



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

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ABSTRACT

The report outlines the salient work carried out throughout 2018. Building on the research that had been carried out in 2015 and 2016, which focused on the gathering of data on the four sites, this year saw the same empirical work being carried out and consolidation of data and data analysis for the comparison of results and phenomena.

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

INTRODUCTION

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

It was firstly important to identify the main socio-spatial elements that influence the sites under study. Consequently, analytical frameworks were developed and applied within the analysis of the physical spaces through both inductive and deductive methodologies. The research objectives concentrate on the physical urban space and built environment, specifically how spatial parameters and qualities have direct and indirect social implications. For each of the four sites, a boundary limit was chosen as a study parameter. Understanding the relation between physical interventions and social changes brings together the research in examining different dimensions concerning the quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

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

Stage 9: PPGIS workshop – analysis of results emanating from Participatory Mapping Walkabout held in November 2017

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

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

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

Given that this is a longitudinal research, the empirical work in 2018 included repeated observations of set parameters defined in 2015, comprising:

- (a) (Stage 5) monitoring physical change to the urban spaces due to urban interventions or due to the proximity to such interventions, including land-use analysis and building on the baseline data obtained throughout 2015; and
- (b) (Stage 7) monitoring the changes in behaviour of individuals within the four urban spaces, including local community members living in the neighbourhoods under study.

FINDINGS

PPGIS results

Deliverable 1 - Qualitative Analysis

Table 1 is the outcome of extensive qualitative analysis from participants' responses and contributions during the PPGIS walkabout. Each site was evaluated according to the six specific themes previously discussed during the Design4DCity workshop¹. The objective was to carry out deeper analysis for each site by finding a predominant theme, which can be directly linked to the frequency of the words in the texts analysed using Voyant-tools. The predominant site-specific theme represents the most notable observations by the participants. To break down the collected information, the row featuring the summary for all sites serves as the foundation for the extraction of themes from participant responses. The colour coding used in the table refer to the main theme categorisation as discussed next.

Deliverable 2 - Theme categorisation

The summarised impressions in the qualitative analysis table were developed into more distinct categories. This categorisation permitted a numerical evaluation of the participants' responses according to repetition for each of the sites. Table 2 demonstrates the most repeated and noted categories.

The categories tackle specific elements that form part of a wider umbrella, highlighted in Table 3.

Deliverable 3 - Understanding *relative frequency*

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 radar graphs, the following categories were the most mentioned for each of the sites:

Bicċerija - Existing physical state, streetscape qualities and accessibility

Words such as 'degraded', 'shabby', '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 remarks about the accessibility of the market site noted its strategic location and good entrance but only from one side of the building as not all streets are easily accessible. The fact that such a historic market was privatised and made 'upmarket' was also repeatedly noted.

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 Bicċerija 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.

Table 2: Theme categorisation — most repeated categories (prominent categories are highlighted)

Categories	Bicčerija	MUŽA	Strait Street	Is-Suq tal-Belt
Value of historic elements	12	8	5	11
Safety	3	1	1	0
Presence of locals	3	0	1	2
Presence of human interaction	0	6	0	5
Link to context	11	6	1	5
Availability of open space	10	0	4	3
Streetscape qualities	16	4	5	4
Existing physical state	18	1	4	1
Presence of greenery	4	0	1	1
Presence of vehicular traffic	13	0	6	6
Availability of services/furniture	4	4	2	5
Walkability and site access	14	2	7	13
Access for all considerations	8	0	3	4
Current/future opportunity	5	0	0	9
Gentrification	1	2	0	4
Commercial activity	2	6	8	10
Tourist dominance	0	1	2	3

Table 3: Broader theme categorisation

Socio-Cultural	Activity-Related	Accessibility-Related	Existing Condition & Linkage
Presence of human interaction	Tourist dominance	Walkability and site access	Link to context
Value of historic elements	Commercial activity	Presence of vehicular traffic	Availability of open space
Safety	Current/future opportunity	Availability of services/furniture	Streetscape qualities
Presence of locals	Gentrification	Access for all considerations	Existing physical state
			Presence of greenery

