

A Creative Ageing City for Second Beginnings

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Can ageing cities be creative? Can the ageing population contribute as a positive force towards urban design and place-making? How can underused spaces in land-scarce Singapore be re-purposed into thriving communities for our ageing population? These are some of the questions that are addressed in Dr. Chong's two recently published books – *Creative Ageing Cities: Place Design with Older People in Asian Cities*, and *Senior Beginnings: Senior Living Redefined*.

Creative Ageing Cities is an outcome of years of research supported by SUTD-MIT International Design Centre, and is the first to bring together multidisciplinary scholastic research on ageing and urban issues from across top six ageing cities in Asia – Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. These case studies give a good overview of the diverse challenges and opportunities in the various Asian urban contexts and offers a new perspective of an ageing and urban design framework that emphasises multi-stakeholder collaboration, inter-generational relations and the collective wisdom of older people as a source of creativity.

Commissioned by the Lien Foundation, *Second Beginnings* is a book project that proposes 10 new architectural typologies to enable seniors to pursue passions, initiate interest-based activities, operate small businesses, exercise and, when the time comes, be cared for within the community. The project puts forward new ideas on how unused and underused spaces in Singapore can be re-purposed into thriving communities for seniors to lead active and engaged lives.

Though highly experimental, these ideas are not merely hypothetical. Partnering with TOUCH Community Services, one of the typologies, i.e. Community Pocket, is currently being realised in a HDB estate in Ang Mo Kio. The new facility will offer interest-based activities, opportunities for exercise and rehabilitation, health services, community farming, communal dining and, above all, equip seniors with the skills to help other seniors – especially those who are frailer and more vulnerable – to stay in the community. It will also run Lien Foundation's Gym Tonic strength training programme for seniors which helps fight frailty. Most parts will still remain open round the clock.

These research and design projects seek to jumpstart collective conversations about the kinds of physical spaces and senior living concepts we would like to have for our seniors. Design for ageing population is not just about building care centres or senior housing. It is about partnering with seniors and various stakeholders, in providing an enabling physical environment and opportunities to work, play, exercise and pursue passions – to live life to the fullest – and avoid institutional care for as long as possible.