

THEME 3 COMMUNITY INCLUSION & SPACE



EVALUATION & MONITORING
Research Findings 2015

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring process is a means through which the Valletta 2018 Foundation gains a deeper insight into the various impacts of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title on different spheres of cultural, social and economic life. The goal of this process is twofold (i) To understand the changes brought about by the ECoC title, and (ii) To address any shortcomings and challenges faced by the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme throughout its implementation.

This process comprises a series of longitudinal studies commencing in January 2015, three full years before the European Capital of Culture year, and running through the ECoC, with results presented in 2019, thereby capturing data before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of Valletta holding the ECoC title.

This process is divided into five themes:

- 1. Cultural & Territorial Vibrancy**
- 2. Governance & Finance**
- 3. Community Inclusion & Space**
- 4. The Tourist Experience**
- 5. The Valletta Brand**

This research is a collaborative, mixed-methods process, involving a number of public entities, collecting and analysing data primarily of a quantitative nature, together with independent researchers working with data that is predominantly qualitative. These entities and researchers constitute the Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring Steering Committee, that was set up to manage and implement this research process.

The public entities forming part of the Steering Committee are:

- National Statistics Office
- Malta Tourism Authority
- Employment & Training Corporation
- Economic Policy Department within the Ministry of Finance

The independent researchers participating within this process were selected according to their area of expertise. The areas covered are:

- Cultural Programme
- Branding
- Sociology
- Built Environment
- European Identity

Although each of these researchers, and their respective teams, are carrying out data collection and analysis specifically within their respective fields, various points of intersection and collaboration across the various areas have been established so far. The data being collected throughout each study is being shared with the Steering Committee in order to create synergies between the different fields being analysed.

The research methods adopted throughout the various studies that comprise this process vary greatly, ranging from quantitative surveys to in-depth interviews, focus groups and real-time experience tracking.

COMMUNITY INCLUSION & SPACE

THEME 3

The European Capital of Culture is concerned not only with the development of the cultural sector but, more broadly, with the myriad ways in which different communities within a city or region participate in culture and interact with one another and their physical environment. The studies within this strand investigate these issues, reflecting upon how inclusive the Valletta 2018 programme is to different community groups within the city, and what impact the infrastructural developments taking place across the city are having on the surrounding communities.

The first of these studies, carried out by Michael Deguara, looks into community inclusion and accessibility, investigating the extent to which various community groups operating within Valletta in some way or other are involved within Valletta 2018. This study examines the factors that may help or hinder participation and involvement within Valletta 2018, including the various obstacles to accessibility, ranging from physical to educational and financial barriers to participation.

A second study by Dr Antoine Zammit, takes a closer look at a series of tangible, infrastructural developments being carried out across Valletta, and seeks to understand the spatial and social impact that these developments may have on the communities that interact with them on a regular basis. This study identifies four projects – the Valletta Design Cluster, MUŻA, Strait Street, and Is-Suq tal-Belt – and examines the extent to which these (and similar) developments may lead to a broader process of culture-led regeneration.



COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN VALLETTA 2018

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ABSTRACT

This research paper looks at the factors which may help or hinder social participation in Valletta 2018. It also investigates accessibility issues on a number of levels, and the concerns and requirements of persons with limited mobility. 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 disability has also been included to assist in investigating accessibility issues.

This study concludes that attention to the social context in which Valletta 2018 will be implemented is key to ensuring social engagement and the achievement of ECoC's goals. Likewise, consultation and direct involvement of the communities involved are also vital. Other factors deemed important for the success of Valletta 2018 are: to develop a clear social strategy; to enhance visibility and communication of its goals and events; and to take steps to increase accessibility, despite inherent challenges presented by the topographical and built fabric of the territory in question. It is strongly recommended that the Valletta 2018 Foundation remains cognizant at all times of concerns about gentrification and monumentalisation to be able to ensure as much as possible that all innovations are assessed against the criterion of whether they will improve the quality of life of people in Valletta and Malta, as host city and country respectively, through culture.

Keywords: Community inclusion; Accessibility; Participation; Social engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The Valletta 2018 Foundation has been tasked with the implementation of a cultural programme “which will enable the participation of the citizens of Malta and Europe and will form an integral and sustainable part of the long-term social, economic and cultural development of Valletta” (Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring Committee, p. 1). Its objectives include the transformation of Valletta into a creative city, improving the quality of life in Valletta through culture, stimulating awareness of Malta’s diverse cultural identities, and driving collaboration and excellence in culture and the arts in Malta (Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring Committee, p. 1).

The Palmer report of 2004 acknowledged that “the social impact of ECoC is a vast question since almost all ECoC programme outcomes can be seen in social terms” (Palmer-Rae Associates, 2004, p. 132), but also noted that social questions tended to be marginal to most ECoCs at the time, while “profile raising and improving the city’s image” (Palmer-Rae Associates, 2004, p. 136) were more central concerns. Notably, the report included local involvement as one of common success factors for ECoCs. Another identified common success factor was the importance of context, i.e. taking into consideration the historical, cultural, social and economic development of the city (Palmer-Rae Associates, 2004, p. 152).

Likewise, the 2013 report by Garcia and Cox has noted that not only is “the engagement of local communities and the city’s public” considered important at bidding stage, but engagement, from both stakeholders and the public, is an “indicator of potential success in delivery”, and “reflects the concept of ECoC as a catalyst for change beyond the delivery of cultural activity” (Garcia & Cox, 2013, pp. 63-64). The same report has indicated that apart from an increase in audiences and on the engagement of diverse audiences, there is a “significant absence of real evidence relating to the social impact of ECoCs” (Garcia & Cox, 2013, pp. 113).

Each European Capital of Culture presents a particular social landscape which may differ in significant ways, and the achievement of the established objectives is highly dependent on an in-depth understanding of the social milieu in which the Valletta 2018 project is to be implemented. Such insight is all the more essential in light of the fact that the success of several of the project’s goals is dependent on the response from the various community groups involved.

This research project aims to identify some of the factors affecting participation by various community groups related to the Valletta 2018 project, with particular emphasis on elements that promote or hinder inclusion of a diverse audience, and on accessibility (including physical, social, geographical, financial, linguistic, and intellectual).

This report will present a brief literature review, particularly focusing on understanding the various ways in which the notion of culture may be used, and locating Valletta and Malta within anthropological and sociological literature. This will be followed by an in-depth discussion of the methodology used, which will serve as a baseline for the methodology to be used throughout the continuation of this research project. Finally the findings of this year’s research will be presented, together with the conclusions and the proposed way forward.



LITERATURE REVIEW

For reasons of brevity, this literature review will be restricted to a discussion of two key concepts, namely:

- a critical appraisal of the notion of culture as it is discussed in the literature, and as applicable to the Valletta 2018 programme;
- an understanding of Valletta and Malta, as host city and country of Valletta 2018, within the anthropological and sociological literature.

There is more literature that is available and that is being noted, but which may not be included in this review to preserve conciseness, including:

- student work submitted at the University of Malta with regard to Valletta and Valletta 2018;¹
- general statistical information compiled by the National Statistics Office;²
- research conducted with regards to European Capitals of Culture, including those mentioned in the Introduction to this report.³

Unpacking the notion of “culture”

A research project which proposes to study the implementation of a cultural programme through an ethnographic approach must necessarily take into account the various ways in which the notion of “culture” has been conceived.

This keyword has been described as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” and, according to Williams (1976, p. 7), has developed three broad categories of usage beyond any purely physical reference (such as when referring to the culture of crops, or of bacteria).

The first sense of the word “culture” refers to an abstract process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development and, up to the eighteenth century, this was the general meaning of the term. The second way in which the term is often used signifies the way of life of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general. The innovation in this usage was that it enabled a discussion of “cultures” in the plural rather than as a single, abstract noun, and this interpretation forms the basis of the way in which the term “culture” is mostly deployed within the social sciences, although not without controversy⁴ Finally the third sense of the word “culture” identified by Williams, and which he states “seems often now the most widespread use”, is the one whereby culture refers to “music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film” (Williams, 1976, p. 90).

¹ Theses related to Valletta and/or Valletta 2018 have been submitted by students studying Accounting, Anthropology, Built Environment, Conservation, Creative Industry and Business Administration, Criminology, Diplomatic Studies, European Studies, Tourism. The Valletta 2018 Research and Evaluation Committee maintains an updated list of relevant theses.

² The National Statistics Office has published a number of statistics which may be relevant, including: the Census of Population and Housing (2011); Culture Participation Survey (2011); Demographic Review (2010); Education Statistics (2006-2007/2007-2008); Lifestyle Survey (2007); Social Security Benefits: A Locality Perspective (2013); Transport Statistics (2014). Of specific relevance is the Valletta Participation Survey which is being conducted in parallel to this study.

³ In particular, significant research has been produced with regard to Liverpool 2008, which follows similar thematic lines as to the current research projects, vide: Garcia, B. (et al), (2010). Creating an Impact: Liverpool’s experience as European Capital of Culture. Retrieved from University of Liverpool website: https://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Papers/Creating_an_Impact_-_web.pdf

⁴ For a defense of the use of the term which takes into account the various critiques of the notion of “culture” within the social sciences, see: Brumann, C. (1999). Writing for Culture: Why a Successful Concept Should Not Be Discarded. *Current Anthropology*, 40(S1), S1–S27.

Bourdieu (1984) offers insight into the creation of the concept of culture by bringing to the fore the dynamics which lead to the social production of activities that are considered to be cultural. Bourdieu concluded that there is a “very close relationship linking cultural practices (or the corresponding opinions) to educational capital ... and, secondarily, to social origin” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 5). The consumption of culture – particularly “the aptitude for taking a specifically aesthetic point of view on objects already constituted aesthetically” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 40) – becomes a definer of class, and “legitimate” forms of culture are likewise defined and stratified by the bourgeoisie.

From its inception at application stage, the deployment of the notion of “culture” within the vision of Valletta 2018 appears to have been rooted in the third definition indicated by Williams, namely the promotion and production of cultural activity through an official programme expressed in various art-forms⁵ Nevertheless, the vision is also inclusive of the notions of cultural identity, with this being done within a context of intercultural dialogue and innovation.⁶

Whilst admitting that the difficulties associated with the usage of this term have never been solved, Williams dismisses as an easy reaction any attempts at trying to find the “true”, “proper” or “scientific” sense of the word. Rather, we are invited to reflect on the way in which the term “records a real social history and a very difficult and confused phase of social and cultural development” (Williams, 1976, p. 92). Nevertheless, it is essential that any discussion on culture is informed by the recognition that there are a number of ways in which the concept is used, and that oftentimes, these various usages will intersect.