(Source: Author)

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

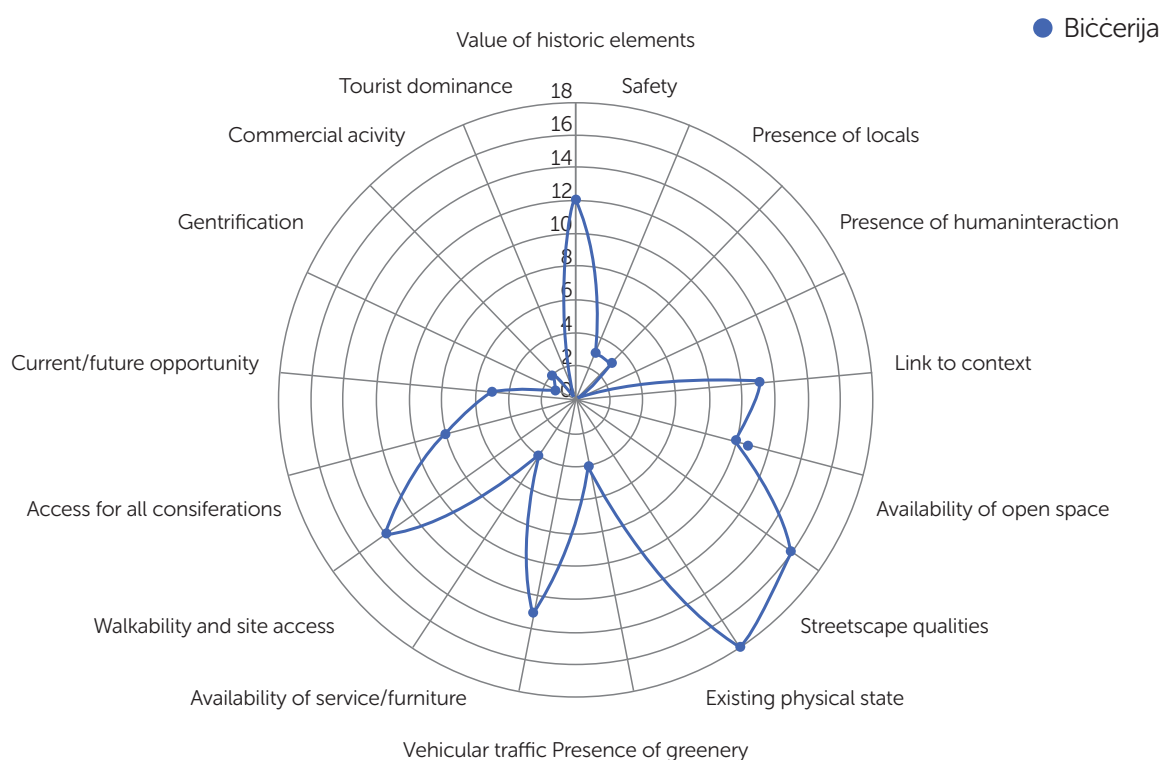
Many participants commented on the strong historic feel of the MUŽA and its context. The presence of historic elements mixed with commercial activity simultaneously was mostly noted as positive. However, the square was repeatedly noted as a potential extended public space for MUŽA and attracting the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

Strait street - Accessibility and presence of vehicular traffic

Majority of observations remarked on the narrow width of the street and the low quality of walkability due to vehicular circulation alongside pedestrians. As expected, many suggested the idea of making it more pedestrian-friendly to operate to its full potential.

