

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

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Objectives

The scope of this research is to understand the spatial (physical) and social (behavioural) impact of cultural infrastructure, primarily architectural and urban design interventions, in terms of broader culture-led regeneration objectives for

the various community and stakeholder groups. The focus of this research is the four Valletta 2018 cultural infrastructural projects, MUŻA, Is-Suq tal-Belt, Strait Street and the Valletta Design Cluster², and their immediate neighbourhoods.

Methodology

This is a mixed-methods approach comprising deductive and inductive avenues and qualitative and quantitative methods. Stages include an initial literature review leading to a theoretical framework that is piloted on the ground to become an analytical framework, followed by application of such framework to the case study areas to assess their physical urban design quality. A behavioural analysis (structured observations) and follow up expert interviews enable an understanding of broader, non-physical phenomena that are influencing the urban spaces. This feeds into Public Participation Geographic Information Systems (PPGIS) workshops, which provide this research with a bottom up perspective that is matched up with the results emanating from the other research stages.

Results

- *Stakeholder semi-structured interviews - textual analysis:* An in-depth textual analysis was carried out for the key stakeholders of each of the four projects under study, together with the Planning Authority. Clearly, agendas of individual stakeholders are diverse. As expected, the PA respondents are more concerned with strategic planning issues. More interestingly, there is a sharp contrast in the approach to the four individual sites – at the extreme ends, a community-driven and community-focused approach in the case of the Biċċerija project to a market-led and thematic-based approach in the case of Is-Suq tal-Belt. In between, the MUŻA project is also partly community-focused, although on an equal footing with the artistic credentials of the project, while the Strait Street project is driven mostly by artistic outcome and individual achievement.
- *Analysis of development planning applications in terms of change of use:* Most trends observed in 2016 remain valid, albeit with a few differences namely that from the 1993-2017 data the greatest potential impact of the development planning applications due to litter can be seen to be within Strait Street. The scale of potential impact in the 2012-2017 period is more significant than that for the 1993-2011 period in all categories and for all four sites. Again, all change of use applications in the Biċċerija area are for a higher commercial order, similar to the results achieved in 2016.
- *PPGIS workshop:* A second PPGIS workshop was carried out in November 2017 as part of the Valletta 2018 Foundation's annual conference. While the actual data generated from this workshop will be analysed in 2018, it is important to note that as a methodology, the majority of participants still

²The Valletta Design Cluster Project is currently being developed in the area commonly known as *Il-Biċċerija*

prefer the more personalised approach that is possible with physical mapping. Important controversies with regard to accessibility, land-use change and space appropriation are evident from a preliminary discussion held with participant's post-walkabout.

Way forward

In 2018, the following work is envisaged:

- Urban design socio-spatial analysis and behavioural analysis shall be repeated to gauge change that has occurred over the past years. The data shall be compared to that achieved in 2015/2016 to undertake a comparative analysis.
- Assessment of change of use applications and permits shall resume to gauge whether the trends observed to date repeat themselves in 2018 or otherwise. The data will be refined to gauge the impact of actual permits implemented on the ground, in addition to potential impact from all the development planning applications.
- Data from the PPGIS workshop carried out in 2017 shall be analysed and categorised to refine the socio-spatial framework that shall be developed. Both spatial and visual outputs (points of intensity/overlap of different themes) are envisaged.

Further convergence of the results obtained from the various stages will take place, to understand the socio-spatial implications on the four neighbourhoods in question.

Enriched by the results from the PPGIS, we shall be able to have an informed outlook as to the implications of change due to the cultural infrastructure and the resulting social/attitudinal and behavioural changes (vis-à-vis the different stakeholders) by having the direct involvement of the local community and an understanding of their needs, concerns and aspirations. This will provide the prelude for the repetition of the physical and behavioural analyses that will occur once again in 2018, which will subsequently enable us to monitor the degree of change that has occurred over the research period, leading to a potential multi-level framework and strategy to be defined within a post-2018 legacy.