



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

**Dr Antoine Zammit
with Tala Aldeiri**

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 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 the manner in which culture-led regeneration may affect the use of the surrounding urban spaces of the place. The research objectives 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.

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, 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 depend on experiences and feelings. By giving meaning, a space is transformed into a place (Carmona and Tiesdell 2007); it is a result of how people perceive and behave in the space. Therefore, places contain “physical, spiritual and social dimensions” (Aravot 2002, 207). They have physical attributes that act as a forum for human interaction. Other terms that relate closely to place-making are ‘sense of place’, or ‘spirit of place’. The activities that happen within a place give it importance, meaning, and identity, a dynamic component of culture that changes with circumstances and attitudes (discussed amply by Relph (1976) and Montgomery (1998)). Cultural characteristics affect the way people perceive and use space, influencing place identity.

A Good Urban Place

Montgomery states that a good place addresses physical, functional, environmental, social, and perceptual dimensions – all aspects which ultimately contribute to the quality of life. William H. Whyte observed that a good place must encourage interaction that may cater to both active and passive participation within the urban space (Whyte 1980). Following on Whyte’s key research, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) describes successful places using four key qualities: sociability, uses and activities, access and linkage, and comfort and image. A high-quality physical setting attracts more people through the number of social interactions occurring within it. 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 have characterised this research:

Theme 1: Cultural infrastructure as an urban intervention in its own right, which examined whether the studied interventions are adaptable and resilient to change, and whether they may be exploited as a means to link different parts of the urban fabric and its diverse communities together.

Theme 2: Cultural infrastructure as an urban catalyst, which investigated whether the interventions have initiated further-reaching positive change, wider urban design, and socio-cultural processes.

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

- *Sub-Theme 1: Accessibility to cultural infrastructure*, where in addition to the physical considerations on site, the research questioned whether (and to what degree) the process was bottom-up, inclusive, or participatory.
- *Sub-Theme 2: Overarching considerations in relation to 'quality', 'amenity', and 'value'*, where to place-making and signs of gentrification were discussed.

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 comprised a mixed methods approach that included 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 longitudinal research, most of the empirical work included repeated observations of set parameters taken over the research timeframe. This included monitoring physical change to the urban spaces due to urban interventions, or due to the proximity to such interventions (that thus defined the neighbourhood area under study for each of the four sites), and the monitoring of changes in the community behaviour in the neighbourhood under study. The mixed research methodology comprised both deductive (formal) and inductive (informal) approaches in the following key stages:

Stages 1 and 2 | Baseline data (desktop) and literature review, theoretical framework

This stage included the collation of baseline data (in relation to the urban environment within the four case study areas) and the initial literature review using secondary sources, as well as the evaluation and continuation of critical baseline data collected by the NSO. The literature review includes the formulation of theoretical principles and hypotheses, the definition of the initial 'product', and the 'process' frameworks (following a deductive and formal approach).

Stages 3 and 4 | Baseline data (on the ground), analytical framework

A current spatial quality assessment based on analysis of existing built fabric and the compilation of baseline data was carried out, along with the piloting of the theoretical framework within the chosen case study areas to develop it into an analytical framework.

Stage 5 | Empirical work within each of the four chosen sites (primary data collection and analysis) — socio-spatial analysis

This stage included an on the ground analysis of the key urban spaces within each of the four case study areas under assessment. The analysis included a quantitative (scoring) mechanism carried out by different stakeholders.

Stage 6 | Key stakeholder interviews

Followed up by textual analysis, this analysis was useful in understanding the different agendas that each of the project leaders had, which enabled the researchers to tie this in with the urban interventions carried out and their impact on the urban space and the people. While it was clear that some projects were based on a very open, community-oriented approach that considered the bigger picture beyond the intervention itself (notably the Biččerija and MUŽA projects), others were based on objectives that more often than not, did not consider at all the local community and were primarily targeted at commercial gain (such as Is-Suq tal-Belt) and artistic/commercial endeavours (Strait Street). In the case of Is-Suq tal-Belt, the interview indeed revealed a very limited and incorrect understanding of the Valletta resident.

Stage 7 | Behavioural analysis following an inductive approach

This stage dealt with participant observation and engagement in order to assess the relationship and engagement of individuals with their urban environments and to understand the different influences on behaviour. This was 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. Different patterns were recorded and collated, after which a process of categorisation established the different categories of behavioural influences, which were compared for each of the four case study areas.

Stage 8 | Development planning application and permit assessment

This stage was added midway through 2016, in order to better understand the physical phenomena that were happening on the ground. Development planning applications submitted to the Planning Authority, and permits issued were assessed for the four case study areas over the 1993–2018 period, with focus on the 2012–2018 period, to coincide with the announcement of the ECoC. Increasingly, this research became limited to change of use applications, that could subsequently be assessed in terms of their potential impact (current and potential future impact) that would be created on the urban space and residential amenity (in both positive and negative terms), in view of wider liveability considerations.

Stages 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 comprised the formal data gathering and analysis process. Stages 3, 5, and 7 were repeated as a method of monitoring the urban and social transformation of Valletta in preparation for and during the European Capital of Culture year. The knowledge from the above stages fed into the pilot PPGIS workshop (Stage 9) in order to provide the study with a bottom-up perspective that could be matched up with the results emanating from the other research stages.

Stage 9 | Participatory Planning GIS workshops

Informed by the results from the previous research stages and the themes emanating from the Design4DCity¹ initiative that was being carried out in parallel, a PPGIS workshop was first piloted in 2016 and subsequently carried out at a larger scale in 2017, in order to develop spatial and visual (GIS) outputs with the local community and outsiders. The results were collated and subsequently categorised in order to understand whether there were any important parallels between the data and observations carried out through the previous research stages and those coming out of the PPGIS.

¹ The Design4DCity is an initiative of Valletta Design Cluster and Valletta2018 Cultural Capital of Europe in close collaboration with 72Hrs Urban Action and different departments of University of Malta. Its objective has been "to co-design the experience of common and shared spaces in Valletta, by building meaningful bridges with the community of residents and regular users of such spaces, [...] and secondly, by partnering with organisations and individuals that can provide a challenging and practical creative input towards this process" (<https://design4dcityblog.wordpress.com/>).

The Biččerija Neighbourhood Unconference, held in June 2016, yielded important results that fed into a multidisciplinary four-day workshop held between 28 September and 01 October 2016, resulting in the extraction of six themes that have been taken forward in the PPGIS.