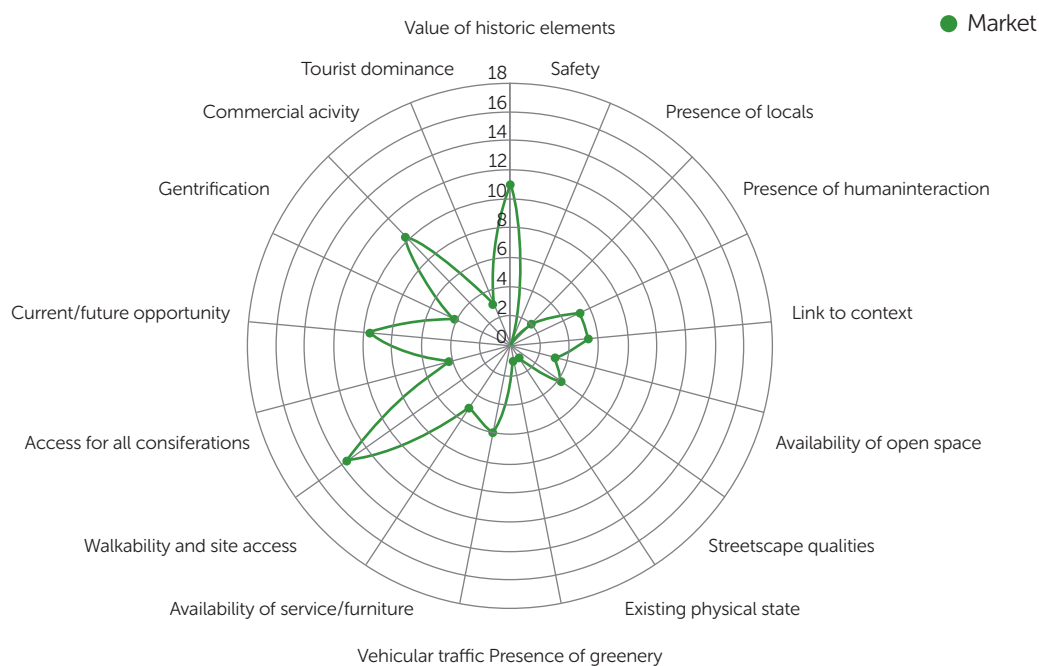
The following radar diagrams plot the relative frequency of the most distinctive categories mentioned by the participants, based on common shared terms. This data was collected with the help of Voyant-tools "Trends" tool. Each data point indicates the relative frequency of a theme.

Figure 1: Relative frequency radar diagram for Biččerija



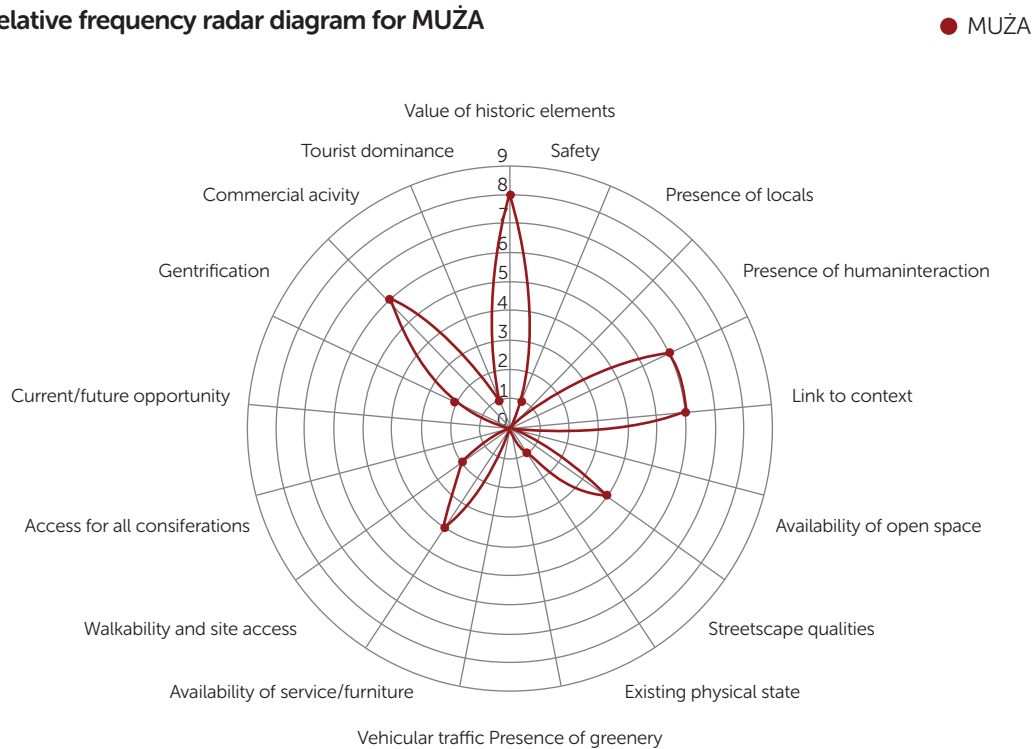
(Source: Author)

