

Debate & Analysis

The closed walkway at Tigné: A shadow over Manoel Island's future?



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It's hard to ignore the fenced-off belvedere walkway at Tigné Point.

Closed back in October 2024 for what MIDI ple termed "precautionary structural repairs," this vital public link remains inaccessible seven months later. What was supposed to be temporary now feels disturbingly permanent, raising serious questions about commitment and responsibility.

The need for repairs wasn't sudden news; concerns about the walkway's condition were flagged publicly by Arnold Casola as early as October 2022. Yet, decisive action seemingly only came when the walkway was deemed unfit for use altogether. Since then, progress appears stalled. Reports suggest disagreements over who should ultimately foot the bill – the developer, the Lands Authority, or the local council.

However, focusing on 'who pays' arguably misses the point. Significant profits have been generated from the Tigné Point development over the years. Given this commercial success, ensuring the proper, ongoing maintenance of integral public infrastructure like the Belvedere Walkway should surely be considered a fundamental responsibility tied to the project, not an expense to be debated or avoided. Regardless of the internal discussions, the undeniable result is a loss for the public: residents have lost a convenient route, tourists a scenic view-

point, and the area now showcases its neglect.

This situation makes me pause and consider the bigger picture. There's a fundamental expectation that when major developments incorporate public spaces, mechanisms are in place to ensure their long-term upkeep. These aren't just nice-to-haves; they are often part of the agreement, explicit or implicit, that allows development in the first place. One should insist that commitment to long-term maintenance should be a prerequisite for any major project moving forward, and failure to respect such terms should result in severe penalties proportional to the scale of the project.

When a key piece of public infrastructure tied to a large project like Tigné Point is left unusable for such an extended period, it inevitably damages confidence.

And this is where the connection to Manoel Island becomes unavoidable. MIDI is the entity seeking to develop the only remaining green lung in this ur-

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banised area. The scale and sensitivity of the Manoel Island project are magnitudes greater than a single pedestrian walkway. Seeing the prolonged inaction and apparent struggle over responsibility at Tigné Point, how can the public feel assured about the stewardship of Manoel Island? If maintaining this walkway proves so problematic as the Tigné project, what guarantees do we have for the far more extensive public commitments promised for Manoel Island?

This situation goes beyond sim-

ple inconvenience; it strikes at the heart of trust and accountability. Fixing the Tigné Belvedere Walkway is a basic responsibility that should have been addressed long ago. Restoring public access here is merely correcting a protracted failure. While essential, it does little on its own to address the broader concerns surrounding MIDI ple's suitability for the immense responsibility of developing Manoel Island. That project demands separate, rigorous scrutiny based on comprehensive plans and a proven, consistent commitment to public interest and long-term stewardship. Such commitment is currently undermined by the handling of Tigné.

Ultimately, we need a fundamental shift towards developers and authorities ensuring our shared public spaces are treated with respect and diligently maintained, not left neglected while attention shifts to the next profit-able venture.

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Mothers who shaped us



VALERIE VISANICH

I recently came across a deeply poignant Maltese song titled "Jien ma nahdimx" ("I don't work") by Karen DeBattista.

It is a beautifully crafted, poetic plea voiced by a mother whose daily life revolves around turning a house into a home for her children and husband. The lyrics offer a moving reflection on the invisible labour and emotional dedication that often go unacknowledged. It captures the quiet strength and selflessness of women whose contributions have historically been undervalued simply because they didn't come with a paycheck.

When we talk about women and empowerment, the focus often lands on working mothers, typically younger women with access to education and career

opportunities. But in doing so, we overlook an equally important generation: my mothers' generation, now in their third age. These women lived within a social framework that defined them primarily as housewives and caregivers. Opportunities were scarce, and recognition even rarer. Yet their contributions were profound. They mastered essential life skills. Many sown their own clothes, ran households with precision, and provided the invisible labour of emotional support. Often in the shadow of their husbands, they sustain families and shaped futures, quietly but powerfully. This is not to say that they lacked any form of agency.

Yet opportunities for these women were severely limited. Unless they secured a place at the teaching college, their employment options were largely restricted to roles as secretaries, nurses, or bank clerks. For many who became wives before 1981, the marriage bar legislation forced them to resign from their jobs upon getting married, effectively excluding them from the workforce. As a result, they became financially dependent on their husbands, with little recognition of their unpaid domestic and emotional labour. Their potential was often curtailed not by lack of ability, but by structural barriers that dictated what women could and could not do. Their voices were often muted by a system which domesticated

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them to the confines of their home.

They are an extraordinary generation. Born in the aftermath of the Second World War and shaped by a century's worth of change within a single lifetime. From the arrival of the first television sets in their homes to the rise of the internet and mobile technology, they witnessed a world transformed. Their lives were marked by dramatic shifts in civil liberties, social norms, and the physical landscape of Malta. These women navigated the evolution from traditional

roles to a more liberal society, often quietly adapting while carrying the emotional and practical weight of their families. Their resilience and adaptability remain deeply inspiring.

They were a generation who, despite limited opportunities in their own youth, seized the gradual opening of the educational system and channelled their aspirations into their children's futures. With determination and sacrifice, they encouraged academic achievement. They became the quiet architects of generational advancement, pushing forward change through care, and untiring belief in the potential of the next generation.

Remembering my mother's cooking and sewing skills isn't just a bittersweet wave of nostalgia. It represents the fading legacy of a generation of women who dedicated their lives wholly to the well-being of their families. These mothers built their identities around care, selflessness, and resilience. This is not to suggest that today's women value family roles any less, but rather that their identities are now shaped by a broader spectrum of responsibilities, including professional aspirations and personal fulfilment beyond the domestic sphere.

Usually, I choose to weave songs and lyrics that hold deep meaning into my articles, as they often serve as a soundtrack to the emotions I want to convey. This week, however, it has been

a particularly difficult task. From Elvis Presley's "Mamma Loved the Roses" to Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colours" and ABBA's "Slipping Through My Fingers", each of these powerful and emotional songs encapsulates a mother's love in ways that words alone often can't. They speak to the tenderness, sacrifice, and reflecting on the bond between mother and child.

Mother's Day holds a paradoxical weight for me, bringing both gratitude and grief. It is a day marked by both absence and presence, loss and renewal. I've already spent a third of my life without my own mother, yet it was 13 years ago on Mother's Day that I became a mother myself.

Rightly so, social media today is flooded with heartfelt odes to mothers. As we celebrate the beauty, strength, and dedication of mothers, we need also to acknowledge the complex emotions this day can evoke. For many, Mother's Day is not only a celebration but also a source of quiet sorrow – the loss of a mother, the grief of an unborn child, or the heartbreak of unfulfilled attempts to become a mother. These experiences often go unspoken, yet they touch a deep and tender place in the hearts of many today.

Wishing all readers a heartfelt and peaceful Mother's Day.

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