

# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE: Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

Assist. Prof. **Dr Zdravko Trivic**,  
Department of Architecture, School of Design and Environment, NUS

Research Team:

Co-PI: Associate Professor **Dr Tan Beng Kiang**, NUS

Researchers: **Nina Mascarenhas** | **Duong Quyen**

Collaborator: **Rita Padawangi** (ARI, NUS/SUSS)

## ARTS AND CULTURE NODES INITIATIVE

“to increase the range of **arts touch points in the heartlands**, where more Singaporeans can enjoy and engage with the arts regularly where they live and play” with the overall vision as “to develop an **island-wide network** of arts and cultural nodes in the heartlands.”

(National Arts Council of Singapore, 2011)

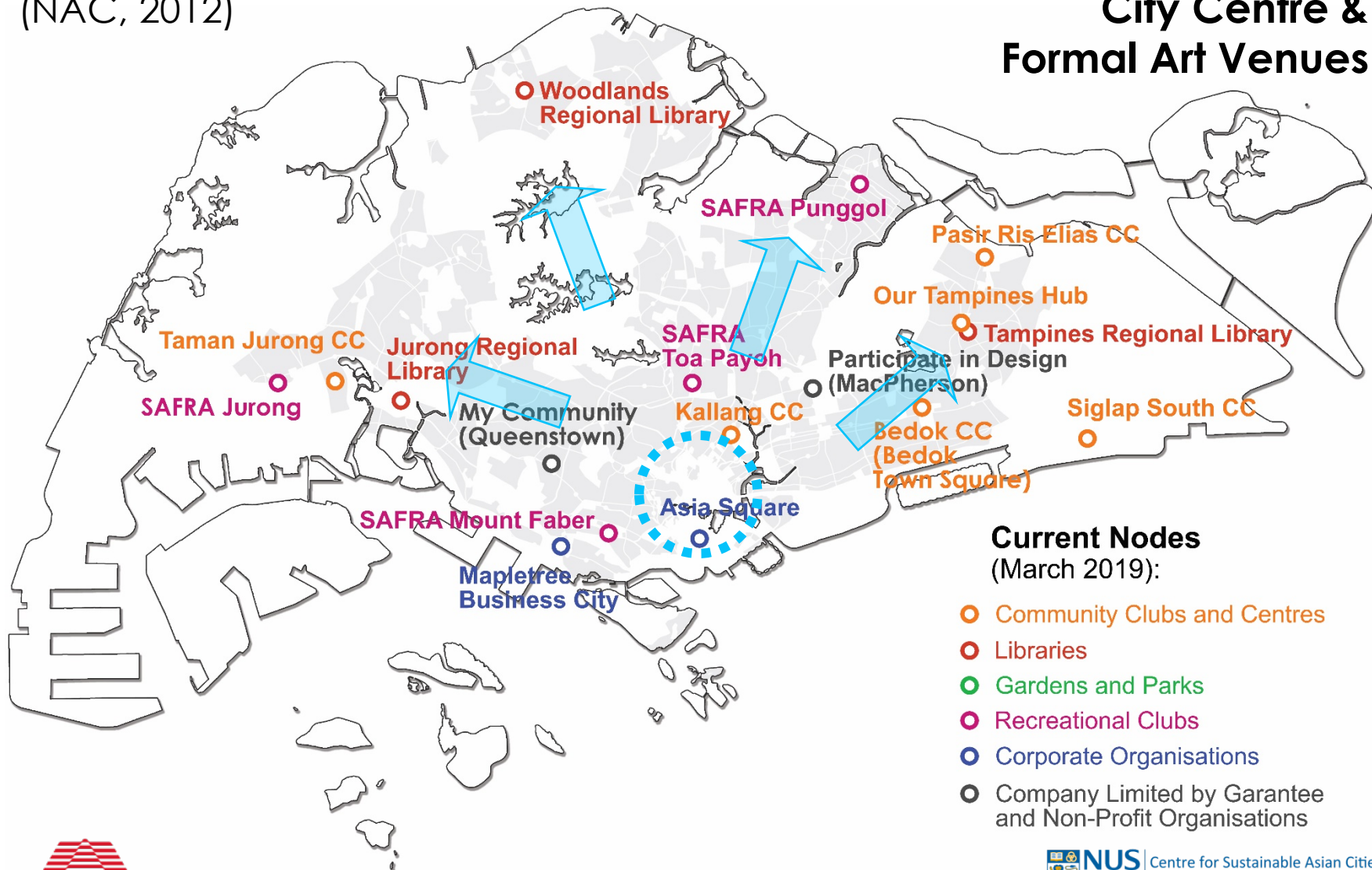
# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## 'ARTS AND CULTURE NODES' INITIATIVE

(NAC, 2012)