Figure 2: Relative frequency radar diagram for Is-Suq tal-Belt



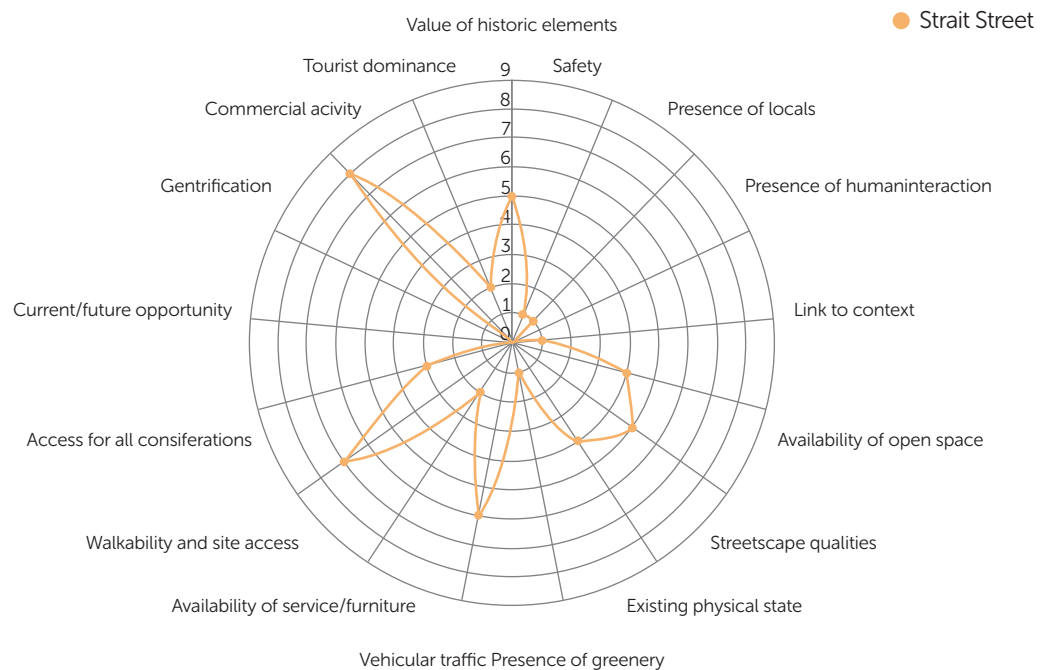
(Source: Author)

