

Valletta's Shorelines: Values and Vulnerabilities in a World Heritage Context

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Introduction

This paper discusses the character and values of Valletta's shorelines, and their role in shaping future plans for the city, in the context of Valletta's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While interventions that are poorly informed on the city's values may jeopardise this non-renewable resource, a well-informed, value-based vision and approach present great scope for its creative and sustainable enjoyment.

Character and description of Valletta's shorelines

Separation between the city and the sea

A distinctive characteristic of Valletta at its

inception was its physical separation from the sea. When the city was first being laid out, three key factors conspired to isolate the new city from its shoreline. Firstly, the sheer topography of the peninsula on which it was built meant that most of the city was perched high above sea level. Secondly, the overriding concern with defence led to the exploitation and reinforcement of the natural topography, to girth the city with a continuous line of walls. Where the contours rose sharply from the sea, the living rock was sculpted into defensive walls, while artificial walls were built to defend low-lying areas. Thirdly, Malta already enjoyed an excellent maritime base in what is today Dockyard Creek, including the

naval facilities of the Order of St John along the Birgu waterfront.

As a result, the new city that took shape during the last third of the sixteenth century did not have a waterfront to speak of. Early maps of the city represent the shoreline as a narrow coastal band of untamed rock between the walls and the sea (De Giorgio 1985; Vella Bonavita 2011).

Evolution from isolation to accessibility

If the city's origin was marked by isolation from the sea, the centuries that followed were characterized by a relentless evolution from isolation to accessibility. In the city's initial layout, the gates onto Grand Harbour and Marsamxett harbour formed narrow corridors between the city and the shore. Within a generation, these corridors were being expanded and developed into a waterfront infrastructure to accommodate Valletta's burgeoning needs for maritime facilities. During the seventeenth century, a fish-market, access roads, quarantine facilities, warehouses, places for worship and even a garden were crowded into the narrow strip of interstices between the city walls and Grand Harbour. The same process was to extend along the Floriana waterfront during the eighteenth century.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the improvement of connectivity between the city and its harbours becomes a foremost concern. The main goal of the Victoria Gate project, undertaken in the 1880s, was to improve two-way vehicular access between Grand Harbour and the city centre. The area around Marsamxett underwent a succession of similar improvements. The Upper Barrakka lift installed in the early twentieth century created a vertical connection between the harbour and the highest part of the city. Nearby, the building of the Duke of York Avenue in the 1930s created

a new link between Valletta and Floriana. The relentless pursuit of improved connectivity continued unabated in the second half of the twentieth century. Road-building projects were undertaken to accommodate the ever-increasing traffic. These projects took an inevitable toll on the historic building fabric of Valletta's shorelines.

Fusion between topography, geology, defence

The cacophonous overlay of developments that has unfolded on the shoreline of Valletta over the four and a half centuries since the foundation of the city have been unified into an organic but coherent whole by a number of characteristics. The influence of natural topography, complemented by the artificial topography of the defensive works, largely determined the configuration and extent of the coastal facilities. The ubiquitous globigerina limestone and coralline limestone gave unity of colour and texture. The shoreline beneath the Sacra Infermeria and Fort Saint Elmo on the Grand Harbour side, recut in the early twentieth century to form wave traps as part of the breakwater project, became a vast and almost surreal sculpture in globigerina limestone, only accessible along a tortuous footpath. The broadly contemporary creation of rock-cut pools for bathers along the Marsamxett shoreline and around Fort St Elmo, as well as the earlier defensive rock-cut features, added to the sculptural appearance of the shoreline, where the globigerina bedrock has become a palimpsest of successive activities.