Locating Valletta 2018 within the anthropological and sociological literature

Understanding the social impact of Valletta 2018 requires us to look at Valletta and Malta, as the host city and country respectively, through the relevant anthropological and sociological literature. An ethnography which is particularly pertinent is *Ambivalent Europeans – Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta* (Mitchell 2002), by anthropologist Jon P. Mitchell, whose research deals with Maltese ambivalence towards Europe and modernisation, based on research carried mostly in Valletta prior to Malta’s accession to the European Union. This text documents the “glory, decline, [and] rehabilitation” of Valletta, and the various discourses and opinions surrounding these processes, as well as other wider themes including gendered lives in Valletta, the generation of community through festivities and ritual, and the influence of nostalgia and modernisation.

One particular insight that Mitchell provides when comparing Valletta to other European capital cities is that, while capital cities are “always important foci for the nation, both as sites for national monuments and as contexts for important state occasions”, they are seldom - if ever - visited by many nationals (Mitchell, 2002, p. 45). However, in the case of Valletta, “the engagement with the capital is less imagined than known” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 45), with the city being an important commercial, administrative and infrastructural centre which is heavily used by Maltese irrespective of residence, with the number of commuters estimated to be of up to 60,000 daily. Mitchell (2002) argues that “because of this daily engagement, Valletta has adopted a specific position in the national imagination” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 46). This statement requires some critical interpretation, in that a significant part of the number of daily visitors may

⁵ An example of this is in the following opening sentences of Valletta 2018’s vision: “V.18 is the catalyst to a long-term, culture-led regeneration that sees cultural and creative activity as the most dynamic facet of Valletta and all Malta’s socio-economic life. Our vision is one where culture is the overriding force in building individual creative careers, promoting our well-being, and in fostering our communities’ international and intercultural outlook.” – *Imagine18*. (p. 18). Retrieved from <http://valletta2018.org/the-bid-book-story/>

⁶ The vision statement follows with: “V.18 is an exciting opportunity to experience our cultural identity afresh in new contexts that push the boundaries and allow for ideas, dialogue, creativity and innovation to flow freely.” – *Imagine18*. (p. 18). Retrieved from <http://valletta2018.org/the-bid-book-story/>

be constituted by persons who repeatedly access Valletta for work-related reasons and this would therefore limit the notion of daily engagement largely to a specific group of repeat-visitors. Thus, the statement that Valletta's centrality to the national imagination is a result of daily engagement, may not be entirely descriptive of the situation, and this would need to be complemented with understanding the way in which Valletta is central to the national memory due to events that are highly significant in the creation of the nation state as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991), as well as the connection which the city has to figures such as St. Paul and Grand Master de Valette, who are considered crucial to the constitution of traditional Maltese identity as European Christians of long-standing (Cassar 2000). What is beyond doubt, however, is Valletta's importance to the national imagination, which has been proven time and again through the heated debate raised across the nation whenever a significant project, particularly of an architectural or infrastructural nature with aesthetic or practical implications, is undertaken in the city.

Also of note are Boissevain's views in the edited volume *Revitalizing European Rituals* (1992), which anticipated developments with regard to an increase in the amount and complexity of festivities and events within the European context, even while other rituals are in decline. Boissevain's analysis may be applied not only to the reanimation and elaboration of established celebrations such as the parish festas or football-related event, but also to the creation of new festivities and events such as the *Notte Bianca*, which has now become a staple of cultural life in Valletta in its own right.

A complementary perspective to Boissevain's observations are the arguments that Giddens brings forth with regard to detraditionalisation, where "the radical turn from tradition intrinsic to modernity's reflexivity makes a break ... with preceding eras" (Giddens, 1991, 175-176). Although the theory of detraditionalisation does not per se anticipate a desire to revitalise and reinvent tradition and ritual, it certainly does not exclude this. In this perspective, the proliferation of festivals, particularly those presenting aspects of culture deemed traditional, together with nostalgia, could in certain cases be considered a response to the "disembedding" which Giddens associates with late modernity.

Further anthropological literature which is pertinent to the relation between the Maltese and their heritage is the work of Reuben Grima, in particular his 1997 paper *Ritual Spaces, Contested Places: the Case of the Maltese Prehistoric Temple Sites* (Grima 1998) and the work of Kathryn Rountree, which likewise looks at various contesting claims and views on various heritage sites and artifacts (Rountree 2010). Although strongly focused on heritage from Malta's Temple period, the texts of both authors serve to bring to the fore the way in which the management of heritage is a complex matter which often provokes conflicting emotional reactions, and over which various community groups may have conflicting claims.

From a Mediterranean perspective, the work of Michael Herzfeld is also highly relevant, particularly his ethnography *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town* (1991), which describes the conflicts that emerge from state intervention in Rethemnos, a historic town in Crete. This study provides an interesting parallel to Valletta in that Rethemnos is not only a town that is rich in history in the formal sense of the term, but is also, for its inhabitants, a site steeped in intimate, personal histories. Likewise, his more recent ethnography *Evicted from Eternity: The Restructuring of Modern Rome*, also offers a scenario that can be fruitfully compared to that of Valletta. In this latter work, Herzfeld observes, amongst other things, that the notion of "culture" is deployed in various ways: as a "scapegoat" for "failure to adhere to civic values"; as a "positive term of political self-identification", the "attitudes associated with a profession", a "political ideology", and "habits that signify a person's economic standing" (Herzfeld, 2009, p. 191-192). Herzfeld's ethnography also provides insight on the effect that gentrification and "the inexorable power of the market to define the course of events" (Herzfeld, 2009, p. 266) can have on a city's inhabitants, as well as the way in which Romans negotiate the role of Rome as their home city against its function as the national capital – concerns which resonate with those of the Valletta community.

METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the Terms of Reference of this research project, there are two principal areas of research that need to be addressed by the report, namely:

- (a) the social involvement of the local population; and
- (b) the accessibility of the Valletta 2018 programme.

The social involvement of the local population

The notion of “local population”, together with the requirement for inclusion of Valletta residents, brings to the fore Valletta’s particular situation as a contested space at the centre of claims made by various community groups. In particular, although residence may constitute an official state-recognised form of belonging to a particular locality, especially if confirmed formally through one’s identity card (Cap 258 of the Laws of Malta, Art 5(2)(b)), this does not readily capture the culturally nuanced sense of belonging to and being from Valletta: being Belti or Beltija. (The term derives from il-Belt, “the City”, as Valletta is generally referred to in Maltese, and roughly translatable as “Vallettan” as per Mitchell (2002), but the term is not used in the English form in general practice.)

In fact, as a result of the waves of migration by families from Valletta to other parts of the island ever since the wartime period, a significant diaspora of families exists outside Valletta who still consider themselves Beltin, an identity most often negotiated through family history and memory, participation in festivities and, significantly, support for the Valletta football club. On the other hand, Valletta residents who do not have family ties in the city would tend not to characterise themselves as being from Valletta and indeed, living in Valletta is neither a requisite nor a guarantee of being from Valletta. The boundaries of Valletta in terms of identity are thus more socially constructed than spatially defined.

Nevertheless, it is frequent to find that several Beltin come from families that only moved into the city a couple of generations back at most. Thus, although Belti identity is often depicted by people from Valletta as something virtually autochthonous, this discourse cannot be taken at face value, and in the fieldwork conducted for this report, two persons who were not originally from Valletta – one young person and one senior citizen – adopted the self-identification of Belti after living there, shedding light on the fact that a Belti can be made, not necessarily born.

Valletta identities are also internally complex. Within the microcosm of Beltin, identity may become segmented through the inner faultlines of belonging, as are family histories, socio-economic status, adherence to particular zones in the city, and membership of parishes and band clubs, not to mention political affiliation. Nevertheless, there are also many instances in which a unified identity as Beltin or “Tfal tal-Belt” (Valletta’s children) is invoked as the card that trumps all segmentary divisions.

In terms of human geography Valletta is at the heart of the Inner Harbour area of Malta, which is the area surrounding the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour. This region has recently been referred to (not without the possibility of contention) as the “Greater Valletta” area. While this view gives priority to actual demographics regardless of culturally-defined discourses of identity (which would create a sharp distinction, for instance, between the people from Valletta, and those from Floriana, which lies just outside

the city walls), it is undeniable that this region comprises the most densely populated area of the island. The same area is split in most statistical data produced by the National Statistics Office as the “Northern Harbour” and “Southern Harbour” areas.

Furthermore, on a wider level, account must be taken of Malta in general, which has been marked as the host region. This is doubly the case when, as has been observed previously, there is a relatively high degree of engagement with Valletta amongst Maltese people in general. Thus, with the exclusion of tourists, at least five groups emerge, all of which have been considered as stakeholders of Valletta 2018, and which have been addressed in this research project.

A sixth group was added which addressed persons with a disability, in view of the fact that the terms of reference included also an emphasis on accessibility, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For the sake of initial research, the focus of this group was on persons with physical disabilities and impaired mobility. Nevertheless, observations were taken regarding all possible issues of accessibility with this group especially, and generally with all the community groups in the research.

Thus the six community groups covered by this study are:

- (a) Persons who consider themselves as being from Valletta, and who reside in Valletta;
- (b) Persons who consider themselves as being from Valletta, but do not reside in Valletta;
- (c) Persons who do not consider themselves as being from Valletta, but reside in Valletta;
- (d) Persons who are residents of the Inner Harbour / “Greater Valletta” area;
- (e) Maltese people in general, who probably commute to Valletta with different levels of regularity;
- (f) Maltese people who have a disability.

At the onset of this research it was felt that, without prejudice to the exploration of any significant themes that could emerge during the course of research, it was expected that the issues that arise from the available literature and which would likely prove central to this research project were the following:

- (a) the effects of the monumentalisation and gentrification of Valletta with regard to the various populations, particularly Valletta residents;
- (b) the negotiation of the public aspects of Valletta as capital city of the nation state against the intimacy of Valletta as a home-town, being a place of everyday life, residence, and private memory, particularly for Valletta residents and the Valletta diaspora;
- (c) the negotiation of what constitutes “culture” in the implementation of the Valletta 2018 project, particularly with a view to identifying the various notions of culture as understood by the various community groups identified.

The accessibility of the Valletta 2018 programme

Accessibility, as a concept, is distinguished from mobility in that it is not limited to the ability of individuals to move around, but looks at structural factors that influence whether something is “get-at-able”, both in terms of places (i.e. the accessibility of a location), and in terms of people (i.e. their ability to access goods and services) (Knowles et al, 2008, p. 50).

The accessibility of culture is a requirement for the fulfilment of Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which establishes “the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” (United Nations, 1948, Art. 27).

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.