METHODOLOGY EVALUATION

As previously discussed, the methodology was based on a mixed methods approach that included the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, and both deductive (formal) and inductive (informal) approaches. 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. Most of the experimental work included repeated observations of set parameters taken over the research timeframe. This included monitoring physical change to the urban spaces due to urban interventions, and the monitoring of changes in the community behaviour in the neighbourhoods under study. All concepts revolved around the inner 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.

When re-evaluating the success and drawbacks of the methodology, four main categories were broken down and reflected upon: the design, the sampling process, the data collection, and the data analysis.

Design

Design refers to the general framework of the methodology with its parallel timeline. It specifies the target audience, and when the data will be collected. The research has a clear main problematic that is supported by a process aimed to find an answer or a set of answers to back up a theory. The strength of a design, and the possible biases, depend on the type of questions being addressed in the research. Since several concepts of evaluating urban space and quality by various authors were used to build the foundation of the research, the orientation of the problematic and questions are in a specific and focused track. It clearly articulates the reasons why this particular design/procedure for the research was chosen and developed.

The methodology framework was created on the design of two interlinked strategies: the macro design of the whole study and the micro step-by-step methodology for each stage. The study was first looked at from a wide standpoint, and then each stage considered individually in order to obtain the best results efficiently. The macro and micro frameworks, with both qualitative and quantitative data, aim to provide a comprehensive approach to socio-spatial research. The results of qualitative and quantitative analysis have successfully shown that they support each other, thereby solidifying the methodology. The chronological order of the process, starting from the spatial analysis and social observations, and the accumulation of raw data with respect to the built fabric, enabled a cumulative build-up of the argument. A theory for each of the four case studies was formulated, relating specifically to the built environment under discussion and reviewed according to general patterns of interaction in public spaces, with respect to socio-cultural and political influences.

The rationale of the methodology began with the collation of baseline data from literature and the National Statistics Office. This allowed the formulation of theoretical principles and hypotheses, which was to be tested during the data collection on-site. Two simultaneous processes, the ethnographic research and the spatial quality evaluation, are methods of extracting new and relevant data by interacting with the site users. Data collection was repeated in 2016 and 2018 in order to allow for a time period of both physical and social change (if it were to happen). Having two sets of new data endorsed the comparative study on which the research argument is built.

In order to make the study more inclusive, stakeholders' interviews were carried out and analysed profoundly in order to consider the planned agenda for each neighbourhood. The main ideas and vocabulary used in the interviews can explain some trends from the previously collected on-site results. The same logic was applied to the Participatory Public GIS workshops; each workshop was held to add qualitative information to the quantitative study in order to explain and clarify previous findings. Finally, all the new data was collected to be compared with the preliminary hypotheses established during the first stages. This process therefore went from building a research basis to the collection of quantitative and qualitative information from various stakeholders, so as to ensure a comprehensive approach in the methodology, permitting community participation in planning concepts.

Readers need to know how the data was obtained because the method chosen affects the results, and by extension, the interpretation of their significance. Therefore, step-by-step clarification of each stage is available, and correlations are made to be able to move on to the next stage. It is important to always provide sufficient information to allow other researchers to adopt or replicate the methodology, particularly when a new method has been developed or readapted. The methodology, however, could discuss the problems that might be anticipated and how to prevent them from occurring. This will allow future researchers carrying out the study to be aware of any problems that may arise, so that these are anticipated earlier and minimised. Marginal errors should be discussed and explained in terms of how they do not impact the interpretation of the findings in any meaningful way. This can be reflected in a separate stage or as an extension of the preliminary two stages that define the research framework.

Furthermore, there should be a last stage for a third round of data collection post-2018. As the period of European Capital of Culture ends for Valletta, the significance of its physical and social impact should be monitored. Therefore, it would be interesting to repeat the same process of data collection in 2020, in order to compare the results with the findings of 2016 and 2018. Since two of the four projects are not yet open, the effects have not completely taken place. Although the projects have been a missed opportunity for 2018, they are yet to contribute to the urban fabric of Valletta and will need to be studied. This added stage will contribute to the inclusivity of the study. Additionally, organising a workshop between representatives of the local community, the private sector, and governmental authorities could create an interesting discussion that can also answer questions in the research.

Sampling

The methodology used sampling as a means to reduce the time required to do the research, which also improves the quality of information by allowing more intensive data collection than would otherwise be possible. For the built analysis and land use assessment, a specific sample of the buildings was studied within the set site limit (planned at the beginning of the research process). For the social study of the research, the quantitative research used inferential statistics that required random sampling of the 'general' population, while the qualitative research used both random and non-random procedures — directly involved stakeholders. This ensured the revision of bottom-up and top-down approaches.

However, the sampling done could have been subject to exterior influences. The researcher may instinctively choose participants for biased (intentional or unintentional) reasons. Furthermore, there might be an unequal distribution of different locations where the sample of the population is selected within the sites. Consequently, it is often difficult to judge the adequacy of sampling in research. Nevertheless, enough samples were collected to be able to generalise, simplify, and make proposals based on the findings (in all stages including the PPGIS workshop).

The on-site sampling of the study was carried out during specific months in both 2016 and 2018. This limited timeframe limits the spatial and social assessments to activities occurring within that period. The research should be distributed throughout the year to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the community's behaviours during different seasons. In addition, summer is the peak of the tourism season and therefore, unintentionally most of the survey participants were tourists. Repeating the surveys throughout the year would accommodate a wider range of users and include a more impartial spatial analysis result that encompasses physical changes within different terms of the year. For example, more outdoor seating and space is appropriated by catering establishments to accommodate the larger number of visitors, therefore interfering with the accessibility and permeability of the site.

Data collection

The data was collected and generated in a way that is consistent with accepted practice in the field of study. For example, the multiple choice questionnaire offered respondents a reasonable range of answers to choose from. The merger of the various tools evaluated in the methodology enabled the successful execution of noting down social and physical traits within the sites, and ultimately documenting and representing them in an analytical framework. The use of both digital and manual documentation in the data collection process was an advantage as it contributed to the success of gathering information. During the PPGIS workshop, some challenges were solved using internet connection, so having the option of hand mapping was a big contributor to the success of the initiative. Most of the questions for the spatial assessment questionnaire were designed very specifically before the study, so there was no opportunity to address new questions that may have risen from the early data collection. Qualitative research allowed the use of early findings to generate new questions that were examined in the later stages of data collection.

The results obtained corresponded directly to the research questions. However, drawbacks or margins of error were inevitable due to the context of the study. In the cases when people were orally asked the questions instead of having them fill them out physically, some answers may have been influenced by the researcher's presence. In addition, the presence of the researcher on site might have affected the behaviour of the participants during the observation period. However, the vantage points chosen for observations were appropriate for attaining a full view of each site. Secondly, the time of research was limited to a certain period of the year which would depict different results from a yearlong study. The observation of social behaviour at different times throughout the day, on both weekdays and weekends, allowed broader and more thorough observations that fed into the impact of the study. Increasing the duration of the study yielded a more comprehensive conclusion.