Ceremonial elaboration

A defining characteristic of Valletta's waterfronts, particularly that facing Grand Harbour, was its sumptuous monumentalisation. Public works endowed by successive Grand

Masters and other patrons vied with each other to create a richly furnished environment. The fishmarket on the shoreline formed an important centrepiece, embellished in the early seventeenth century by a handsome fountain with a bronze statue of Neptune. On the seaward wall of the



Fig. 01 The Vilhena Monument overlooking Grand Harbour. Perched on a tall pedestal to ensure its visibility from the harbour, it is one of the surviving fragments of the monumental elaboration of Valletta's waterfront during the baroque period.

fishmarket, a cannon carved in marble served as an ornamental waterspout to replenish ships with water. A short distance away, another marble monument, the Amati Column, stood by the shoreline. The warehouses on the waterfront continued the same mood of baroque opulence with their elaborately moulded facades. The Grand Master's leisure gardens and belvedere overlooked the whole scene. On the bastions above, a monument to Grand Master Vilhena, raised on a tall pedestal at a street corner aligned

with the Grand Master's palace, announced his authority to every ship that entered harbour (Figure 1). The purpose of this waterfront was evidently not limited to the merely utilitarian, but was a showcase of wealth and power. It provided the perfect backdrop for the processions, pomp and ceremony that characterised the baroque world. The welcoming of dignitaries entering harbour, journeys across the harbour by the Grand Master and his retinue on his ceremonial barge, as well as other public festivals and notable occasions (e.g. Ganado 1993) were carefully choreographed events. This choreography was extended onto the shore with the help of the theatrical scenography of the waterfront itself.

Diversity of use

Today, the shoreline of Valletta presents a range of scenarios, from quays accessible by road and cast in concrete, to rocky fore-shores with only limited pedestrian access. This variety of treatments and levels of accessibility comes hand in hand with the variety of different activities that characterises Valletta's shorelines. Alongside the more institutional activities such as those around the customs house, docks and fish-market, a range of other communal and individual activities also take place along Valletta's foreshore, ranging from boat-racing, boating and waterpolo, to strolling, fishing, bathing, scuba-diving, and even dining *al fresco*. Boating and diving activities are centred on convenient access points to the water. Meanwhile, even the less accessible parts of the rocky foreshore around Fort Saint Elmo are pressed into use, offering a more solitary and contemplative space for bathing and fishing.

Values and significance of Valletta and its shorelines

The above brief description of some of the defining characteristics of Valletta's shorelines

permits a discussion of some of the more salient values that are tied to this facet of the city.

The values and significance of Valletta's shorelines may be discussed more meaningfully in the context of the values and significance of the city itself. The city of Valletta was declared to be of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) when it was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1980, after having been found to fulfill criterion (i), which requires a site to be "...a masterpiece of human creative genius", and criterion (vi), which is applicable to a site "... associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance". Central to the OUV of the city, therefore, is the creative process that transformed the peninsula into the urban centre that we have inherited, from the initial, sixteenth-century vision, through the subsequent reinventions and adaptations that the city has undergone. Equally central is the long history of events, people and memories which the city has been associated with, making it a significant *lieu de memoire* for the Mediterranean world, and different peoples' encounters with that world.

The maritime dimension of Valletta is absolutely central to its OUV as outlined above. In spatial terms, the shoreline of Valletta is an integral and crucial material embodiment of the values and significance of the city. This fact is formally enshrined in the inscription of Valletta on UNESCO's World Heritage List. In 2009, Malta formally clarified that the boundaries of the World Heritage property extend to the shoreline of the peninsula (MEPA 2009, UNESCO 2010). In this light, we may enumerate some of the salient values associated with the shoreline, on the basis of the description in the previous section.

Contextual Value

The relationship between the urban form of the fortified city and the natural topography of the Valletta peninsula and its harbours is a fundamental defining characteristic of the city. The interface between land and sea constituted by the shoreline is integral to this relationship.

Architectural Value

The shorelines of Valletta represent a fusion of geology, topography, and architecture that shaped the boundaries of the city. Their development of Valletta's Grand Harbour waterfront over time represents a distinctive and outstanding assemblage of seventeenth and eighteenth century harbour facilities.

Historical Value

The history of Valletta's harbours has always been central to the destiny of the Maltese archipelago, and has sometimes been pivotal to the Mediterranean. The waterfronts and shorelines of Valletta are a testament to this historic role.

Aesthetic Value

The harbours, waterfronts and shorelines of Valletta have been celebrated by landscape artists since the sixteenth century. They constitute a series of iconic viewsapes which are integral to the value and significance of Valletta.

Industrial Heritage Value

The succession of technological innovations that were invested along Valletta's shorelines, from the sixteenth century defensive works to the early twentieth century breakwater and bridge, together with the associated wave traps, are significant for industrial archaeology.