Figure 3: Relative frequency radar diagram for MUŻA



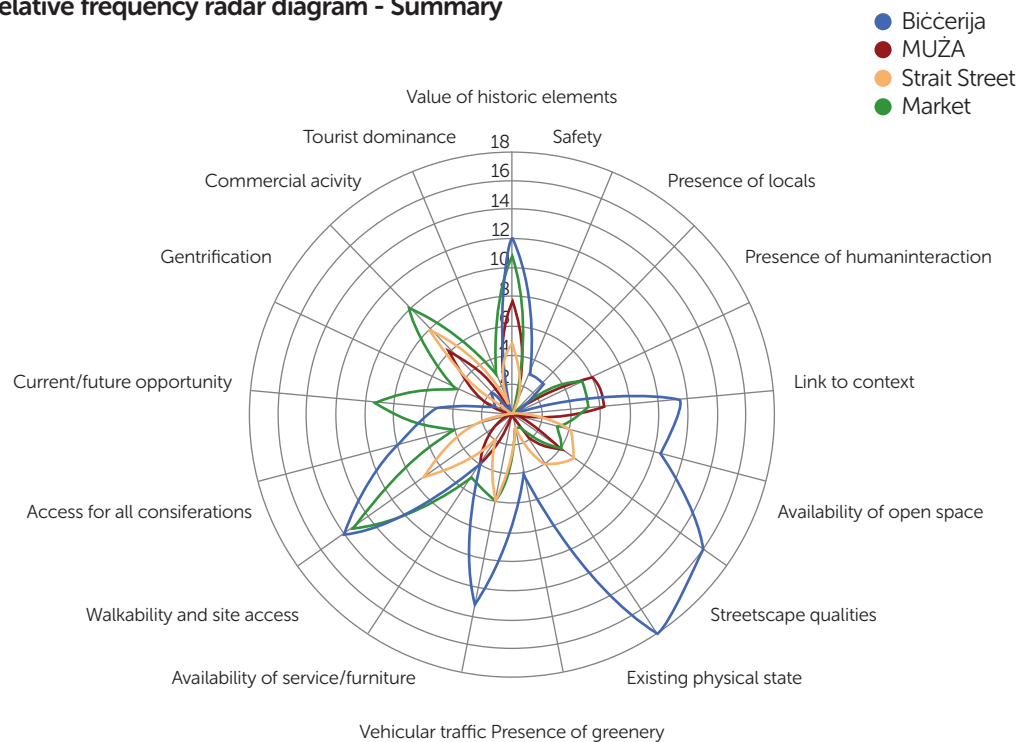
(Source: Author)

Figure 4: Relative frequency radar diagram for Strait Street



(Source: Author)

Figure 5: Relative frequency radar diagram - Summary



(Source: Author)

7.2 Spatial (physical temporal) analysis (Stage 5), including land-use analysis

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

MUŽA 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 square Jean de la Valette 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 a public square that gathers people.

Table 4: Spatial analysis 2018 results

Spatial Analysis 2018		Biččerija		Strait Street		MUŽA		Is-Suq tal-Belt		Is-Suq tal-Belt (repeated)
Spatial quality analysis based on analytical framework	Accessibility and Permeability	2.86		3.18		3.86		3.55		2.40
	Perception and Comfort	2.82		3.68		3.91		3.76		2.90
	Vitality	2.27		3.72		3.79		4.09		3.60
	Public Space - Overall Score	score 2.65		score 2.65		score 2.65		score 2.65		score 2.65
Physical analysis based on state of repair of current built fabric	4.1 to 5	16	0	11	18.96	10	21.27	15	13.27	
	3.1 to 4	33	27.5	13	22.41	13	27.65	11	9.73	
	2.1 to 3	57	47.5	20	34.48	19	40.42	83	73.45	
	1.1 to 2	12	10	11	18.96	5	10.63	4	3.54	
	Less than or equal to 1	2	1.67	3	5.17	x	x	x	x	
Total		120	100	58	100	47	100	113	100	

(Source: Author)

Is-Suq tal-Belt's high score is correlated to the appeal of the front façade overlooking Merchant's Street. It is the busiest zone where it was easier to find participants for the 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 space². However, the side streets that encircle the structure are used for litter and for delivery vans, which disrupts the movement of pedestrians, although this was not flagged by many respondents when the surveys were carried out.

² For a while this bench was for the sole use of the patrons of the catering outlet and at one point a sign was put up precluding people from sitting along it. This was removed after some time, possibly following resident outrage that was caused by this spatial appropriation. Josephine Burden, a Valletta resident and background in Community Cultural Development as an academic and practitioner provides a detailed account of this may be found in <http://www.islesoftheleft.org/valletta-and-our-common-good-is-suq-tal-belt/>

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 obstructs the accessibility and comfort of the space. It was therefore 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 Merchant's 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 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 is relative to the specific period 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, which could have actually been used to enhance, rather than detract from, the nature of the public space 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 towards into the street make it less walkable, but more lively. Some construction works also impedes the flow of pedestrians. Other concerns were the long stairs, inclined and uneven ground level, presence of service vans and litter. The site is generally considered safe except for some sections with vehicles and others that are less lively.