The process for the survey data collection was less efficient due to two main challenges. The first was a language barrier between the researcher on site and the targeted participants. Having an Italian and a Maltese version of the questionnaire would have facilitated and widened the selection of people to answer the spatial quality assessment. Secondly, the questions were sometimes misunderstood. Therefore, simpler terminology and shorter questions would have yielded to a larger number of samples being answered and more precise responses. The collection was more efficient with the researcher asking the participants the questions of the survey, as the participants were more enthusiastic to collaborate, and they answered more attentively. Questions requiring a longer response were often skipped or hastily answered.

The on-site surveys and physical assessments were carried out in 2016 and again repeated in 2018, each time by different researchers. This brought about an element of subjectivity, which could be minimised by having clear criteria for numerical scores. For example, when mapping land use, there should be clear guidelines for

the differences between the typologies, such as warehouses and garages. These differences were difficult to comprehend on site when carrying out the study, which caused the mapping process to be re-done several times in order to get statistics that were logically related to the previous mapping in 2016. The element of subjectivity could have been steering the results towards a specific direction. This could have been avoided by having more than one researcher, perhaps of different professions, carrying out the same study in order to get a more accurate and well-rounded understanding of the site elements. The use of multiple researchers would have provided an average which would have offered a more precise evaluation of both physical and behavioural elements. Another solution would have been to have the same researcher carry out the same procedures if possible, to eliminate errors that could result from outlook differences.

Data analysis/interpretation

When quantitative methods are used alone, they do not acquire depth and are therefore not sufficient. To get a complete picture, it is important to understand and be able to conduct qualitative research. The 'deeper data' that was tapped into using qualitative methods became increasingly valuable throughout the interpretation of the quantitative data, because it provided explanations and justifications.

However, the qualitative data collected in the PPGIS was challenging to analyse. The participant's observations were studied thoroughly in order to understand their perceptions of each site's spatial qualities and characteristics. Some remarks were vague and unclear, posing a problem to the analyser. In some cases, unclear observations were dismissed, or just keywords were taken into account so as not to misinterpret any information.

During the interpretation of the data, three methods were used to clarify important concepts related to the research question: the categorisation of themes, the identification of keywords, and the use of graphics. Broad and repetitive social observations were categorised into themes as a manner of simplifying collected data and extracting key notions of social behaviour within the four neighbourhoods. The results were further elaborated with visual representations and graphs that highlight a dominant theme. The use of Voyant-tools aided in the extraction of keywords in the stakeholder interviews and the PPGIS workshop. The words provided an orientation of the stakeholders' interests and the participants' concerns and remarks.

Survey results were documented in separate Excel sheets for every site. Each answer was given a numerical score in order to be able to quantify the answers and give a total score for each of the four sites. This method of quantification allowed for the concise comparative analysis between the various physical spatial elements of each site. The division of questions into themes such as accessibility, comfort, and image allowed for a more concise comparison which could point to specific needs and improvements to be made in the future development of each neighbourhood. The land use assessment was interpreted through mapping and consequently through statistics extracted from the surface areas calculated on the maps. Being able to read individual columns for each neighbourhood with the corresponding land use percentages clearly allows the reader to compare the differences between 2016 and 2018.

Conclusion

The inductive approach proved to be a suitable model for answering the research questions and the amount of qualitative data gathered ensured the credibility and reliability of the research. All the tools worked together successfully and were equally useful in portraying the true character of the sites. This also allowed for triangulation between the data to further enforce and supplement the results from each stage of the process as gathered by the various tools used.

FINDINGS

The research findings have been documented extensively within each of the Interim Evaluation Reports prepared throughout the course of the research's lifetime.

Research findings – 2016

Physical analysis – spatial and building analyses

The spatial quality analysis based on the analytical framework using criteria for accessibility and permeability, perception and comfort, and vitality provides the highest overall score for MUŽA (3.61) followed by Is-Suq tal-Belt (3.30), Strait Street (3.18, although note that repeating this exercise specifically for the intersection with Old Theatre Street provides the highest score of 3.71), and the Biċċerija (2.75).

Building assessment

The physical analysis of the neighbourhoods based on the observations on the ground related to the state of repair of the built fabric provided the highest impression score for the Biċċerija neighbourhood (3.37), followed by Is-Suq tal-Belt (3.36), the MUŽA neighbourhood (3.26), and Strait Street (3.14). Comparing this to the Census' state of repair (as reported by homeowners and translated into measurable scores) yields different results – the MUŽA neighbourhood (4.60), followed by Is-Suq tal-Belt (4.20), Strait Street (4.10), and the Biċċerija neighbourhood (3.90).

Land use analysis

The land use analysis, based on observations taken on the ground for the four neighbourhoods, was carried out specifically for the ground floor and then repeated for the entire floor space.

- **Ground floor use:** This analysis was useful since it enabled us to understand the degree of active frontage that may be present within the neighbourhoods, as a central contributor to vitality and natural surveillance (eyes on the street), which in turn results in a greater degree of safety. The highest presence of active frontages occurs in the MUŽA neighbourhood (89%), followed by Strait Street (67%), Is-Suq tal-Belt (57%) and the Biċċerija neighbourhood (56%). Conversely, the highest proportion of dead frontage is in Strait Street (32%), followed by the Biċċerija neighbourhood (27%), Is-Suq tal-Belt (25%), and the MUŽA neighbourhood (7%). These results again illustrate that the MUŽA neighbourhood has the highest degree of vitality, an important contributor to spatial quality, again correlating perfectly with the results in Section 8.1.1.
- **Predominant land use:** This analysis illustrates the state of affairs with land use correct as of 2016. The predominant land use in the Biċċerija neighbourhood, Strait Street, and Is-Suq tal-Belt is residential (54%, 63%, and 43% respectively), whereas offices prevail mostly in the MUŽA neighbourhood (34%), almost at par with administrative (government-related) uses (33%).

Analysis of development planning applications with regard to change of use and impact on the four neighbourhoods

Five categories of potential impact due to the change of use were singled out and scored on a scale of 0 to 3:

- generation of people (and people movement);
- visual implications;

- aural implications;
- olfactory implications; and
- litter generation.

This study revealed that the place which was affected the most due to the change of use for all categories throughout the period 1993–2016, was within the Biċċerija neighbourhood, and least within the MUŻA neighbourhood. The exercise was specifically repeated for the period 2012 (the year Valletta was announced as 2018 European Capital of Culture), and in 2016, where one could note the same trend, but with a higher degree of impact on all categories. Post- 2012, the amount of development planning applications for change of use increased significantly.