Beyond  
City Centre &  
Formal Art Venues



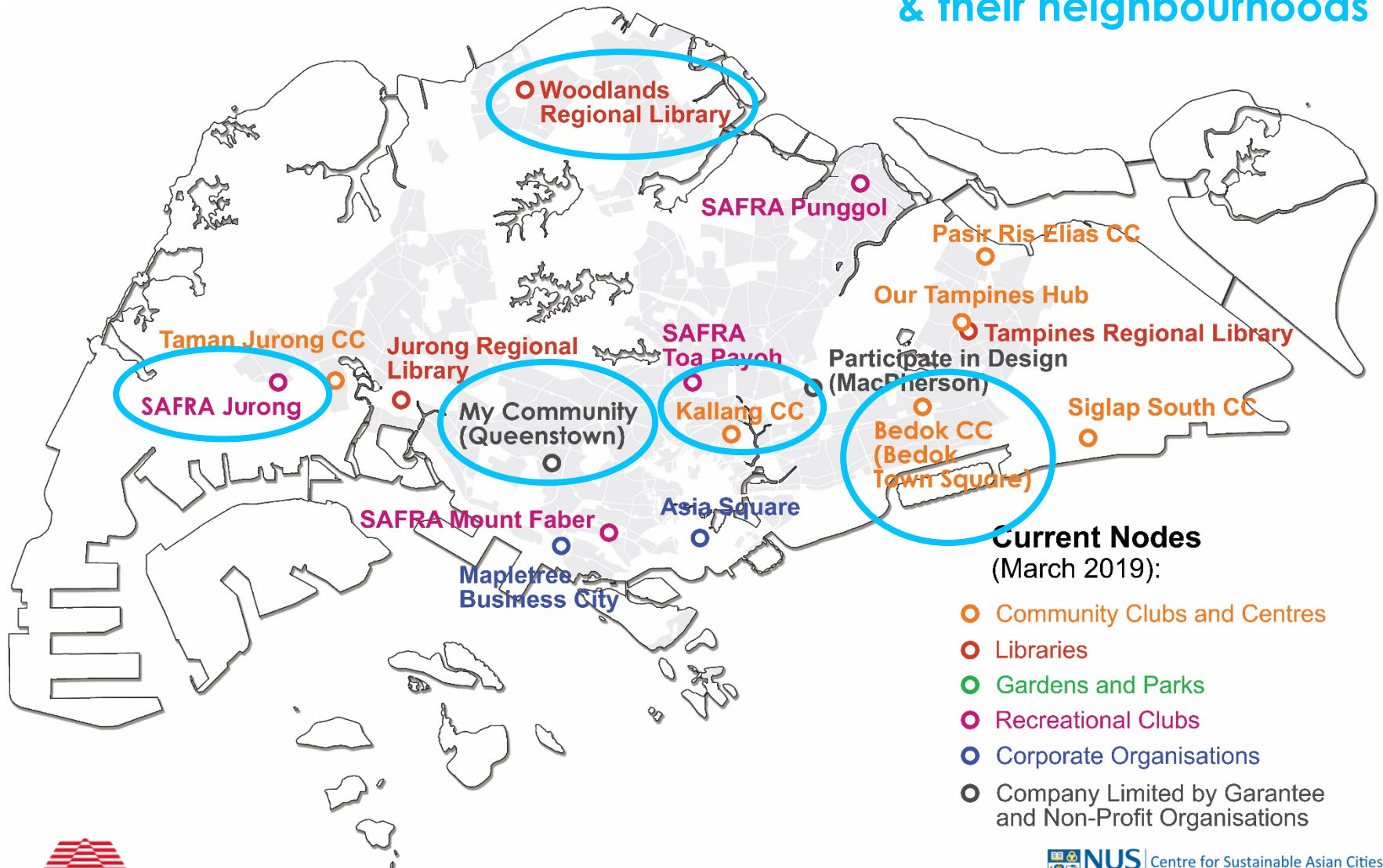


# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## RESEARCH SCOPE

## 5 TOUCH POINTS & their neighbourhoods





# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- **PART 1: Arts and Space - Activating Spaces through Arts**
  - **How can spaces be activated** through arts and culture? By what means, approaches and strategies?
  - What are the **spatial opportunities** of local neighbourhoods for bringing arts and culture activities into everyday life through **formal and informal venues**?
- **PART 2: Impacts of Arts and Culture Nodes Strategy**
  - **What are the impacts and how are they measured?**
- **PART 3: Strengthening the Nodes Strategy**
  - What indicates a successful arts and culture project/initiative in the heartlands?

PART 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

WHAT CAN SPACE DO FOR THE ARTS?

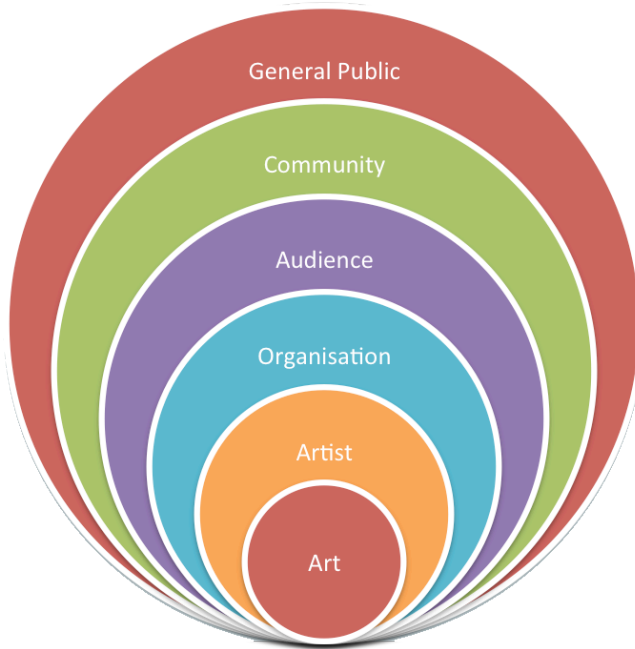
WHAT CAN ARTS DO FOR SPACE?

WHAT CAN ARTS AND SPACE DO  
FOR THE COMMUNITY, AND VICE VERSA?

### PART 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

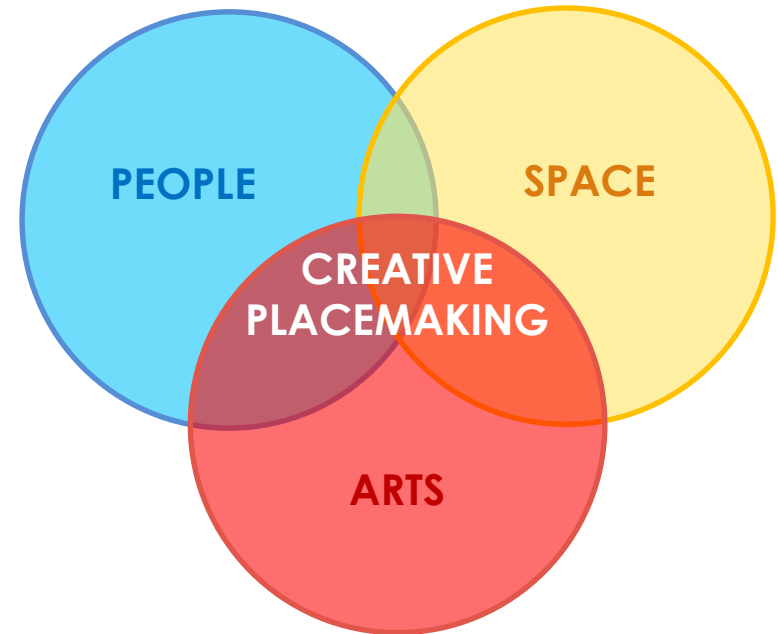
#### WHAT CAN SPACE DO FOR THE ARTS?