Of the forms of accessibility referred to, physical accessibility constitutes the category that is most formally defined and regulated, particularly with regard to accessibility for persons with a disability. Malta is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), has legislation protecting the right to accessibility for persons with disability (which includes elements of social accessibility) (Cap 413 of the Laws of Malta), and has a National Commission dedicated to eliminating any form of direct or indirect social discrimination against persons with disability and their families while providing them with the necessary assistance and support. This latter Commission, namely the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD), has also issued Accessibility Guidelines aimed at creating a more accessible built environment to ensure a better quality of life not only to persons with disability, but to everyone (National Commission for Persons with a Disability, 2011). This wider dimension, particularly with regard to children and their families, as well as elderly people, would need to be addressed in the research.

The mainstreaming of universal design policies in the implementation of Valletta 2018 would be highly beneficial to promoting accessibility - particularly physical and social accessibility - although the limitations imposed by the historical nature of many sites, as well as the challenges set by the topography of the Xebb ir-Ras⁷ peninsula, must be kept in mind. Whilst noting that it is not within the competency of this research programme to make any formal site assessments or recommendations, it is essential that concerns regarding physical accessibility issues, amongst others, are reflected in the collection of data. This would require that provisions are taken to seek inclusion of concerns by the particularly vulnerable groups identified, namely persons with disability, children and elderly people. Thus, while accessibility was a particular focus for the sixth community group identified, namely persons with disability, this concern was explored with all the community groups who may have children or elderly relatives.

⁷Xebb ir-Ras is the peninsula over which the city of Valletta was built.

Geographical accessibility is, after physical ability, the next most widely-discussed form of accessibility, with public transport and congestion being matters of especially longstanding concern for the general public. In view of the fact that this research project is limited to the local population, it is understood that the focus will be on geographical accessibility within the Maltese Islands.

Valletta remains a central hub of the public transport system and is easily reachable by bus - however, the number of people who rely or depend on private transportation has increased, with Malta having a high ratio of cars per capita⁸ This has resulted in widespread congestion, particularly when a series of events is focused on a limited geographical area such as Valletta, which creates difficulties not only for persons travelling to Valletta but also (and possibly especially) for residents. There are also significant logistical limitations in travel between the islands of Gozo and Malta, thereby restricting geographical accessibility for Gozo residents.

Financial accessibility requires investigation as to whether the costs of accessing the various projects that are expected to emerge from Valletta 2018 create any restrictions on participation by the communities involved. It would also be interesting to note whether from the statistical evidence it transpires that events that are free of charge or low cost register higher turnout, and whether this may aid in cementing a more widespread interest in cultural events and strengthening the valorisation of local resources as well as allowing several local business initiatives to flourish.

The area of linguistic accessibility is concerned with the ways in which language barriers may impact Valletta 2018 and any emerging projects. Although both Maltese and English are official languages, linguistic ability in residents (inclusive of Maltese and expatriate residents) is variable, and attention needs to be given to target audiences for events and whether the linguistic needs of such audiences are adequately satisfied. Disability issues may also need to be considered, such as whether sufficient measures have been taken to reasonably cater for persons with hearing or vision impairments, as well as restricted literacy skills.

Intellectual accessibility has been defined as "ensuring that visitors and staff can understand any information which [an] organisation provides" (Museums Galleries Scotland, n.d.). There is an overlap to an extent with linguistic accessibility due to the importance of language to intellectual comprehension. However, intellectual accessibility may also be understood to require indicators of whether people feel welcomed at the various sites and events, whether special events may help people with different backgrounds, skills and knowledge levels engage with the material being presented, and whether specific community groups are being reached by the project. Importantly, one group which needs to be reached by Valletta 2018 is children, and therefore it is important to consider the programme's accessibility for this group.

Finally, in view of the fact that accessibility is a social issue in the wider sense of the term, the category of social accessibility includes somewhat all the other categories, which may themselves present overlaps. Nevertheless, this form of accessibility may cover other aspects which have not been specifically mentioned under the other areas, such as those related to gender (e.g. whether the culturally apportioned

⁸ As per the Transport Statistics issued by the National Statistics Office, in 2013, the number of vehicles per 1,000 total residents was 763, and the number of vehicles per 1,000 total residents aged 18 and over was 928. National Statistics Office, (2014). Transport Statistics (p. 109). Valletta. Retrieved from https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications_by_Unit/Documents/A4_International_Trade_and_Transport_Statistics/Transport_Statistics_2014.pdf

gender-roles may have an effect on cultural access) and socio-economic status (e.g. whether events are perceived to be accessible to all persons from all socio-economic backgrounds, including events that are free of charge and therefore present no financial restrictions).

In all cases above, the research will eventually need to consider statistical indicators as they become available, whereby attendance may then be compared to national figures in terms of disability, gender, socio-economic status etc. However, it is also important to explore the level of accessibility through qualitative research to obtain a rich description of the user-experience.

Research choices

It has been decided that a qualitative approach, based on semi-structured interviews, will be used to provide an in-depth understanding of perspectives from members of the six community groups identified. It is also noted that work on matters related to participation is also being undertaken by the National Statistics Office (NSO), and statistical data, as it becomes available, may be used to complement the qualitative research. Likewise, it is hoped that the qualitative research may enrich any analysis of any quantitative data collected by providing rich descriptive material addressing the concerns, opinions and ideas of the various community groups involved.

The use of the ethnographic approach aims at giving an account, of interpreting the meaning of observed behaviour (Agar, 1996, p. 129). Ethnographic research is particularly well-suited to understanding participation and accessibility since "it is done in the field and depends upon attentive observation". Thus, it is "well suited to assisting us in gaining a better understanding of what impacts programs have and what happens when policies are implemented" (Luton, 2010, p. 85).

Since the scope of ethnographic research is not statistical representativeness but contextual description, the study has been based on four in-depth case studies from each of the community groups identified – a process which will be repeated for subsequent years. The case studies include semi-structured interviews coupled with more general observation not limited to the individuals who would be the basis for the case studies. Each individual researcher was assigned two of the community groups, with regular meetings held for the individual researchers to share findings and provide peer support and advice for further research. All researchers were involved not only in the collection of data but also in the analysis to ensure continuity in the process leading from fieldwork to the presentation and interpretation of results.

Given the specific nature of the community groups as identified, respondents were selected through a snowball sampling technique, where the researchers identified persons within the required populations, and proceeded to ask the respondents to identify further possible respondents. While no statistical representativeness is claimed for the sample used, there has been an effort to have a mix of gender and ages in each community group to provide a diversity of responses.

The fact that social phenomena are studied through fieldwork on location enables the ethnographer to frame such phenomena within the conceptual framework of culture, understood here in the wider sense of the term as comprising the whole cluster of socially constructed meanings in which daily life is embedded. Ethnographic research inherently necessitates a continuous reworking and modification of the project's design, particularly in view of the fact that ethnographic projects need to remain open to the material that emerges from the fieldwork, rather than persist in imposing concerns that have been determined a priori.

Indeed, the first cycle of fieldwork which informs this report constituted a particularly exploratory phase, in which, although following a set of questions administered in a semi-structured manner, the researchers specifically allowed interviewees to highlight any other topics which had not been raised by the interviewer, or to follow any other lead that may have been of possible interest.

Almost all interviews were held face to face either in the interviewee's residence, or in a public place that was convenient to the interviewee. In the case of the disability community group, one interview was conducted via videoconferencing, and the other was conducted through email due to difficulties experienced by the interviewee.

Apart from background demographic data and information on current cultural participation, the main qualitative indicators for this cycle were:

- Knowledge of the Valletta 2018 programme (awareness of programme, awareness of aims of programme, awareness of events, experience of events, access to events);
- Personal views on Valletta and the Valletta 2018 programme (personal significance of Valletta, experience of Valletta, opinion on Valletta's issues and likely future developments, impact of Valletta 2018 on Valletta and Malta, and on the respondents' communities).

It is noted that this research was emphatically dialogic in nature, in which neither the concerns of the community groups involved, nor the aims of the Valletta 2018 project could be taken as existing independently of each other. To do so would have risked either considering local concerns as being mere limitations to the implementation of the project, or to view the aims of the project as a hegemonic imposition on the city. The research rather was informed by an approach that takes constructive dialogue and mutual understanding of these two poles as essential to the fulfilment of the project's objectives, namely Valletta 2018's intention to bring about cultural and infrastructural change.

A full list of questions administered to the interviewees may be found as an Appendix to this report.

FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the most salient points emerging from the semi-structured interviews conducted with persons from the community groups identified. This report, which encapsulates the findings of the first cycle of this project, aims to provide a baseline study of the level of social involvement amongst the various community groups, as well as current concerns or opinions regarding the accessibility of the Valletta 2018 programme.

Importance of context

As has been stated in the introduction, the Palmer Report of 2004 identified the importance of context, including the social context, as one of the common success factors for ECoC (Palmer-Rae Associates, 2004, p. 152). Furthermore, as per the literature review, there are several elements that are crucial to understanding Valletta as a social space, including:

- the way in which Valletta shares the role of both national capital and intimate hometown;
- the process of “glory, decline, [and] rehabilitation”, often resulting in a tension between nostalgia and gentrification;
- the creation of strong identities and a sense of belonging which transcends, and is not dependent on, residence.

It transpired that the overwhelming message from most of the interviews conducted was that Valletta is a space which has multiple layers of meaning to people from different backgrounds, with the various community groups giving varying perspectives on the nature of this space.

People who identified themselves as Beltin emphasised the intimate aspect of Valletta as a place of community and local history, which is often invoked with a sense of nostalgia. Beltin tended to express a concern with the imminent death of history, memory and continuity in Valletta, as testified by a number of statements such as: “In my opinion, history is dying”;⁹ “Valletta no longer belongs to the Beltin”;¹⁰ and “Many young people just love Valletta because of football.”¹¹ One expatriate resident in Valletta also added on to this set of notions by stating: “that the Beltin are a ‘dying breed’ makes me anxious because I feel that I am part of the group that is pushing the Beltin out of their rightful home.”

Non-resident Beltin tended to describe Valletta as “home”;¹² and as a place which they feel compelled to visit regularly or daily even if they do not have family living within the city. The methodology section included a discussion on how Valletta identities are internally complex, with Beltin negotiating their micro-local identity (i.e. as belonging to a particular district, parish etc.) against a unified identity as Belti or Beltija. One interviewee said that Beltin often voice this unified identity by calling each other “kugin” (cousin), a form of fictive kinship that expresses a familial bond between all Beltin. Likewise the term “it-tfal tal-Belt”, which could be translated as “Valletta’s sons and daughters” is also used to connote the Beltin.

⁹ “Il-history qed naraha tmut.”

¹⁰ “Il-Belt m’ghadhiex tal-Beltin.”

¹¹ “Hafna zghazagh il-Belt ihobbuha biss taht il-kappa tal-futbol.” – It is important to note that this particular statement was made by a person involved in one of the parish feasts within Valletta, and therefore it can also be read as a lamentation about a decline in youth participation in feasts.