Within the period 2012–2016, the highest impact is again in the Biċċerija neighbourhood, followed by Strait Street. In order to understand why these two neighbourhoods were affected so significantly, we sought to analyse the nature of the change of use in more depth. In terms of scale of impact of commercial uses, for instance, hotels and catering establishments with on-site cooking would have a higher impact than retail or service-oriented commercial uses, or catering uses without on-site cooking, and even more than offices – resulting in generating more people, greater aural and olfactory implications, and more littering. It becomes clear that in the Biċċerija neighbourhood, along with Strait Street, the majority of the premises are changing their uses into commercial uses (from residential or vacant premises), or into a higher level of commercial use (for instance, from office to retail, or from retail to catering).

All the premises located in the Biċċerija neighbourhood that have applied for a change of use, post-2012, are changing into a higher level of commercial use. In contrast, within the neighbourhoods surrounding MUŻA and Is-Suq tal-Belt, change of use here is not of a commercial nature (for instance from warehousing to residential), or it remains within the same level of commercial use (for instance different typologies of retail).

Research findings – 2017–8

Physical analysis – spatial and building analyses

The project with the highest score for spatial quality was MUŻA (3.85), followed by Is-Suq tal-Belt (3.80), and Strait Street (3.53). The Biċċerija scored the lowest (2.65). The scoring hierarchy represents the existing conditions and concerns.

MUŻA has the highest score as it is the site with the best overall physical state. It is located in a strategic area at the entrance of Valletta, and therefore, the surrounding context is mostly in excellent condition. Even with ongoing construction works, the Jean de la Valette square is open and unobstructed for pedestrians to access. The biggest concern is not having any seating or any shading elements, which was reflected in the low score for the comfort and image category. This noticeably affected the overall use of the space, which is used as an intersecting zone rather than as a public square that gathers people.

Is-Suq tal-Belt's high score is correlated to the appeal of the front façade overlooking Merchants Street. It is the busiest zone where it was easier to find participants for surveys. The relation of the market with the pedestrian street created a pleasant space with an interesting and diverse context, with a large built-in seating bench for passers-by to enjoy the space. However, the side streets that encircle the structure are used for litter and delivery vans, which disrupt the movement of pedestrians, although this was not flagged by many respondents when the surveys were carried out.

However, a month after the conduction of the surveys, outdoor furniture was laid out in front of the market. This changed the dynamics of the space and obstructed the pedestrian flow. In addition, parking spaces were allocated for electric taxi carts, which also majorly limited the accessibility and comfort of the space. Therefore, it was felt that the surveys had to be repeated to address these new phenomena, and care was taken to also approach respondents within St Paul's Street rather than being limited to Merchants Street. This provided a much lower overall score of 2.97. One may note that the key contributor to this low overall score was due to the issue of accessibility and permeability, which scored even lower than the Biċċerija. The low scoring from 2016 had been due to the ongoing construction in rehabilitating the market structure, which had negatively influenced people's perception of the space. Factors that affect people's perception of space (including non-physical aspects such as negative press and pressures from residents or NGOs) are unpredictable, so the results of the study are relative to the specific period during which it was conducted. It is nonetheless interesting to see how scoring has been affected by these different parameters. It also points to the fact that the over-appropriation of the public space (in terms of outdoor catering areas and servicing/litter in the case of the side streets) can be considered to be a missed opportunity of this project, as it could have been used to enhance, rather than detract from the nature of the public space even further.

Strait Street has a long and varied configuration, so different sections have different conditions. However, the overall result is an indication of the commercial takeover that is currently taking place. The street is already narrow, so catering establishments that extend their perimeter outwards into the street make it less walkable, but more lively. Construction work also impedes the flow of pedestrians. Other concerns were the long stairs, inclined and uneven ground level, the presence of service vans, and litter. The site is generally considered safe except for some sections with vehicles and others that are less lively.

The Biċċerija is one of the most dilapidated neighbourhoods in Valletta, but is undergoing slow progression. The inclined nature of the site creates safety and accessibility issues. Secondly, as the Civil Abattoir structure is still undergoing renovation, construction is influencing the present character of the site. Construction material and machinery obstruct the encircling streets, making accessibility and permeability very low. There are also bad odours and no outdoor furniture, thus contributing to overall low image and comfort. The spatial quality of the site requires major efforts to improve its scoring, and can be seen as a missed opportunity for the European Capital of Culture.

Building assessment

The majority of the buildings in Valletta are considered to be in 'Fair' condition. In comparison with 2016, there are a decent number of buildings which have been restored to excellent condition (specifically tourist accommodations), and hardly any residential buildings.

MUŻA in general has the highest ratio of buildings in 'good' and 'excellent' condition. This fact is predictable as the area is located at the entrance of Valletta and has had an increase in leisure and commercial land use. The actual building of the museum will have the biggest visual impact when the construction is finished. The immediate area around the Biċċerija, which is still undergoing construction, has remained more or less the same. However, the perimeters of the site boundaries are undergoing renovation, probably due to their location next to main streets and their proximity to the waterfront (mostly boutique hotel establishments).

The Is-Suq tal-Belt area has had a fair number of renovated buildings, probably as a complement to the increase in touristic and leisure activity. Most of the buildings which have been renovated into excellent

conditions are boutique hotels, which highlights the role of tourists in the area and how it is losing its residential feel.

In Strait Street, the intersection with Old Theatre Street was previously active, but there are efforts to liven the entire strip, with the most evident number of renovations taking place at its edges. Both segments have been transformed with bars and restaurants, which feature music performances during weekends.

Land use-analysis

There is a noticeable increase in the number of PA development applications in Valletta, as seen from the analysis of development permits issued over the past years, as well as the ongoing construction works within Valletta. The change of predominant use of buildings is less evident than the change of ground floor use, which is at the interactive level with the users of the site. For the sake of the research, a site undergoing construction will be considered as a vacant building, so as to truly represent the present-day character of the site.

Ground floor use in MUŻA was predominantly retail in 2016. Its usage within this sector managed to increase slightly. There is an increase in leisure activities as new cafes and restaurants have been opening in the area. The vacant percentage has increased due to the undergoing works in Auberge d'Italie which will be hosting MUŻA. It has decreased its administrative activity, and will eventually replace it with cultural activity.

The Is-Suq tal-Belt site has had a sharp increase in the number of hotels, jumping from none to 5% in two years. This statistic is confirmed by the high number of tourists observed around the site during the analyses. Predictably, leisure activities significantly increased from 6% to 9%, which can be noted in the neighbourhood as it has many busy cafes and restaurants. The market has attracted establishments to open nearby and is transforming the surrounding context to a dining and shopping area.

