

THEME 3 - Community Inclusion & Space

Community Inclusion and Accessibility in Valletta 2018

Michael Deguara

This study looks at the factors which may help or hinder social participation in Valletta 2018, including accessibility issues.²

Methodology: The local population has been subdivided into six community groups based on criteria of 'a sense-of-belonging' to Valletta and patterns of residence. A group of persons with restricted accessibility have also been included to assist in investigating accessibility issues. The six community groups covered by this study are mainly based around different forms of Beltin³, but not exclusively. These groups are: (i) persons who consider themselves as being from Valletta, and who reside in Valletta; (ii) persons who consider themselves as being from Valletta, but do not reside in Valletta; (iii) persons who do not consider themselves as being from Valletta, but reside in Valletta; (iv) persons who are residents of the Inner Harbour (also defined as the 'Greater Valletta' area); (v) Maltese people in general, who commute to Valletta with different levels of regularity; and, (vi) Maltese people who have restricted accessibility⁴.

Results to date: Preliminary observations show that Valletta is a place which has multiple layers of meaning to people from different backgrounds. Attitudes towards Valletta vary from one community group to another, ranging from the positive injection of investment through the development of boutique hotels to concerns over parking and accessibility, and the rise of property prices. Results from the study reported a good level of awareness of Valletta 2018, but the need to further clarify the aims and events of the project. This study also concludes that Valletta 2018 needs to ensure continuous social engagement, consultation and direct involvement of the different community groups. Other relevant findings include the need to develop a clear social strategy, to improve accessibility within the city, where possible, and to remain conscious of the issues related to gentrification and monumentalisation of the city.

Way forward: The findings will eventually be compared with the statistical information generated through the Valletta Participation Survey, with a particular view as to whether the qualitative data can shed light on trends indicated by the quantitative data and vice versa.

² In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the research into this area should seek to measure accessibility on a number of levels, namely: (i) physical; (ii) social; (iii) geographical; (iv) financial; (v) linguistic; and (vi) intellectual accessibility.

³ The term derives from il-Belt, "the City", as Valletta is generally referred to in Maltese, and roughly translatable as people from Valletta.