¹² Generally the word “home” was used in English, even if the rest of the sentence was in Maltese, e.g. “Il-Belt ghalija hija home.” (“Valletta to me is home.”); “Inhossni home meta nkun il-Belt.” (“I feel at home when I am in Valletta”).

In this context, one of the interviewees noted how festi tend to separate, while football tends to unite – and how in view of this, football tends to be generally given more importance by Beltin. This same interviewee had also made a recommendation to bring the titular statues of the main religious feasts in the city together on Valletta Day in 2018, since “that would be our greatest victory, as we would have shown everybody that neither feasts nor politics can divide us, but that we are Beltin first and foremost.”¹³

Non-Beltin, regardless of residence, tended to emphasise the historical, architectural, administrative and commercial importance of Valletta. The interviewees that were most disengaged from Valletta were those from amongst the group of persons with a disability who, due to accessibility reasons which will be looked into in more detail, have very limited involvement with Valletta as a place.

A general concern with the preservation of the character of Valletta was more or less consistent across the community groups. The topics of Valletta’s emerging nightlife and increase in boutique hotels were subjects on which there was divergence between various interviewees, although both trends were generally felt as being, at least in part, a response to Valletta 2018.

Non-Beltin were inclined to see the development of boutique hotels as a positive trend, while the opening of entertainment establishments, particularly in Strait Street were seen as potentially leading Valletta to lose its character. Younger interviewees, nevertheless, tended to see Valletta as providing a better nightlife alternative to Paceville, as it offered something different than the standard nightclub model and offered less noisy entertainment spaces which did not prevent patrons from engaging in conversation.¹⁴

On the other hand the Beltin interviewed had varying reactions to the same issues. Both boutique hotels and entertainment establishments were seen as reviving Valletta and giving it something of the social importance and glamour that it had in the past, as well as providing significant business opportunities to the owners, a substantial number of whom are themselves Beltin. However, Beltin also often complained that this has pushed prices up and has consequently made it more difficult, if not impossible, for young Beltin to buy property in Valletta and live there. It is noted, however, that this is also made difficult by the fact that most buildings in Valletta are old and often do not cater for homebuyers’ requirements today. Nevertheless, a good number of the respondents allowed for the fact that the trend of boutique hotels and the Airbnb phenomenon (which is less well known) have given unprecedented opportunities to Valletta landowners to capitalise on their property. Furthermore, some respondents also said that these trends have helped to reduce the number of vacant properties in the city, thereby “giving it more life”.

Some Beltin voiced concern about nightlife in the area, with the main reasons cited being the loss of the city’s character, although this was not unanimous. One interviewee criticised the revival of Strait Street as being simply the transference of the standard nightlife model upon Valletta, without consideration of context: “2018 should be all about culture but all we are seeing are new arriviste bars and restaurants, when the restaurants that promote genuine stuff, and the old bars, are being forgotten. We’re faking Valletta as it used to be and tearing the thin veil of the society there. We’ll make some money out of it but will it rip the identity of Valletta?”¹⁵

¹³ “...tkun l-ikbar rebha li nkunu ghamilna ghax inkunu urejna lil kulhadd li la l-festi u lanqas il-politika m’huma se jifirduna, li ahna Beltin qabel kollox”.

¹⁴ Paceville is a district within the town of St Julian’s which developed into an area populated mostly by nightclubs and other entertainment establishments.

Others from the Beltin interviewed were more concerned about possible nuisance to residents, but were satisfied as long as the night entertainment remained restricted to specific zones. One of the interviewees, however, actively called for a further expansion of the entertainment industry in Valletta, with a view to reaping the economic benefits, but also to “give life” to the city: “If we want Valletta to be given life, we need to have nightlife and not just fix the streets. The tourists of today are the replacement of yesterday’s sailors [who used to patronise Valletta’s bars].”¹⁶

One other concern voiced by many of the Beltin interviewed was to negotiate the historical and national aspect of Valletta with their daily needs – one respondent, for instance, stated that he does not agree with the introduction of a modern aesthetic which may clash with the city’s appearance. Nevertheless, the same respondent also argued that “you cannot turn Valletta into a museum”,¹⁷ as this would negatively impact on its commercial success as well as on residents’ lives. One other respondent also said that there is a tendency to restore sites but then render them unusable, because “one ends up not even being allowed to have drinks in the square”.

Finally, Beltin and Valletta residents tend to feel that their home city, being the capital city of the nation-state, is particularly prone to all sorts of interventions by Government as well as other authorities and/or entities. They have often voiced resent at the fact that such changes often take place without adequate consultation with residents. One significant exception was the MUŻA project which is being organised in liaison with Valletta 2018.¹⁸ As part of this project, a focus group of Valletta residents were asked to give their views on Valletta and Valletta 2018. The participants were also asked to choose an artwork, a reproduction of which would be placed in their communities in a place of their own choosing. This approach, which has been defined as “community curatorship”, was strongly welcomed by the participants, some of whom stated that this was the first time that they had been actively involved in something happening in their own home city. This project was also helpful at breaking barriers of social accessibility, with some of the members of the focus group entering the Museum of Fine Arts for the first time, despite having lived in Valletta for all their lives. The strong acceptance of the project shows that consultation is certainly one of the key factors in ensuring a successful engagement of local communities with cultural projects.

Level of engagement with Valletta 2018

There was a very good level of awareness across all the community groups that the title of European Capital of Culture for 2018 had been awarded, with all interviewees being conscious of this. Particularly within the community of Beltin, the awarding of this title was welcomed as an international recognition of Valletta’s uniqueness. One interviewee mentioned a statement he had seen on a social media platform which, with a touch of hyperbole, expressed this local pride: “Valletta is now the capital of Europe – bow your head in respect!”¹⁹

There was, nevertheless, a widespread poor level of awareness of the aims of this project and what

¹⁵ Most of this quote was said in English, with the exception of the last sentence which was originally “Se ndaħhlu sold, imma will it rip the identity of Valletta?”

¹⁶ “Jekk il-Belt irridu ntuha l-hajja, irid ikollna d-divertiment ta’ bil-lejl u mhux sempliciment nirrangaw it-toroq. It-turist illum huwa flok il-bahri tal-bierah.”

¹⁷ “Ma tistax il-Belt tagħmilha mużew ghax se twaqqaf hafna mill-affarijiet – il-hwienet, il-hajja tar-residenti...”

¹⁸ The researchers of this report thank Sandro Debono from Heritage Malta and Marcia Grima, then also working with Heritage Malta, who extended an invitation to participate as observers in the sessions being held with regard to the MUŻA project. This invitation made the following observations possible and greatly enriched the findings of this report.

¹⁹ “Valletta l-Belt Kapitali tal-Ewropa. Baxxi rasek!”

events have been or are being organised. With regard to aims, a minority of interviewees were aware that although beyond cultural events which would be held in 2018, the ultimate aim was to leave a long-term impact. Many others emphasised tourism and, as has been stated, also connected it to the boom in the boutique hotel business as well as the increase in nightlife. However, almost all respondents, including the ones who gave the replies above, said that they were unsure of what the aims really were, or how it is being proposed that these goals are achieved.

Likewise, there was a lack of clarity as to which events formed part of the Valletta 2018 programme. With the exception of a few interviewees who did not attend any cultural events at all due to lack of interest or accessibility issues, most respondents had attended some cultural events, but were unable to identify whether they were related to Valletta 2018 or not. *Notte Bianca* was one event that virtually all respondents were familiar with, although not all chose to attend.

Some of the expatriate respondents resident in Valletta stated that they appreciate the synergy created by the mix of Maltese and non-Maltese participants at certain events, and that such events allowed them to interact with the local population.

With regard to persons with a disability, there was a marked lack of participation in cultural activities, especially those occurring in Valletta. Whilst these respondents often voiced a lack of interest in such activities, it was clear that problems of access, including Valletta's natural topography and built infrastructure, constitute a definite barrier to participation in cultural events.

Residents, whether Beltin or not, as well as non-resident Beltin, often expressed some hope that Valletta 2018 would create some improvement in city management, in particular with cleanliness (e.g. garbage collection and street cleaning), better parking regulation, and the recuperation of old characteristic shops.

Residents who are not Beltin expressed a fear that the whole ECoC process may result in the "Disneyfication" (Zukin, 1995) and/or gentrification of Valletta with the attendant loss of social diversity. This would be mainly due to the inflation of real estate prices to which they may have contributed themselves with the result that Beltin and other "ordinary people" would no longer be able to afford to live in Valletta, and the city would become the reserve of affluent and probably absent owners. Of course, certain Beltin have nonetheless been very willing to sell off their property at favourable rates, and buy-to-rent investments are another factor that would contribute to this phenomenon.

The respondents in the Inner Harbour/Greater Valletta Area were very concerned that Valletta and its many economically disadvantaged residents will not be the ultimate beneficiaries of Valletta 2018, and rather that it will be the businesses responsible for gentrification that will reap the benefits. These concerns were also expressed by some Beltin, also in particular with the plans that are in place for the Valletta market (*is-Suq tal-Belt*), where there is concern that prices will be upmarked for a tourist audience and thus limit affordability for Valletta residents. There was also a significant number of interviewees who demonstrated strong skepticism as to whether the apparent changes in Valletta will do anything to improve the quality of life and the Valletta experience for residents and visitors alike.

Accessibility

As has been stated in the literature review, the notion of accessibility is not limited to the ability of individuals to move around, but includes structural factors that influence whether something is “get-at-able”, both in terms of places (i.e. the accessibility of a location), and in terms of people (i.e. their ability to access goods and services) (Knowles et al, 2008, p. 50). Although there are several levels on which to analyse accessibility, including the physical, social, geographical, financial, linguistic and intellectual levels, it is not uncommon to find that one form of lack of accessibility contributes to another (e.g. the lack of physical accessibility may be an obstacle for a person to participate in cultural life and thereby contribute to social and intellectual accessibility). Thus in the following discussion, accessibility will be discussed holistically rather than separating it into its separate constituents. However, for ease of discussion, it has been separated into concerns about accessibility in terms of transportation, and the way in which issues of accessibility can impact one’s engagement with Valletta.

Concerns regarding transportation, public and private

As has been mentioned, Valletta is very well-connected by public transportation, being the centre of the public transport system. Nevertheless, the high vehicle-per-person ratio in Malta means that congestion is a problem to which public transportation may not be immune, despite attempts to mitigate this through the introduction of bus lanes. Furthermore, public transportation is inherently not as flexible as private transportation, and interviewees have complained, for instance, that night buses do not run late enough, meaning that it was not feasible to depend on public transportation to be able to enjoy a night out in Valletta. Persons with a disability, elderly people or persons who otherwise have limited mobility might also be at a disadvantage if they are not able to use public transportation in a reliable way.