The Biċċerija maintains a stable land use in the neighbourhood, with another similar notable increase in the number of touristic accommodations. These are located at the edges of the site's parameters, which is attracting tourists. However, these users do not remain in the area, and instead solely pass through. This fact is reflected in the minor increase in leisure and retail activities.

Strait Street is being transformed into a wining and dining destination in Valletta. Therefore, the number of retail and leisure activities has increased, and the number of empty warehouses has decreased significantly. While there were already a significant number of existing offices, more new offices have also been opened, thereby marking administration as the primary activity.

The four sites have given an overall indication of the changing character of Valletta – one wherein more external visitors are being accommodated, and one that is becoming a prime catering destination.

Analysis of development planning applications with regard to change of use and impact on the four neighbourhoods (updated to 2018)

Most trends observed in 2016 remained valid, albeit with a few differences, namely that data from 1993–2017 shows that the greatest potential impact of the development planning applications due to litter can be found within Strait Street. The scale of potential impact in the 2012–2017 period is more significant than that for the 1993–2011 period in all categories and for all four sites. Again, all change of use applications in the Biċċerija area are for a higher commercial order, similar to the results achieved in 2016.

Stakeholder semi-structured interviews – textual analysis

An in-depth textual analysis was carried out for the key stakeholders of each of the four projects under study, together with the Planning Authority. Four deliverables were obtained – term frequencies; distinctive terms used within the interviews; relative frequency of the most distinctive terms used within the interviews; and categorisation of key themes, in order to understand the different interests/agendas of each stakeholder.

The results from this analysis comprise an important component that enriches the data obtained from previous analyses and informs a broader understanding of process-related considerations that are further explored through the PPGIS Workshop held later on in the year. Clearly, the agendas of the individual key stakeholders are very diverse. As expected, the PA respondents were more concerned with strategic planning issues, with constant references to more comprehensive issues characterising their interview. More interestingly, there is a sharp contrast in the approach to the four individual sites – at the extreme ends, a community-driven and community-focused approach in the case of the Biččerija project, to a market-led and thematic-based approach in the case of Is-Suq tal-Belt. In between, the MUŽA project is also partly community-focused, although on an equal footing with the artistic credentials of the project, while the Strait Street project is driven mostly by artistic outcome and individual achievement.

Behavioural (observational) analysis

One of the research objectives was to gain an informed understanding of how people behaved in and made use of the sites under study through behavioural patterns and other influences contributing to the vitality of the spaces. Hours of observation data were collected for an in-depth comprehension of people's behaviour, both throughout 2015/2016 and 2018. The behaviour ranged from casual conversations to how people interacted with the built environment. Observed patterns were then collated into distinct categories to serve as a base for quantification.

In 2016, the following categories of influences were observed:

1. **Aural:** The aural category encapsulates all sensorial experiences relating to sound.
2. **Vehicular and Pedestrian Interface:** This category reflects the presence of moving vehicles, the interface between pedestrians and vehicles, as well as parked vehicles which restrict access, or block views.
3. **User Categories:** This category sheds light on the types of users within the space, age, gender, ethnicity, and profession amongst others.
4. **Thermal Comfort:** Thermal comfort refers to the level of comfort of the user due to environmental influences and weather conditions.
5. **Relating to Cleanliness:** This category relates to all the factors which reflect the condition of the space, state of cleanliness, or absence thereof.
6. **Actual Use of Space:** This category reflects types of user experiences and activity relating to the use of the space and vice versa, how the space and the land uses set within the space induce human activity.
7. **Perceptual Influences and Use of Space:** This category includes abstract and intangible notions relating to the use of space, which also include the observer's perception of the atmosphere at the time.
8. **Human Interaction:** Human interaction encapsulates the interface between two humans or more.
9. **Olfactory:** The olfactory category encapsulates all sensorial experiences relating to smell.

In 2018, similar categories were defined, as follows:

1. **Aural:** encapsulates all sensorial experiences relating to sound.
2. **Vehicular and Pedestrian conflict:** the presence of moving vehicles, the interface between pedestrians and vehicles, as well as parked vehicles which restrict access or block views.
3. **User Categories:** the types of users within the space, such as tourists or residents.
4. **Leisure activity:** the level of leisure occurring in the space (whether busy or slow).
5. **Visual pollution:** blocked views, litter, and waste. Also strongly related to the current construction activity since it is at a peak stage in Valletta.
6. **Interaction with Space:** the use of the space, and how the space and the land uses set within the space induce human activity.
7. **Safety:** related to incidences of pedestrian safety, such as slippery pavements, interference from outdoor furniture, passing by construction sites, and avoiding vehicles.
8. **Human Interaction:** encapsulates the interface between two individuals or more, ranging from an intimate scale to a larger scale (such as a group of tourists).
9. **Olfactory:** all sensorial experiences relating to smell.
10. **Movement:** primarily focusing on pedestrian flow.

Behavioural mapping revealed the following predominant groups of patterns:

- *Strait Street* – Aural and Vehicular/Pedestrian Interface influences; very much influenced by the configuration of the urban space and the tight height-to-width ratio that characterises the street and which amplifies sounds emanating from the buildings that align its edges. Moreover, conflicts arise when vehicles access the narrow portions of this street to the detriment of the pedestrian experience.
- *Is-Suq tal-Belt* – Aural and actual use of space influences; very much influenced by the nature of the land uses surrounding and defining the urban space (the presence of retail outlets is second highest after MUŻA at 24%).
- *Biċċerija* – Actual use of space and aural influences; primarily due to the interaction between resident and visitor, the observed and the observer, the fine balance that occurs between privacy, natural surveillance, and visual permeability. It is a neighbourhood wherein the indoor spills out into the semi-private (such as the balcony spaces) and the semi-public spaces (wherein space is often claimed in an informal manner).
- *Pjazza Jean De Valette (MUŻA)* – Human interaction and actual use of space influences; particularly due to the lines of flow that characterise the urban space from multiple directions and that increase the chances of encounter. This is also very much in line with the high degree of vitality and presence of active frontages, which characterise this neighbourhood.