Biċċerija is one of the most dilapidated neighbourhoods in Valletta, but is undergoing slow progression. The inclined nature of the site possesses a safety and accessibility issue. Secondly, construction is strongly influencing the present character of the site due to the renovation works currently being undertaken within the Civil Abattoir structure. Construction material and machinery obstructs the encircling streets, making accessibility and permeability very low. There are also bad odours and no outdoor furniture, thus contributing to a low image and comfort overall. The spatial quality of the site requires major efforts to improve to a higher scoring, and the inability to have physical urban renewal within this neighbourhood may be seen to be one of the missed opportunities of the ECoC objectives in Valletta.

Land use analysis

There is a noticeable increase in the number of PA development applications in Valletta, as also seen from the analysis of development permits issued over the past years, as well as 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, undergoing construction is considered as a vacant building so as to truly represent the present-day character of the site (Table 5).

Ground floor use in MUŻA was predominantly retail in 2016, and still managed to slightly increase. An increase has been further registered in leisure activities as new cafes and restaurants have opened in the area. The increased percentage of vacancy is due to the undergoing works in Auberge d'Italie in order to host MUŻA. In turn this factor has decreased activity of an administrative nature that will eventually be replaced by cultural activity.

Table 5: Land use analysis, 2018

Spatial Analysis 2018		Biççerija	Strait Street	MUŽA	Is-Suq tal-Belt
Ground Floor use	Leisure	3%	23%	5%	9%
	Retail Outlets	5%	22%	49%	26%
	Residential	40%	10%	2%	10%
	Office	9%	10%	5%	2%
	Administrative	2%	9%	17%	17%
	Hotel	4%	3%	1%	5%
	Religious	11%	x	6%	10%
	Educational	x	x	x	x
	Cultural	4%	1%	x	1%
	Services	2%	2%	4%	1%
	Warehouse	14%	18%	x	15%
	Garage use	5%	x	x	2%
	Vacant	2%	3%	11%	2%
Predominant use (all floors)	Residential	54%	63%	10%	40%
	Administrative	14%	8.50%	20%	16%
	Religious	10.50%	x	3%	10%
	Office	10%	18%	30%	18%
	Educational	4.50%	x	x	8%
	Cultural	4%	x	x	x
	Hotel	3%	1.00%	1%	2%
	Retail outlets	x	6.00%	8%	1.50%
	Services	x	x	1%	x
	Leisure	x	x	2%	1.00%
	Warehousing	x	x	1%	x
	Vacant	1%	4.50%	23%	3%

(Source: Author)

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 have an evident increase 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.

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 perimeter, 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 have increased, and the number of empty warehouses has decreased significantly. New offices have also opened, while there is already a significant number of existing offices, 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.

Building assessment

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

MUŻA in general has the highest ratio of buildings in 'good' and 'excellent' conditions. 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 construction is finished.

The immediate area around Biċċerija, which is still undergoing construction, has remained more or less the same. However the perimeter of the site boundary is undergoing renovation, probably due to the location of these buildings next to main streets and proximity to the waterfront (mostly boutique hotel establishments).

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 buildings renovated into excellent conditions are boutique hotels, which highlight the role of external users 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 at the end segments of its length. Both segments have been transformed to bars and restaurants, which feature music performances during weekends.

