

# **ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND SPACE THROUGH VALLETTA 2018 CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS**

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## **Objectives**

The objective is to assess the impact that the Valletta 2018 Foundation's four major infrastructural projects are having on the city's community and architectural heritage. The study aims to expose the effect of cultural infrastructure on the physical urban fabric and seeks to understand the manner with which the behaviour of the community and users is altered. It therefore ultimately deals with the conditions for liveability of the urban space. The main research question of this study is: What role can cultural infrastructure play in the achievement of culture-led regeneration?

## **Methodology**

Building on the research that had been carried out in 2015 and 2016, which focused on the gathering of data on the four sites, this year saw the same empirical work being carried out and consolidation of data and data analysis for the comparison of results and phenomena. The work covered both the physical and social aspects of the four Valletta neighbourhoods. In order to assess the current state of urban quality, together with a land-use analysis of each site and its surrounding context (Stage 5 of the research), two sets of results emanating from deductive physical analyses were compared with data from 2016. Patterns emanating from inductive behavioural analysis (Stage 7 of the research) were in turn compared to the physical results in order to derive potential patterns. A current physical land-use analysis was also carried out with a focus on change of use. The latter was analysed to a greater depth (focusing particularly on ground floor uses) in order to understand the nature of change that the physical fabric has undergone over the duration of this study. All analyses contributed to a richer and deeper understanding of the current state of affairs of the four neighbourhoods which towards the end of 2017 had been supplemented by a PPGIS workshop (Stage 9 of the research) in order to understand local community needs, concerns and aspirations using an accessible online platform. The PPGIS results have also been analysed in the first part of 2018.

## **Results**

The empirical work carried out in the aforementioned research stages (Stages 5, 7 and 9) falls within a mixed methods approach. In its entirety, this work is composed of both deductive and inductive avenues for research, along with qualitative and quantitative methods that have been refined over the course of their application.

Following the PPGIS walkabout, there was a required process of technologically archiving collected information. This process had already started during the walkabout session when participants mapped their observations directly onto the online platform. Those who were still not comfortable using the Mapping for Change app, or who had connectivity issues with their phones or tablets, chose a manual option and mapped out their observations on paper, which was later digitised. Therefore, one method of archiving was on the online platform, and the other was a more exhaustive archive using Excel. This enabled the extraction of the most frequently-repeated remarks within a clearly outlined table for the four sites, which consequently permitted further extraction of themes from participant responses to create specific categories for numerical evaluation. Additionally, the online engine 'Voyant-tools' was used to provide word count frequencies from the participant texts. The resulting words were added to the analysis table to give an indication of the participants' most-noted observations and concerns.

The study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative methods, and once the participants' responses and information were provided by means of text, the data was mined and categories were extracted. The extraction of categories is based on the repetition and difference of comments that were made available through a corpus of unstructured text. The numerical data was used to create radar graphs as the output of results for each site, which allows one to graphically see which categories are prominent and therefore important to take note of for future policies. Consequently, the radar graphs of the four sites were overlaid for comparative analysis. Each site has a graph peak that represents the category most noted by the participants, which permits one to understand the primary concerns for each site. Graphical results facilitate the deduction of final conclusions.

Stage 5 included the Repetition of spatial (physical temporal) analysis on the ground in order to compare to results obtained in 2015 and Stage 7 included the Repetition of behavioural (observational) analysis on the ground using the indicators achieved in the baseline study carried out in 2015.

### **Way forward**

Overall results reveal that Valletta 2018 has had a positive outcome on its physical fabric in terms of improvement to the physical quality of the buildings within most of the four neighbourhoods, in spite of some differences among the sites. Spatial assessments indicate a general improvement from 2016. For the Biččerija area, ongoing construction projects are heavily impacting accessibility within the area, with several public and private projects expected to be concluded in the coming months, and with the Valletta Design Cluster aiming at providing access to new facilities and public spaces in this previously delapidated neighbourhood

once it opens its doors. Is-Suq tal-Belt initially scored high in accessibility, however, once several other factors were considered over time, the final figure pointed to a low score for accessibility. Changes are constantly taking place so it is important to consider constant assessment for well-encompassed research. Land use changes and architectural interventions have indicated predominant activities for each neighbourhood. Since Valletta won the ECoC title, PA applications for further developments (or redevelopments) have increased and most have changed use from residential towards leisure or commercial. A significant increase in hotels is also evident from a general increase in tourist activity in Valletta. This is strong proof that Valletta is transforming from a retail to a catering destination.