##### CULTURAL ECOLOGY



#### WHAT CAN ARTS DO FOR SPACE?

##### PLACEMAKING



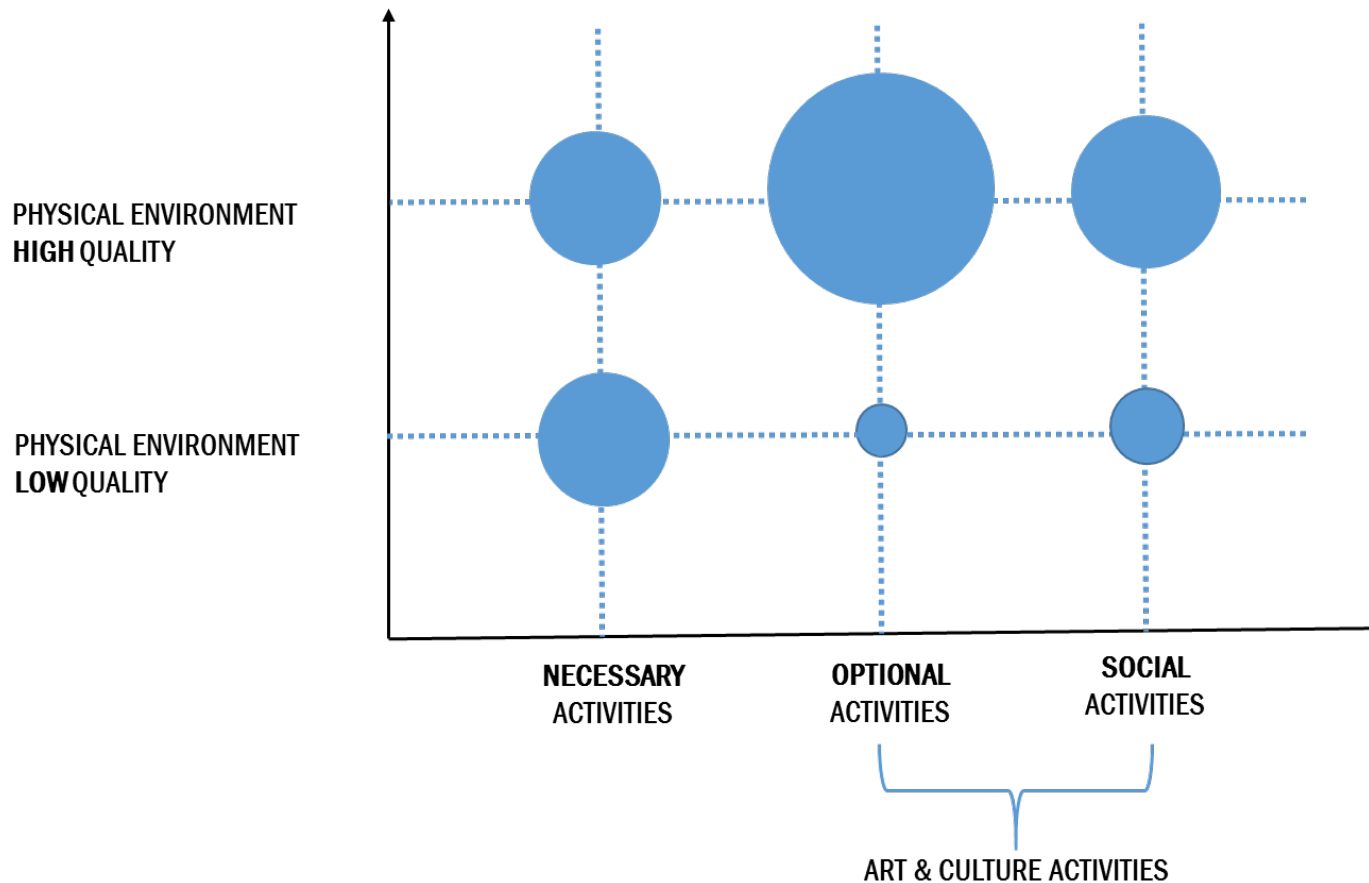
#### WHAT CAN ARTS AND SPACE DO FOR THE COMMUNITY, AND VICE VERSA?

##### PARTICIPATION



### PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### WHAT CAN SPACE DO FOR THE ARTS?

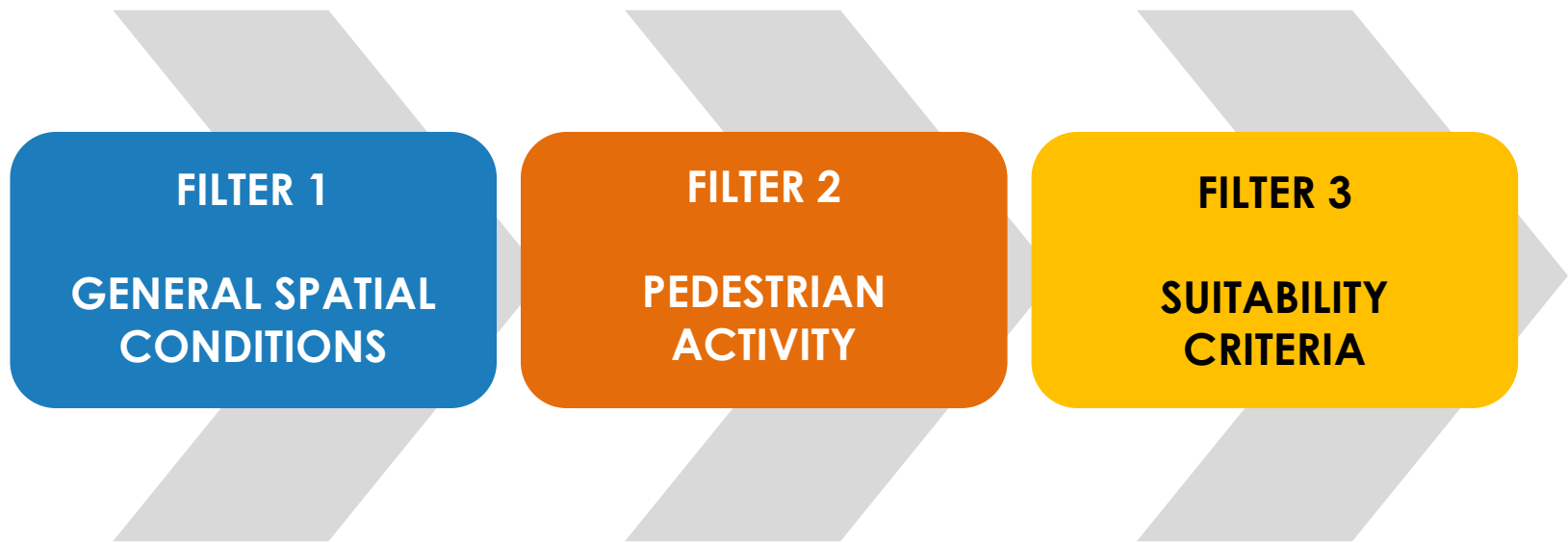


The **intensity of activities** highly depends on the **design quality of physical environment**.

(Source: Jan Gehl, 2006)

## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

**CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPACE:  
WHAT ARE SUITABLE VENUES  
FOR THE ARTS?**



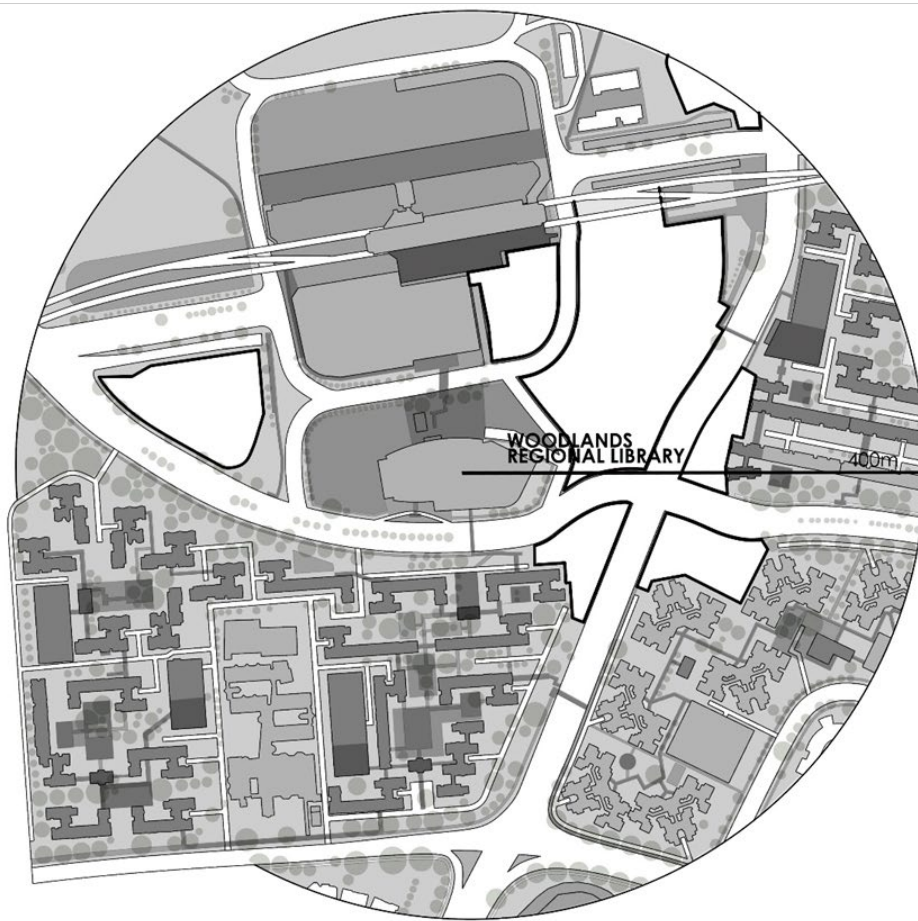
# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