This implies that Strait Street, the Biċċerija, and Is-Suq tal-Belt neighbourhoods are dominated by sensorial/environmental influences, whereas Pjazza Jean De Valette (MUŻA neighbourhood) is dominated by people/users and their interaction. Indeed MUŻA and Jean de la Valette square demonstrate the highest interaction with the surrounding space, as visitors interact with the sculpture therein, take photos of the churches, and often look into or sit around the Royal Opera house site if there is an event. Its central location and proximity

to the main bus terminal and Republic Street results in a large flow of pedestrians. This flow creates chance encounters and interaction among individuals. Even though pedestrian flow is transversal the majority of the time, there are often events and street performers that attract crowds and initiate human interaction. This creates a dominant aural effect of music and theatre. Governmental vehicles do access the space, however, this is rarely problematic and they do not create significant conflict with the pedestrian users. The square serves as a 'connecting corridor' to all the immediate land marks. These influences are evidence of the liveliness present and the active frontages.

The Biččerija neighbourhood has the lowest level of human interaction from the four sites, as it is primarily residential in nature and the opportunities for interaction are limited to streets and alleys. However, interactions do occur – between residents, workers, and visitors. Residents frequently interact in alleys and from balconies. There is a blur of limits as residents use the outdoor space as an extension of their home 'territory'. The site is characterised by residential sounds such as loud televisions, birds, individuals arguing, infants crying, etc. There is an evident impact of construction works on the behaviour of users. Machinery and vans block access in streets and result in high visual pollution. There is the constant presence of strong odours, due to the cat sanctuary adjacent to the site and neglected litter. Tourists have expressed that they feel like intruders as the residents are not very approachable and give off the feeling of territoriality.

Is-Suq tal-Belt area is a destination for visitors to have a shopping and dining experience. Therefore, there is a high level of human interaction and leisure activity such as carrying bags, dining, looking at shops, etc., as there is a strong retail presence. There is a high flow of movement due to its location in one of the busiest streets of Valletta, Merchants Street. On the sides of the Market building, there are significant olfactory issues due to the litter that is left there for pickup. There is also a notable disturbance between the pedestrians and the users of the space with the service vehicles. The highest influences of human interaction, interaction with the space, high level of leisure activity, and aural influences, all serve as an indication of the liveliness of the area. However, influences such as pedestrian and vehicular conflict are also present, and should be addressed so as to further contribute to vitality and comfort within the site.

Strait Street is characterised by its primary function as a narrow street, which evidently influences the users' behaviour. Since it is a long stretch, different behaviour patterns occur in different sections. The intersection with Old Theatre Street is the liveliest, as it is where the commercial activity is mainly concentrated. New beverage and catering establishments have been opening towards the edges of the street. This almost creates an alternating pattern along the stretch between busy, commercial activity and a quiet, residential feel, resulting in high interaction with space, olfactory (due to food and litter) and aural influences. As Strait Street is recreating itself as an entertainment destination, there are a number of user categories from residents, to workers, and tourists. However, conflicts still arise when vehicles access narrow portions of this street, which causes the loss of pedestrian experience. Space appropriation due to outdoor catering areas (and the abuse of the approved limitations by some establishments) creates further impediment to the pedestrian flow and compromises the pedestrian experience.

PPGIS workshops

The PPGIS workshop was organised to identify concerns and discussions of possible alternative approaches to physical interventions. PPGIS gave residents an opportunity to submit their own views on the issues in a bottom-up manner, both in collaboration with other members of the community, or otherwise.

Pilot workshop 2016

The first PPGIS pilot workshop was held on 6th December 2016 in Valletta. The session was organised by the University of Malta in collaboration with the Valletta 2018 Foundation. It centred on the key themes emanating from the Design4DCity workshop held some months earlier, these topics being:

1. the surrounding area;
2. services and public spaces;
3. the future of the site;
4. cleanliness and quality of life;
5. accessibility; and
6. heritage.

The purpose of the PPGIS session was to test the 'community maps' interface, which was adapted for use in the Maltese Islands by Mapping for Change – a social enterprise within University College London. A group of ten people gathered to participate in the session. By discussing the digitisation of aspects relating to the first four themes of Design4DCity, a physical mapping session was implemented. The objective was for participants to appreciate that digital mapping can be more useful when preceded by a face-to-face communal discussion whilst mapping elements of the discussion on a physical map. The method used for this part of the pilot was the MAP-it Toolkit, during which two teams discussed the pedestrian and vehicular accessibility of the site. As a follow-up to the pilot session, the results of the physical mapping session were digitised onto the 'community maps' interface using a purposely set up Design4DCity account. Participants were encouraged to continue using the interface in their own time to validate the digitised results as well as to continue populating the map with a rich array of data related to the Design4DCity themes of interest to them.

Participatory Mapping Walkabout 2017

The second Participatory Mapping Walkabout was held during the annual Valletta 2018 Capital of Culture conference entitled 'Liveable Cities – Liveable Spaces', held from 22nd November to 24th November 2017. The Mapping for Change platform of 2016 was used once again, in order to continue building upon the existing database of information. The walkabout was organised jointly by the Valletta 2018 Foundation, studjurban, and Mapping for Change, with around sixty participants. Once on the site of the cultural infrastructure, participants were encouraged to use the online platform to map their contributions, with a paper map option also available.

Results Analysis Methodology

Following the PPGIS walkabout, there was a required process of technologically archiving collected information. Therefore, one method of archiving was on the online platform, and the other was through using a more encapsulated archive on an Excel sheet. This was done to extract the main repetitive remarks in a clear, outlined table for the four sites, which consequently permitted further extraction of themes from participant responses to create specific categories for numerical evaluation. Additionally, the online engine 'Voyant-tools' was used to provide word count frequencies from the participants' texts. The resulting words were added to the analysis table to give an indication of the participants' most noted observations and concerns.

Since the study encompasses both qualitative and quantitative methods, the next step was the numerical input of data according to the created categories, based on the repetitiveness of comments throughout the participants' responses and information. The numerical data was used to create radar graphs as an output of the results for each site, which allowed us to visualise which categories were prominent, and which are

therefore important to take note of for future policies. Consequently, the radar graphs of the four sites were overlaid for comparative analysis. Each site had a graph peak that represented the category most noted by the participants, which permitted us to understand the primary concerns for each site. Graphical results facilitated the deduction of final conclusions.

As previously mentioned in the methodology, there was a numerical input of data based on the repetitiveness of comments throughout the participants' responses and information. According to the numerical values and the radar graphs, the following categories were the most mentioned for each of the sites:

Bićerija - Existing physical state, streetscape qualities, and accessibility

Words such as 'degraded', 'shabby', and 'need of upkeep' were repeatedly present in the participants' remarks about the surrounding area of the design cluster, and the need for its restoration to mask the efforts of the project. Similarly, streetscape elements such as poor levelling, tiling, and stairs were linked with low accessibility to the site.