Functional Value

The succession of evolving functions for which Valletta's shorelines have been used over time has left an overlay of material evidence of these different functions, which are intrinsic to the evolution of the city.

Archaeological Value

The coastal zone around Valletta is a rich depository of archaeological evidence of human exploitation of its harbours since antiquity. These deposits extend onto the seabed as well as the shoreline.

Associative Value

Valletta's shorelines are invested with deeply-rooted associations with a succession of events, and with historic and literary figures who have passed through its harbours, often at key moments in the history of Malta and of the Mediterranean.

Recreational Value

The shorelines of Valletta represent important leisure spaces for local communities that enjoy very limited access to open spaces, and are an important contributor to the health and well-being of Valletta's population.

Economic Value

Valletta's shorelines have an enduring history of economic exploitation that is almost as old as the city itself. The outstanding qualities of the natural harbours on either side of Valletta continue to present opportunities for economic development.

Vulnerabilities

The foregoing characterisation of Valletta's shorelines and their values may permit a more informed discussion of their vulnerabilities. This

section poses the following question: what are the trends that may pose a risk to these values, and consequently diminish the significance of Valletta?

The relentless reinvention of Valletta and its harbours to meet ever-changing needs has long been taking a toll on several of the characteristics and values that have been identified. The nineteenth century heralded a more utilitarian attitude towards the waterfront, and the progressive degradation of the baroque furnishings that characterised the area around ta' Liesse. The removal of Neptune's fountain from the fish-market to the courtyard of the Governor's palace in the mid-nineteenth century was followed by the demolition of the fish-market, completed in the early 1980s when the marble water-spout was taken down to become a museum piece, while the site of the fish-market was turned into a roundabout. At around the same time, a housing block was squeezed into the site of the former Grand Master's garden, of which only the nymphaeum survives, marooned in a car park.

A short distance away, the handsome eighteenth-century customs house served as



Fig. 02 Saint Gregory's Bastion, Valletta. The foreshore was encased in concrete in the early 1980s. Inset: Detail from 1927 Survey Sheet published by the Office of Public Works, Valletta, showing position of bastion and configuration of shoreline prior to casting of concrete.

the principal gateway into the islands until the advent of air travel. Its once-elegant landing stage, with steps leading down to the waterline, has welcomed a succession of kings, queens and dignitaries. In recent years the landing stage was encased in a new concrete cast without a development permit, and the damage has to date not been reversed.

As already noted, the concern with improving connectivity around Valletta resulted in a series of projects that often obliterated the form and character of entire sectors of Valletta's waterfront. This process culminated in the early 1980s, with the completion of a peripheral road around Valletta. Its creation had entailed the destruction of what remained of the fish-market at ta' Liesse, as well as the demolition of part of the Barriera Wharf Quarantine complex and adjacent fortifications.

Until the 1980s, the foreshore around Fort St Elmo was one of the least accessible sectors of Valletta's shoreline. The creation of a crudely cast concrete embankment along French Curtain and St Gregory's Bastion on Marsamxett harbour created vehicular access around St Elmo as far as the breakwater (Figure 2). Mercifully the project was not pursued further to create a complete road link around St Elmo.

The regeneration of the Pinto Stores along Floriana's waterfront in the first decade of the new millennium, to form the centrepiece of a new cruise liner terminal, represents an important watershed. Although located in Floriana, the new facility was branded as the "Valletta Waterfront". The reinvention of a contemporary purpose for the vast eighteenth-century warehouses, which till then had languished as underutilised storage and office space, became a showcase of how the recognition and creative exploitation of the values of the historic fabric could produce a unique, beautiful and highly desirable setting. This

immensely successful project has been widely, and deservedly, lauded for turning a situation of dilapidation and neglect into a magnet for leisure activity, in which the respectful reuse and enjoyment of the historic fabric plays a central role, and on a grand scale.

The very success of the regeneration of the Pinto Stores has itself posed new challenges. During 2007 (MIMCOL 2007) and 2008, a series of new proposals were put forward for the regeneration of other sectors of the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett harbour. It rapidly became clear that the success witnessed at the Pinto Stores was being adopted as a model for much of Valletta's waterfront. The idea of the cruise liner terminal, with its seemingly inexhaustible supply of cruise-ships laden with passengers hungry for services, became a new mantra, as the multiplication of facilities for liners around Valletta's waterfront was proposed.