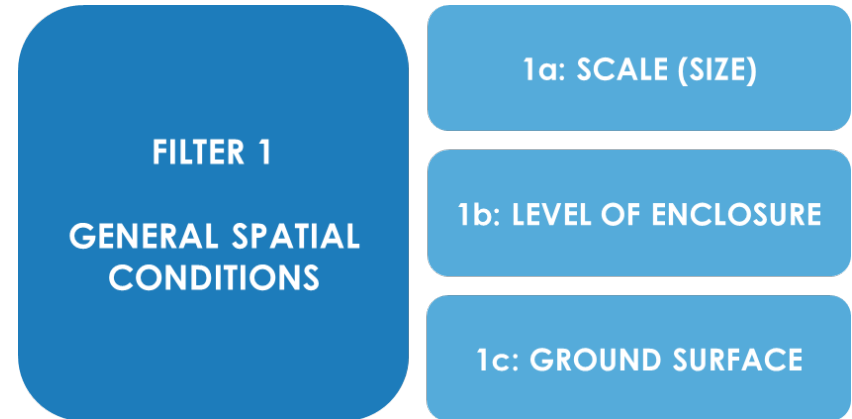
## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

### FILTER 1: OVERLAY OF 1a, 1b & 1c

Map of available spaces combining 1a scale (size), 1b enclosure and 1c ground surface (darker shades indicate more opportunities)  
EXAMPLE – WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD



### FILTER 1: GENERAL SPATIAL CONDITIONS



### SPATIAL OPPORTUNITY SCALE

LESS

MORE



# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

### 2a + 2b

Map showing the volume of observed stationary vs. transient activities at selected points in the neighbourhood  
EXAMPLE – WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD



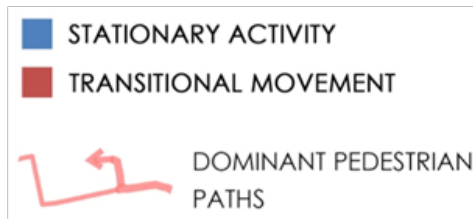
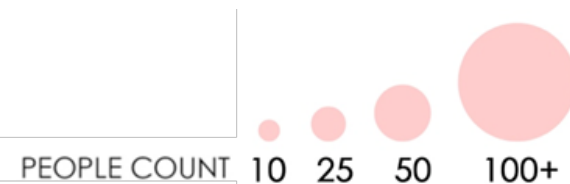
### FILTER 2: PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

FILTER 2

PEDESTRIAN  
ACTIVITY

2a: TRANSIENT ACTIVITY

2b: STATIONARY ACTIVITY



# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

**FILTER 1** + **FILTER 2: OVERLAY** – 4 categories of neighbourhood spaces

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION HUBS, COMMERCIAL AREAS

### CATEGORY A:

near **both movement paths** and **stationary activity**

STRATEGY: **Broadening and diversifying** arts audience





# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

**FILTER 1** + **FILTER 2: OVERLAY** – 4 categories of neighbourhood spaces

AMENITIES

### CATEGORY B:

away from  
movement paths but  
**with stationary activity**

STRATEGY: Facilitating  
**social bonding** and  
**deepening arts  
engagement**





# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

**FILTER 1** + **FILTER 2: OVERLAY** – 4 categories of neighbourhood spaces

CARNIVALS

**CATEGORY C:**  
**near movement paths**, no stationary activity

STRATEGY: Providing residents a **reason to pause and engage** – **pop-up, publicizing, broadening**





# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

**FILTER 1** + **FILTER 2**: **OVERLAY** – 4 categories of neighbourhood spaces

AMPHITHEATERS & ROOFTOPS

### CATEGORY D:

Spaces **away** from movement patterns and **underutilized**

STRATEGY: **activating** “white elephants”



### PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### STEP 3

##### **FILTER 3: SUITABILITY CRITERIA**

(CRITERIA FOR GOOD PUBLIC SPACE & SUITABILITY FOR ARTS AND CULTURE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES)

##### **FILTER 3 SUITABILITY CRITERIA**

(CRITERIA FOR GOOD PUBLIC SPACE & SUITABILITY FOR ARTS AND CULTURE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES)

**3a: ACCESSIBILITY**

**3b: CONFIGURATION**

**3c: COMFORT**

**3d: SUPPORTING  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

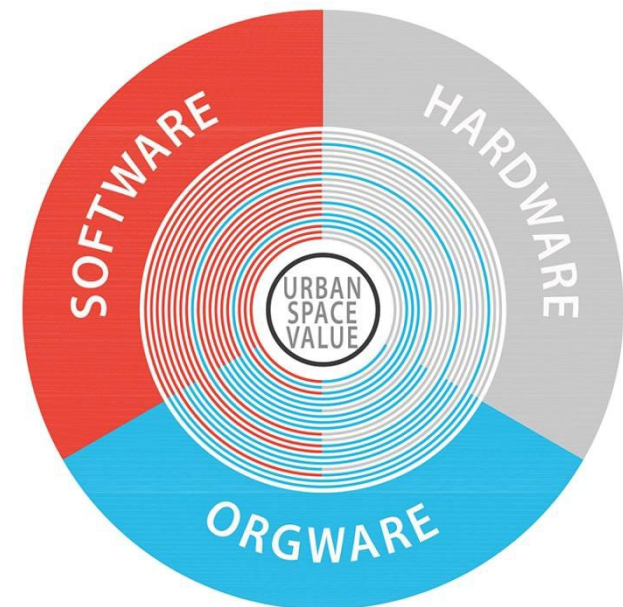
**3e: MULTI-  
FUNCTIONALITY**

**3f: IMAGE**

#### **CHECKLIST FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SPACE EVALUATION**

#### **21 CRITERIA**

**Literature** review  
+ **Interviews** with artists & arts event  
organisers



Cho, Heng & Trivic, (2016). *Re-framing Urban Space*. New York: Routledge



## PART 1: SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES - KEY OUTCOME

### Guide for Bringing Arts into Neighbourhoods: Choosing the Right Space and Strategy

coming soon...