Amongst persons who use private transportation, complaints about lack of parking space were a common factor. Belkin were furthermore also concerned about problems of internal traffic flow within the city’s boundaries, particularly following the removal of the bridge formed by the old City Gate, which provided an easier connection between the Western and Eastern sides of Valletta. Those with elderly relatives living in Valletta, also complained about how it was hard to provide adequate transport to their family members with limited mobility.

The concern with lack of parking was felt particularly strongly by persons with a disability, who said that more parking spots reserved for persons with a disability would be an encouraging step.

Another concern was the congestion caused by mass events such as Notte Bianca, both for persons travelling to Valletta, and for persons living in Valletta, who would not be able to leave the city and return when such an event is being held. In fact two Valletta residents interviewed said that if they leave the city during Notte Bianca, they would have to secure an alternative place to lodge for the night, as it would be impossible for them to return to their home. One other respondent compared the imposition of Notte Bianca to a burglar breaking into one’s house.²⁰ One suggestion from the group of commuters to Valletta was to spread such mass events over a week to avoid congestion.

One respondent who is a Valletta Resident favourably mentioned the ferry project, as it has increased accessibility into Valletta and decreased congestion.

²⁰ “Qisu xi hadd dahallek fid-dar.”

The impact of lack of accessibility on engagement with Valletta

Engagement with Valletta, for most of the disability cohort, was mostly restricted to the Valletta Waterfront as this is an accessible area, but they rarely enter Valletta proper. Interviewees in this group rarely visited Valletta for entertainment or for cultural activities, and generally went to the city only to purchase clothes, where the person would often have to be lifted into the shop and would then choose a number of garments to try at home because the changing facilities would not be accessible.

Half of the respondents in this group emphasised the need for a nationwide educational campaign for people to not park on parking spots designated for persons with a disability, as well as the need for the promotion of Universal Design, whereby buildings and spaces cater for the needs of all from the outset. Respondents indicated that more effort needs to be put into making museums and historical sites accessible not just for wheelchair users but for other types of disability, such as those emanating from visual impairments or hearing difficulties. It is also true, however, that the difficulty is not only in the design of individual buildings (most of which were constructed before adequate accessibility standards were put in place) but systematic. As one of the respondents from the group of Beltin resident in Valletta put it, "in Valletta you are never working with a blank canvas". The same respondent had, in fact, been involved on a project related to a building in Valletta which was not initially given a permit since the building was not wheelchair friendly – but the building itself was located in a narrow street with steps. Indeed, our respondents with disability found problems both because of Valletta's topography, being built on a hill and therefore having steep slopes and steps in many streets, and also because most commercial and entertainment establishments are housed in old buildings, with restrooms typically located at the end of a flight of stairs. Although there are inherent difficulties, however, interviewees have voiced a need to push for certain steps to be taken, such as ensuring that accessible public convenience locations are situated around these public spaces to render them more accessible. Museums and historical sites, too, harboured a challenge for wheelchair users, with very little information being offered for persons with sensory impairments.

The majority of the disability cohort never went to theatre or any other performance, mostly as it is not accessible physically. Two did mention that they harboured no real interest in seeing opera. It is also worth noting that one of the respondents was not economically active, as her disability is severe and has been an obstacle to her finding employment, thus also creating financial impediments to cultural participation. Financial accessibility was also a concern to a number of respondents, particularly those with families, some of whom stated that they make use of occasions in which museums and other sites have open days, and that such initiatives are to be encouraged.

One respondent, who stated that he was concerned that Valletta 2018 could turn out to be just an image-enhancement exercise, also said that he strongly believed that Valletta needs the ECoC initiative, and suggested that innovative ways of presenting art and culture need to be found to bring it closer to people, bolstering this argument with a provocative example – "more people go to the public toilet than to the Museum of Fine Arts, so why not have an exhibition at the public convenience?".

This example lends an important insight, namely that enhancing accessibility to Valletta 2018 by removing as many barriers to access as possible is vital, but it is not enough. In the implementation of Valletta 2018, it is important that the traditional boundaries of cultural spaces are reconsidered in such a way that Valletta becomes indeed a creative city.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings above, a number of factors emerge which are important for Valletta 2018 to ensure the participation of the local population, and which will ultimately determine its success.

Firstly, the overarching recommendation is that it is essential for attention to be given to the social context in which Valletta 2018 will be implemented to ensure social engagement and the achievement of the goals of the European Capital of Culture.

Secondly, as is evident from the way in which the MUŻA project has been strongly welcomed by participants, the consultation and direct involvement of communities are of paramount importance for the various community groups that make up the local population to feel that they are a part of the Valletta 2018 project. This is especially so in a situation where communities, particularly Valletta residents, have complained about consistently having interventions imposed on them by external authorities without any prior consultation.

In this regard, it is also ideal for Valletta 2018 to develop a social strategy. The Palmer Report proposed three avenues, which are by no means mutually exclusive, namely: Access Development, Cultural Instrumentalism, and Cultural Inclusion. Discussions need to be held to forge a clear strategy of how the involvement of the local population is to be integrated into the Valletta 2018 project.

Given the lack of clarity that was noted, it is also important for an investment to be made in a campaign that makes Valletta 2018's aims and events more visible and understandable to the general public.

Steps have already been taken to improve accessibility, but – whilst realising the inherent difficulties that Valletta's topographic and built fabric presents - more needs to be made to make the city accessible.

Many of the people interviewed had an interest in national or local history and culture, and while this understandably cannot be the sole focus of Valletta 2018, events targeting this field would be likely to attract attention on a more popular level, especially if the events are targeted to be family or child-friendly, and if entrance fees are free or low cost.

Finally, the concern with the gentrification and monumentalisation of Valletta is strong and has been, at least to some extent, justified. Adequate planning is required to keep this in check and to ensure that any initiative taken with regard to the Valletta 2018 project, and as much as possible any third party intervention within the city at all, is considered in the light of the impact that it will have on making Valletta a creative city, and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors through culture.

WAY FORWARD

Since the inception of this research, there has been collaboration with the MUŻA project being coordinated by the Valletta 2018 Foundation and Heritage Malta, particularly in view of the fact that this is a community-driven project.

Furthermore, it is envisaged that community fora such as the Valletta Forum and the Valletta School Council may, depending on availability of respondents, be incorporated into the research. There is also room for fruitful collaboration with the National Council for Persons with a Disability with regard to accessibility issues.

Subject to availability of respondents, a number of respondents from the first cycle will be interviewed again at various points in 2016, while new respondents will also be included. We anticipate that as the Valletta 2018 programme rolls out, there will be more material (including academic work, media coverage, etc.) that will be available and which will need to be reviewed.

No specific changes in the methodology are envisaged but a meeting will be held to review the work done in 2015 and identify areas in which improvement can be achieved.

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APPENDIX

Questions administered to Interviewees

Demographic data

- Age
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Progeny
- Socio-economic Status
- Residence
- Self-identification as Belti

Valletta participation

- Reasons for visiting Valletta
- Frequency of visits

Cultural interests

- Festa
- Theatre
- Museums and exhibitions
- TV
- Food
- Clubbing
- Sport
- Others

Knowledge of Valletta 2018

- Awareness of Valletta 2018
- Awareness of aims of Valletta 2018
- Awareness of Valletta 2018 events
- Experience of Valletta 2018 events
- Access to Valletta 2018 events

Personal views on Valletta and Valletta 2018

- What does Valletta mean to you?
- What is your experience of Valletta?
- What do you like about Valletta?
- What are Valletta's problems as you see them?
- How do you see Valletta's future developing?
- How do you think Valletta 2018 will impact Valletta or Malta in general?
- How - if in any way - do you think Valletta 2018 will impact you and your community (i.e. family, people you know etc.?)



ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND SPACE THROUGH THE IMPACT OF VALLETTA 2018 CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE ON VARIOUS COMMUNITY GROUPS

Dr. Antoine Zammit
With **Christopher Azzopardi** and
Daniel Attard

ABSTRACT

The research is concerned with the assessment of the spatial and social impact of cultural infrastructure, understood primarily as architectural and urban design interventions, in order to gauge the manner with which they may result in broader culture-led urban regeneration within specific Valletta neighbourhoods. Four areas of intervention within the Capital have been chosen for in-depth study – the Biċċerija (the upcoming Valletta Design Cluster) and its surrounding neighbourhood; the entire extent of Strait Street; Pjazza de Vallette/MUŻA and its immediate environs; and the area surrounding the Covered Market (along both Merchants Street and St. Paul's Street).

The nature of the subject matter demands an assessment of the urban space and the various (physical and non-physical) phenomena that affect it. Following the initial identification of the primary socio-spatial phenomena/elements that influence the areas under study, through both inductive and deductive methodologies working in parallel, analytical frameworks are subsequently developed and applied within the analysis of the physical spaces. The latter are monitored closely throughout the five-year period for changes (both each urban space per se and its interfaces/enclosure through the frontages that define it) and key patterns are derived therefrom, categorised and correlated to the NSO data that was obtained throughout 2015 at the specific neighbourhood level. In this manner socio-spatial phenomena may be brought together.

Over the past year, the main research objective was to collect 'on the ground' baseline data, particularly due to the lack of adequate available data. These in-depth observations have resulted in a very comprehensive set of data comprising 347 properties within the four sites – an important milestone in itself – that shall be followed by drawing out key observations and patterns throughout 2016, a potentially longer stage than was originally envisaged but a necessary one given the breadth of this available data and its complexity. In addition to this data, two further studies carried out in parallel (via inductive and deductive approaches) have led to the identification of some significant spatial and social patterns, which are currently being collated and shall be categorised throughout 2016.

Keywords: Involvement, accessibility, cultural infrastructure, regeneration

INTRODUCTION

The main research question of this study is – What role can cultural infrastructure play in the achievement of culture-led regeneration? The question is answered through the assessment of three key considerations:

- (i) those aspects of place that may reflect the cultural values held by the community – analysed separately from a deductive spatial approach to social conditions and an inductive social approach to space;
- (ii) the potential impact of cultural infrastructure within the place from a socio-spatial point of view – requiring the study of the interface/overlap between the social and spatial perspectives through ‘on the ground’ investigation of the urban fabric and close monitoring of any change therein; and
- (iii) the manner with which culture-led regeneration may affect the use of the surrounding urban spaces of place, at a later phase of the research.

The research objectives formulated from the above questions centre primarily on the physical urban space/built environment, in terms of establishing important spatial parameters and qualities that, in turn, have direct and indirect social implications. These themes are amply discussed within the literature.

Place-making, sense of place, identity and meaning

Central to the discussion on the relationship between urban space and people is the concept of ‘place-making’, or the creation of meaningful places as opposed to anonymous spaces. Place attachment is an intrinsic part of human nature (Horan 2000, Rad and Ngah 2013) and is an important prerequisite for broader urban regeneration objectives.