Behavioural (observational) analysis (Stage 7)

Part of the study is also an assessment of the four neighbourhoods' social components. One of the research objectives was to gain an informed understanding of how people behave and make use of the sites under study through behavioural patterns and other influences contributing to the vitality of the

spaces. A number of hours of observation data were collected for an in-depth comprehension of people's behaviour, in a process that was essentially similar to that carried out in 2015/2016. The behaviour ranged from casual conversations to how people interact with the built environment. Observed patterns were then collated into distinct categories to serve as a base for quantification. Some similar categories of patterns were eventually defined, as follows, some of which were similar to those established in 2016:

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 current construction activity since it is at a peak stage in Valletta
6. **Interaction with Space:** the use of the space, and how the use of land within a space induces 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

Tables 6 and 7 overleaf list the incidence of patterns for each of the above categories in each of the four neighbourhoods (top categories are highlighted in yellow for ease of reference):

Table 6: Behavioural (observational) analysis – influences (categories) & patterns, Biċċerija (left) and Strait Street (right)

Influences	PATTERNS BIĊĊERIJA	%	PATTERNS STRAIT STREET	%
1	39	14%	29	10%
2	36	12.50%	20	7%
3	28	10%	35	13%
4	42	14.50%	30	11%
5	4	1.50%	14	5%
6	30	10%	34	12.50%
7	28	9%	20	7%
8	24	8%	30	11%
9	48	16.50%	28	10%
10	11	4%	31	11.50%

(Source: Author)

Table 7: Behavioural (observational) analysis – influences (categories) & patterns, MUŽA (left) and Is-Suq tal-Belt (right)

Influences	PATTERNS MUŽA	%	PATTERNS Is-Suq tal-Belt	%
1	29	10.50%	40	11%
2	15	5.50%	27	7.50%
3	30	11%	29	8%
4	49	18%	38	10.50%
5	20	7%	40	11%
6	49	18%	49	14%
7	5	2%	25	7%
8	40	15%	41	11%
9	2	1%	35	10%
10	35	12%	36	10%

(Source: Author)

The patterns collated in each of the four sites has provided an indication of the users and can be correlated to the predominant activity documented.

MUŽA 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 encounter and interaction among individuals. Even though pedestrian flow is transversal for 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 it is rarely problematic and does 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 active frontages.

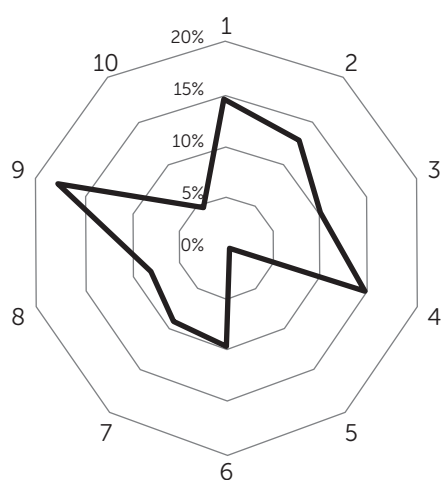
The Biċċerija neighbourhood has the lowest level of human interaction from the four sites, as it is primarily residential in nature and the opportunities for interaction are limited to streets and alleys. However, interactions do occur – between residents, workers and visitors. Residents frequently interact in alleys and from balconies. There is a blur of limits as residents use the outdoor space as an extension to their home 'territory'. The site is characterised by residential sounds such as loud televisions, birds, individuals arguing, infants crying, etc. There is 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 it provides for 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 the location in one of the busiest streets of Valletta, Merchant's 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 notable disturbance between the pedestrians and users of the space with the service vehicles. The highest indicators (influences) of liveliness in the area are of human interaction (Influence 8), interaction with the space (Influence 6), leisure activity (Influence 4), and aural influence (Influence 1). However other influences, notably pedestrian and vehicular conflict, are also present and should be addressed so as to further contribute to the 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 most lively 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 is a number of user categories from residents, to workers and tourists. However, conflicts still arise when vehicles access narrow portions of this street which cause the loss of a complete pedestrian experience. Space appropriation due to outdoor catering areas (and the abuse of the approved limitations by some establishments) create further impediment to the pedestrian flow and compromises the pedestrian experience.

