr Boydell and Dr Parkinson will bring with them their international expertise on topics like depression, as well as arts and dementia. Dr Yoong and Dr Yeo will share what is happening to arts and health initiatives in Singapore.

Conclusion

11. I'm going to conclude here and hand you over to our wonderful panelists. Thank you, especially to our overseas panelists who have made time in your different time zones to join us today; we much appreciate that. I wish you all a very fruitful afternoon.

12. Thank you.