‘Space’ is a term describing a physical area composed of physical elements. The philosophical study and explanation of space depends on experiences and feelings. By giving meaning, a space is transformed into a place (Carmona and Tiesdell 2007). Heidegger (in Knox 2005) states that people need to relate to the physical surroundings and form a space which gives them a sense of origin. A place is context-dependent and holds human purposes, experiences, and actions in a physical setting. People’s understanding of their surroundings is related to known places, which obtain meaning in a spatial environment (Seamon and Sowers 2008); it is a result of how people perceive and behave in space. Places therefore contain “physical, spiritual and social dimensions” (Aravot 2002, 207).

Place-making is amply discussed in the literature by numerous authors – Cullen (1971), for instance, explains how this is related to the sense of being ‘here’; Alexander (1979) argues that timeless buildings may achieve this regardless of scale; Krier (1979) revisits traditional towns and approaches place-making as a solution to modernist architecture. A number of authors connect place-making intrinsically to social considerations – Jacobs (1961) insists that it is ‘vitality’ (the activities of people within the space) that makes a place. On the other hand, Relph (1976) discusses place making, meaning, and identity from the social science point of view (Aravot 2002). Other salient sources include Gehl (1987), who places the focus on the public realm – the spaces between buildings. In turn, Tibbalds (1992) discusses how the objective of good design should be the creation of character areas with identities, relating to historical and regional context.

Urban places are a hybrid of physical elements and public interactions. They have physical attributes that act as a forum for human interaction. The physical aspects, regulations, users of the space, and key stakeholders involved in the process of place-making, all determine how the physical context may influence behaviour. Places have personality, a quality which cannot (and should not) be assessed only through design, but also through user behaviour. The historical and political milieu, together with the social context, define the realities of place (Gehl and Matan 2009).

Another term that relates closely to place-making is the 'sense of place', or 'spirit of place'. This is not simply a summation of physical form, economic and social activities, and significance of past and present events, but it is related to the degree to which a place may retain its identity and distinctiveness. Although harder to analyse, it may nonetheless be assessed in terms of the uniqueness of places (Relph 1976), which has both physical and non-physical implications – the latter demanding a study of people and their activities as they interact with urban space. The activities that happen within a place give it importance, identity and meaning. Indeed, in the words of Shah (2009):

“Place physical and functional qualities influence the degree of dependency on and attachment to place as a platform for activities and social interaction. This means that to secure identity is to ensure continuity in the physical, social together with meanings and attachment held by the people (Shah 2009, 158).”

While a place may be defined through its physical properties, it is nonetheless a result of culture and symbolic processes – which defines its identity. Identity is not static – it is a dynamic component of culture that changes with circumstances and attitudes (discussed amply by Relph (1976) and Montgomery (1998)). The process of 'image building' within the human brain is a result of the dynamics of identity and perception (Lynch 1960). Individuals associate meaning and relate to places (express feelings about places) as a result of cultural forces, values, beliefs and ideas. Cultural characteristics affect the way people perceive and use space, influencing place identity. The latter may effectively be defined through three characteristics – the physical setting, activities, and associated meaning (Relph 1976).

Unlike an objective observer trying to capture movement patterns, the user experiences the physical fabric of place through senses and emotions. Urban interventions, and the urban spaces therein, are perceived as welcoming or alienating, attractive or unpleasant, pleasant or detestable (Relph 1976). Public open spaces form a significant component of the city's identity and are central to this discussion. They should therefore constitute a central component of analysis. Individual activities encounter the physical fabric within urban space. Places, therefore, together with the connections between them and their urban form, have wider cultural implications and influence life patterns (Montgomery 1998).

A related concept that is dealt with in literature sources is 'insideness' – a term which suggests safety, enclosure, and comfort. People feel 'inside' a place because they are part of it; in the sense that they may relate to the identity which the place gives them. Negative feelings such as alienation, lack of perceived safety and potential threats result in the opposite phenomenon, 'outsideness' (a feeling of separation between themselves and the physical environment). Within the same space, different levels of insideness and outsideness may be experienced by different people (Seamon and Sowers 2008).

Perhaps a more difficult term to describe is meaning, largely due to the fact that it is not a tangible quality of the space or the activities therein. It depends on, and is an element of, human intentions and feelings (Relph 1976). Since meaning may be both "practical and emotional" (Lynch 1960, 8), it cannot be

easily changed by the manipulation of the physical environment. Meanings are related to memory and collective memories, another important theme that is dealt with in the later stages of the research once the primary socio-spatial patterns are defined and correlated. "Place-based meanings" (Hull, Lam and Vigo 1993, 110) may be considered as a social process, similar to the manner with which people interact with one other, and should not be underestimated. People carry out activities within urban places on a daily basis. This provides a familiar setting, where the collection of these regular experiences provides meaning to place. Thus, the way people speak, dress, and move within a physical setting gives meaning. Meaning influences people's approaches and emotions about how they see themselves in their locality and the symbolism which attaches them to place (Knox 2005). All these patterns, and others, are effectively analysed within this research through an inductive analysis.

Attaching meaning to a place is the result of individuals' psychological and social processes that in turn influence place perception, implying that in order to study place identity holistically one must move beyond physical components and address the meaning and links between people and places (Shah 2009). Meaning is intrinsically related to place because of the association with group activities that happen in the space. Place-based meanings may be described as the phenomenon that binds people to the physical setting (Hull, Lam and Vigo 1993). In simple terms, meaning is the 'significance of place' – a collective element shared within groups of individuals based on their experiences.

From the above discussion, therefore, and in line with observations by a number of authors (see Shah 2009, for instance), both physical and psychological components must be integrated together in order to assess a place, hence the reference to the socio-spatial milieu within this research.

Due to the inherent difficulty in assessing 'meaning' and 'identity' of place objectively (not least due to the strong subjectivity characterising them), it may be simpler to dissect the role of place-making, which ultimately revolves around the creation of good quality urban environments that improve individuals' quality of life, the latter being a central objective of any urban regeneration/renewal intervention. Posing the question "what makes a good urban place?" is important as it explores how the physical environment (and the meaning thereof) may be translated into manageable components that in turn may be objectively assessed.

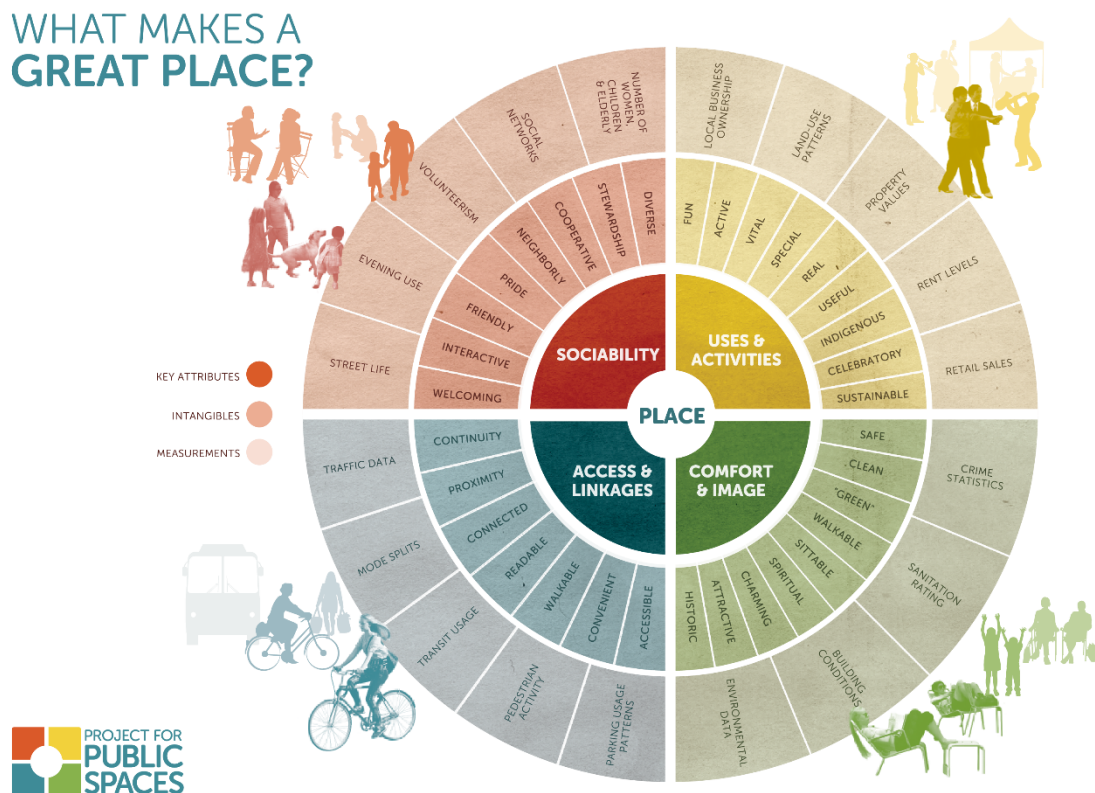
A Good Urban Place

... successful urban places must combine quality in three essential elements: physical space, the sensory experience and activity (Montgomery 1998, 96)

In line with Montgomery's observation, a good place addresses physical, functional, environmental, social and perceptual dimensions – all aspects which ultimately contribute to quality of life. William H. Whyte observed, through his seminal work as part of the Street Life Project in New York City, that a good place must encourage interaction that may cater for both active and passive participation within the urban space (Whyte 1980).

Following on Whyte's key research, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) describes good urban places through the activities that may be held within the space – a place where "social and economic exchanges occur, friends run into each other, and cultures mix" (PPS 2015). Successful places are characterised by four key qualities: sociability, uses and activities, access and linkage, and comfort and image. This is in turn very similar to Montgomery's (1998) definition of urbanity through activity, image, and form (Figure 1).

Figure 1: What Makes a Great Place? (PPS, 2015)



A high quality physical setting attracts more people and may be singled out from other urban spaces through the number of social interactions occurring within it. A primary indicator of good design is therefore, high use (Gehl 1987). Good design is not dependent on style or taste and is not formulaic, since individuals play an important role in defining a space – and individuals come with different cultural baggage and set of values, thoughts and beliefs (Simmons n.d.). Good design is intrinsically related to quality of life, economic and social transactions (Macmillan 2006). In the words of the Urban Task Force (1999):

Quality of design is not just about creating new developments. It is also about how we make the best of our existing urban environments, from historic urban districts to low density suburbs. (Urban Task Force 1999)

Various authors discuss the manner with which the quality of place may be analysed, through an analytical framework that comprises a set of components that may be scored/rated, thus indicating the success (or otherwise) of a place (Zammit 2013). The PPS (2015) qualifies four characteristics of place, with corresponding questions to analyse space. Montgomery (1998) lists 'urban success indicators' and explains the 'principles for achieving urbanity'. In turn, CABE & DETR (2001) provide a useful 'design analysis tool' that measures the value of urban design. All concepts revolve around the manner with which principles of good design may be used to address the physical and functional qualities of space, and how this may improve and increase the amount (and types) of activities, which in turn influence sociability and interaction.