Is-Suq tal-Belt - Accessibility, commercial activity, current/future opportunity

The commercial function of the market was regularly acknowledged. Many remarked about the accessibility of the market site and noted its strategic location and good entrance, but only from one side of the building, as not all the streets are easily accessible. The fact that such a historic market was privatised and made an 'upmarket' was also repeatedly noted.

MUŽA - Value of historic elements, commercial presence, and link to context

Many participants commented on the strong historic feel of the MUŽA and its context area. The presence of historic elements mixed simultaneously with commercial activity, was mostly noted as positive. However, the square was repeatedly noted as a potential extended public space for MUŽA, and attracting the public as an outdoor exhibition space.

Strait Street - Accessibility and presence of vehicular traffic

The majority of observations remarked on the narrowness of the street and the low quality of walkability due to vehicular circulation alongside pedestrians. Expectedly, many suggested the idea of making it more pedestrian-friendly to reach its full potential.

It is crucial to see if the qualitative and quantitative study results overlap, thus giving a cohesive result. The table of preliminary qualitative analysis indicated the following main remarks:

- Bićerija - *Surroundings: need for contextual integration with residential neighbourhood;*
- Is-Suq tal-Belt - *Concern with loss of local feel: local community support;*
- MUŽA - *Potential to expand MUŽA to public space outside; and*
- Strait Street - *Concerns with streetscape quality and accessibility.*

Thus, we can clearly observe that the main ideas extracted from the qualitative text are also present in the quantitative study.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall results reveal that Valletta 2018 has had a positive outcome on its physical fabric. Spatial assessments indicate a general improvement from 2016, except for the Biċċerija, which is undergoing construction that is heavily obstructive in the area. Even though the covered market scored high in accessibility, there are still several factors needing consideration. Changes are constantly taking place, so it is important to consider constant assessment for well-encompassed research. Land use changes and architectural interventions have indicated predominant activities for each neighbourhood. Since Valletta obtained the ECoC title, applications of PA developments have increased, and most have changed use from residential towards leisure or commercial, and a significant increase in hotels is evident from the increased touristic feel in Valletta generally. This is strong proof that Valletta is transforming from a residential to a catering destination.

Qualitative data obtained from the PPGIS workshop and patterns from the behavioural analysis further underline this point. The results obtained highlight the lack of an all-inclusive vision with respect to planning for cultural infrastructure within Valletta, outlining the physical disconnection between the four projects. Therefore, the current Valletta strategy is a short-sighted view of the future of the city that's more about generating investment, while acting against Valletta's long-term liveability. There need to be new strategies focusing on the social aspect in order to ensure an increase in local residents and therefore, to enhance the sustainability of the regeneration process.

Neighbourhood renewal should be based on local empowerment to make sure that communities are equipped to respond to economic, social, and cultural challenges. The community core is also established and developed through the creation of a sense of place within the space. The built environment has a direct impact on the quality of life of every citizen and the enhancement of design will directly affect the well-being of the community. Regeneration is a process which demands the engagement of multiple actors in the creation and activation of urban spaces. Local development initiatives should not serve as a substitute for top-down approaches, which are needed for structural changes and planning of investment. Therefore, a practical and efficient policy should focus on the formation of a mutually beneficial interaction between top-down policies and bottom-up initiatives.

The evidence suggests that most regeneration schemes do not have explicit policies on community participation, nor do they incorporate it into their strategic planning. The Valletta research reveals a number of lost opportunities, and the decline of involvement due to policies which integrate it. Overall, the impression is that community involvement is often assumed to be taking place, and is approved of in principle, but is marginal in practice, with much loss of effectiveness in regeneration schemes. It makes a major difference in planning and practice if governments, planning agencies, stakeholders, and the community are equally involved in the process. The research's approach in community participation resulted in better quality information on local issues and challenges, thus a deeper insight into people's daily living problems, which could greatly benefit future planning policies, was obtained.

Urban Public Space: An entitlement or a commodity?

According to Alvarez and Barbosa (2018), it is important to reveal an understanding of urban public spaces that recognises and values the multiple forms of exclusions in the city, which are indicators of the level of citizen participation in modern cities. The goal, as in this research methodology, is to question the social relations, organisations, concepts, and practices that contribute either to a city where all differences are embraced, or

emphasise segregation, which therefore produces conflict or cooperation. It is in daily indicators of conflicts that our societies form and recreate the public sphere, and also where the social dynamics of urban open spaces take place. Hannah Arendt (1991) refers to the public sphere, the *vita activa*, as a domain of 'political actions involving cultural production and citizen construction as fundamental parts of our social narrative'.

The urban crisis today entails the transformation of the city into a business space, leaning towards economic profits rather than the social needs that make up urban life, thereby proving the dominance of the top-down approach. Ouriques (2005) states that "leisure should be studied in the context of progressive commodification of all aspects of life, of control and appropriation of all possible spaces by capital". It remains disputed as to what degree public spaces can be non-commodified spaces for local leisure and serve as a source of capital. Tourism and the attraction of big events have become important strategies for the attraction of visitors and capital, which have consequently significantly commodified public spaces to create places of display rather than spaces of quality.

Local and national governments have set up areas of historical and cultural value for the occupation and consumption of tourists, presenting a conflict between the interests of local residents and of globalised capital. Tourism has also become an important factor in the representation and appropriation of public open spaces; it generates great infrastructure, but on the other hand can cause the breaking down of the social fabric, the marginalisation of communities, and weak urban identities. Holder (in Ruschmann 1997) argues that the degradation of space that leads to economic decline, abandoned facilities, and a culturally uprooted population begins with small, exclusive tourist movements in attractive places that transform into mass tourism.

Citizen Participation in Planning Public Policy

Alvarez and Barbosa (2018) go on to validate that the concept of urban public spaces is a transdisciplinary domain based on joined physical, environmental, and social practices. In urban planning, 'public spaces' are considered as open spaces free of buildings, while in the social sciences, the term refers to meeting places and sites of individual and collective interaction. Physical and environmental practices refer to complex systems, including circulation, infrastructure, socioeconomic, etc. Society develops in the physical unity that constitutes urban public spaces, hence, it is a socio-spatial process. Citizen participation creates a new way of life which brings together economic, environmental, and social aims through the community's exclusive perception.

Healey asserts for a process of "inclusionary argumentation", in which "participants come together, build understanding and trust among themselves, and develop ownership of the strategy" (Healey, 1997:249). Article 2 - Active involvement by local residents in urban regeneration plans increases the effectiveness of the existing strategies. Secondly, it brings attention to new issues previously not visible in the regeneration discussion, which may point to different needs and solutions. The benefits of community involvement can include: providing job training for underprivileged people; assisting local small business development; assisting with the renovation of housing; supporting the socialisation of youth; helping to protect or enhance the local environment; improving the status of women; improving public services, and making them more consultative and inclusive.