These proposals were fraught with problems, largely caused by an absence of holistic thinking, and a lack of understanding of the values at stake. From a land-use planning and urban conservation perspective, they represented a departure from, or at best a curious interpretation of, some of the policy principles and guidelines laid down in the 2002 Grand Harbour Local Plan. The most glaring example is that of the Marsamxett shoreline, which the 2002 Local Plan recognized as "...a very popular amenity for the people of Valletta, particularly during the summer months, providing an essential, informal, open recreation area ..." (MEPA 2002a, 194). Policy GC04 expressly stated that "...the rocky beaches in the area will be protected and structures should be minimised, preferably kept to what already exists... No constructions will be permitted below Fort St. Elmo" (MEPA 2002b, 57). The proposals that were under discussion early in 2008 (see for

instance Sunday Times of Malta, 3 Feb 2008, p. 10), however, included a breakwater arm and a cruise liner quay below Fort Saint Elmo, and another cruise liner quay along a rocky beach popular with bathers.

Apart from their impacts on the values of Valletta's shoreline, the proposals to multiply the number of cruise liner berths around Valletta are also problematic in economic terms. The complexity of assessing the economic impacts of cruise liner activity, and the dearth of data to do so, has been underlined (Theuma and Patiniott, this volume). Against this backdrop, the idea that cruise liner capacity could or should continue to be increased, and that economic benefits would continue to accrue proportionately, appears at best naive, and was never substantiated by sound modelling and published research. The notion that the same type of activity should be replicated again and again represented a classic example of the dangers of 'single-element planning', which has plagued the tourism industry (Vella, this volume). It ignored the fact that, even with current capacity, the inundation of cruise liner passengers was already straining various other points of the hospitality infrastructure, from the availability of transport (see for instance timesofmalta.com, 6 May 2008) to the overcrowding of cultural attractions. Multiplying capacity means that, at peak use, the available product will be stretched to, if not beyond, its limits, with diminishing returns in terms of quality and satisfaction. Even more worryingly, the rest of the year, whenever demand is lower, this bloated capacity increases the likelihood of semi-deserted or underutilised facilities, and the attendant harpies of seasonal unemployment and poor returns. A related issue that requires further analysis and publication is the relative importance of cruise liner activity versus locally based patronage in assuring the success of the

Pinto Stores development. It is fallacious to presume that the successful regeneration of such a waterfront is necessarily dependent on cruise liner activity, and to impose this as a package on the historic warehouses along Valletta's Grand Harbour waterfront, as proposed in 2007:

...the shoreline between Customs House and the current Fish Market, offers the ideal setting for a permanent cruise liner berthing facility to be developed on similar lines to the Valletta Waterfront Project. Development of the quay should be carried out offshore, between Lascaris Wharf and Barrier Wharf, making sure that the existing pattern of the fore shore [sic] is somehow retained and transformed into a lovely promenade complete with all necessary facilities (MIMCOL 2007, 183-184).

This proposal made no mention of the massive physical and visual impact such a facility would



Fig. 03 Late 19th century photograph of part of Valletta's waterfront on the Grand Harbour, showing the warehouses and quarantine facilities at Barrier Wharf. Reproduced by kind permission of Mr Francis Lea-Ellis.

have on the presently unspoilt panoramas of this stretch of Valletta's waterfront, which may be enjoyed from the Upper Barrakka Gardens and Lower Barrakka Gardens that flank it at either end, and which are among the most celebrated and iconic views of Valletta and Grand Harbour (Figure 3).

This model of boom and bust by design has not yet been implemented, perhaps partly because of the global economic downturn witnessed since 2008. To date, however, this model has not been superseded by a more value-based vision. It is not superfluous, therefore, to underline another risk associated with such projects. The investment in creating infrastructure on the scale of new breakwaters and cruise liner quays would represent an immense boon to the building industry, which in Malta is a powerful player in the determining of policy. An inherent danger, therefore, is the risk that such projects may sometimes be eased on their way to approval and realisation, in spite of the unanswered questions about their long-term economic suitability, because these are outweighed by the short-term benefits for the building industry lobby.

