RE-IMAGINING SINGAPORE: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

Arts & Culture
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CultureBYTES

Dear Readers,

Singapore celebrates 54 years of independence on 9 August 2015. The 2020 World Values Survey (WVS) indicated that 95.5% of Singaporeans feel either very proud or quite proud to be Singaporean. This issue of CultureBYTES explores how arts and culture can help identify "Singapore" as the place where people feel a strong sense of belonging, contribute with being a critical and multiracial society. This is not surprising – Singapore's population is made up of people who have come from different cultures, with different nationalities, with different ethnicities, speaking different languages and practicing multiple religions. The 2020 Population Census showed that Singapore's multilingualism and multiculturalism, among others, has kept spotlight the importance of the arts, culture and heritage in our society. This issue explores various initiatives and perspectives, regardless of circumstances.

Happy National Day!

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RESEARCH

Survey

Being Singapore: Multiracial and Multireligious

STPI Board of Management
(in Political Science and Sociology)

THE SINGAPOREAN IDENTITY

Ethnically composed respondents in Singapore (2020)

On the 7th September 2020, IPS-Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellows Prof Tan Ern Ser and Prof Tan Kelvin Beng Hock discussed the results of the survey, which measured Singaporeans' identity, "political and multicultural" and "multireligious" as a cornerstone of their "Singaporean" identity. Watch the discussion here.

View the full infographic

Report

World Values Survey - Singaporean Values, Attitudes and Lived Experiences

Our Singapore Values, Attitudes towards Institutions, Politics and Political Participation & Singapore Our Feelings Into the World Values Survey is a three part series presented by the Singapore Institute of Policy Studies of the Office of Minister Tharman.

In Our Singapore Values, the researchers identified four clusters of Singaporeans based on their values: Conservative, Ethnic Conscious, Liberal and Cosmopolitan, and Profile Crusaders. From there, they set out to find out the extent to which these clusters differed in their attitudes towards civic democracy and their institutions, and social and cultural values. Results showed that Singaporeans are "ambivalent" about democracy and the economy, there is a certain sense of "ethnic consciousness" in the country, and that there is a strong appreciation for meritocracy and a concern about rising inequality.

In Attitudes towards Institutions, Politics, and Politics, the study found that most Singaporeans have confidence in institutions, but there is a "lukewarm" attitude towards democracy, generational differences in the levels of trust, with older Singaporeans more trusting of institutions, and younger Singaporeans with consistently lower levels of trust and attitudes towards socio-economic benefits for their generation, contrasted against their parents. The study also found that Singaporeans feel "not as strongly rights-oriented and concerned with social justice".

In Lived Experiences in Singapore Our Feelings Into the World Values Survey, the study focused on social and cultural values. This covers themes such as happiness, satisfaction, health, and quality of life, perceptions of life, lived experiences, and national identity. One of the factors that contributed to a "sense of belonging" was being "very proud or quite proud to be a Singaporean". This suggests that Singapore's "Pride" is a critical factor in generational gaps in positive feelings among citizens.

Study

Heritage Connections: Southern Islands and Islanders

The historical connections between mainland Singapore and its Southern Islands.

Find out more

Study

Arts and Culture: Connecting Identities

The role of arts and culture in sustaining Singapore's identity.

Arts and culture play a key role in sustaining Singapore's ethnic communities. This is one of the key findings in a study by researchers from the National University of Singapore. It challenges conventional perspectives that "ethnic communities are a hindrance to a cohesive society".

The role of the arts in integrating ethnic identities is documented in various places. For instance, they ensure that the particular ethnic groups "integrating" into the heritage of the Balestanian and Bugis. Intangible culture also plays a vital role in the interaction of ethnic communities, and in the preservation of their identities. For example, the Peranakan experience is shared by ethnic Chinese and Malay people. Musical and dance performances are also a key part of the Peranakan culture, and have been passed down through the generations. The documentation of traditional dwellings for the Orang Laut's floating village and the Balestanian's palaces, is crucial to preserving the cultural heritage of these communities.

Today, arts and cultural forms continue to be supported by prominent cultural institutions, such as the Peranakan Museum, the Malay Heritage Centre, the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, the Singapore Indian Heritage Centre, the Singapore Indian Heritage Centre, the Singapore Indian Heritage