Citizen participation can contribute to the improvement of existing policies, resulting in strengthening local democracy, and therefore, developing a new relationship between public services and users. However, there should be a balance between public-private collaboration. David Harvey (1989) believed that cities need to "keep ahead of the game by engendering leap-frogging innovations in lifestyles, cultural forms, products,

and service mixes...if they are to survive.” The following case studies demonstrate different approaches of community involvement in city planning in Jeonju, South Korea, which is similar to the case of Valletta, and Fort Point District in Boston, USA.

Case Study 1: Jeonju Hanok village – Jeonju, South Korea

The government of Jeonju city developed a project of a traditional cultural-oriented village from 1999–2010, known as ‘The Hanok village’, in reference to the traditional type of Korean housing. It is located at the centre of Jeonju city, and encompasses many historic and cultural resources. Designated as a preservation area in 1977, the village had since deteriorated due to a shortage of supports and subsidies for housing repairs, losing many of its residents. In 1999, the local government of Jeonju city approached the residents by holding public open debates for the village’s regeneration, based on planning between public officials and residents. The plan consisted of restoration, fostering cultural tourism, and improvement of the infrastructure. The project was carried out from 1999–2010, and resulted in 7 million tourist visits in 2012.

The preliminary success of this regeneration resulted from community involvement in policy implementation, beyond the usual top-down approach. However, the regeneration has faced limits and challenges with the constant rise in tourism destroying traditional culture. With millions visiting, the number of commercial facilities in Jeonju Hanok Village has increased sharply over the years. The village turned into a big food court with an obscure identity, which contradicted the idea of a slow, traditional Korean village lifestyle. The number of eateries in 2010 was only 36, increasing to 64 in 2014. Simultaneously, the number of traditional tea houses has decreased from 10 to 6, and many professional handicraft workshops have been replaced by modern souvenir shops. The high volume of tourists has led to an increase in the cost of food and rent. As a consequence, Jeonju Hanok Village had 1,000 families in 2012, but today only half remain.

Case study 2: Fort Point District - Boston, USA

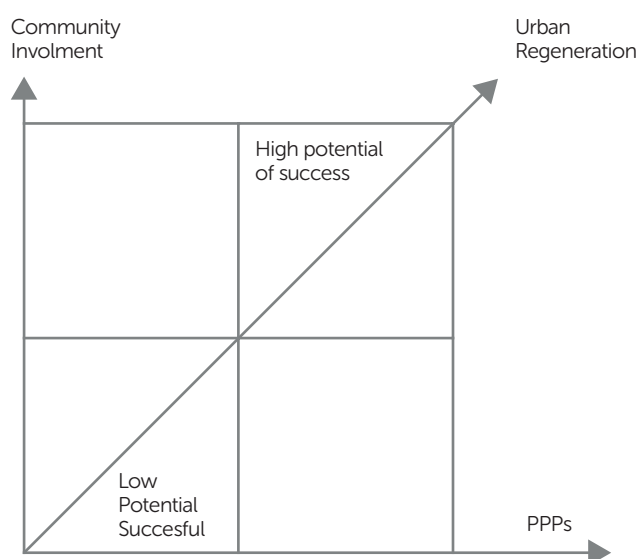
Fort Point district, a historically industrial region along the Fort Point Channel in South Boston, is today a vibrant, mixed use area. It has a strategic position within the city, thus attracting enterprises and markets from the entire region, and has gained a reputation as the entertainment hub of one of America’s oldest cities. The centre of the regeneration strategy is a public-private partnership that considers all social, economic, and environmental factors. It involves job creations, tax revenues, and property values alongside affordable housing and 45,000 m² of an open spaces network. The public management of private money contributes to benefits for the whole community.

Hence, the Fort Point regeneration goal was to reach public benefits through private investments. It is important to note the participatory planning process for the entire duration of the project, with workshops and meetings regularly taking place in order to emphasise a common, shared vision with the local community and all the main stakeholders. The initiative was realised with people, companies, and government making up the core strategy. People, cultural, and artistic associations created a sense of belonging; companies held the expertise and financial capability; and public authorities gave the legal framework with short and long-term vision for the entire city.

WAY FORWARD

The comparison shows that in urban regeneration projects, the involvement of the community has been crucial for the final outcome. It provides the means to support community leaders to work together on common goals, with the challenge of creating new opportunities and functions. It also brings new economic opportunities, thus improving the quality of lifestyle by creating liveable neighbourhoods with improved healthy and safe community environments. The people are the essence of the place, so if they leave, the physical urban setting will lose life, driving away both residents and tourists. A city will fail to grow sustainably without merging culture-led urban regeneration with its identity. The Valletta research affirms that spatial transformations inevitably affect social behaviours and cultural values, drawing from evidences of demographic decline and low presence of locals. As suggested by McCann (2001) the lack of responsibility of planning services is encouraged by the increase in privatisation, due to the limited economic resources along with a critical view of bottom-up policy making, so that “urban policy is increasingly left in the hands of corporate-supported organisations”.

Figure 1: Bevilacqua, Calabrò, and Maione (2013): Community involvement and Public-Private Partnerships relations in implementing successful urban regeneration initiatives



Bevilacqua, Calabrò, and Maione (2013) state that enhancing a mix of functions that target various users will improve the balance in urban contexts, and that “involving private actors within the planning process shifts toward a decentralised planning system in which local actors and stakeholders play a crucial role” (Figure 1). Usually, in order to create and manage the future development of cities, private organisations and planning consultants are engaged from public–private partnerships, and work towards a consensus-based approach (McCann, 2001). Community involvement is a method to strengthen a sense of “belonging to” that has to be preserved and improved, because “the sense of community is formed and sustained over shared resources” (Perdikogianni, 2007). Community involvement is about inclusiveness, and building a relationship of trust between planners and citizens, so as to cope with socio-economic inequality and advance sustainable planning.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

European Capitals of Culture inevitably bring about significant changes to the city's social and urban fabric, often helping to shape the direction of the city for years to come. The case of Valletta is no different, with the city having changed face drastically in the years leading up to the title.

The studies in this report trace these changes, commenting foremost upon the changes in the city's urban landscape, with particular emphasis on the four infrastructural projects spearheaded by the Valletta 2018 Foundation. These projects are analysed critically, not only for their immediate impact on the city, but more specifically in terms of how they have shaped life for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

These impacts are ever more apparent when working closely with different communities that define the city. The issues that are highlighted in the anthropological study on community impacts of Valletta 2018 shed new light on this, highlighting the day-to-day challenges faced by many participants and their hopes, aspirations and concerns for the future development of the city.