Principles of Good Practice

The dire list of cautionary tales that have been retold above need not be the shape of things to come. This section rehearses some of the widely-established principles of good practice that will help steer away from further degradations of the values of Valletta and its shorelines.

Most fundamentally, the safeguarding of the fabric and spirit of a historic environment such as Valletta must not be presented or perceived as opposed to its development, reinvention and revitalisation. The extraordinary qualities of the historic fabric of Valletta are at the core of the attractiveness and economic potential of the city, and to exploit those qualities in a

manner that diminishes them is short-sighted and contradictory. In a sustainable and value-based approach, the care of those qualities is integral to strategies to facilitate their enjoyment, for the tangible and intangible benefit of the community. Engaging with the values of the city brings into focus what it is that makes people passionate about it. A commitment to this vision should not be the preserve of the conservation camp, but also needs to be shared and embraced by residents, entrepreneurs, designers, planners and policy-makers, who collectively will shape the city's future. Instilling such a vision and attitude is arguably the most fundamental ingredient to long-term sustainable enjoyment of the city.

On a more technical level, there are numerous practices and guidelines that can serve as useful tools for the realisation of such a vision. One important nexus is that between Valletta's World Heritage (WH) status, and the day-to-day decisions that cumulatively affect the integrity of the city. At present, the integration of planning decisions at a micro, medium and large scale into the framework of Malta's obligations under the WH Convention is a far from seamless one. The relationship between individual planning decisions and Valletta's OUV and WH status is not analysed as a routine part of the planning procedure. As a result, the spectre of a negative impact on Valletta's OUV, and consequently on its WH status, is frequently raised by objectors and NGOs after a planning decision has been taken, sometimes even after the offending development has been implemented. Conversely, policy makers and developers often remain reticent about engaging in a proactive discussion of the WH dimension of a development when it is still in the early, proposal stages. In several instances, there has been a tendency to bury one's head in the sand on this issue, invoking the arguments of *force*

majeur and economic necessity to plough ahead with a proposal through to implementation, without a timely and balanced analysis of long-term impacts on the city's OUV. There is also a tendency in some quarters to misrepresent the UNESCO WH mechanism as a form of foreign interference, and one not well informed on local circumstances. While at a national level Valletta's WH status is jealously defended, the obligations to carefully manage its OUV are often rather less passionately pursued.

The guidance of the WH framework is extremely clear on a state party's obligations in this regard. *Inter alia*, Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines states:

The World Heritage Committee invites the States Parties to the *Convention* to inform the Committee, through the Secretariat, of their intention to undertake or to authorize in an area protected under the *Convention* major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Notice should be given as soon as possible (for instance, before drafting basic documents for specific projects) and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, so that the Committee may assist in seeking appropriate solutions to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is fully preserved (UNESCO 2012).

The pivotal concept here is the early timing of consultations, to permit a smooth revision and development of concepts and proposals, and steer clear of reactive discussions and corrective actions after a project has been committed to, which is not an unfamiliar scenario in the Maltese context. The missing link, apart from the attitudinal issues already referred to, appears to be the absence of a formal mechanism, embedded in the planning

process at a national level, to ensure that planning decisions are consistent and compatible with Malta's obligations under the WH Convention. For developments that are smaller in scale, this end may be achieved through the refinement of appropriate policies, for example to better address concerns about Valletta's roofscape. For medium and large scale developments, a practical measure to integrate the obligation to consult the WH Committee at proposal stage would be to formally embed it in the planning application process, as a prerequisite for further consideration.

Another key instrument which provides important guidelines for good practice when managing change in a historic urban environment is the *Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture* (UNESCO 2005). The memorandum lays down a series of key principles for the successful integration of new buildings within the historic fabric of WH cities, which are also useful in historic cities more generally. The Memorandum emphasises the importance of good communication and teamwork between heritage conservation professionals, planners, architects, investors and the interested communities. Attention to a sense of place is given central importance, while pseudo-historical imitations and facadism are rejected as unacceptable. Key design principles are respect for mass and volume of existing fabric, as well as respect for the axes, roofscape, and plot configuration of the historic fabric. The Memorandum underlines the principle that contemporary as well as historic architecture together constitute invaluable assets for the city and for quality of life within the city. Returning to the context of Valletta and its shorelines, it is fair to add that many of the principles enshrined in the Memorandum were already present, implicitly if not explicitly, in the 2002 *Grand Harbour Local*

Plan. Practical measures that may be useful here are to continue to articulate values, norms, and holistic conservation objectives, so that the creative and sustainable use of the city becomes a more collective project in which the full range of interested parties may take an active role.