#### SUPPORT GROWTH OF ARTS AND CULTURE ECOLOGY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

##### CHOOSE SUITABLE ARTS VENUES

- Present a step-by-step framework to **identify and evaluate spatial opportunities** in the neighbourhood and **choose the most suitable formal and informal venues** for community arts and culture activities

##### ACTIVATE PUBLIC SPACE

- Articulate **strategies to activate public space through arts**

##### ENGAGE AND BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY

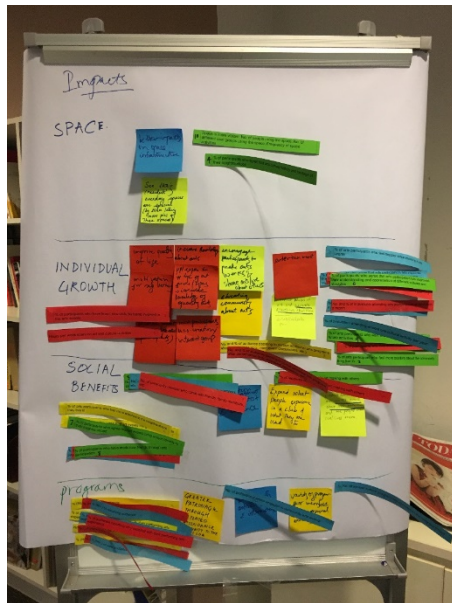
- Suggest ways in which arts and space can **actively engage the community** and trigger positive social impact

### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS

# N EIGHBOURHOOD A RTS AND C ULTURE I MPACT A SSESSMENT

- What impacts?
- On whom?
- How to capture and measure?
- Short-term vs. long-term impacts?

- **Review/collect** (theory, frameworks and tools):
  - ~200 impact indicators database
- **Analyse & shortlist** (~50 indicators)
- **Refine & validate** (FGDs with node partners and residents)
- **Final NACIA (20 indicators)**



FGD with node partners

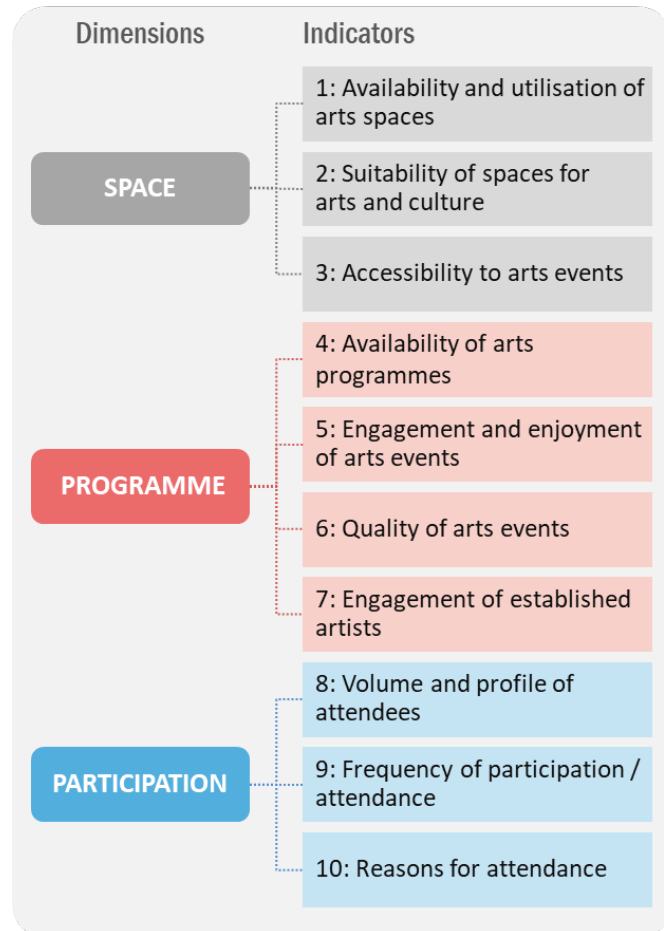
# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

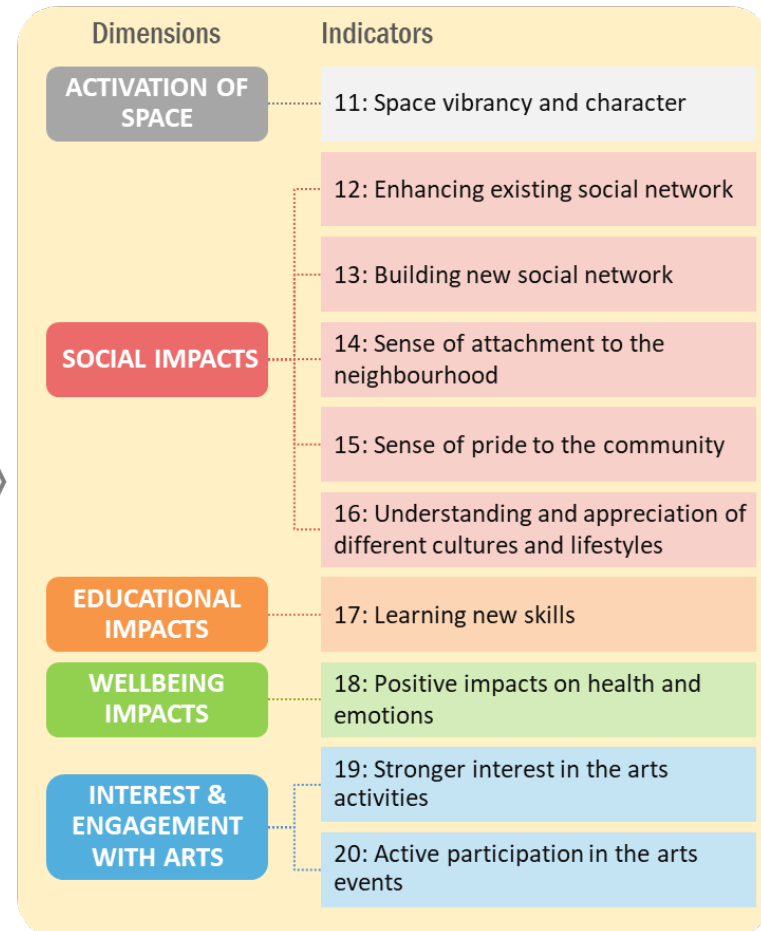
## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS

### NEIGHBOURHOOD ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

#### Domain 1: Attributes



#### Domain 2: Impacts



### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS

# N EIGHBOURHOOD A RTS AND C ULTURE I MPACT A SSESSMENT APPLICATION

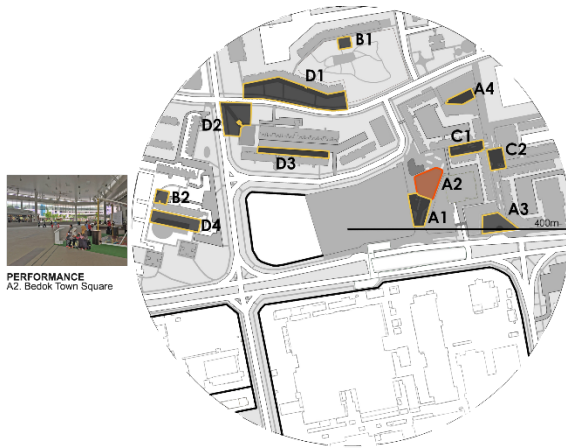
	Pilot study	Final study
Arts & culture events	8	11
Pop-up events	5	
Pilot surveys	242	300
FGDs with residents	5	5
FGD with node partners	1	
Interviews with artists & event organisers	8	

# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

### DOMAIN 1: HARDWARE ATTRIBUTES



PERFORMANCE  
A2. Bedok Town Square

Bedok Town Square

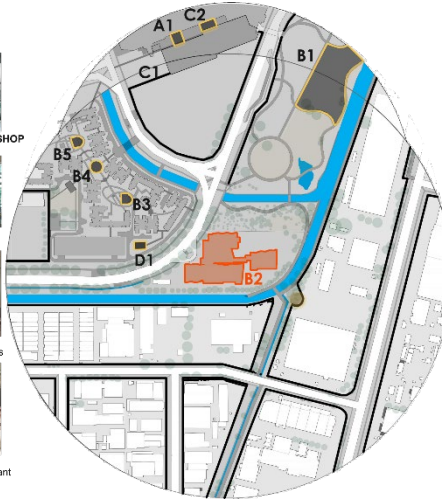


PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP  
B2. 1. Atrium

PRACTICE/WORKSHOP  
B2. 2. Creative Corner

PRACTICE/WORKSHOP  
B2. 3. The evergreen rooms

PERFORMANCE  
B2. 4. Joy Garden Restaurant



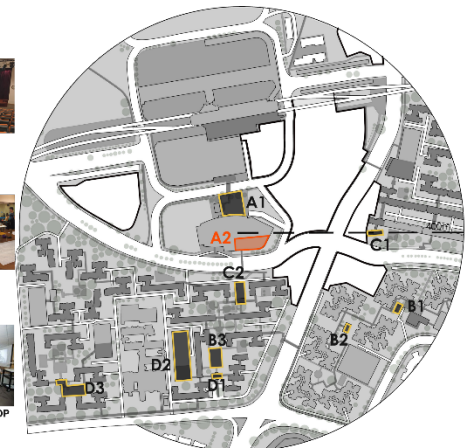
SAFRA Jurong



PERFORMANCE/  
WORKSHOP  
A2.1 Auditorium

PERFORMANCE/  
WORKSHOP  
A2. 2 Programme zone

PRACTICE/WORKSHOP  
A2. 3 Amazon/ Everest  
rooms



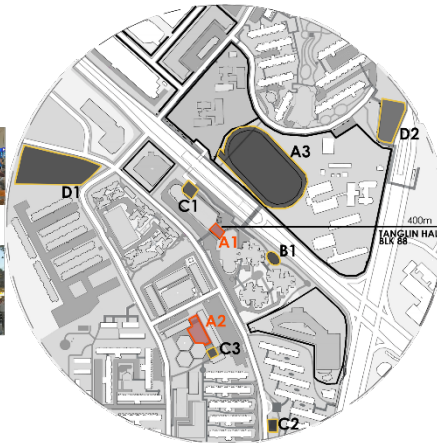
Woodlands Regional Library

OVERALL  
DIVERSE  
SPACE  
AVAILABILITY  
AND  
UTILISATION  
associated with  
impacts

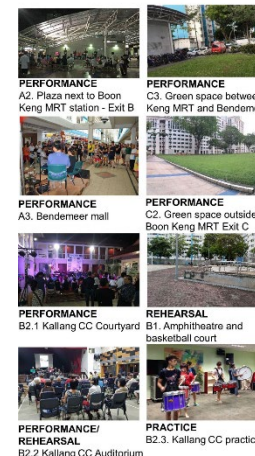


A1. PERFORMANCE  
Bk 88 Tanglin Halt Road

A2. PERFORMANCE  
Community plaza



Tanglin Halt / My Community



PERFORMANCE  
A2. Plaza next to Boon  
Keng MRT station - Exit B

PERFORMANCE  
A3. Bendemeer mall

PERFORMANCE  
B2.1 Kallang CC Courtyard

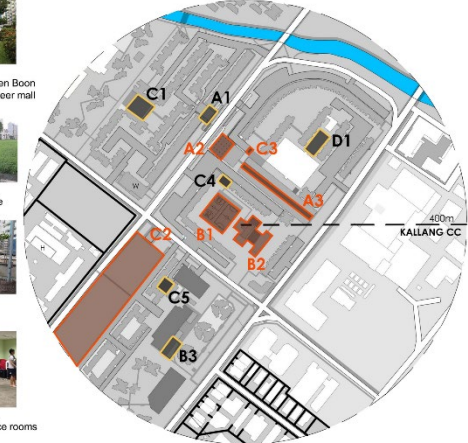
PERFORMANCE/  
REHEARSAL  
B2.2 Kallang CC Auditorium

PERFORMANCE  
C3. Green space between Boon  
Keng MRT and Bendemeer mall

PERFORMANCE  
C2. Green space outside  
Boon Keng MRT Exit C

REHEARSAL  
B1. Amphitheatre and  
basketball court

PRACTICE  
B2.3. Kallang CC practice rooms



Kallang CC

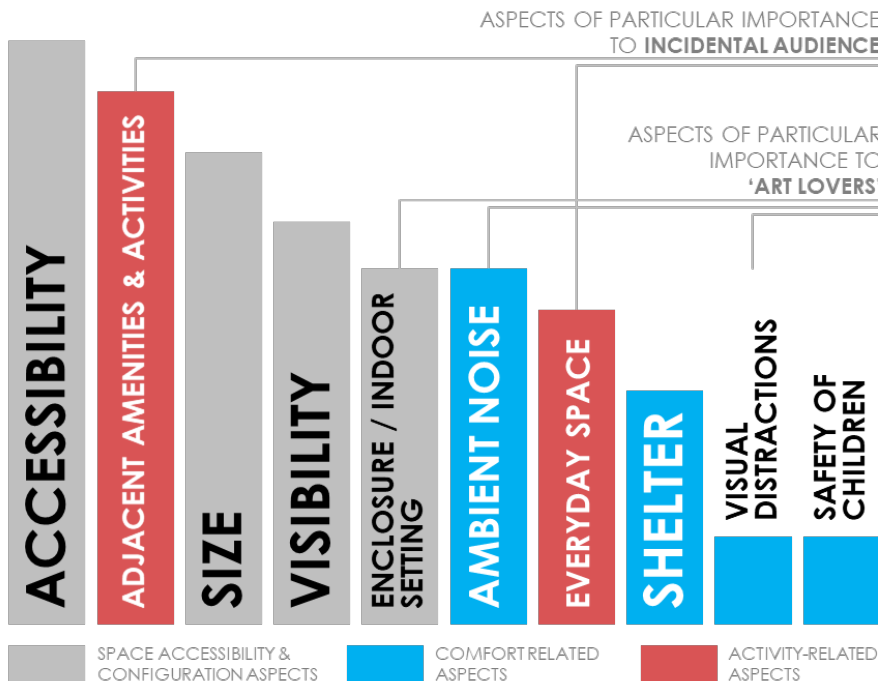


### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 1: HARDWARE ATTRIBUTES

#### SPACE SUITABILITY

- Over 80% - “suitable” or “very suitable”



- Perception of suitability varies depending on **type of event**, e.g. performance vs. workshop.
- ‘Art lovers’ are more demanding.