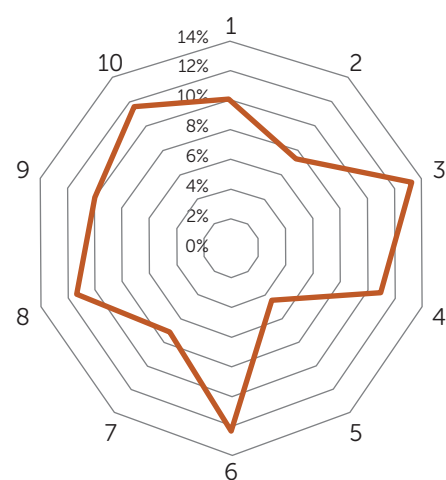
The radar diagrams overleaf (Figures 6 – 9) graphically illustrate the predominant patterns within each of the four sites as observed on the ground.

Figure 6: Radar diagram for Biċċerija



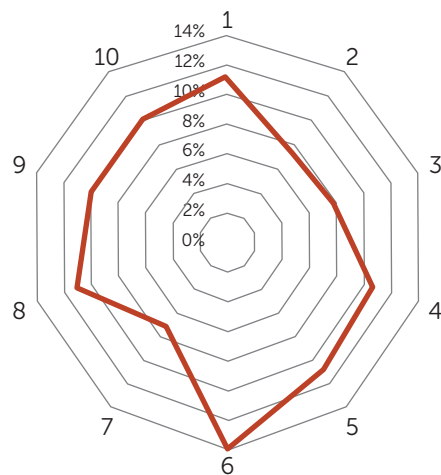
(Source: Author)

Figure 7: Radar diagram for Strait Street



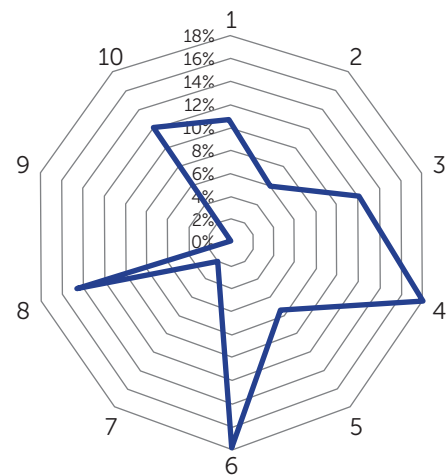
(Source: Author)

Figure 8: Radar diagram for MUŻA



(Source: Author)

Figure 9: Radar diagram for Is-Suq tal-Belt



(Source: Author)

Overall reflection

Overall results reveal that Valletta 2018 has had a positive outcome on its physical fabric in terms of improvement to the physical quality of the buildings within most of the four neighbourhoods, in spite of some differences among the sites. Spatial assessments indicate a general improvement from 2016, except for Biċċerija which is undergoing construction that is heavily obstructive within the area. Even though Is-Suq tal-Belt initially scored high in accessibility, there are several factors to consider. Changes are constantly taking place so it is important to consider constant assessment for well encompassed research. Land use changes and architectural interventions have indicated predominant activities for each neighbourhood. Since Valletta won the ECoC title, PA applications for further developments (or redevelopments) have increased, and most have changed use from residential towards leisure or commercial. A significant increase in hotels is also evident from a general increase of tourist activity in Valletta. This is strong proof that Valletta is transforming from a retail to a catering destination.

Qualitative data obtained from the PPGIS workshop and patterns from the behavioural analysis further highlight this point. The results obtained highlight the lack of an all-inclusive vision with respect to planning for cultural infrastructure within Valletta — one that is not always accompanied by physical urban design interventions that are specifically directed towards the local communities and one that is not always the result of inclusive and participatory processes that may truly address the bigger picture. Therefore, the current Valletta strategy being implemented is a short-sighted view of the future of the city that appears to be more about generating (short- to medium-term) investment, while acting against Valletta's long-term liveability. New strategies are needed that focus on the social aspect in order to ensure an increase in local residents and therefore 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, and this was one of the reasons for implementing a PPGIS walkabout within the research methodology. 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.

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.