A third pillar of good practice and regulation is tied to funding. Grants and loans play an important role in financing infrastructural development projects. The scope and depth of scrutiny of the impacts of a project vary considerably from one funding institution to another, but the underlying principle is that the ethics and goals of a funded intervention should be consistent with the principles of the funding body. One of the more rigorous impact assessment frameworks is that of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The Bank's *Environmental and Social Policy* (EBRD 2008) adopts a precautionary approach to the use of cultural heritage resources. It is "guided by and supports" international instruments protecting cultural heritage, such as the UNESCO (1972) WH Convention, and takes on the responsibility "...to guide clients to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on cultural heritage in the course of their business operations..." (EBRD 2008, 58). It defines cultural heritage "...as a source of valuable historical and scientific information, as an asset for economic and social development, and as an integral part of a people's cultural identity, practices, and continuity..." (EBRD 2008, 58).

The European Commission's Structural Funds programme has so far stopped short of such direct scrutiny of the impact a funded project will have on cultural heritage. To date it has relied mainly on the screening and approval process managed by respective national authorities. In the case of funded projects which

impact WH properties, however, there may be scope for a mechanism to screen the fulfillment of WH obligations as a prerequisite for funding. This would provide valuable checks and balances against the risk that funding and the associated deadlines end up driving projects without sufficient attention to their negative impacts on cultural heritage.

The final principle of emerging good practice that will be underlined here concerns the link between care for the historic environment, and the health of those who use that environment. The built environment is widely recognized as a fundamental determining factor in the health and wellbeing of neighbourhoods and communities (Figure 4; Barton and Grant 2006; WHO 2012). Meanwhile, a related area that is attracting more interest in recent years is the relationship between health and cultural heritage (e.g. Ander *et al.* 2013). At the convergence of these two trends, we are witnessing a growing awareness that the care of the historic environment is not merely about the maintenance and enjoyment of the aesthetic qualities of our surroundings. There is mounting evidence that the care of the historic environment has a significant impact on the physical as well as psychological health and wellbeing of residents and other users. Active community participation and empowerment has been identified as one of the key ingredients of good practice to develop and implement a healthier urban environment (WHO 2012, 12).

Developments that may be detrimental to the physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals and communities may never be justified by financial gain. The concept that "health is wealth", that health is indeed "the greatest wealth", is embedded in the European Commission policy framework. Furthermore, various European Commission policy documents



Fig. 04 Determinants of health and well-being, adapted by Barton and Grant to include built and natural environment. From Barton and Grant (2006), after Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991). Reproduced with the copyright-holder's permission.

As preparations gather pace for Valletta to take on the title of European Capital of Culture

...using structural funds for non-direct health investments such as urban regeneration... can also have positive impacts on population's health..." (European Commission 2013, 20). The relevance of these concerns to the debate on the future of Valletta's shorelines and waterfronts is self-evident. A practical measure to encourage good practice in this regard would be the broadening of the concept of Environmental Impact Assessment as currently understood in Malta to explicitly include an assessment of social and health impacts, and to weigh these into decisions alongside other environmental and economic considerations.

Conclusion

As preparations gather pace for Valletta to take on the title of European Capital of Culture

in 2018, the city is once again on the threshold of momentous changes. The ongoing reinvention of Valletta's relationship with the sea is central to these changes. It presents exceptional opportunities to improve the quality of life in and around the city, as well as the attendant risks of ill-advised interventions which will be difficult to reverse. The competing values and interests that have been discussed in this paper require careful scrutiny and debate, and a clear long-term vision capable of distinguishing between short-term financial gain, and more holistic and enduring economic benefits embedded in the wellbeing of the entire community. The legacy of the coming years will have an enduring impact. Whether future generations will be grateful for it will depend on our ability to recognize the quintessential values of Valletta, and to implement a vision that cherishes and celebrates those values.

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