In line with the above discussion, three main research themes therefore characterise this research:

Theme 1: Cultural infrastructure as an urban intervention, examining the degree of 'robustness' of the intervention (in terms of whether it is adaptable and resilient to change and whether it may be exploited as a means to knit/tie in different parts of the urban fabric (and its diverse communities) together).

Theme 2: Cultural infrastructure as an urban catalyst, investigating whether the intervention may instigate further-reaching positive change and spark off wider urban design and socio-cultural processes (multiplier effects).

Theme 3: Cultural infrastructure as a vehicle for urban regeneration/renewal, attempting to understand the role of the intervention for broader urban regeneration (whether it is reflected in the cultural infrastructure) and its effect on the local community. In turn, this important theme explores two relevant sub-themes:

- Sub-Theme 1: Accessibility to cultural infrastructure, necessitating an understanding of socio-spatial morphologies (spatially through an 'on the ground' urban design and architectural analysis and socially through important demographic and household data at the neighbourhood level). In addition to the physical considerations on site, the research also questions whether the process is bottom-up, inclusive and participatory (and to what degree).
- Sub-Theme 2: Overarching considerations in relation to 'quality', 'amenity' and 'value', necessitating a discussion in relation to place-making and (in the later stages of the research) the potential risk of gentrification (due to increased value)

METHODOLOGY

The research deals with product – the physical (design) interventions on the ground – and process – notably, planning and socio-cultural processes that manifest themselves in physical (product) terms. In line with this duality, the research methodology comprises a mixed methods approach that includes the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed methods approach is particularly relevant in this type of study that is concerned with the interfaces between the built environment and its social implications.

Being a longitudinal research, most of the empirical work will include repeated observations of set parameters taken over the research timeframe. This includes:

- (a) monitoring physical change to the urban spaces due to urban interventions or due to the proximity to such interventions, building on the baseline data obtained throughout 2015; and
- (b) monitoring the changes in attitudes and behaviour of a defined target audience or local community members living in the neighbourhood under study, the subject of subsequent stages of this research.

The mixed research methodology comprises both deductive (formal) and inductive (informal) approaches and comprises the following key stages:

Stage 1 (carried out throughout 2015)

Collation of baseline data (in relation to the urban environment within the four case study areas) and the initial Literature Review using secondary sources (salient aspects of which have been discussed in the Introduction above).

Evaluation of critical baseline data collected by NSO. To this effect, there were some initial difficulties with data collection in terms of NSO data due to the way the Census data is structured using Enumeration Areas and the requirement of this research to be very specific in terms of immediate neighbourhood areas (in relation to the four case study areas). Nevertheless, following a number of meetings with NSO and preparatory work from our end (in terms of collection of some primary data) we were able to extract the required Census data that is specific to the neighbourhood surrounding our sites under study.

Stage 2 (carried out throughout 2015)

Formulation of theoretical principles and hypotheses, definition of initial 'product' and 'process' frameworks (following a deductive and formal approach), which have been piloted within the chosen case study areas.

Stage 3

Testing of frameworks through empirical work – case study analysis, subdivided into three parts (primary data collection and analysis; partly carried out during 2015)

Focus groups (to be carried out in 2017)

Followed up by a textual analysis; patterns generated from this analysis are used to define categories (in an inductive manner) and refine the process framework (in line with the deductive approach in Stage 2). A focus group for each of the chosen four project sites (discussed in Section 5 of this report) will be carried out and an exercise of purposive sampling will occur prior to the definition of each focus group.

Urban design (socio-spatial) temporal analysis (ongoing, commenced in 2015, to be repeated in 2017)

Including a quantitative (scoring) mechanism carried out by different stakeholders and community groups.

Follow-up results with key stakeholder interviews (to be carried out in the latter part of 2016 and in 2018)

Interviews may also be analysed through a textual analysis and through which the process framework may be further refined.

Stage 4

In parallel to Stage 3, carry out Ethnographic Research within the chosen case studies, following a more inductive and informal approach and subdivided into two parts (commenced in 2015)

Physical observation (ongoing, commenced in 2015, to be repeated in 2017)

Supplemented by photographic recording, regard to be given to sensorial 'atmospheres'.

Participant observation and engagement (ongoing, commenced in 2015, to be repeated in 2017)

Supplemented by informal participant engagement through discourse/dialogue, storytelling and anecdotes, in relation to the local community's experience of the urban space, intended to enrich the analysis developed through the more formal research structure.

Stage 5

Following a process of data gathering and analysis for Stages 3 and 4, follow-up the results with Participatory Planning GIS workshops (scheduled for the latter part of 2016 and 2018)

Using the results from Stages 3 and 4, discuss different approaches or alternatives to the architectural/urban design interventions, developing spatial and visual outputs (GIS outputs).

Stage 6

Using the results from the above stages to define a three-pronged research output (to commence in the latter part of 2018 and throughout 2019)

The envisaged research output includes:

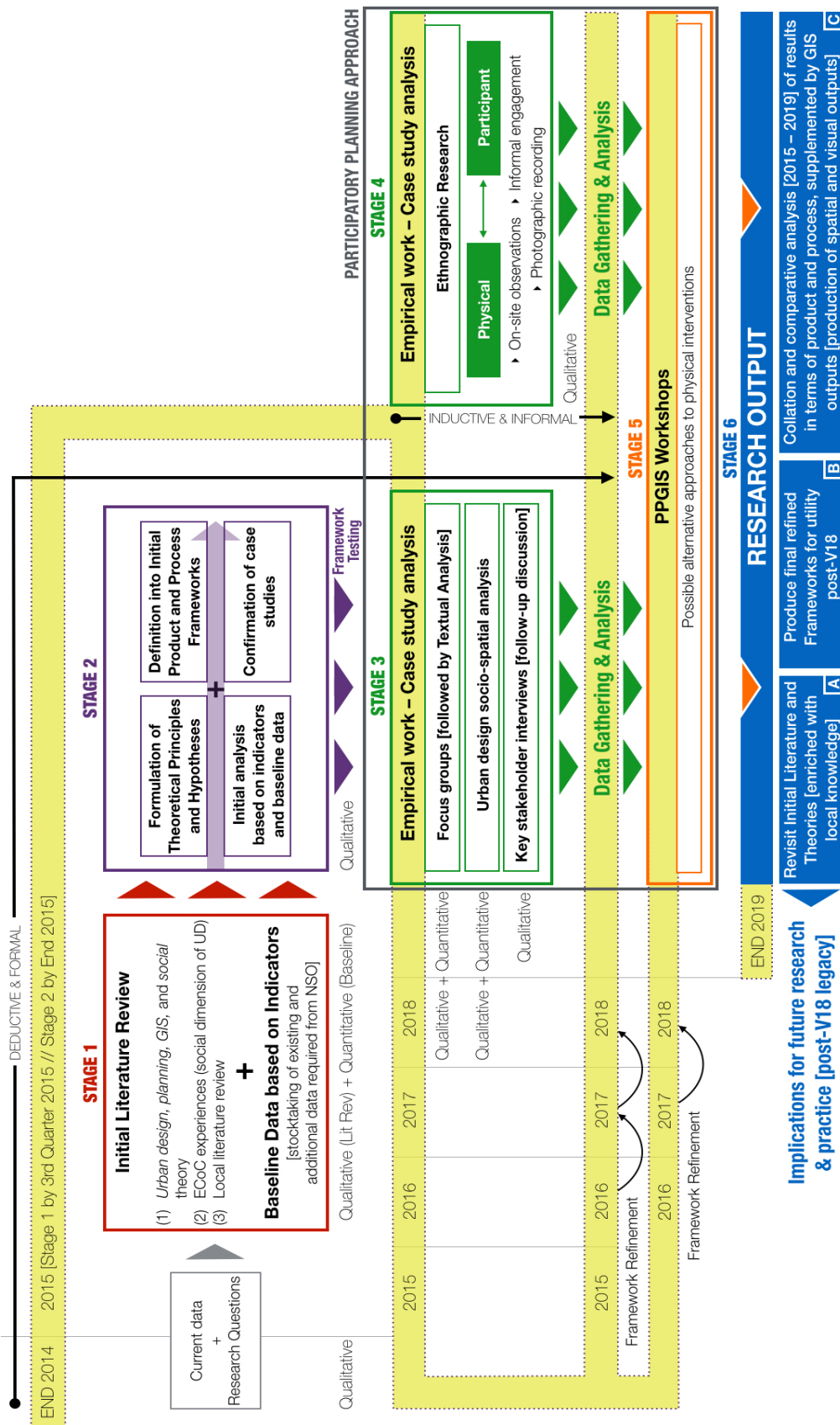
[A] Revisiting the initial literature and theories, enriching them with local results and knowledge

[B] Producing the final refined 'Process' and 'Product' frameworks for application post-Valletta 2018

[C] Presenting the collation of results, comparative data analysis (2015 – 2019) supplemented by GIS outputs

The Research Methodology (to be refined throughout the research process) is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Research Methodology (Source: Author)



RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The lack of available information and the need to carry out much more on-site analysis and in-depth observations than was originally envisaged have resulted in very rich, diverse and complex data. This in itself is already an important milestone and now necessitates an intricate process of drawing out patterns and correlating socio-spatial phenomena. The direction, albeit not necessarily 'new' (with respect to what was originally envisaged) is nevertheless one that has been dictated by the plethora of information that the research team has managed to extract 'on the ground' and thus deserves all the time and attention to understand it fully and move beyond simply presenting cursory observations. To date, the main focus has been an in-depth analysis and the development of an inventory composed of 347 properties (121 properties in the Bičćerija area, 66 properties along Strait Street, 47 properties within the neighbourhood surrounding MUŽA and 113 properties in the area around the Covered Market). On-site observations have led to the identification of some significant patterns, which are currently being collated and categorised; the result of 109 site visits translating into 26.5 hours for each of the four sites (or 106 hours in total). Throughout the coming year, the data shall be collated, and processed, categorised and correlated with the NSO data that has been obtained at the specific neighbourhood level.

