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COMMUNITY INCLUSION & SPACE

COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN VALLETTA 2018

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Objectives

This research project seeks to identify factors affecting community participation and accessibility, with an emphasis on the awareness that various groups have of the Valletta 2018 programme. It also aims to explore perceptions of Valletta's foreseeable developments, particularly those related to the city as a community space.

Methodology

The current cycle of research, in the actual year of the European Capital of Culture 2018, seeks to explore further developments within Valletta and Malta as the host city and region respectively. The Methodology remains largely unchanged from the previous cycles, with semi-structured interviews being carried out with four individuals from each of six groups, namely (1) Beltin residing in Valletta; (2) Beltin residing outside Valletta; (3) non-Beltin residing in Valletta; (4) respondents from the Inner Harbour area; (5) respondents from other parts of Malta; (6) persons with disability. The interviews carried out were complemented by participant observation in

community oriented programmes within Valletta 2018, which provided further insights. All interviews were conducted in the last quarter of 2018, allowing for most of the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme to be completed at the time when these took place.

Results

One of the overarching concerns was that of accessibility, where Valletta remains largely inaccessible to people with a disability, impairments, and mobility issues. MUŻA can be seen as an example of good practice in ensuring that not only the structure, but also the cultural offer are presented in a way that is inclusive and accessible.

The commercial activity which has been catalysed, at least in part, by Valletta 2018 has been largely welcomed, especially by small business owners in Valletta. However, efforts to reduce disturbance to Valletta residents are sorely needed. Another concern for residents, especially those in private rental accommodation, is the possibility of being uprooted from their own communities. The newly launched White Paper on the Rental Market hopefully brings light to this situation – however, it is noted that if residents are being forced to move out, this will have a negative impact on their personal lives and on the vibrancy and the social fabric of the city.

With regard to programming, it has been noted that the general view has been positive, but that more community-based events could have been included. It is hoped that the success of the two main projects that directly involved the Valletta community, namely il-Festa l-Kbira and Ġewwa Barra, should encourage stronger investment in similar initiatives.

Way forward

There is potential for Valletta 2018 to leave an enduring legacy, which the Valletta Cultural Agency may take up. However, a focus on programming alone cannot achieve this, and an important part of creating such a legacy needs to be fulfilled by enhancing urban infrastructure and liveability, as well as fostering networking, research, consultation, and dialogue.

The research conducted from 2015 to the present year fed into a combined report. This report will include the main insights obtained throughout the four year period of research, together with policy considerations and recommendations.