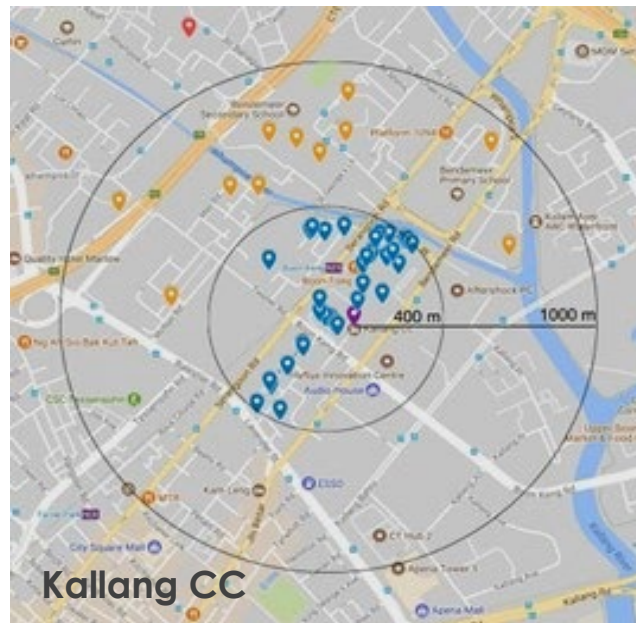
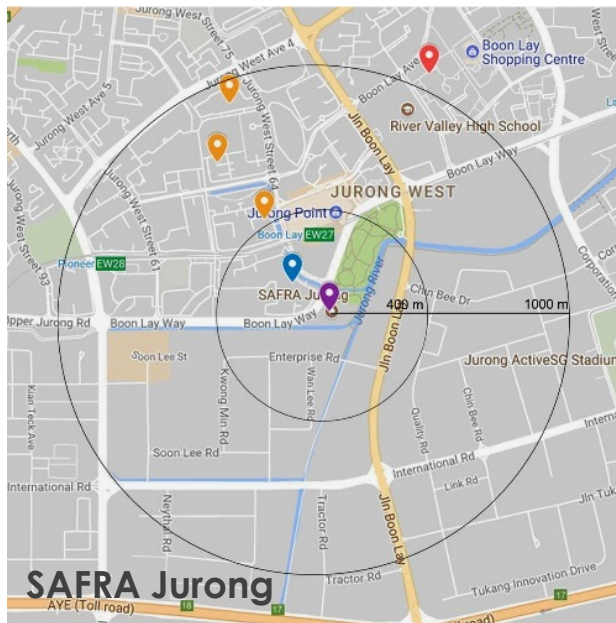
“(...) **I don’t think this is a very conducive place.** We are being surrounded by four things: the road, the supermarket, the food-court and the coffee-shop. (...) I find that it is problematic as **it is too noisy.** (Participant Tanglin Halt FGD, 24 Jun 2017)

### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 1: HARDWARE ATTRIBUTES

#### SPACE ACCESSIBILITY

- **Over 90%** of participants are in **favour of having arts events closer to home**, especially the elderly and mothers with young children



*“It (SAFRA Jurong) is not so convenient for me [...] because from the MRT you still have to walk some distance and it is not sheltered. Singapore is very hot. That’s one reason.”*  
[SAFRA FGD, 3 Dec ‘16]

**Accessibility** is also associated with the presence of **adjacent amenities and activities** (e.g., grocery stores, food courts or MRT stations) makes a venue attractive and **convenient**.

## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

### DOMAIN 1: SOFTWARE ATTRIBUTES

#### ARTS & CULTURE PROGRAMMES availability & quality

- Overall, good diversity of arts programmes across all nodes
- ~90% - overall very good quality, enjoyable and engaging
- Perceived quality varies across nodes





### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 1: SOFTWARE ATTRIBUTES

**“When something is free** a lot of people come to watch it and **you can’t expect everyone to get the same kind of quality as something that is paid** but the most important thing is what the artist should want out of it is to ensure that you get **a glimpse** or a snippet of what it actually is.”

[Kallang FGD, 21 Jan 17]

**“I don’t know whether you consider that arts** – the RCs have block parties where they bring in singing and musicians.” [SAFRA FGD, 17 Dec 16]

### COMMUNITY ARTS vs. ‘QUALITY’ ARTS

- **Not all events** which involve music and singing are **viewed as ‘arts’**
- Some participants associate ‘quality’ with ‘entry fee’ and the formal venues

Photo: Woodlands Regional Library, Jan ‘17



## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

### DOMAIN 1: PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE ATTRIBUTES



**Node Strategy - successful in reaching out to new audience**

- **~70%** of surveyed participants are **“first-timers”**
- **~40% incidental audience**
- However, **repeat audiences are equally important**

### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS - ACTIVATION OF SPACE



“It [arts event] **creates good atmosphere** and promotes a *light-hearted, joyous mood.*”  
(Tanglin Halt FGD, 25 Feb' 2017)

“It was actually the music that attracted me to this place. I was actually going home (...) and then I realised it was something live so I thought it was quite cool (...). [It is] quite interesting and **makes the whole place more lively.**” (Kallang FGD, 21 Jan' 2017)

## VIBRANCY & PLACE IDENTITY / ATTACHMENT TO NEIGHBOURHOOD

- **90%** - arts brings **vibrancy, festive atmosphere and sense of identity**
- **Over 80%** - arts contributes to **stronger attachment to neighbourhood**
- seeing familiar spaces from a **new perspective**
- reason for **exploring different neighbourhoods**



## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS – ACTIVATION OF SPACE

# TEMPORARY & PERMANENT CHANGES TO SPACES

Art brings **festive atmosphere** & activates public space **before and after the event**





## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS – ACTIVATION OF SPACE

# TEMPORARY & PERMANENT CHANGES TO SPACES

Adjacent complementary uses

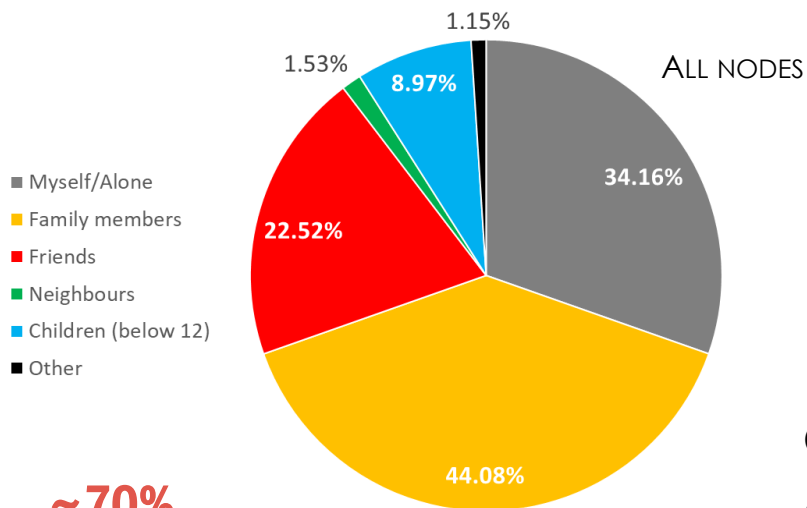


Source: Trivic (2019)

### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS – SOCIAL BONDING

Q. WITH WHOM DID YOU ATTEND THE EVENT?



~70%



**FAMILY + FRIENDS**

SAFRA JURONG,  
TANGLIN HALT,  
WRL

~40%



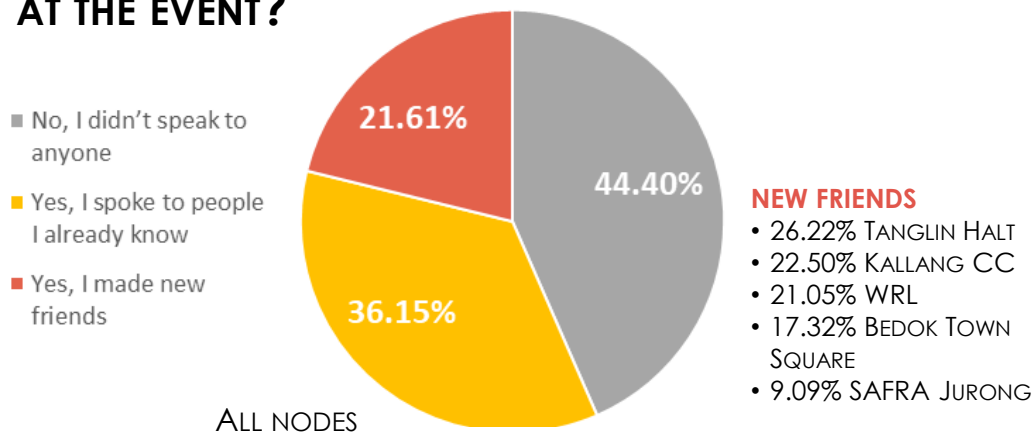
**ALONE**

KALLANG CC,  
BEDOK

#### COMMUNITY BONDS

- **STRENGTHENING EXISTING NETWORK**
- **BUILDING NEW SOCIAL NETWORK**

Q. DID YOU COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE AT THE EVENT?



#### NEW FRIENDS

- 26.22% TANGLIN HALT
- 22.50% KALLANG CC
- 21.05% WRL
- 17.32% BEDOK TOWN SQUARE
- 9.09% SAFRA JURONG

### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS – SOCIAL BONDING

**“[art] breaks the ice between people** who are enjoying the music together regardless of age.” [Bedok FGD, Dec '16]

**“In a formal space (...) you don't take note of who sits near you (...)** but if it's informal you're like 'who's as busybody as me'.” [Kallang FGD, 21 Jan '17]

**“I think any kind of event creates interest, interest creates topics that you can make small talk about.** If you're in a lift with a fellow you can say **‘Oh hey, I saw you at so and so event!’**” [Kallang FGD, 21 Jan '17]

### BONDING BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS

#### stages of 'neighbouring'

(Grannis, 2009):

- **Familiarization** with strangers – passive face-to-face contact
- **Mutual recognition**
- **Shared experience**
- **Further interaction**
- **Friendship**



## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS – SOCIAL BONDING

"I am from China and I know only about some Chinese arts. **I don't really know much about Indian or Malay arts**, or arts from other countries. By listening to their songs or watching them dance, **we can understand more about their cultures, even when we don't know the language.**" [Tanglin Halt FGD, 26 Feb '17]

**PRIDE IN  
COMMUNITY**

**~88%**

**APPRECIATION  
OF DIFFERENT  
CULTURES**

**~87%**

### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 2: EDUCATIONAL & WELLBEING IMPACTS

“Encourages people to **think out of the box**. People can think of **different ways to look at common objects**.”

[SAFRA Jurong FGD, 21 Jan '17]

“It's unexpected (...). **I'm experiencing things I might not know**, or listen to things that I never heard before.”

(Kallang FGD, 21 Jan' 2017)

“(...) it's true when you say we live a very mundane life, a lot of people say **'Singaporeans got no life, we are not happy'**, so this **brings the life back to us (...)**” [Kallang FGD, 21 Jan '17]

### EDUCATIONAL & POSITIVE EMOTIONS

- Parents see arts events as **educational and social activities** in which they engage, together with their children.
- **Good mood, active lifestyle and healing** benefits (~90%).



### PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS – KEY FINDINGS

#### DOMAIN 2: IMPACTS – INTEREST & ENGAGEMENT WITH ARTS

“ Can school students **work with budding artists** to cultivate their interest in arts and then have a **showcase in the market place** so that more can see. [SAFRA Jurong FGD, 17 Dec '16]

“(...) there's also **a lot of talent within the community** who would be looking for a platform to perform. (...) **you can join on a volunteer basis or there's a workshop that you can join.**” [Tanglin Halt FGD, 25 Feb '17]

## DEEPER PARTICIPATION and INTEREST IN ARTS

- Residents want to be **mentored by artists** and their **work showcased** together at a community venue
- **~72% - pursuing other art activities**

### ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

**84.5% - passive participants**  
**24.2% - volunteers** (Tanglin Halt)  
**8.3% - performers** (WRL)



## PART 2: STUDY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IMPACTS - KEY OUTCOME

### Guide for Assessing the Impact of Bringing Arts into Neighbourhoods

coming soon...

#### EVALUATE IMPACTS

Short & long term impacts of arts engagement in neighbourhood

#### GATHER FEEDBACK

From residents and stakeholders to improve future efforts

#### UNDERSTAND AND PLAN

Distil insights to plan future activities and monitor impacts over time

#### DOCUMENT HISTORY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Build evidence of success to support funding, promotion and recruitment strategies

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT CAN  
**SPACE**  
DO FOR THE  
**ARTS?**

79

- **BUILD STRONG NEIGHBOURHOOD ARTS AND CULTURE ECOLOGY.**
- Pay stronger focus on **informal spaces.**
  - Capitalise on:
    - **WELL-USED & FREQUENTED SPACES** IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
    - **GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITIONS** (shelter, visibility, etc.)
    - **AVAILABILITY OF SPACES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS**
  - Improve the quality of space using **TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT PHYSICAL DESIGN** means
  - Build **PLACE IDENTITY**

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

WHAT CAN  
**ARTS**  
DO FOR THE  
**SPACE?**

---

89

- **BUILD SYNERGIES** BETWEEN ARTS PROGRAMMES, AVAILABLE USES AND USER GROUPS **TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY BONDING.**



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

WHAT CAN  
**ARTS AND SPACE**  
DO FOR THE  
**COMMUNITY**  
AND VICE VERSA?

---

93

- OFFER DIFFERENT **LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT** TO **EMPOWER COMMUNITY**.
- ENCOURAGE **INTERDEPENDENCE** BETWEEN **PROFESSIONAL ART PROGRAMMES AND ARTS INTEREST GROUPS'** AND BETWEEN **VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY ARTS** PRACTICE.

# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE:

Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

## COMING SOON...

**Guide for  
Bringing Arts into  
Neighbourhoods:  
Choosing the Right  
Space and Strategy**

**Guide for  
Assessing the  
Impact of Bringing  
Arts into  
Neighbourhoods**

Forthcoming book

**COMMUNITY ARTS  
AND CULTURE  
INITIATIVES IN  
SINGAPORE:  
ASSESSING THE  
NODAL APPROACH**

**by Zdravko Trivic**  
(Routledge, UK, 2019/20)

Check also:

Trivic, Z. (2019) **“Bringing Arts Closer to Local Communities: Spatial Opportunities and Impacts on Community Bonding”**, in L.C. Hoong, & L.C. Malone-Lee (Eds.), *Building Resilient Neighbourhoods in Singapore: The Convergence of Policies, Research and Practice*, Springer. DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7048-9\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7048-9_7)

# ARTS & CULTURE NODES IN THE HEARTLANDS OF SINGAPORE: Exploring Strategies, Spatial Opportunities & Impacts

Thank  
you!

Assist. Prof. **Dr Zdravko Trivic**,  
Department of Architecture, School of Design and Environment, NUS

Research Team:  
Co-PI: Associate Professor **Dr Tan Beng Kiang**, NUS  
Researchers: **Nina Mascarenhas** | **Duong Quyen**  
Collaborator: **Rita Padawangi** (ARI, NUS/SUSS)