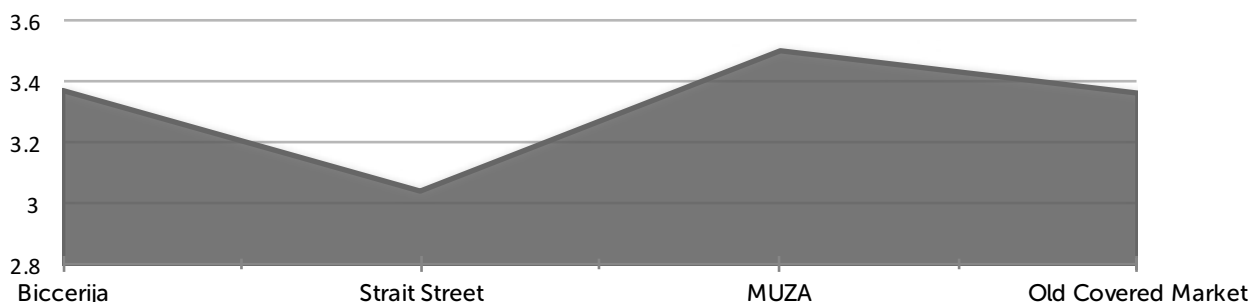
Throughout 2015, the following research targets were achieved:

BASELINE STUDIES

Key baseline studies were carried out 'on the ground' both in terms of urban design studies and sociological studies (based on key theoretical principles that were defined into initial 'product' and 'process' frameworks). Results are being collated and will be presented in the coming months. Some key observations from the baseline data may however be reported.

Scoring the neighbourhoods in terms of their state of repair (façade, apertures, other elements and materials, and averaging out these scores) indicates that the current highest 'impression score' is obtained for the neighbourhood around MUŽA (3.505, or 'fair – good'), followed by Bičćerija (3.372, or just over 'fair') and the Covered Market (3.362, or just over 'fair') and terminating with Strait Street (3.043, 'fair'). Figure 3 illustrates these scores for the four sites.

Figure 3: Impression scores for the four sites being analysed (Source: Author)



In parallel, this research has made possible the development of two Masters dissertations; developed through deductive and inductive research methodologies. The former study has been based on the development of an analytical framework dealing with urban design principles of permeability, movement, safety and security, conditions and maintenance, comfort, imageability, vitality and use, active frontages, venues and evening use. The individual categories within this framework have been scored by both professionals and non-professionals in order to enable a more complete analysis of the urban areas. The full results are currently being compiled; nonetheless they appear to further reinforce (in more depth) the baseline study's impression scores discussed above.

The second study (based on the inductive approach) has been largely based on on-site observations to identify key socio-cultural dynamics that could have a direct influence on the physical space. The myriad of patterns have been collated and categorised into the following nine categories:

Cat 1_Aural: encapsulates all the sensorial experiences relating to sound.

Cat 2_Vehicular and pedestrian interface: reflects (a) the presence of moving vehicles; (b) the vehicular/pedestrian interface; and (c) the impact of parked vehicles on access (restriction) and/or views (blocking).

Cat 3_User Categories: sheds light on the types of users within the space, in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity and profession.

Cat 4_Thermal Comfort: refers to the level of comfort experienced by the researcher due to environmental influences and/or weather conditions.

Cat 5_Relating to Cleanliness: reflects the environmental condition of the space, state of cleanliness or absence thereof.

Cat 6_Actual Use of Space: reflects types of user experiences and activity relating to the use of the space and vice versa, in terms of how the space and the land uses set within the space induce human activity.

Cat 7_Perceptual Influences and Use of Space: abstract and intangible notions relating to the use of space, including the observer's perception of the atmosphere at the time.

Cat 8_Human Interaction: encapsulates the interaction between two humans or more.

Cat 9_Olfactory: encapsulates all the sensorial experiences relating to smell.

Preliminary results indicate that the strongest patterns (following frequency testing) in the various sites include:

Bičćerija – Category 1 (Aural), Category 6 (Actual Use of Space), Category 8 (Human Interaction) and Category 2 (Vehicular and pedestrian interface)

Strait Street – Category 1 (Aural), Category 2 (Vehicular and pedestrian interface) and Category 6 (Actual Use of Space)

MUŽA/Pjazza de Valette – Category 8 (Human Interaction), Category 6 (Actual Use of Space) and Category 3 (User Categories)

Covered Market – Category 1 (Aural), Category 6 (Actual Use of Space), Category 8 (Human Interaction) and Category 3 (User Categories)

These socio-cultural dynamics are currently being correlated to the components of the physical spaces per se, although most of the major pattern categories have clear and unequivocal links with the configuration of the individual spaces and their urban grain. Notably, Category 1 is strongest in sites having tight height:width ratios and/or characterised by numerous close apertures or projecting balconies; Category 2 is strongest in sites having tight street widths where the chance of potential pedestrian-vehicular conflict is most likely; Categories 3 and 8 are directly proportional with high pedestrian flows (particularly within main thoroughfares

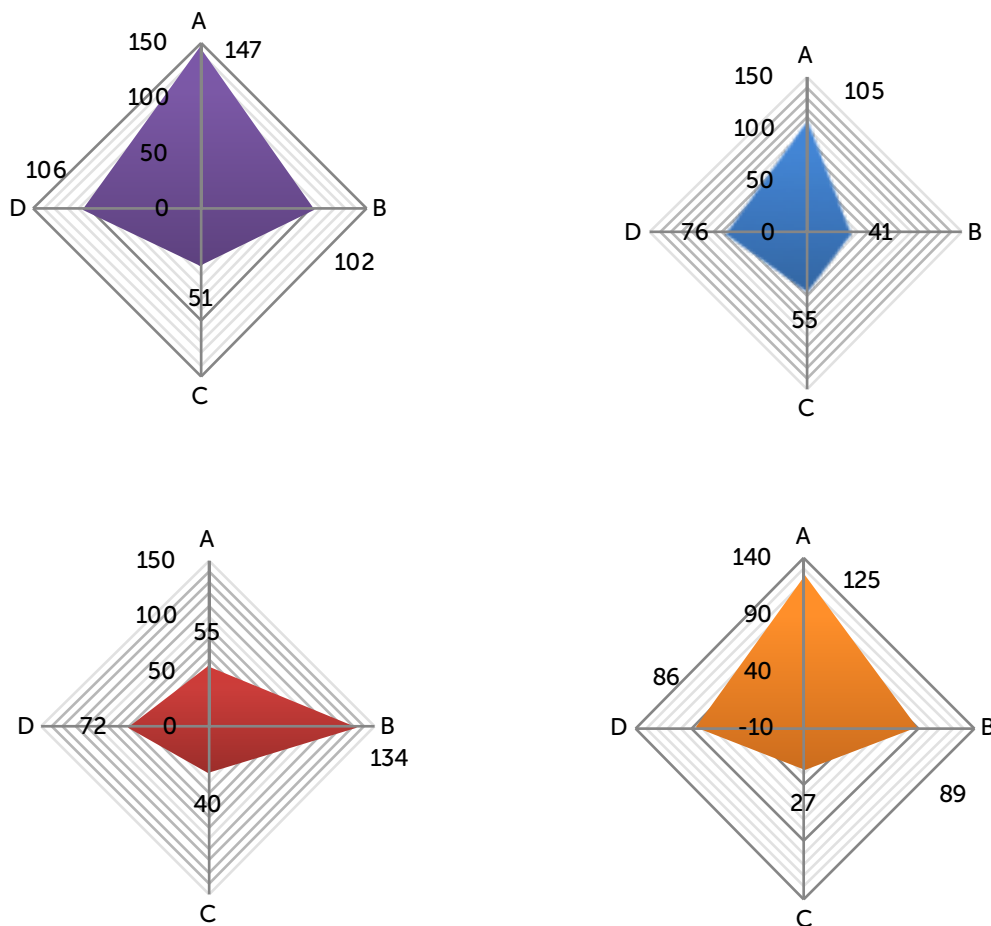
and transition spaces) where the occurrence of a 'chance encounter' increases exponentially; while Category 6 is consistently present within the four sites (although a closer look reveals that user experiences and activities vary significantly across the sites due to distinctive qualities of the urban environments and the presence of specific elements contained therein).

As a last exercise, like-categories are collated into four main category groups, which allows for an easier understanding of the key typologies of patterns within the urban spaces, as follows:

- Sensorial/Environmental Influences (Categories 1, 4, 5 and 9) – Cat Grp A
- People/Users and their interaction (Categories 3 and 8) – Cat Grp B
- Vehicular and Pedestrian Interface (Category 2) – Cat Grp C
- Use of Space (actual and perceived) (Categories 6 and 7) – Cat Grp D

The predominant results may be visualised better through spider diagrams (Figure 4).

Figure 4: (from below, clockwise) Spider diagrams developed for Bičćerija, Strait Street, the Covered Market and MUŽA/Piazza de Valette (Source: Author/Mr. Daniel Attard)



ADDITIONAL STUDIES

Short studies were carried out together with NSO in order to 'fill the gap' in relation to what presently exists (incomplete and/or missing data) – this is explained above (Stage 1 of the Methodology) in further depth. Results are being correlated to the physical observations and will be presented in the coming months.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A preliminary literature review was carried out, salient aspects of which have been presented in the Introduction above.

Future direction of research

The Methodology section discussed above already gives a clear indication of the direction the research study will be taking over the next years leading up to 2019.

Throughout 2016 there will be further data research and evaluation based on the case study analyses and empirical work including urban design analysis, focus groups, PPGIS, key stakeholder interview follow-ups, temporal analyses and participatory planning workshops.

Annual targets and potential outputs include: data gathering, collation and analysis, framework refinement, recording/digitisation of all observations and data categorisation.

In the medium-term, there will be an assessment on multiplier effects in terms of macro-scale regeneration, gentrification and rate of transfer of property in the proximity of the projects/areas in question. In the long-term, there will be an analysis of the perception of users in terms of intangible ownership of the space/place with predictions for long-term, sustained use in line with the Valletta 2018 legacy (assessed through the development of participatory processes involving the local community, focus groups and the PPGIS workshops).

No major changes to the Research Methodology are envisaged at this stage. Given that the analytical frameworks will now be in place (having developed, and refined, them throughout the past year through the baseline studies), the data collection in the upcoming years will be smoother and more focused, through a greater familiarisation of the sites in question and the (physical and social) forces that characterise them. This will allow more time for in-depth data analysis.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

The initial findings within this theme bring to the forth the importance of citizen participation within all aspects of urban regeneration, from the initial exploratory phase, to the final decision-making and implementation processes. Regular and ongoing consultation with local communities is crucial to ensure the accessibility of a project to those most directly affected by its impact.

This also applies to the four main Valletta 2018 infrastructural projects analysed throughout this study. Zammit's findings indicate that these four sites play host to a vast range of experiences and encounters, ranging from planned and casual interpersonal interactions, to different sensorial experiences. Taking these different encounters into account, and exploring the complex social dynamics behind them, may be of great value in ensuring that developments in these sites contribute to the further growth of their related social communities.

Finally, the accessibility of Valletta 2018 implies not only providing physical access to relevant events, activities, and locations, but also ensuring that all communities are kept abreast of the opportunities available to them to become active participants within the European Capital of Culture project. Whereas Valletta's physical infrastructure and topography create inherent obstacles to physical accessibility, stronger channels of communication with diverse community groups can help minimise educational and social obstacles to participation.



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